

Questions taken on notice and further information agreed to be supplied at the hearings

Portfolio:	Energy, Environment and Climate Change
Witness:	Ms Lily D'Ambrosio, Minister for Energy, Environment and Climate Change
Committee member:	Ms Bridget Vallence
Page/s of transcript:	6

Relevant text:

Ms VALLENCE: How many tonnes of recyclable material have gone to Victorian landfill?

Ms D'AMBROSIO: Yes, and what I say to you is that I am happy to take that question on notice and certainly get back to you on that.

Answer:

As a result of SKM Recycling's temporary closure earlier this year, it is estimated that approximately 22,000 tonnes of recyclable material from kerbside collections was disposed to landfill.

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Committee member:	Mr Danny O'Brien
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Relevant text:

Mr D O'BRIEN: Happy to. SV advised us—being VAGO—that the allocations—they receive from the Sustainability Fund—are not sufficient to fully implement all the actions outlined in these [the government waste] strategies.

So Minister, you have just told Mr Hibbins that there is still \$400 million in the Sustainability Fund. Why are you using that to prop up the budget when it could be going to actually delivering the strategies that Sustainability Victoria talks about?

Ms D'AMBROSIO: What is important here is that, as I said to you, our government has put in record investment into the resource recovery and recycling sector; that is a fact.

Mr D O'BRIEN: But Sustainability Victoria has told the Auditor-General they do not have enough money to do the strategies that you have outlined.

Ms D'AMBROSIO: Look, I am not here to quibble with the Auditor-General's report. The report is what it is. What I am saying to you is that we continue to address issues that are raised by the VAGO report. We will continue to do that absolutely as we seek to have the waste and resource recovery and recycling sector in Victoria put on a more resilient and sustainable footing. Therefore we have already in a very short period of time put in significant record funding which is being rolled out producing significant improvements in terms of facilities and plans.

Mr D O'BRIEN: But Minister, you have just told us there is still \$400 million sitting there—

Ms D'AMBROSIO: No, what I said to you is I pointed to—

Mr D O'BRIEN: propping up the budget bottom line.

Ms D'AMBROSIO: What I pointed to was official papers from last year which provided a forecast of what would be sitting in the Sustainability Fund come the end of this year. So in terms of what is actually sitting in there that is certainly a matter for future reporting, but importantly what is critical here of course is that the money that we have spent is going to significant investment in reprocessing. Some of those include of course—and this is about leveraging funds too, so for example—moneys towards a demolition and washing facility at Repurpose It that was launched not that long ago, just a number of weeks ago, that is diverting 500 000 tonnes of waste from landfill in the north of Melbourne.

Mr D O'BRIEN: Minister, I would be very happy if you would like to place any of those on record. We would be very happy to take them.

Ms D'AMBROSIO: Yes, I am very happy to provide those.

Answer:

Sustainability Victoria (SV) currently administers two grant programs on behalf of the Victorian Government which support investment in reprocessing. They are the \$25.3 million Resource Recovery Infrastructure Fund (RRIF), which supports the development of infrastructure that improves the collection, sorting and recycling of processed materials; and the \$4.5 million Research, Development & Demonstration Program (RD&D) for projects that research product development, demonstrate product performance and test the feasibility of innovative technologies for priority materials such as flexible plastics and glass fines. The RRIF will create 47 projects, 290 new jobs and propose to reduce waste to landfill by approximately 600,000 tonnes per year. This is expected to leverage a further \$88 million investment.

Recipients of funding and support from SV include the following:

- Repurpose It launched its new construction & demolition waste washing plant in March 2019. This is a state of the art washing facility which utilises best practise technologies in the processing of typically untreatable waste streams currently being sent to landfill. It adds more than 500,000 tonnes of capacity to the recycling network. This facility was part funded by SV with a \$500,000 RRIF grant in mid-2017.
- Advanced Circular Polymers opened its state-of-the-art plastics recycling plant in June 2019. The facility will take 70,000 tonnes of plastics, previously exported overseas, and turn it into commercial grade recycled polyethylene terephthalate (rPET) and recycled high density polyethylene (rHDPE) and other commodities. They received a \$500,000 RRIF grant in mid-2017.
- Downer has developed Reconophalt, which utilises polymers from recycled plastics, glass and printer cartridges to create robust, sustainable asphalt. They received a \$67,226 RD&D grant in December 2018.
- Integrated Recycling has developed a recycled plastic railway sleeper so it meets the performance requirements for wide scale use on the Victorian rail network. SV supported this project initially with \$300,000 of RD&D grants to Monash University who partnered with Integrated Recycling to develop the concept and field test performance; and subsequently with \$460,000 of RRIF grants to Integrated Recycling to build manufacturing capacity. A trial commenced in June 2019, with the installation of 200 recycled plastic railway sleepers at Richmond Railway Station.

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Committee member:	Mr Gary Maas
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Relevant text:

Mr MAAS: Thank you very much. In the remaining time that I have, I would like to take you to e-waste, an area of waste we have not discussed today, and refer you to budget paper 3, page 43, 'Recycling industry response interim measures'. The budget provides \$34.9 million to support the waste and recycling industry transition, and I note that the e-waste ban will be effective from 1 July this year. How is the government increasing local government's capacity to ensure access to a wide network of collection facilities?

Ms D'AMBROSIO: Look, thank you—

The CHAIR: Minister, there are only about 8 seconds to go, so rather than me cut you off as you begin, we will have to take that as a question on notice. Deputy Chair, you have the call until 1.48 p.m.

Answer:

The Victorian Government allocated \$15 million in the 2017-18 Budget to help councils provide Victorians, including those in regional areas, with access to best practice collection sites. This is funding upgrades to 122 council-operated transfer stations so they can safely collect, store and manage e-waste.

Once completed, the network will provide Victorians, both metropolitan and regional, with reasonable access to a best practice collection site that accepts all types of e-waste.

This network is in addition to almost 1,000 additional e-waste drop off facilities around Victoria, such as those provided by TechCollect, Officeworks and Mobile Muster (telephones). Information on drop off sites and accepted items are available on the Sustainability Victoria website.

Councils have also received grants for e-waste education support, as part of a \$1.5 million education campaign supporting Victorians to 'Take your e-waste to a better place.'

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Committee member:	Mr Richard Riordan
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Relevant text:

Ms D'AMBROSIO: REFCLs would have stopped five fires on Black Saturday.

Mr RIORDAN: It would have stopped five fires on Black Saturday?

Ms D'AMBROSIO: Five, yes. And I am happy to provide you the details of that later.

Answer:

Based on the evidence we have available now, it is likely that had technology such as Rapid Earth Fault Current Limiters (REFCLs) been installed, it would have been instrumental in stopping at least five of the major fires that were ignited by powerlines on Black Saturday.

The Powerline Bushfire Safety Taskforce identified that the likelihood of powerlines starting bushfires is *"substantially reduced if the sensitivity and speed of protection equipment is improved so that more faults are detected, and are detected more quickly"*. The early detection and response to many powerline faults within a split second can be the difference between a catastrophic bushfire ignition and an ignition being avoided altogether.

These technologies such as REFCLs, new generation Single Wire Earth Return (SWER) automatic reclosers and the development of early fault detection devices are already reducing the risk of faults, such as those experienced on Black Saturday.

The Powerline Bushfire Safety Taskforce estimate that the risk of a multi-wire powerline starting a bushfire with a REFCL installed is around 70 per cent lower than if these devices are not installed – given the frequency of and risk of wire-to-earth faults compared to wire-to-wire faults.

In this past fire season and on a total fire ban day, REFCLs in two zone substations identified faults that had the potential to result in an ignition. Had these REFCLs not been installed and operating the consequences of those faults could have been devastating. In addition, on 28 May 2018, an Early Fault Detection system identified a hard-to-find fault, exactly the same type of fault that caused the Kilmore East fire on Black Saturday.

These different devices, deployed in areas of the highest bushfire risk consequence are delivering promising results that could reduce the risk of catastrophic bushfires in the future.