

National Waste Reporting 2013

FACTSHEET– MUNICIPAL SOLID WASTE (MSW) STREAM PROFILE 2010-11

Key fact: In 2010–11, 51 per cent of resources in the MSW stream were recovered, but there are opportunities to increase the recovery rate.

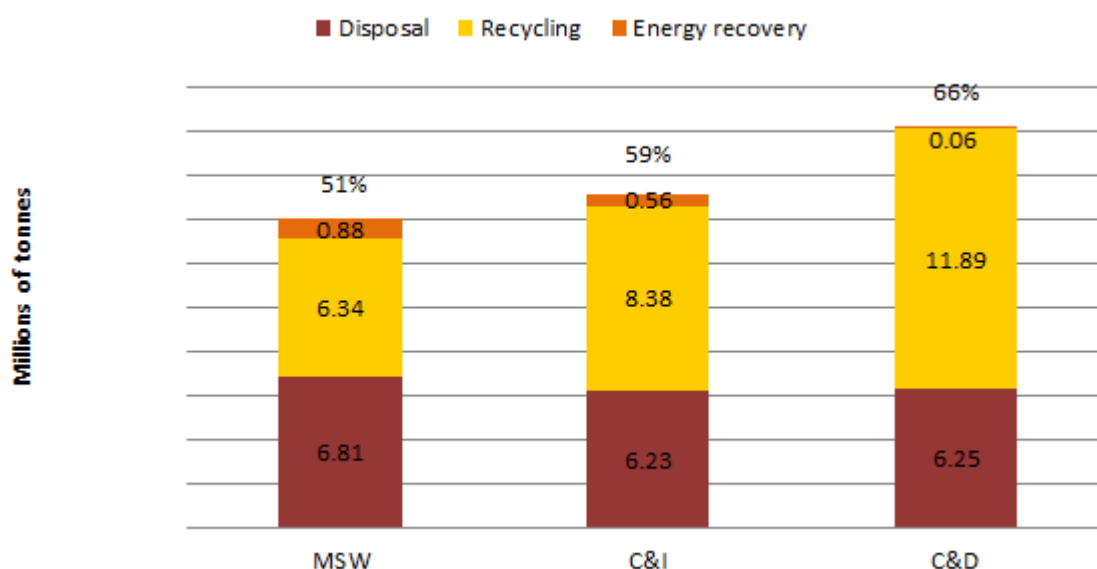
Municipal solid waste (MSW) is primarily waste collected from households and councils, such as through kerbside waste and recycling collections. It includes biodegradable material, recyclable materials such as bottles, paper, cardboard and aluminium cans, and a wide range of non-degradable material including paint, appliances, old furniture and household lighting¹.

In 2010–11, around 14 million tonnes of MSW was generated nationally, of which:

- 6.81 million tonnes (48 per cent) went to landfill
- 6.34 million tonnes (45 per cent) were recycled
- 0.88 million tonnes (six per cent) were used in energy recovery.

The 51 per cent recovery rate was the lowest resource recovery rate of the three main waste streams (see Figure 1). While some waste is separated at its source for recycling e.g. kerbside recyclables and garden wastes, the residual or landfill bin from households is a major part of MSW disposal tonnage. The contents of these bins are a complex mix of materials which can only be recovered using expensive and complex infrastructure that generally produces products of lower quality than those from source-separated wastes.

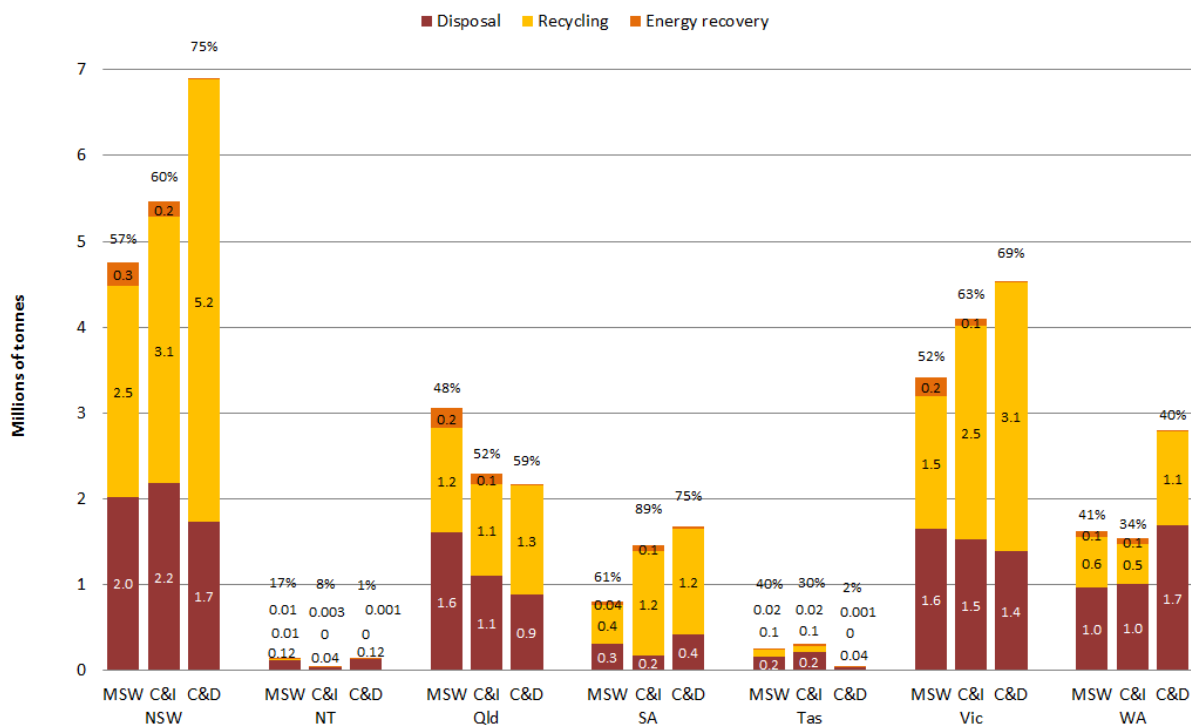
Figure 1 Australia total waste generation by waste stream and management, 2010–11²



¹ National Waste Report 2010, http://www.scew.gov.au/resource/ephc-archive-waste-management#National_waste_policy

² Note that the resource recovery percentage is included above each waste stream column and that ACT tonnages are excluded as the ACT does not collect data on the source of recycled materials by stream.

Figure 2 Australia total waste generation by waste stream, management, and jurisdiction (excluding ACT), 2010–11



The costs of waste management represent one of the biggest areas of annual expenditure for most local councils. This creates incentives to reduce costs e.g. through implementation of resource recovery programs.

Other areas for action include:

- Councils may aggregate significant volumes of feedstock and enter a long-term processing agreement with private sector operators. This longer term certainty of supply may provide increased justification for investment in processing technology or infrastructure.
- Improving energy recovery at landfills to increase the resource recovery rate.
- Providing increased opportunities to collect, and separate, recoverable materials by:
 - Increasing the types of materials collected at kerbside, for example greater collection of organic waste.
 - Increasing the number of local waste collection sites and/or the types of materials that are accepted for recovery.
 - Encouraging further product stewardship initiatives. An existing example is the National Television and Computer Recycling Scheme which provides free recycling services to householders and small businesses and addresses a type of hazardous waste that had previously low recycling rates.
 - Facilitating reverse logistics networks and services by using supply chains to collect and aggregate recoverable materials.
 - Encouraging community resource recovery activities.
- Further collaborative action between government, businesses, industry and the community to identify and address the barriers to resource recovery.

For more information on MSW see:

- *Waste generation and resource recovery in Australia*
- *Waste generation and resource recovery in Australia* workbooks
- Product stewardship factsheet
- National TV and Computer Recycling Scheme factsheet
- [*Place-based approaches to commercial and industrial waste and recycling*](#)
- Interactive mapping tool
- Recycling Near You <http://recyclingnearyou.com.au/>