

TRANSCRIPT

LEGISLATIVE COUNCIL ENVIRONMENT AND PLANNING COMMITTEE

Inquiry into Recycling and Waste Management

Melbourne—Tuesday, 8 October 2019

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WITNESSES

Mr Jeff Angel, Director, and

Ms Amy Westnedge, Senior Campaigner, Boomerang Alliance.

The CHAIR: I would like to welcome Mr Angel and Ms Westnedge from the Boomerang Alliance. Thank you very much for making yourselves available today. We appreciate it, and we are looking forward to your contribution.

All evidence taken at this hearing is protected by parliamentary privilege as provided by the *Constitution Act 1975* and further subject to provisions of the Legislative Council standing orders. Therefore the information you give today is protected by law; however, any comments repeated outside this hearing may not be protected. Any deliberately false evidence or misleading of the Committee may be considered a contempt of Parliament. All evidence is being recorded. You will be provided with a proof version of the transcript in the next few days, so if there are any changes or any amendments you need to make to that, please do so and return it to Hansard.

Now, we have received your submission, and thank you for that. I suggest we can give you about 5 minutes or so. You do not have to go through the whole submission, because we have read the submission. If you have particular points you would like to highlight, then we will go to questions and answers. Who would like to go? Mr Angel? Welcome back. I think you appeared before this Committee two years ago.

Mr ANGEL: Some time ago. I think it was on bags.

Dr RATNAM: The plastic bag ban.

The CHAIR: Plastic bags—okay. Welcome back.

Mr ANGEL: Thank you. Thank you for inviting us to present at this very important time for waste and recycling. We believe that Victoria is at a crossroads obviously through a conjunction of a variety of circumstances, but it is a very important crossroads. The State can either start very quickly on working to lay the basis for a circular economy or the alternative will rush in, which is a stagnating or even diminishing rate of recycling and very large waste-to-energy plants. Obviously we do not prefer the second option, and I think in any number of economic, environmental or social benchmarks quite clearly diminishing or stagnant recycling and waste to energy, with some landfill of course, is not the preferred way to go.

The second critical point is that we do not have a long time or a long period to solve this. That is most pronounced in Victoria, of course, compared to some other states because of the problems you have had with some of the operators. It is our view that in order to set the basis for a circular economy and the long-term environmental, social and economic benefits from that, we really have to put most of the settings in place in the next three to five years. This is not a time for long-term bureaucratic processes focused on far into the future.

The third important, I guess, change in the environment—the political environment—is that the environment NGOs, the recycling association and the Waste Management and Resource Recovery Association of Australia are largely on the same page. When previously we would have sat around the table arguing with each other about the next landfill or what to do with the recycling industry, there is a very high degree of consensus, which I would hope offers a political opportunity for Government as well as obviously for fulfilling what the community wants to do with its recycling.

Do we think that the Victorian Government has a central role to play? Absolutely. It is not only a state-level crisis but a national crisis. The Victorian Government are, as are other states, locked into the COAG thing that happened a month or so ago, where the COAG heads of government announced the ban on the export of plastic, metal, glass and paper. Now, it is my understanding that the Federal Government actually wants to legislate that ban, and of course that means that we then have to flow through interstate enforceability in making that ban come to fruition.

The Prime Minister has said that the ban should start in the second half of 2020. That is not long term; that is quick action, which obviously will need to be reflected by state and local governments. While there are any number of reasons as to why we are in this predicament, clearly we think that the windows and doors of opportunity that have opened are quite clearly previous government policies and programs and industry collection arrangements that were based on that lazy assumption that China and Asian countries will just take whatever we send them. That has dramatically changed. Clearly it is a change for the better, and nor should we, as domestic reprocessors of the material collected at kerbside and from commercial establishments, be similarly tolerant of those levels of contamination and that lack of value-adding.

I think that governments and industry also took comfort in exaggerated figures about recycling. The more we are finding out about the data that has been collected the more they have become empty claims. We have never been recycling as much as we had claimed or governments had claimed we had, and that gave an exaggerated degree of comfort.

Two of the most important measures that state governments can take—or three actually—are, one, recycled content rules promoted through procurement policies; and secondly, a one-off injection of funds. Where I come from in New South Wales there is quite a lot of money collected by the waste levy. The industry say quite clearly they do not want endless subsidies, they want one-off injections of funds so they can upgrade their reprocessing and be assured that there is going to be a market for that material through recycled content in procurement policies.

The third major element of course is product stewardship, whether it is a container deposit scheme or whether it is a federal-level agreement to subject packaging to much stricter product stewardship requirements rather than the current packaging covenant, which is more or less a voluntary arrangement. When you look at the packaging covenant objectives they cannot achieve that through a voluntary process; there has to be a degree of enforceability in that program, and obviously product stewardship laws can supply that.

We have also obviously been active over the years on a container deposit scheme—endless campaigning. Could Victoria please just introduce one? The other major agenda item that is now on foot, of course, is single-use plastics being phased out, and South Australia is about to do the first legislative attempt of that next year. So there is a lot going on.

The CHAIR: Excellent. Thank you very much for that. I will start off with the last subject: the container deposit scheme. That is not product stewardship. You tried to link the two together, but I do not think you meant it that way. They are quite different things, because a CDS is basically consumers receiving the payment of 10 cents and that then gets whacked on the Coke bottles or water bottles. So consumers are paying for it. Do you see a sort of separation between the two streams where manufacturers are made accountable—and I am sure they will build it into part of their costs. They are there to make money, and that is fair enough. We talked about TV packaging, for example. We talked about TVs with e-waste now and that actually getting recycled and hopefully getting back to the manufacturers. So how do you see that a product stewardship program could effectively work alongside a CDS and alongside kerbside recycling? And obviously we do not want to undermine that, because I think it is very important that kerbside recycling is actually made to work very effectively—for example, by separating glass from the rest to reduce contamination. So how do you see the three programs working side by side in an effective way to achieve a good outcome without one undermining the other? You can take that on notice or you can tell us off the top of your head.

Mr ANGEL: No, no. To be frank, I think a container deposit scheme is a product stewardship scheme. The essential element of a product stewardship scheme is that the industry levies its sector members, and yes, of course that is often passed on to the consumer. In the case of a container deposit scheme there are two elements: one is the refund, the 10-cent refund; but there is a second element, which is a handling fee, which is what supports the collection infrastructure. It is the same with the e-waste. They levy tiny amounts—but it passes on into the retail cost—and that levy supports the collection infrastructure. So that is the key element of any product stewardship scheme: you actually collect the stuff to recycle it, otherwise what is the point of the whole exercise?

Because container deposit schemes create a separate collection infrastructure to kerbside, there have been arguments—frankly false arguments in terms of economic impact, but there have been arguments—that that

creates competition for kerbside collection, and the materials that were in the kerbside bin, the drink containers, could now be diverted into the cleaner stream, the container deposit systems and its collection infrastructure. What was argued when the debate in all the other states was going on about container deposits was that container deposits would financially undermine kerbside. What we are now seeing from the experience in New South Wales and Queensland is that that is not the case. The reason that is not the case is that drink containers are still left in kerbside, they have not 100 per cent disappeared, and the 10-cent value, the refund value, of those containers far outweighs the loss of material value that is created by some containers being extracted from kerbside bins.

In fact I have read the Tomra submission to your Inquiry, and they very clearly say New South Wales kerbside is now getting \$50 million a year from the refunds in the kerbside bin that are part of the container deposit scheme, and they say that they expect Victoria would get \$40 million a year. Now, that is more than Government can provide. It is more than ratepayers need to provide, because it is a new source of income, and it is a continuing source of income; it is not just some one-off subsidy. Now, to be honest, we expected that because that is what normally happens. There were arguments, because people were trying to oppose the scheme and put up various propositions. Our view is that a container deposit scheme not only increases recycling because more people are collecting it in order to get the 10-cent refund and not only massively reduces litter—the benchmark information in New South Wales also proves that; they did before and after CDS litter sites—but also supports kerbside.

Now, the other point you were making about glass is that, yes, it also extracts most of the glass out of kerbside, so it is not contaminating the paper and cardboard recyclers in the commingled bin, and it does all this without any government money. So the final question—is there any—

The CHAIR: Who pays for the collection, which is the 5-cent—the collection bit?

Mr ANGEL: Yes. You have got about 5 cents per container, yes.

The CHAIR: Yes. Who pays that? The State Government, or is it still industry?

Mr ANGEL: No, it is passed on through the price of the product.

The CHAIR: Right. That is the New South Wales model you are talking about.

Mr ANGEL: Every model. Now, the final question really is: does that create prohibitive rises in the price of products, of drinks? There have been two independent price reviews, one in New South Wales and one in Queensland, and both of those found there were different price impacts according to the type of product. But the end result is that if you return your container and get your 10 cents, in a number of cases you are ahead. We can refer you to the IPART review in New South Wales. In fact in the case of beer, the real price increase—that is, taking account of the refund and the handling fee—was 5 cents, not 15 cents. Now, why that happens: competitive market pressures. People want to retain their market share. Some of the unrefunded deposits are ploughed back into their pricing strategies. This has been happening in South Australia for years. In summary I could say all of the arguments across a whole range of issues that were put up against container deposits are now being proven wrong in reality.

The CHAIR: The reason why I ask this question is that we are going to New South Wales on Thursday.

Mr ANGEL: Yes; okay.

The CHAIR: And we are meeting with the company you talked about and meeting with the government agency specifically in relation to the CDS. So that is why I am interested in your view on the scheme as well, how you line up the three—the kerbside, the CDS and obviously the stewardship program.

Mr HAYES: Thanks for your submission, and thanks for all that information on the CDS especially. I wanted to ask about product stewardship and supermarkets et cetera. The supermarkets did not want to come and talk to us, but anyway—I wonder why? A lot of stuff that ends up in landfill and comes from supermarkets is pretty well single-use. The supermarkets say, 'Well, you can return soft plastics to us'. How could we improve product stewardship of materials that go through the supermarkets and make sure that they are

recyclable in some way? Putting them into garden furniture is pretty short term and not an ideal sort of answer really, but how can we extract maximum value out of that? Do you think a levy on virgin plastics would be a help, or is it a matter of labelling the type of plastic used and making sure it goes back into the right bin or making the supermarkets comply with some sort of product stewardship in that they have got to explain about every item that they stock the way they see it being recycled? Any or all of the above—or how do you think it could work?

Mr ANGEL: We very strongly support upgrading the current product stewardship scheme for packaging, which is the Australian Packaging Covenant, to a full-scale product stewardship scheme that is either co-regulatory or mandatory under the federal legislation, so there is a whole range of accountability and transparency and enforceability processes in that Act.

Mr HAYES: What is the Act called again?

Mr ANGEL: The Product Stewardship Act.

Mr HAYES: It is a Federal Government Act, yes.

Mr ANGEL: I might say that the Act actually mentions the word ‘deposits’. But there are a range of commitments that are being made for packaging, both through the national waste policy process and by APCO. There are three that are of relevance. One is the average recycled content of packaging—the figure being currently mentioned is 30 per cent. We understand that they have already reached 30 per cent, so there needs to be a much higher figure put into a product stewardship arrangement. But of course when you create a recycled content requirement you create a market for the material that is being collected—not just the soft plastic bins in supermarkets but a whole range of other stuff.

Secondly, there is the issue of recyclability and the target—I think it is 70 per cent needs to be recyclable, re-usable or compostable. That means nothing really, because frankly a lot of it is already recyclable. The point is: is it actually recycled or composted or re-used, and that is where product stewardship comes in in creating a market for the material and, again, the collection infrastructure. It is very hard with single-use plastics, whether they are straws or coffee cups or whatever, to create a comprehensive collection infrastructure, which is why one goes to the first strategy, which is phasing them out and bringing in alternatives that can be composted, for example, or avoided because people bring their own water bottles et cetera. Our Plastic Free Places program, which I might say has APCO support, is being rolled out in cities in four states. It actually helps retailers or commercial establishments, like catering and cafes et cetera, to switch to alternatives and educate their customers. What we are finding is that if you can help those companies get over the procurement process—because most of them do not have enough time to work out what alternatives are acceptable and what the price is and what the customer reaction is expected to be—once they get over that they go gung-ho. So we have a program in Perth, at Bassendean, and one in Adelaide, which is a precursor to their ban legislation expected in the first half of next year. We do not put up this thing as an alternative to the ban, but it is actually a way of helping business adjust and transition.

There are three places in Queensland where it is also being rolled out. Eventually we will do ourselves out of a job because the banned legislation will come in. So it is avoiding material by people re-using their own cups or the establishment providing re-usable items, getting rid of stuff like plastic straws and plastic food ware and getting the compostable alternatives in place or in fact maximising recycled content where that is not possible. The thing that is developing is that where businesses take up the compostable alternatives that they give out—we are finding this in Adelaide, I think—you actually need a collection system so it is composted, it is not just chucked into landfill. And there is discussion that allied to a plastic-free program is a compostable collection process.

Mr HAYES: Could you make supermarkets responsible for collecting what they put out?

Mr ANGEL: Well, it is a bit hard given it is so dispersed very quickly, but supermarkets are part of that product stewardship arrangement, so they should be contributing as much as they can where they can.

Mr HAYES: What do you think about a levy on virgin plastic that has been touted?

Mr ANGEL: Well, I think it would work but I think it is also politically extremely difficult, and I am not sure any of us want to wait 10 years to have the plastic tax battle while we keep adding plastic to the environment that lasts for hundreds of years. To some extent there is a pragmatic approach to that, like let us solve the problem rather than—

The CHAIR: Just on that, or something flowing from that, we talked earlier about the federal ban on exporting waste. Should we as part of that consider the reverse, because most of our plastic waste, packaging stuff, is actually coming from offshore? So would you say then that the Federal Government, for example—I am not pushing responsibility—as part of the plan needs to do the same thing: mandate that the product coming to Australia is only coming through as a recycled and recyclable product, like the Europeans have done? We talked earlier to previous witnesses in relation to the impact. For example, should we then call on the Government to actually, as part of that legislation that is being prepared for next year, also mandate the same—

Mr ANGEL: Absolutely. We import an enormous amount of the packaging, whether it is around existing foodstuffs or in fact empty bottles. We have a lot of what are called unfinished goods—the beverage in the bottles we import. No-one really knows the extent of the federal legislation, but it is a very high profile position being put to the public. I want to see all levels of government reinforcing it, absolutely. There is one thing, though: there are multiple standards of recyclability and compostability. You will find in a number of shops plastic bags that claim to be recyclable or biodegradable, but that is according to overseas standards. What we have to do is enforce Australian standards, and that is particularly in regard to compostability. Some of the overseas compostability standards do not come anywhere near to our standard. So, yes, if we are preventing stuff coming in, it has to be Australian standard-specific, not some greenwashed thing from overseas.

The CHAIR: The reason I asked that question—before I go to Ms Taylor—is our manufacturing sector is, I suppose, much slower than what it was. So if we do not export any of our plastic or any of our recyclable stuff but yet the incoming is actually so great, what do we do with it? That is the point I am making. It has to be a two-way street. I will come back to something about waste to energy later on.

Ms TAYLOR: Thank you for unpacking the economic elements of the CDS. You are kind of the first person where it has landed with me. Now I get where you are coming from, so that is helpful. I am just wondering—and I hope you have the answer, but if you do not we are going to the facility on Thursday, so it is all good—with the kerbside collection, inevitably with human nature some glass will get chucked in and it will still contaminate the kerbside, or have they got an option for that, to prevent the contamination of the kerbside collection? That is my concern, because it was raised in one of the hearings.

Mr ANGEL: No, but even if you invest in blue bins we are still going to get stuff in kerbside bins. It is not like you get 100 per cent household engagement with the blue bin or the container deposit bin, but because there is far less the challenges to the paper recycling and cardboard recycling plants are much less. They have been for years complaining about the extra investment they have to make to extract glass out or refurbish the equipment because it gets shredded by the glass, and they would much prefer something like a container deposit scheme, that actually solves the problem at source rather than ending up in the factory and having to invest in rehabilitating the equipment every now and then. No system will 100 per cent solve the problem, but a container deposit system does it without having the ratepayers pay for it by investing in blue bins everywhere.

The CHAIR: But that does not solve the whole problem?

Mr ANGEL: Nothing does.

The CHAIR: That is right. That is where we do not want to mislead, saying, ‘A container deposit scheme is going to solve your recycling’.

Dr RATNAM: No, it does not. It is one part of it.

The CHAIR: With 10, 20, 30, 40 per cent, you have still not resolved the issue with the kerbside and making that done right. It does help, but it is sort of—

Mr ANGEL: I think I would argue that it is the biggest thing that helps. You still need to educate the household, in the case of a container deposit system, to go and get the refund. There are people with different

income levels who do not care about the refund. You can try and get them to put them out for collectors, so instead of the blue bin being collected by the kerbside collector, charities can come along. They do this in South Australia. The Scouts go through the suburb and say, 'Look, sign up to our charity scheme and let us come and collect it instead of it going in the bin'. There would have to be multiple ways of appealing. No scheme is going to be a 100 per cent solution.

Ms TAYLOR: So when you are in the supermarket you have got your organic and you have got your ugly veggies, and to keep them separated they wrap them in plastic. Do you have an option or alternative to that? I think, 'Those poor ugly veggies, I would love to use them and not waste them', but they are often in plastic and the organics are all in plastic.

Mr ANGEL: I do not know why they are in plastic.

Ms TAYLOR: I think it is so that people do not say, 'Is that the organic? Oh it's not organic, it's the cheaper one'—you know, they do not try to pass it off as the other.

Mr ANGEL: You are right, but there is plenty of non-plastic packaging we can use.

Ms TAYLOR: Good. That is a good answer. That works.

Dr RATNAM: Thank you very much for your submission and your presentation today. It has been very, very insightful and very compelling. I wanted to ask if you could talk us through—and you outlined this in your submission as well—your concerns around waste incineration.

Mr ANGEL: I have had two involvements with waste to energy. One was on the New South Wales waste-to-energy task force that developed the current New South Wales policy, and secondly, sitting on platforms at waste management conferences giving the contrary view. The thing that really switched me against waste to energy was when at one of the conferences in Coffs Harbour one of the speakers was very clear that in order to invest in a waste-to-energy plant you need to lock up resources for 20 years in order to get the investment and convince the banks you have got a viable proposition. That then leads to various claims by the waste-to-energy industry that they are not taking recyclables, which is just absolute nonsense. Over a 20-year period almost everything is recyclable.

The other thing that I did argue against on this particular task force was that the industry keeps putting up gigantic plants—700 000 tonnes a year, 500 000 tonnes a year. There is no way they can contract that for 20 years and say they are not going to be incinerating recyclables. That is why I sort of proffer those two pathways. Something big has to happen in each pathway. If the waste-to-energy industry does get a stranglehold on the material and locks it up for 20 years or the circular economy programs get a stranglehold on the material and lock it up forever—because you can keep recycling it—because of the particular crises with stockpiling and landfilling of recyclables that cannot go on forever either. It cannot even go on for a medium term. So it is at that very critical juncture.

The other thing about waste to energy is even though they apply best practice emission controls it is not zero emissions, it is just smaller emissions, and that is where you run into a whole lot of local community problems. Some of the communities may already have highly polluted environments, which the waste-to-energy incinerator is adding to, and in the case of New South Wales we have yet to see a scheme that gives full confidence they can even meet the current emission limits with the current technologies they are proposing. That is why two of them fell over in New South Wales. The bigger the throughput the bigger the emissions quantities that you have to manage, and some of it is eventually released into the air. So it is not only an environmental threat, it is actually now a threat to the circular economy.

The CHAIR: Just on that, I accept the points you made on the two issues of the 20-year contract and the super-duper plant. I think there is a valid argument to support what you are saying in relation to the question: do we need to have a plant that big? There is a fair argument there. But with the smaller scale plant, it is used for residual product that cannot be recycled so it is heading to landfill or not necessarily incineration but any waste to energy other than landfill on a smaller scale and in a shorter contract. I know in New South Wales, where I think you were referring to, they were looking at a big plant years ago and they were looking at recycling at the front end, and cost-wise they decided it was too big, too costly. They walked away, and I think it was a good

decision to walk away from it. If we then say we are restricting the industry to smaller contracts, smaller operations, for what we cannot recycle at all is the choice landfill? Is that something that can be considered?

Mr ANGEL: I did argue for that on this New South Wales task force. The industry were not interested. They are interested in big plants, big profits and big flow-through of materials. But if we fully go through the process of circular economy arrangements, down to the big reprocessing plants as opposed to the big incineration plants, you may end up with some materials that you may not want to landfill. I will say that even at that stage you will have to assess the toxic emissions from those residuals because inevitably the easy, less hazardous material may have been recycled and you are being left with the more potentially hazardous material, and at the end of the process you have still got a toxic residual to put in landfill. So, yes, waste to energy as a solution to our current crisis is not a solution. If it is a sort of minor adjustment at the end of some long process of setting up the circular economy, maybe. But that is not what the industry is saying. They are not going to come to Government and say, 'We want to put in a 40 000-tonne waste-to-energy plant'. There may be some facilities that—and I hazard to say this because I am still thinking about it—already fully go through a recycling process and reprocessing into new materials. What they do with that—there are some companies with very small amounts wondering. I do not know if a waste-to-energy solution is right for them and right for the environment, but I think that is more the sort of thing that New South Wales would like to see rather than giant plants sprouting up.

Dr RATNAM: Just a follow-up—and that is probably a question for Cesar, as Chair, as well—we are talking about the scales because one of the theories is that one of the reasons we are getting the large-scale plants proposed as opposed to the small-scale plants is about financial and economic viability. And so often people will say, 'You can't use the European context because the scales of volumes are just so different'. Population numbers, for example, which change the waste volumes, are incomparable. So people are saying the context is a bit different and the environment is a bit different here. I am not sure. Do you have any more insight into that in terms of the scales that are viable and what happened in New South Wales? Is the reason we are seeing these large-scale plants proposed here that the small-scale plants just are not viable or that the industry wants to just make as much money as possible, or is it about infrastructure outlay—they are not going to put the outlay, not going to invest the capital?

Mr ANGEL: No, I think the industry is extremely ambitious and says, 'We come from Europe and America and we do big things'. Whether there are smaller scale programs that some businesses may want to do, we have yet to see them come forward.

Dr RATNAM: Okay. So what is in the environment allowing the different proposals to come forward will be important then as well, because all we are hearing from are the big proposals at the moment.

Mr ANGEL: Yes. Well, they see this as their big opportunity.

Dr RATNAM: Right. I see.

Mr HAYES: Thanks for everything you have said so far. In your submission you say:

We are also calling for mandatory stewardship programs to keep batteries and solar panels out of landfill.

One of our panel members is very interested in solar panels and getting rid of them.

Dr RATNAM: It is unfortunate he is not here for this part. He would have really enjoyed this submission actually. He would.

Mr HAYES: On his behalf, I just want to ask: if there is a stewardship program that returns all batteries and solar back—

The CHAIR: Return back to sender.

Mr HAYES: can they be successfully reprocessed down to almost nothing?

Mr ANGEL: Yes. Again, though, you have got to make sure you have got a market for the stuff that is being recovered. I understand that product stewardship for solar panels is certainly on the agenda, and it is

certainly timely. Over the next five to 10 years there will be this avalanche of redundant solar panels. I am trying to remember. I thought that the COAG meeting also mentioned that or the meeting of environment ministers also has it on their agenda, and I know New South Wales has allocated some funds to developing a scheme. Batteries, hand-held batteries—we are way behind catching up on them, but there has been a lot of discussion about adding that to the existing e-waste product stewardship program. I do not know why it is taking so long, but we should propel that as well.

Mr HAYES: Yes. And where do you see for a lot of these things, including glass bottles, collection points? I suppose with cashback for bottles it is even a bit more complicated, but how do you see these things being collected? Batteries: should people that sell them be responsible for collecting the items? And you would know this from interstate: how do people get money back for bottles easily?

Mr ANGEL: Well, a container deposit scheme. You mean non-eligible drink containers?

Mr HAYES: No, I mean eligible ones. Could they take them back to a retailer?

Mr ANGEL: Right. Well, there are three types of collection points. One is sort of a petrol station-local shop that hands out cash if you bring in your 10, 20, 30 bottles, and then they have to store them somewhere. I have got to say in New South Wales that is become a diminishing service because some customers do not like all these smelly bottles being stored and the shop owner has space issues, and handing out the cash and counting the bottles distracts from serving other customers. Then there is the reverse vending machine system, which is being spread out in New South Wales. That is most suited for smaller households with smaller amounts, like 50 or 100. Otherwise you get queues of people if someone is sitting there putting in 1000 containers and taking half an hour, and people get very frustrated. But those smaller reverse vending machine kiosks, as they are called, are very important in terms of convenience. The one thing that really irritates people is that they want to get their refund and there is nowhere to get it locally, so they have a role.

Then in New South Wales we have things called automated depots, which can take thousands of bottles delivered at a time. They run on things called singulators, as you will see actually, and they can do 5000 containers an hour. We are actually involved in one at Five Dock in Sydney, a very interesting lesson about the coalface of recycling: people bringing them in and why they bring them in. You have got cleaners bringing them in. They clean big apartment buildings where they never had recycling before, and they are bringing in thousands of containers. Obviously the 10-cent refund makes it worthwhile for the labour they put in to collect them and put them in bags and what have you and drive them to the depot. In the case of New South Wales we probably need more of those automated depots because we are finding that there are people collecting large amounts. As I say, that is interfering with the convenience of the reverse vending machine kiosks, of which there are hundreds. But while there is nowhere else to take them, people take their thousand containers to the reverse vending machine. So, you know, there is a range of collection points that need to be put in place in Melbourne and Victoria with its metro-sized areas. It will need all three.

Mr HAYES: Can you see the same with batteries? Where would you take them?

Mr ANGEL: Batteries? No. But any product stewardship scheme would levy the battery suppliers, and they would support collection points. One of the suggestions that has been around a long time is that people are given some sort of bag, an orange bag or something, an orange-coloured bag, and they—

The CHAIR: A plastic bag?

Mr ANGEL: Whatever; I do not know. I had not actually got to that point; I did think of it myself. The one thing we will keep using plastic for is killed things and handheld batteries! People put it out with the normal kerbside collection, but it is separated in the kerbside bin so it is not contaminating all the other stuff in there. One of the issues with the whole e-waste product stewardship scheme was that they have progressively increasing per cents of the available e-waste being collected over a number of years, and they started off very low. It will probably end up being something similar like that.

The CHAIR: Thank you, Mr Angel. Good to see you again for another Inquiry, and Ms Westnedge as well. Thank you for your contribution this afternoon.

Mr ANGEL: Thank you.

The CHAIR: On that note, we conclude for this afternoon.

Committee adjourned.