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Infrastructure Victoria
Level 33, 140 William Street,
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Email: enquiries@infrastructurevictoria.com.au

1 June 2023

Dear [REDACTED]

Re: Victoria's 30-year infrastructure strategy

Thank you for the opportunity to provide feedback for the 2025 review of Victoria's 30-year infrastructure strategy. The Waste Management and Resource Recovery Association of Australia (WMRR) is the national peak body representing Australia's \$15.8 billion waste and resource recovery (WARR) industry. With more than 2,000 members from over 500 entities nationwide, we represent the breadth and depth of the sector, within business organisations, the three (3) tiers of government, universities, and NGOs.

Victoria must transition from a linear economy to a circular economy if it intends to meet climate, environmental and sustainable resource management targets and the linked economic and environmental benefits (jobs, investment in local manufacturing, reduced carbon emissions, reduced energy consumption, reduced reliance on virgin material). As such, it is crucial that the proposed infrastructure strategy incorporates circular economy principles (where the objectives are to design out waste and pollution, prolong the life of products and materials through the use and investment in systems, and to restore, regenerate and decarbonize).

To achieve this, the Strategy must go beyond treating infrastructure planning as a series of isolated projects, and instead recognise infrastructure life cycle by supporting proactive and sustainable management of resources in designing, delivering, utilizing and eventually decommissioning assets - leading to triple bottom line benefits for the state. Further, in preparation for infrastructure reaching end-of-life, there must be consideration of the waste management hierarchy, in order to maximise the recovery of these actual facilities and infrastructure, via the WARR sector.

It is essential that Infrastructure Victoria consider the connections between the proposed Strategy and the Statewide Waste and Resource Recovery Infrastructure Plan (SWRRIP) overseen by Recycling Victoria. Alignment with the current, and involvement in the development of, a revised SWRRIP will be crucial for industry and Victoria as a whole to ensure coordination, (co-)location, resource recovery and efficiency have been considered. The WARR system is complex, and all elements are interdependent; one cannot simply consider an aspect of WARR in isolation from the others. As such, systems thinking requires attention (strategic, regulatory, policy, investment, and more) to be given to all interrelated parts of the WARR model that work towards managing materials.

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By incorporating circular economy principles and acknowledging the waste management hierarchy early in the stages of project planning, through designing for disassembly and material recovery, Infrastructure Victoria can minimize waste generation and facilitate the recovery of valuable resources while reducing reliance on virgin resources and promote the reuse and recycling of materials. This approach not only conserves natural resources but also reduces greenhouse gas emissions and energy consumption linked with primary material extraction and production while supporting local remanufacturers.

In line with this, the Strategy should emphasize the importance of understanding the material required and waste generated from infrastructure projects both during construction and operation. A comprehensive assessment of the types and quantities of material consumed, and waste material produced will enable effective planning and implementation of resource recovery as well as remanufacturing opportunities (e.g. use of recycled material in construction) that may present. Infrastructure Victoria should collaborate with relevant stakeholders, including industry experts, to gather accurate data and develop a clear understanding of these material streams. Encouraging the use of recycled materials in projects must continue to be a priority. Following on from the good work that is being done by EcologiQ in Victoria (which we support), consideration should be given to procurement targets (for all levels of government) which will promote increased and ongoing market demand for secondary raw (recycled) materials and support the continued growth of the recycling industry in Victoria.

Please contact the undersigned if you wish to further discuss WMRR's comments.

Yours sincerely

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