

VICTORIAN BRANCH COMMITTEE

MEETING

9.00 - 10.00 am AEST

Wednesday 19 August 2026

Zoom teleconference

President: Justin Cohen

Vice President: Samuel Lawson

MINUTES

1. Welcome and apologies

Attendees: Gayle Sloan, Michelle Mandl, Maarten de Beurs, Vince Macolino, Natasha Mulay, Jared Roberts, Samuel Lawson, Megan Surawski, Gayle Seddon, Justin Cohen, Karsten Forsterling, Kelvin Davies, Anthony Douglas and Lisa Lepore.

Apologies: Christine Wardle, Allard Bernhofen, Graeme Stewart, Kathy Mac Innes, and Alaa Abou-Antoun.

2. Previous minutes and actions arising

i. Previous minutes

The minutes of the 22 July 2026 Branch Committee meeting were confirmed as a true and accurate record.

Moved: Gayle Sloan *Second:* Kelvin Davies

ii. Actions arising:

- Jared and Gayle to discuss the use of AI based on waste tracker data etc for WARR infrastructure – *discussion to progress offline (actioned and closed)*

3. National advocacy (CEO)

Packaging reform

- Minister Watts advised at a meeting last week that the Australian Government would not progress packaging reform at this stage, citing cost-of-living pressures.
- Discussed that the cost pressures identified in APCO's report appear to have been used to justify further inaction.
- Senior industry representatives, as well as WMRR, have met directly with the Minister and DCCEEW to explain the challenges facing the sector. However, the Minister has indicated that the government does not currently intend to take further action.
- WMRR will be writing to the Ministers ahead of the Environment Ministers' Meeting next month noting the frustration about the lack of progress against previous commitments, particularly packaging stewardship and design rules, and the limited priority being given to the waste and resource recovery sector.

Batteries and Solar Stewardship

- There has also been limited progress on solar panel and battery stewardship, broader extended producer responsibility (EPR), and packaging design rules.
- Noted that the Senior Officials Meeting held on 14 August 2026 did not resolve key waste and resource recovery issues. A follow-up meeting is scheduled for this week.

DCCEEW update

- Mike Kaiser has now appointed his senior leadership team and there is cautious optimism that leadership changes may generate greater momentum.
 - Noted that in this term, there has been no progress on design rules, e-waste, batteries, solar panels, or EPR-type schemes.
- Narelle Luchetti has joined DCCEEW as Deputy Secretary from the Department of the Prime Minister and Cabinet. A new Circular Economy Director, with a primary industries background, will also replace Kate Lynch.
- \$900M national competition funding identified with two priorities: stewardship schemes and data harmonisation/red tape reduction. Work is underway to develop productivity measures for consideration by environment ministers.
- The relevance of the government's \$900 million competition policy agenda was discussed – noting the Treasurer's 2025 announcement included reference to harmonisation for the waste sector.
- There appears to be little activity within central government on container deposit schemes.
- WMRR has also raised the need for stronger alignment between national carbon and materials policies.
- The Safeguard Mechanism Review is underway and open for consultation until September.

National EPA

- WMRR CEO Gayle Sloan met with National EPA CEO John Bradley.
- The National EPA is still determining how it will engage with industry. Its immediate priorities include EPBC Act responsibilities and waste export restrictions. NTCRS monitoring not currently on their radar.

4. VIC Issues

i. Branch discussion: WMRR election priorities

- Following the Cabinet reshuffle and the appointment of Jaclyn Symes as Minister, the ministerial handover remains underway and a new adviser has not yet been appointed.
- The government is expected to enter caretaker mode in September.
- WMRR's election platform should be framed around regulation, markets and investment, with a five-year outlook.
 - Key concerns included the lack of progress on market development and product stewardship, uncertainty surrounding waste levy settings, and the failure to leverage Victoria's housing and infrastructure program to stimulate demand for recycled materials.
 - The effectiveness of existing market-development measures has also not been adequately monitored over the past three to five years.
- Priority area discussed
 - Levy increases and long-term certainty
 - providing certainty about future landfill levy settings and recognising the private investment that could be placed at risk by any levy reduction, including the relevant commitments in the Victorian Recycling Infrastructure Plan.
 - CDS expansion (opposition has reportedly committed to this)
 - EPR acceleration, with focus on batteries
 - Continued funding for hazardous waste collections
 - Simplification of Energy from Waste (EfW) approval process
 - Clarity on EPA's dual role as both regulator and market development body (ie clarifying how Recycling Victoria's proactive recycling and market-development functions will operate following their transfer to EPA Victoria and committing to reducing regulatory red tape and having clearer accountability structures)
- WMRR generally advocates for establishing a clear plan for statewide waste and recycling education; and directing at least 50% of levy revenue back into waste and resource recovery infrastructure, programs and market development, alongside an increased levy.

WMRR NATIONAL OFFICE
57 ST JOHNS ROAD
GLEBE NSW 2037

(02) 8746 5000
INFO@WMRR.ASN.AU

WMRR.ASN.AU

- Look to identify specific investment priorities that could be supported through greater levy hypothecation.
 - Opportunities to work with Breakthrough Victoria to attract and commercialise European recycling technologies in Victoria could also be explored.

Action arising:

WMRR to circulate a draft Victorian election priorities document for comment.

ii. Opposition campaigning for changes to Council collections

- Recent [media coverage](#) has focused on the Opposition's proposals to reconsider the purple glass bin and increase the frequency of red-bin collections.
 - The Opposition have advocated for a return to weekly red-bin collections – this could undermine circular-economy objectives, as councils operating fortnightly residual-waste services generally achieve stronger landfill-diversion outcomes.
 - The proposal to cap council waste charges would also place financial pressure on councils and could conflict with the cost of providing additional collection services.
 - The Committee discussed how these proposals would interact with Victoria's energy-from-waste policy and infrastructure requirements.
- WMRR CEO is meeting with the Shadow Minister for the Environment and will emphasise that increasing collection frequency while reducing household charges is neither financially viable nor consistent with Victoria's waste and resource recovery objectives.
- The council driven 'Glass Advocacy Group' is considering broadening its advocacy to oppose mandatory weekly garbage collections.

iii. EPA updates

- The group discussed that it is difficult for stakeholders to identify the appropriate contacts within DEECA and the EPA following recent organisational changes.
- Representatives have previously met with EPA Victoria to discuss service standards and exemption processes.
 - EPA's approach appears to have become more flexible, including consideration of a multi-year transition period for councils implementing the service standards.
 - EPA has indicated that it intends to establish a council reference group on service standards.
 - Melbourne's nine (9) councils will write to EPA Victoria seeking formal confirmation of the transition arrangements discussed to date. A clear statement and demonstration of good faith from EPA may reduce the need for formal exemptions.

iv. Other regulatory and policy updates

- DEECA has released [guidance](#) for waste service providers on managing and disposing of dead wildlife and associated waste during an H5 avian influenza response.
- EPA Victoria has also released a [proposed regulatory position](#) on the management of waste fire extinguishers, with feedback due by 21 August 2026. Under the proposal, recyclers handling reportable priority waste would require an A01 permission, an appropriate vehicle permission and registration as a receiver in Waste Tracker.

v. Submissions/consultation

Open for consultation:

- [2026-2027 Safeguard Mechanism Review](#) (18 September 2026)
- QLD draft [End of Waste \(EOW\) Code for Incinerator Bottom Ash Aggregate](#) (31 August 2026)
- QLD draft [EOW code for Tanalith E treated timber and sawdust](#) (24 August 2026)

WMRR NATIONAL OFFICE
57 ST JOHNS ROAD
GLEBE NSW 2037

(02) 8746 5000
INFO@WMRR.ASN.AU

WMRR.ASN.AU

Recent submissions

- [Climate Change Authority 2026 Annual Progress Advice](#) (6 August 2026)
- [Expanding Australia's Right to Repair Framework](#) (3 July 2026)
- [Inquiry into the Extended Producer Responsibility Scheme for Packaging \(No Time to Waste\) Bill 2026 \(15 June 2026\)](#)
- [Carbon Credits and Other Legislation Amendment \(Integrity and Transparency\) Bill Consultation \(25 May 2026\)](#)
- [Guideline for safe management of end-of-life lithium ion batteries \(15 May 2026\)](#)
- [2026 NGER Scheme Updates \(8 May 2026\)](#)

5. Working group updates

i. **Landfill – (Kathy Mac Innes) Gayle Sloan**

- EPA Victoria establishing a working group to modernise standards through its review of the Best Practice Environmental Management guidance.

ii. **EfW – Anthony Douglas**

- The Victorian parliamentary inquiry into waste-to-energy infrastructure is due to report on 25 August 2026. WMRR will issue a response following its release.
- IBAA Code discussion held with a national working group session on Monday – EnRiskS undertook a review of the code for WMRR and presented their findings that generally, the Draft Code is unworkable — wrong standard applied (benchmarked against compost/biochar contaminant levels, not fit-for-purpose. Testing requirements also may not be reasonably practicable as drafted.
- EfW Working Group meeting moved to September; EPA representative to present if available.
- Gold Coast EfW project progressing.
- Cross-jurisdictional coordination remains poor for EfW development. In particular, the WA anomaly noted — landfill approved the week after Premier opened Kwinana EfW facility.

iii. **RRMD – Maarten de Beurs**

- The Circular Economy Market Report was reviewed at the August meeting, with discussion focused on material flows and the volume of recoverable material still being sent to landfill.
- The next meeting will focus on council procurement.
- Noted that there is considerable overlap between the Energy-from-Waste and Resource Recovery Market Development groups, especially concerning the IBAA journey which parallels digestate and recycled organics approvals/certification processes (reframing to a manufacturing mindset).

iv. **Waste Educators – Gayle Seddon**

- EKOT are presenting in August, focused on textile circularity.
- The September meeting will have a presentation from End food Waste
- AI driven waste composition for the October meeting.
- Committee is drafting a survey to determine themes for 2027.

v. **YPs – Ray Trevorah (absent)**

The group discussed opportunities to provide networking opportunities with university near-graduates.

6. Events

- [Australian Landfill and Transfer Stations Conference](#) 21 - 23 October 2026 (Brisbane).

ii. Save the Date

- VIC Women of WARR Leadership Breakfast (Friday 9 October 2026)
- Vic End of Year Drinks (Thursday 3 December 2026)

[Confirmed WMRR events](#)

7. Other business

i. Review of Branch Priorities for 2026-2028

- The State Branch Election outcomes to be confirmed later this month with WMRR Strategic Plan review in Sydney on Wednesday 30 September. A discussion of the Branch Priorities (last updated October 2025) is provided at [Annexure A](#). The branch committee is welcome to add further comments.
- The upcoming Victorian election is also an opportunity for the branch to consider key priorities for the incoming government.

Action arising:

Committee members encouraged to consider WARR priorities for Victorian election and upcoming strategy review, and be prepared to discuss at the next meeting.

ii. Change of web system and CRM

- Further details coming soon – however Gayle provided a quick showcase of the new site emphasising the data capabilities.
- State of Nation Report being launched in coming weeks with new website

8. Next meeting date

Wednesday 16 September 2026

Actions arising from meeting:

Item	Action	Timeline / Notes
7(i)	Committee to discuss Victorian election and branch priorities at the next meeting	Add to agenda for discussion at next meeting.

Annexure A: WMRR Branch Priorities as discussed October 2025

Issue	Progress / Comments
Regulatory Challenges within and across departments	(e.g.: EfW cap licence v DAs, Regulatory documents as guidance v compliance documents, Community v Technical (when assessing proposals)) Group comments: • Parliamentary Inquiry into EfW is a prime opportunity for advocacy on these challenges • Challenges with guidance approach of regulators may lend itself to 'train the trainer' workshops facilitated by WMRR (once stabilised workforces within DEECA.) ○ Noted that there has been positive experience from the Branch dealing with the science division who have expressed desire to acquire knowledge from industry ○ There is an opportunity for education and positioning managing waste as an essential service for Victorians that warrants a consistent approach to regulation and compliance – and not held to ambiguous, uncertain and unforeseeable standards. ○ Aware that some regulatory staff are visiting sites and there is opportunity for industry to increase such opportunities for regulators to gain an understanding of industry. ○ It was noted that RV have demonstrated a good understanding of the WARR industry and its challenges. ○ The groups are keen to reiterate positioning WARR as a good neighbour and essential service - not an adversary (i.e. landfills are a top 5 area of concern...)
Position on the rollout of the Service standards and the glass bin	• WMRR has been active in support for national alignment on the expansion of CDS scheme to support wine and spirit bottle collections. WMRR understands 33 councils oppose the rollout. - councils are planning their budgets based on the financial impacts and they are taking this advocacy lead.
Action on Batteries	• WMRR nationally has pushed for alignment with NSW Framework. • VIC Waste educators have focused on achieving behaviour change for managing batteries and other hazardous item. • <i>Notes:</i> ○ Mornington will look to present kerbside figures on batteries in bins. ○ WMRR to share recent Queensland data. ○ WMRR to follow up on the presentation from DEECA on the next steps for the batteries regulations.
Technical specification requirements handicapping	• WMRR nationally working on agreed frameworks for IBAA and APCr and encouraging federal and state agencies equivalent to Ecologi. • WMRR has been active in advocating for recycled content thresholds at national and state level.

Issue	Progress / Comments
procurement of recycled materials	VIC RRMD group has been looking at successful models affecting increased procurement of recyclable materials.
Definitions of Waste	Feedback provided by WMRR to the EPA in September on guidance material – awaiting response.
Waste Levy	The group also added that Levy hypothecation should be addressed. WMRR position is that at least 50% should be coming back to industry. For Victoria, it was agreed that the levy needs to continue to rise and go back to industry