



4 August 2017

Ms Cherri Buffett
President
Chamber of Commerce
PO Box 370
NORFOLK ISLAND 2899

By Email to: nichamberofcommerce@gmail.com

Dear Ms Buffett

RE: Waste and Environment – Plastics categorised as ‘non-recyclable’ by Norfolk Island Regional Council

This letter is in response to your submission to the Mayor on 1 August 2017. Please find below a response to your queries.

1. *Why is plastic, specifically commodity and standard plastics, categorised by Council as a ‘non-recyclable’ material on Norfolk Island*

As the Chamber of Commerce is aware the waste management solutions on Norfolk Island have fallen behind international standards for a long time. The *Waste Management Centre - Fees & Charges Guideline* (which you will find attached to this letter) clearly explains that disposal fees will be charged on all items that are currently not recycled at the Waste Management Centre.

The following explanation can be found in the guidelines under *Section 4. WHAT IS RECYCLABLE AND NON-RECYCLABLE*:

‘Recyclable wastes are those waste streams that are currently being recycled either on Norfolk Island or are processed and recycled in New Zealand or mainland Australia.

As the Norfolk Island Regional Council moves towards a more sustainable waste management system, more waste streams will be recycled and the list will be amended to reflect these changes.’

The members of Chamber of Commerce may be aware that a significant majority of our waste is burnt at Headstone and disposed of into the ocean. As explained in the fact sheets that you attached to your letter, this can have significant long term environmental, social and economic impacts.

In order for Norfolk Island to move to a sustainable waste management solution, revenue must be collected to allow Norfolk Island Regional Council to invest in infrastructure and to compete for grant funding.

Council do not currently have the facility to manage recyclable plastics therefore, it would not be feasible for Council to process and export plastics for recycling at this current point in time. However, Council are working hard to generate revenue to procure the appropriate equipment to transition current practices to more sustainable solutions.

a) *Whether Council is intending to burn plastic waste on Norfolk Island or if it is going to use it for landfill?*

Currently, our non-recyclable waste streams, including plastic, are burnt at Headstone then the burnt material is disposed of in the ocean. Council is currently working towards procuring a multi-purpose baler for the purpose of compacting and baling recyclable plastic streams and sending to a facility to manage this recyclable stream.

There are no plans for recyclable plastics to go to landfill either here or mainland Australia.

b) *What measures and study has Council taken to determine the cause and effect of this – especially long term – on the community, local businesses and the island itself?*

There is no proposal to burn plastic waste beyond mid-2018 at this stage, nor for it to go to landfill.

c) *Has a risk analysis – specific to the Norfolk Island environment – been undertaken? If so, the Chamber requests a copy of this documentation. If an analysis has not been done, then the Chamber asks why not? Council should provide an immediate explanation to the Norfolk Island community and local businesses with regards to this.*

Given there is no proposal for the above there is no risk analysis available to Chamber of Commerce for these practices.

d) *If Council is going to place plastic in a landfill, where then is the location of this landfill and what assessment and tests have been made to determine that this is a safe area and that no further/future environmental damage or catastrophe will ensue? Again, the Chamber requests a copy of any relevant documentation which provides evidence of this.*

No recyclable plastics are intended to be sent to landfill.

2. *How can Council expect Norfolk Island to be the ‘Best Small Island in the World’ when it is not a leader and is not setting an example in helping to reduce a huge, global crisis (the issue of plastic); and when it - as South Pacific island - is not a leader and is not setting an example by making absolutely every intent it can to reduce this problem? Even more so when there is the issue of the great Pacific garbage patch (see attached documents).*

As the Chamber of Commerce must be aware, funding is required to implement changes to current practices on Norfolk Island in order to meet environmental best practice. The Chamber of Commerce would also be aware that the purpose of implementing fees for disposal of waste is to raise capital to purchase such equipment. Unfortunately, without funding it would be impossible to make these changes.

Also given the past budgetary constraints faced by the Norfolk Island Regional Council and the previous Administration of Norfolk Island it has been impossible for Norfolk Island to become a ‘leader’ with regards to waste management.

Fees and Charges for waste has provided Council with a cost effective method to encourage waste minimisation on the Island. If your members need any tips on waste minimisation, please refer to the ‘Did you know’ articles that are published in the Norfolk Islander and that can be found on the Council website.

Chamber requests specs on the proposed incinerator Council is planning to purchase for Waste Management.

Currently, no incinerator is planned to be purchase for Waste Management therefore no specifications are available.

Other matters

As the Chamber of Commerce would be aware, the purpose of the Community Strategic Plan 2016 - 2026 is to outline the future aspirations of the community, and Council works towards these goals. We are currently working towards a more sustainable waste management future which will be aligned with the Community Strategic Plan 2016 – 2026. Given we are only one year into the plan and it would be unreasonable to expect that we have already met these targets. Council can assure you that there is much work occurring in this space to bring Norfolk Island to be a leader in environmental management matters.

In order to achieve these goals, community support is paramount, including support from the Chamber of Commerce. The Association of Chamber of Commerce Executives defines a Chamber of Commerce as *'an organization of businesses seeking to further their collective interests, while advancing their community, region, state or nation. Business owners in towns, cities and other territories voluntarily form these local societies/networks to advocate on behalf of the community at large, economic prosperity and business interests'*.

In lieu of the fact that the current waste management techniques are in direct contradiction to the community's strategic goal of *'being the best small island in the world'* there are also unknown affects to the local economy particularly as the Norfolk Island economy hinges on tourism.

As Council continues to advance the community with relation to waste management we look to the positive advocacy role the Chamber of Commerce can provide.

Yours sincerely



Bruce Taylor
Acting General Manager

Enc: Waste Management Centre – Fees & Charges Guidelines

CC via Email: Mayor, Cr John McCoy, Cr Rod Buffett, Cr David Porter and Cr Lisle Snell of the Norfolk Island Regional Council