

GENERAL ITEMS

DEVELOPMENTS AT ANZECC

The Australia and New Zealand Environment Council (ANZECC) on 7 February 1992 endorsed a national plan to dramatically reduce the amount of waste going to landfills by the end of the century.

Part of the plan involves negotiations with industry over targets for recycling. ANZECC aims to achieve the following targets:

- plastic containers 25% (currently 6%)
- glass containers 45% (currently 36%)
- paper 40% (currently about 32%)
- aluminium cans 75% (currently 62%)
- liquid paperboard 25% (currently less than 1%)
- steel cans 25% (currently less than 1%)

The ANZECC Ministers also agreed to a strategy to deal with the problems caused by the disposal of over 10 million used tyres in Australia each year, and further agreed to work towards banning the disposal of whole tyres to landfill by mid 1993; and agreed to introduce or increase the cost of the disposal of shredded tyres.

The Waste Minimisation and Recycling Strategy adopted by ANZECC is stated to be aimed at ensuring a 50% reduction in the total quantity of solid waste going to landfill by the year 2000.

The ANZECC Ministers have stated that they recognise waste minimisation and recycling industry is an important growth industry with the potential to create many jobs for Australians, citing the Pacific Dunlop announcement to establish a tyre recycling facility expected to be operating later this year in Victoria.

ANZECC has also reaffirmed its commitment to national guidelines to cover the transportation of hazardous wastes.

The guidelines have been designed to ensure the proper disposal of hazardous waste and better regulation of the transport of hazardous waste across State and Territory borders. ANZECC claims the guidelines will also help to stop the illegal dumping of waste and the movement of

waste across borders to take advantage of lower standards and costs.

ANZECC also adopted national guidelines for the assessment and management of contaminated sites. In adopting the guidelines the Council noted the need for urgent work to resolve the complex issues associated with legal liability in regard to the clean up of contaminated sites.

ANZECC asked the Commonwealth to commission the CSIRO to identify options for processes and sites for dealing with the disposal of low-level radioactive waste.

The ANZECC meeting reaffirmed its strong support for the interim planning target for the emission of greenhouse gases which was endorsed by the Commonwealth and State Governments in October 1990.

The target involves the stabilisation of emissions of greenhouse gases by the year 2000 at 1988 levels and a 20 per cent reduction by 2005.

However the target provides important provisions that Australia should not proceed with the adoption of response measures which have adverse economic or trade impacts in the absence of similar actions by the major greenhouse emitting countries.

ANZECC Ministers also stated they welcomed the close cooperation between Australia and New Zealand in the negotiations taking place to develop a climate change convention but expressed concern at the difficulties in achieving an effective international agreement at the Earth Summit in Rio de Janeiro in June.

ENVIRONMENTAL CLAIMS FOR MARKETING

In February 1992 the Trade Practices Commission published a document entitled "Environmental Claims for Marketing - A Guideline".

The Commission says that the Guideline is designed to:

- promote compliance with the Commonwealth Trade Practices Act and the State and Territory Fair Trading Acts by manufacturers, importers and marketers who make claims of environmental benefit for their products;

- make consumers aware of the Commission's views about such claims; and
- encourage industry to self-regulate by developing codes of practice for advertising and promotion, and systems for dealing with complaints.

The Commission says that it believes that compliance with the Guideline will help:

- ensure that consumers and ethical traders are not disadvantaged by false and misleading claims about the environmental impact of products; and
- encourage product innovation and competition based on truthful and informative claims of environment benefit.

This Guideline offers guidance on the approach the Commission will adopt in carrying out its functions to enforce the provisions of the Trade Practices Act. It does not have the force of law and, accordingly, it is not intended to supplant legal advice on the application of the law in particular circumstances. Federal, State and Territory courts will apply the law in particular cases according to the facts and circumstances presented to them and the principles established in the many cases decided under the Trade Practices Act.

THE AUSTRALIAN HERITAGE COMMISSION

Sydney planner Mrs Sonja Lyneham became Chairman of the Commission on December 16, 1991. She replaced Mr Tony Fitzgerald, AC QC, who resigned to become President of the Queensland Court of Appeal.

Also, on 5 February 1992 the Federal and Western Australian Governments announced that a memorandum of understanding between the Australian Heritage Commission and the Western Australian Department of Conservation and Land Management ("CALM") aimed at resolving conflicts between the two organisations and setting out an agreed basis for applying the results of joint work carried out in relation to Western Australian forests.

In the MOU CALM states that it will protect national estate values on CALM land in the WA southern forests region while maintaining timber

volumes to industry as specified in its 1987 Timber Strategy and other forest values specified in its 1992 draft Forests Strategy.

FOREST AND TIMBER INQUIRY FINAL REPORT

The RAC has announced that Justice Stewart, the chairperson of that organisation, will forward the Final Report of the Forest and Timber Inquiry to the Prime Minister at the end of March.

The RAC says the two-volume report will be shorter than the draft report released in July 1991 and differs from that report in that it will concentrate more on options for government action and administrative solutions.

The terms of reference for the Inquiry were issued by the Prime Minister (Hawke) on 26 November 1989.

COASTAL ZONE INQUIRY

The RAC has announced the appointment of three special commissioners to assist it with the Inquiry.

The new commissioners are:

Mr Bob Graham, Senior Lecturer in Urban Geography at the University of Tasmania and Director of the commercial consultancy division of TASUNI Research;

Dr Gregory McColl, formerly Director of the Centre for Applied Economic Research at the University of New South Wales; and

Mr Alan Oxley, Managing Director of International Trade Strategies Pty Ltd, a strategic adviser to business and a leading analyst of international trends and trade issues.

The focus of the Inquiry will be the use of Australia's coastal resources and the integrated management of building, tourism, Mariculture and associated development. The terms of reference were given to the RAC by the Prime Minister (Hawke) in October 1991.
