

Environment Protection (Resource Efficiency) Bill

The Victorian Government has recently introduced a Bill to strengthen Victoria's waste management regime and to promote greater resource-use efficiency.

The *Environment Protection (Resource Efficiency) Bill* introduces a suite of inter-related elements to the Environment Protection Act 1970, most notably:

- Introducing sustainability covenants to enable industries and companies to identify resource efficiency gains and reduce ecological impact;
- Clarifying the roles of key statutory bodies involved in waste management, namely EcoRecycle Victoria, EPA and regional waste management groups;
- Providing additional funding and increased incentives for environmental priorities (such as waste reduction programs) through changes to landfill levies; and
- Integrating the *Litter Act 1987* into the *Environment Protection Act 1970* legislation.

Road Traffic Noise Strategy

EPA is developing a Road Traffic Noise Strategy. The strategy needs a broad range of programs to be effective in reducing traffic noise.

Elements of the strategy will include:

- *the motor vehicle* ~ reducing noise from individual vehicles and reducing use of the motor vehicle;
- *roads* ~ reducing noise emitted from traffic flows on the road network; and
- *the noise receptor* ~ reducing noise impacts on people at home or at noise-sensitive buildings.

Already, initial consultation with stakeholders has identified the need for a State environment protection policy (SEPP) to provide the statutory basis for the strategy.

Ecological Footprint

Ecological footprint is a tool that allows EPA to summarise Victoria's level of sustainability in a single value ~ the area of land required to sustain our level of resource consumption and waste disposal. The concept is a potentially powerful communication tool because it quantifies, in a simple, readily understandable way, what effect our everyday activities are having on our environment.

Using this measure of our demands on the planet, we can calculate the degree to which simple alternatives to everyday behaviours can reduce the size of our eco-footprint. EPA has established a series of pilots in partnership with a wide range of organisations and businesses to further investigate the practical applications of Ecological Footprint as a communications tool to promote sustainability.

Draft Industrial Waste Management Policy (Solid Fuel Heating)

Correct use of appropriately designed wood heaters produces very low levels of wood smoke and subsequently, significantly reduces the level of pollution produced. In recognition of this, the draft Industrial waste management policy (Solid Fuel Heating) proposes a statutory framework for managing the manufacture and supply of wood heaters. It also proposes measures to improve the use and operating practices of solid fuel heating devices already installed in homes. EPA Victoria is currently undertaking consultations with key stakeholders in regard to this policy.

Environmental Assessment (EA) Review

In April 2002, the Department of Infrastructure released an Issues and Options Paper on the Environmental Assessment Review for public comment. The closing date for submission of comments is Friday 21 June 2002.

The following amendments to the existing EA process are proposed:

- , improved assessment procedures at appropriate levels for a range of proposals that may have significant adverse effects on the environment;
- , improved openness and equality for all stakeholders involved in the process, in particular improved clarity for proponents and effective opportunities for public involvement at key stages during the process;
- , assessments will include analysis of suitable alternatives and their potential impacts;
- , implementation of effective monitoring systems will be required;
- , improved consistency with other legislation that relates to the planning and *approval of proposed development, particularly the Planning and Environment Act 1987*; and
- , integration of environmental, social and economic factors in project planning and statutory decision-making.

Victorian Launch of the Earth Charter

The following information was prepared by the Earth Charter Initiative.

The Earth Charter is a concise, but inclusive ethical framework for building a more peaceful, equitable, and just society. The principles of the Earth Charter centre on the following themes:

- , Respect and Care for the Community of Life;
- , Ecological Integrity;
- , Social and Economic Justice; and
- , Democracy, Nonviolence and Peace.

The Earth Charter is part of a continuing process generated by the Brundtland Commission's call for a new code of ethics for sustainable development, and the unfinished business of the Rio Earth Summit which attempted adoption of an ethical framework for sustainability, but found political will lacking. The Earth Charter was developed by the Earth Charter Commission through an in-depth civil society participatory process of consultation to identify the contents for such a Charter. This task was completed in 2001 and the current objectives are to encourage the use, implementation, and endorsement of the Earth Charter by civil society, business, and government; and to promote its educational use in schools, universities and other life-long educational settings.

The Earth Charter Initiative seeks endorsement from various organisations and will be exploring some expression of recognition by the United Nations at the Johannesburg Summit in 2002. It is hoped that many organisations will endorse the Earth Charter and support the process of taking the Earth Charter to governments and to the intergovernmental arena as the United Nations.

The exercise to seek endorsement started in 2000 and since then, the Earth Charter has received endorsements and support from many organisations, starting with the adoption by the NGO Millennium Forum. It is an integral part of a 100-hour teacher-training program developed by UNESCO. The Earth Charter was recently adopted by the Parliament of the Republic of Tatarstan/Russia. The International Council of Local Environmental Initiatives endorsed it and is following up by requesting their members to use it as a parameter and guide in the development of local planning.

For additional information on the Earth Charter, visit the following websites: www.earthcharter.org and www.eca.anu.edu.au.

For further information on the Victorian launch of the Earth Charter, please contact: Jennie Slatter, email: Jennifer.Slatter@epa.vic.gov.au. The Victorian launch will be held in Melbourne on Thursday 18 July 2002.