

Submission to the Garnaut Climate Change Review on an Emissions Trading Scheme (ETS) for Australia

**Reverse Garbage Co-operative Ltd, Brisbane
April, 2008**

Who we are

Reverse Garbage was established nine years ago to support Friends of the Earth – Brisbane. We are a not-for-profit co-operative that collects industrial and commercial discards from approximately 300 Brisbane factories and businesses, diverting them from landfill to make them available at low cost to the community. We facilitate the re-use of materials in their existing form to minimise the energy and time required to recycle. In a very practical way, Reverse Garbage encourages people to reduce their consumption of new materials and to re-use resources destined for the dump.

The materials are collected free of charge and so save dumping fees for business.

Open to the public, the Reverse Garbage warehouse is at 296 Montague Road, West End. Materials collected include textiles, timber, tiles, perspex, plastics, polystyrene, props, paper and card, metal, vinyl, wadding, rubber, windows, doors, shop fittings and merchandising products.

Customers include home renovators, teachers, students, artists, prop makers, model makers and craftspeople. Our largest customer group consists of schools and childcare centres with many teachers preferring an environmentally responsible alternative to mainstream art supplies. We send materials to schools and childcare centres outside Brisbane.

Reverse Garbage is home to Echoes Gift Shop which showcases the work of local artists and designers who use salvaged materials to create useful products.

Reverse Garbage runs creative workshops in schools, and at festivals. With the recent creation of an on-site workshop space at Reverse Garbage, we offer the public a range of both practical and creative activities, with participants learning about the environmental implications of waste and consumption as well as creating something unique from salvaged materials. Our eco-art workshops run for children during the school holidays have been extremely popular.

Our submission

1. ETS coverage

We note that the waste sector may be included in the coverage of the ETS. We acknowledge the importance of including greenhouse gas emissions generated from waste in the scheme.

However, we would also like to see the efforts made by groups such as ours to reduce greenhouse gas emissions through resource recovery activities recognised by the ETS.

Reverse Garbage advocates re-use of materials rather than recycling where possible as it results in a greater reduction in greenhouse gas emissions. We see these greater reductions occurring in the following ways

1. The energy required to process recycled materials (usually a large scale and energy intensive industrial process) is not required when simply collecting, sorting and re-selling useful materials.
2. The small scale that re-use organisations such as ours can operate on means that materials can travel much smaller distances before and after reaching the consumer. Materials are collected from the industrial areas of towns and cities and taken directly to retail outlets that, due to their relatively small size, can be located close to densely populated urban areas. The current scenario where container loads of metals and plastics are shipped overseas to be recycled before being shipped back as consumer products sits in stark contrast with the energy efficient nature of a locally based resource recovery operation.
3. Re-use operations like Reverse Garbage encourage consumers to re-assess the way they use and throw out materials on a day to day basis by demonstrating the usefulness of things that would otherwise have been destined for landfill. We also challenge consumers to take a more creative approach to their use of materials in their lifestyles. We believe these are crucial parts of changing individuals' behaviour to a more conscientious approach to energy and resource use and ultimately a reduction in consumption (the biggest GHG saver of all).
4. Clearly, any instance where a consumer purchases a product from a re-use operation like Reverse Garbage rather than an equivalent product manufactured from virgin or recycled resources involves a significant and immediate reduction in processing and transport related greenhouse gas emissions. We believe it also has the potential for massive long term GHG savings as that consumer, at least for a moment, is shown an alternative to the unthinking consumption patterns common in today's society.

Recommendation

That the ETS include a system of offset credits which recognises the work of all players in the waste industry. We support credits for methane capture at landfill sites and for recycling activities but we would like to see re-use activities given credits at a higher level than recycling given their greater potential for reducing greenhouse emissions.

2. Independent Carbon Bank

We support the establishment of an independent institution to administer the ETS. We would like to see such an institution assisting groups such as ours to quantify their greenhouse emissions abatement activities, to apply for offset credits, to assist groups to trade and to acquit their credits. We would also like to see such an institution

playing an educative role in the community about the importance of the whole range of abatement activities.

Without government encouragement and support, community-based activities such as ours may simply not have the resources to participate in the ETS.

Recommendation

That any independent institution administering the ETS include a unit devoted to assisting all organisations involved in abatement activities to benefit from the ETS.