



Ms Sally Blackadder
Chief Operating Officer
Department of Education
GPO Box 33 Sydney NSW 2001

Email: Sally.Blackadder@det.nsw.edu.au

29 September 2023

Dear Ms Blackadder

Re: Recovery of organics and creating a high-quality compost product

The Waste Management and Resource Recovery Association of Australia (WMRR) is the national peak body for all stakeholders in the waste and resource recovery (WARR) industry. We have more than 2,000 members representing over 500 individual entities nationally, operating across a broad range of business organisations, the three (3) tiers of government, business, universities, and non-government organisations.

WMRR supports all efforts by the Department of Education and schools to avoid and reduce waste, as well as where waste is inevitable, actions taken to divert it from landfill. We truly welcome the Department's consideration of ways to improve waste management and awareness of this important issue and welcome the increased introduction of organics collection at schools in NSW.

WMRR would like to take this opportunity to bring to your attention, [recent announcements by the NSW EPA](#) that clarifies that only food and garden organics can be placed in organics bins. The statement clarifies the [Regulations](#) that compost can only be made using, 'mulch, garden organics, food waste, manure and paunch'. Therefore, fibre-based packaging (or any other 'compostable' packaging for that matter) in organics bins is considered contamination.

Integral to the acceptance and use of compost products in the marketplace is being able to produce a high-quality product, free of contaminants and inclusions. The Department plays an integral role in clear and consistent messaging to the community (students, their families and staff) and businesses (the Department) about what is acceptable in organic bins. The EPA's website explains that only food and garden organics, no packaging, no paper, tissues, lunch wrap are accepted in NSW. Also, no other compostable food service-ware (coffee cups, drinking cups etc) are permitted either. The [EPA has recently undertaken extensive work with the CSIRO](#) in relation to the risk that the presence of other materials can have on the safe production of compost. To go beyond the agreed list places a real risk to the compost's quality and possibly making it unsuitable for use. This applies equally to onsite compost bins at schools. Keeping it simple also reduces the risk of contaminants.

As a result, transitioning to single use fibre/compostable packaging is not recommended at this time, rather we recommend focusing on higher-order waste management hierarchy principles which involves promoting reusable and /or recyclable options and encouraging behavioural change to reduce waste generation.

WMRR strongly believes that by following the EPA's guidance the Department can establish robust protocols to minimise waste generation in general and the occurrence of contaminants in organics, thus safeguarding community health, the environment and optimising the utility of compost. We would be very keen to discuss this issue with you further. Please do not hesitate to contact the undersigned to discuss further, including opportunities that may exist for WMRR to assist the Department in fighting the war on waste in NSW.

Yours sincerely

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