



News

Govt fiddles as rubbish piles up

PETER HUNT

504 words

2 May 2018

Weekly Times

HERWEK

WeeklyTimes

21

English

© 2018 News Limited. All rights reserved.

Landfill levies are not being spent on addressing the recycling crisis, writes PETER HUNT MOUNTAINS of unrecycled paper and plastics are piling up across Victoria, while the State Government spends more than \$500 million of ratepayers' landfill levies upgrading its websites, planting trees and drafting climate change "action" plans.

"Industry is telling us there's a lot of stockpiling going on in the wake of China's decision (not to take Australia's low quality recycled waste)," Municipal Association of Victoria chief executive Rob Spence said.

"But the Government is spending landfill levies on upgrading the Parks Victoria web site and other projects that don't do much to help." Each year the Victorian Government collects about \$200 million in landfill levies that local councils pay on each tonne of waste, which is recovered via the municipal waste charge on ratepayers' bills. The landfill levy was established to reduce disposal to landfill. But The Weekly Times analysis of Victorian Government spending shows nearly all projects funded from the landfill levy do nothing to reduce or recycle waste.

Of the \$573m of levies committed to projects over the next four years, \$38.8m is being spent on waste reduction projects in schools and the wider community.

The Government is instead spending \$88.8m of the levies on renewable energy and storage, \$86.4m on a 2037 Biodiversity strategy, \$142m on the Environmental Protection Authority, \$100m on a timber plantation in the Latrobe Valley and \$20m to make government buildings "greener".

One of the nation's largest recyclers said the Victorian Government "had abandoned the field" in the wake of China's decision.

In response to China's decision the Andrews Government offered local councils \$12m to help them through the crisis until June, while offering recyclers just \$1m.

"The Government just encourages us to keep stockpiling," one major recycler, who did not wish to be named, said.

Meanwhile regions such as the Latrobe Valley, which has lost power and timber industry jobs, is desperately trying to find new industries.

Latrobe Valley Authority economic development and investment director Mike Timpano is exploring recycling industry opportunities. "The development of a recycling industry in Latrobe Valley has been identified by our community and businesses as a potential area of growth in our region," Mr Timpano said.

"We are working with community and business to understand what their views and plans are about this area of opportunity." But so far the Victorian Government has made no commitments to developing recycling industries in Victoria, limiting its funding to \$2.4m for pilot projects that burn waste to make energy.

When asked about investing landfill levies in the industry, Victorian Environment Minister Lily D'Ambrosio referred to the \$12m short-term assistance package for councils and \$1m for industry. "Work is well under

way to help industry and local government address these challenges and ensure those impacted get access to our \$13 million assistance package as soon as possible," Ms D'Ambrosio said.

Document HERWEK0020180501ee5200005