

MEDIA RELEASE

**Caroline Le Couteur MLA, Territory and Municipal Services spokesperson
ACT Greens**

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Organic waste devalued

ACT Greens TAMS Spokesperson, Caroline Le Couteur MLA, says that the Government has ignored the potential benefits of source separation of organic waste.

“With the release of the new Waste Strategy, the concern now is that the Government is not prioritising source separation which leads to higher quality products and better environmental outcomes,” Ms Le Couteur said.

“It seems that the Government is set on investing in a dirty MRF, a clean MRF and a waste-to-energy plant for wood waste products.

“The consultancy report states that the quality of end-products which would come from a dirty MRF are expected to be much lower than what could be achieved through the current composting process, and certainly much lower quality than source separation.

“We are also concerned about the way that the costings for a third bin have been assessed. The potential reduced costs of landfill waste collection does not appear to be part of the calculations.

“Also, assumptions in the report – such as assuming that Canberrans would fail to use a green bin correctly 50% of the time, paint a negative picture of source separation, and we’ll be looking at what this figure was based on.

“Once we invest in a dirty MRF, we will be committed to continuing to waste our organics which can be turned into a highly valuable resource.

“Australia has real soil quality issues, and what we are essentially doing through this process is mining our soils without replacing essential nutrients.

“The compost you get from the dirty MRF will never be very high quality and will only be used for mine site rehabilitation and forestry, because it will have toxics in it.

“The Greens will continue to look for ways to recycle organic waste that are both environmentally and economically responsible.

“It is unfortunate from an agricultural and environmental perspective for the nutrient cycle to end in a dirty MRF in Canberra,” Ms Le Couteur said.

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Waste statistics to landfill, 2010-11

Wastestream source to landfill	tonnes	Percentage of total
Household waste	74228	27.7
Private delivery from domestic sources	16577	6.2
Construction and demolition waste	45262	16.9
Commercial and industrial waste	132022	49.2
Total waste	268089	

Waste statistics 2008-9

Organic waste makes up approximately 40-50% of household sector waste, and 10-20% of commercial waste. Organic waste makes up around 25% of the total annual landfill figure, this figure totalling 214,000 tonnes at last audit (2008-09).

Total waste generated	798,000 tonnes
Total waste to landfill	214,000 tonnes