

LANDFILL — CONSTRUCTION AND DEMOLITION MATERIAL

762. Mr P. ABETZ to the Minister for Environment:

Can the minister update the house on how the Liberal–National government’s program to reduce construction and demolition materials going to landfill is progressing?

Mr A.P. JACOB replied:

I thank the member for Southern River for the question. Construction and demolition waste represents about half the solid waste currently generated in Western Australia, particularly within the Perth–Peel region. It also represents around half the waste sent to landfill currently within the Perth–Peel region. Western Australia’s re-use or recycling of construction and demolition waste material lags significantly behind that of other comparable states. This comes at a large cost to the environment. There is lost opportunity cost not only in waste that is simply being landfilled, much of which could be recycled to better outcomes, with the stress that that places on the life of existing landfills, but also from using material that could otherwise be recycled as it puts more pressure on quarries and access to basic raw materials, requiring a greater environmental footprint because more and quicker native vegetation clearing is required.

To address this issue, I launched the recycled construction products program earlier this year. This program will provide \$10 million over the next five years to incentivise the use of recycled construction and demolition waste materials. Under this program, \$8 million has been pre-allocated to metropolitan local governments on a per capita basis, as a financial incentive on a per-tonne basis, to those local councils to use recycled construction and demolition waste material on their road-base projects, for clean fill and for other suitable recycling purposes. It also makes \$2 million available over the next five years through an open and competitive process to private sector entities, state government entities and metropolitan local governments should any local government use in excess of its existing allocation—this is designed to incentivise all those bodies to use recycled construction and demolition products.

There is a requirement for extensive product sampling and testing of this type of material. Specifications are in place to ensure that the use of these products does not result in unacceptable impacts on public health, amenity and the environment. That is as it should be, and we are not compromising on the need to make sure that a high specification applies to these materials, and a sampling regime that goes with that. But in the spirit of red tape reduction, following on from the earlier answer from the Minister for Finance, the Waste Authority is also developing a sampling and testing support scheme to assist industry with the cost of testing these products to ensure that recycled material is eligible for funding under this program. There is no compromising on the regulatory standard to meet environmental health standards, but we recognise that we need to encourage markets in this area. Therefore, we are exploring ways in which we can help subsidise some of the extra specifications required for that material.

I am very pleased to report to the house that there has already been significant interest in this program, with almost one-quarter of the competitive funding allocation already being subject to submissions. Just over six months in, around one-quarter of the five-year funding is already subject to expressions of interest to access that funding.

The SPEAKER: That concludes question time.

Mr D.A. Templeman interjected.

The SPEAKER: I am sorry, member for Mandurah; I feel really guilty, but what can you do?