WMRR
WASTE MANAGEMENT & RESOURCE RECOVERY ASSOCIATION AUSTRALIA

WMRR landfill position paper

WMRR, the peak body for stakeholders in Australia's $15.5 billion essential waste management and resource recovery industry, is committed to the principles of the waste management hierarchy acknowledging that waste and resources in Australia must be managed in accord with this hierarchy (see image 1). WMRR also supports Australia's efforts to build a circular economy.

WMRR acknowledges that each aspect of the waste management hierarchy fulfills an important role in an effective best practice waste management and resource recovery system, and that each aspect plays a different and significant role due to regulatory, economic, and environmental factors across Australia.

Managing waste in accord with this hierarchy including the disposal of residual waste[1] to modern landfills, is an essential service. Even at the highest levels of resource recovery in a circular economy, there will be a continuing need to dispose of some residual waste to landfill (considered as leakage under the circular economy model) to protect human health and the environment.

Modern Australian landfills must be:

> **Engineered facilities** designed to comply with high environmental standards and tightly regulated by planning and environmental regulators. A well-engineered landfill provides containment (clay and geosynthetic liners and covers) to minimise emissions of leachate, stormwater and landfill gas, and treats leachate and landfill gas to protect human health and the environment.
>
> **Effectively managed** to efficiently utilise airspace, operated to provide containment of waste progressively on a daily basis, and monitored to comply with regulatory requirements. Additionally, many modern landfills apply the technology and systems to process landfill gas, which is 50% methane, either to renewable energy, providing a local renewable energy source, or oxidised to less potent carbon dioxide by flaring or passively in bio-covers, consequently reducing greenhouse gas emissions.

WMRR supports best practice landfills that are planned, sited, designed, constructed, and operated to the highest environmental and regulatory standards, and supports innovation and technological advancement to further advance landfill design and management. WMRR also supports the considered use of landfill levies to drive greater resource recovery.

WMRR deems the role of landfills in modern waste management systems integral and considers that landfills provide an essential service, playing a fundamental role in protecting human health and the environment, both:

- in managing residual waste flows within the economy; and
- during periods of service and economic disruption and post disaster emergency waste management.

[1] Residual waste generally refers to material that is left over after processing (through a processing facility and/or a source separation system) … The composition of residual waste streams may vary from region to region and over time, depending on the availability of recycling and recovery options. Source: WA Waste Authority.

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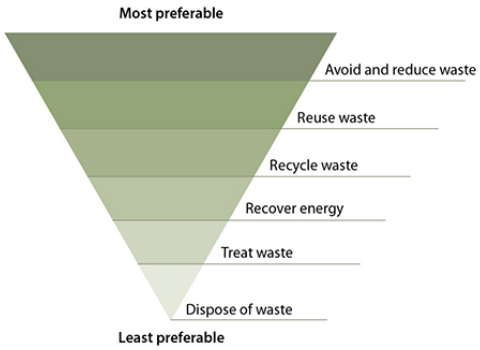
WMRR believes modern engineered landfills should continue to be provisioned in State and Federal infrastructure planning as an essential component of our waste management systems to ensure:

- responsible disposal of residual waste;
- the resilience and capacity necessary to protect human health and the environment; and
- the standards our society expects are maintained at all times.

Image 1: The waste management hierarchy



Source: NSW EPA[2]

About WMRR

The Waste Management and Resource Recovery Association of Australia (WMRR) is the national peak body for all stakeholders in Australia's $15.5 billion essential waste and resource recovery industry, which employed 50,000 people nationally.

WMRR has more than 2,000 members across the nation who are involved in a range of important waste management and resource recovery activities within the Australian economy, including community engagement and education, infrastructure investment and operations, collection, manufacturing of valuable products from resource recovered materials, energy recovery, and responsible management of residual materials.

The waste and resource recovery industry is a significant contributor to Australia's economy and environment, and a protector of human and environmental health, contributing through reducing the pressure to utilise depleted virgin resources, extending the lifecycle of manufactured products, and improving industrial ecology.

[2] Waste Hierarchy (NSW EPA) https://www.epa.nsw.gov.au/your-environment/recycling-and-reuse/warr-strategy/the-waste-hierarchy

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