

WASTE

More land is appropriated from wildlife for food production than any other purpose. So using more land than we need because of high food waste levels has direct impacts on animals.

Background

Not all waste is created equal. There are considerable differences in the impact on wildlife and eco-systems of various kinds of waste. These differences allow us to rank waste issues and focus on the most critical ones.

Waste can be broadly considered in the following categories: land, water, energy and materials.

Land

Animal Justice Party (AJP) aims to minimise our human footprint to allow the recovery of wildlife populations. High levels of food waste mean we need to appropriate more land for food production than we'd otherwise need. It is also particularly tragic when an animal is raised in pain on a factory farm, trucked and slaughtered in terror, only to end up in the bin. Australians are reported to throw out \$825 million¹ worth of fresh meat each year.

But food and other waste are intimately connected and show some of the hidden complexity in the trade-offs and dilemmas associated with tackling waste.

For some foods, extra or more sophisticated packaging can reduce food waste at the expense of increasing packaging waste. Recycling packaging can reduce packaging waste at the expense of using extra energy to do the recycling. In a real sense the refrigerator is the ultimate illustration of waste trade-offs. It reduces food waste by allowing us to keep foods longer at the expense of consuming material in the form of steel, aluminium, plastic, copper to name a few. It is also a fairly heavy user of energy in the average household.

Water

Even though fish and other aquatic animals comprise just 1.5 percent of global food kilojoules, fishing has dramati-

cally altered ocean and fresh water eco-systems. Pollution from factory farming running into rivers creates dead zones² in many bays around the world. Ocean pollution from plastics is certainly significant and important, but much smaller than the massive problems created by people eating fish and other marine animals.

So while reducing ocean pollution of all kinds (including the "ghost gear"³, lost fishing nets and lines) is important to the AJP, we believe in ranking problems and ensuring that actions are more than just symbolic. If you care about the ocean, then the big thing you can do is to stop eating ocean products. It's nice to be concerned about plastic straws and bags and bottles but the number one enemy of the oceans is what you choose to eat.

Energy

While many forms of waste, like food, plastics, paper and old phones are obvious. Wasted energy is invisible. A modern mobile phone embodies as much energy⁴ as it took to produce a 1980s motor vehicle. And while cars are typically kept and maintained for well over a decade, many people upgrade their phones without a second thought. They might rage against users of disposable cutlery, while being on their 5th phone in a decade. This invisible energy waste can clearly have a large impact; particularly when the energy comes from burning fossil fuels. But it can also be significant where energy comes from damming rivers or cutting and burning forests or energy crops.

But does energy use matter if it is clean? Sweden consumes almost 40 percent more electricity per person than Australia but produces just 1/4 of the CO₂ per person. We need to understand that easy generalisations may need to be revised as our information gets better and as technology changes.

¹http://www.tai.org.au/sites/default/files/PB%206%20What%20a%20waste%20final_7.pdf

²<https://www.sciencedirect.com/science/article/pii/S0959378006000495>

³<https://www.ghostgear.org/>

⁴<http://pubs.rsc.org/en/content/articlehtml/2014/cs/c3cs60235d>



Want a voice for animals in Parliament? Join, donate, or find out more about the Animal Justice Party at animaljusticeparty.org. You can also read our policies, here: animaljusticeparty.org/policieslist.

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Materials

Materials typically start off as mined or grown and are then processed. Australia's mining industries use tens of thousands of hectares, but with highly variable impacts. This is much lower than the hundreds of millions affected by animal agriculture and the 25 million affected by cropping.

Some mining technologies are virtually invisible⁵. Others involve total devastation, but over a small area. Something like the McArthur River mine in the Northern Territory is smaller than Sydney airport. In contrast to these small intense impacts, our food industries appropriate hundreds of millions of hectares. But again there is a wide variation in the kinds of land use and its impacts on wildlife. Measuring the impact of wasted materials is complex but wasted food probably has more impact on wildlife and habitat than other forms of waste; simply because of the massive land use changes required to produce food.

Recycling issues

As the recycling industry has grown it is evident that it is just like any other large industry, particularly when handling toxic material. Adelaide has more recycling⁶ per person than anywhere else in Australia and has seen a string of recycling plant fires over the past decade, all spreading toxic smoke over a large area. It shouldn't be assumed that recycling is always benign.

Recycling may be a little different from other industries, but it still has costs and benefits which need to be measured and added to the mix when decisions are made. We should recognise that recycling some goods may be hazardous and expensive in both time, energy, water, strong solvents or other materials.

Australia has been exporting its recycling to developing countries and has had an "out of sight, out of mind" attitude to the extreme hazards associated with recycling some goods.

While we support recycling in our policy and objectives we understand that it isn't an end in itself but a means to an end; namely to reduce our adverse impacts on the planet.

The circular usage conundrum

In 2018 a committee of the Australian Senate called for the Government to "... prioritise the establishment of a circular economy in which materials are used, collected, recovered, and re-used, including within Australia."

Consider timber, a traditional, popular, renewable material used for building, furniture, and energy. Is its use and disposal considered "circular"? Forests are habitat and their

harvesting impacts many animal species. The forestry industry has also always been one of the most dangerous for humans. In essence it is a *sustainably destructive* industry.

Other grown materials, such as hemp, biofuels, wool or cotton, are also too complex for simple solutions. Wool involves substantial suffering, regardless of how sustainable it is. Some materials are *sustainably destructive* and wool is *sustainably cruel*. Circularity makes the most sense with elements, particularly metals and their alloys. But even here there are trade offs and compromises. What if an element is more energetically expensive to recycle than to mine? Recycling in that case may only be sensible if clean (meaning near zero CO₂ emissions) is abundant.

Some materials may be easily recycled, but undesirable for toxicity and safety reasons. Many battery technologies have such problems. Lead acid batteries are readily recycled but also a dangerous weapon in the wrong hands. But the nature of battery use make control impossible.

In summary, we aim to minimise our eco-footprint while providing a good standard of living for everybody on the planet. When a circular economy of some material helps, then we should support it, but when it doesn't then we shouldn't. To assume that circularity is always good is to prejudge complex technical issues when we should be measuring impacts and making intelligent choices.

Policy

The AJP aims to eliminate food waste and environmental pollution while reducing energy and material use. We support recycling and a "circular economy" where these have positive impacts. We recognise that the environmental problems we face ultimately also require a reduction in consumption and an end to the consumption of animals (see our policies on Population and Farming)

Key Objectives

1. To invest in further development of biodegradable products and work toward the banning of harmful plastics (see our Marine Animals policy).
2. To encourage recycling and composting programs in businesses and public institutions and educate the public about waste issues.
3. To work towards universal access to recycling services for residential and commercial premises.
4. To stop the dumping of clothing and edible food by retailers and to ensure these products are sent to people in need.
5. To invest in innovative enterprises which are reducing and reusing waste.
6. To oppose "planned obsolescence" and barriers to repairing or upgrading consumer goods.

⁵<https://www.csiro.au/en/Research/MRF/Areas/Resourceful-magazine/Issue-07/Invisible-mining>

⁶<http://www.environment.gov.au/protection/national-waste-policy/national-waste-reports/national-waste-report-2016>



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