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Time to recycle everything with a plug or battery

Victoria's ewaste landfill ban should also drive national policies

Last week's announcement by Environment Ministers to fast track the development of new product stewardship schemes for photovoltaic solar panels (PVs) and batteries, has created the perfect opportunity for Australia to better manage end-of-life electrical and electronic equipment.

The Victorian Government's deferral of the ewaste landfill ban now commencing in July 2019, is also a positive step towards diverting unwanted and obsolete electronics from landfill, including handheld batteries.

However, there is still a wide gap between the product scope of the Victorian landfill ban and national product stewardship programs for ewaste

Ewaste is clearly recognised as a priority waste stream globally, and the need to accelerate action has been highlighted by these recent announcements.

Australia has made significant steps through the National Television and Computer Recycling Scheme (NTCRS) and voluntary programs like MobileMuster, but the take-back and recycling of many other categories of electrical and electronic goods are unfunded due to lack of stewardship schemes. This means that ewaste still continues to flood into landfills at the cost of local government and the community.

MRI E-cycle Solutions supports the Victorian Government's proposed ewaste ban and believes the new start date of 1 July 2019 will better prepare the community and local councils through public education and infrastructure upgrades. It also presents the opportunity to sync the State ban with an expanded national electronics stewardship scheme.

"The Victorian Government's definition of ewaste is wide-ranging and the most appropriate way to better manage the recovery, reuse and recycling of unwanted and obsolete electrical and electronic goods, but without a national electronics stewardship scheme will dump the cost of recycling solely onto local government" said Will LeMessurier, Managing Director of MRI E-cycle Solutions.

“There are still many categories of ewaste that fall outside the NTCRS, mobiles, PVs and batteries, that will go straight to landfill in the absence of a comprehensive national electronics stewardship scheme to collect, reuse and recycle anything with a plug or a battery” said LeMessurier.

*“The current review of the Commonwealth Product Stewardship Act 2011 provides an unmatched opportunity to create a suite of national regulations to ensure that the recovery and recycling of **all** products with a plug or battery are subject to consumer-friendly, industry funded stewardship schemes that are well promoted.”*

It is essential that the NTCRS be expanded to include the same types of electronic products that will be covered under Victoria’s landfill ban to avoid shifting the cost of their recovery and recycling from producers and retailers to local councils.

A mismatch between Victoria’s comprehensive definition of ewaste and Commonwealth regulations will also create further confusion amongst councils and the public as to what can and can’t be recycled.

Expanding industry funded co-regulated and/or voluntary programs under the Product Stewardship Act to cover all types of ewaste will significantly improve economies of scale for industrial processing and create new employment opportunities. It will also contribute to higher recycling rates nationwide and ensure the cost burden is shared equitably among producers, retailers, consumers and local government. Australia will then truly have a best practice model to the envy of other countries battling the challenge of ewaste.

MRI E-cycle Solutions is eager to see effective policy (and regulatory) reform across all States and Territories that: facilitates and encourages electronics and battery reuse; maximises resource recovery; and helps local government manage ewaste without being economically penalised.

Pursuing these goals will increasingly play a part in achieving circular solutions for electronics.

##ENDS##

MEDIA COMMENT

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ABOUT MRI E-cycle Solutions

MRI E-cycle Solutions is an Australian-owned e-waste and battery recycling company with a reputation for practical expertise and robust technical knowledge. We operate across Australia and New Zealand and provide a comprehensive range of collection, reuse and recycling services for all electrical and electronic products and batteries. This includes solutions for associated consumables like batteries, fluorescent tubes, and printer cartridges. MRI E-cycle Solutions is also the largest non-lead-acid battery recycler in Australia. Our product stewardship arm (MRI PSO) is an approved Co-regulatory Arrangement under the Federal Government’s National Television and Computer Recycling Scheme (NTCRS).