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## Workshop outcomes

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Subsequent to the seminar presentations and panel discussion, a workshop session was facilitated by Nicole Parsons of Resource NSW. The workshop broke participants into small groups to identify remaining barriers, and possible solutions to the implementation of appropriate on-site vermiculture installations in the commercial and industrial sector. Each small group subsequently presented their top three priorities back to the forum. These priorities were grouped and discussed, and are documented below.

### Issue 1: viability

A number of issues were raised in association with the real and perceived viability of on-site vermiculture installations (and on-site management systems in general) relative to the direct financial costs incurred through current disposal practices. Some of these issues are structural, some of these are more directly related to implementation within the existing context:

- a) Collection and disposal costs should reflect the true costs of disposal. In this instance, the cost competitiveness of on-site options would be dramatically improved.
- b) Disposal fees and levy should be set so as to encourage highest resource value resource recovery outcomes.
- c) The non-economic benefits of on-site organics management systems need to be revealed and promoted to improve the perceived value of these options (i.e. consideration of triple bottom line implications, rather than a strict focus on direct financial costs).
- d) Where the resulting recycled organics products are not able to be applied on-site for landscape maintenance, markets must be established to enable C&I sector organizations to readily recover a proportion of costs by selling product.
- e) It was suggested that, as on-site installations have been encouraged by state and local government for the environmental benefits, that there may be an opportunity for local government to purchase the resulting product, provided that the installation and product meets certain quality requirements. This would 'close the loop' and result both in vastly improved viability, and also influence over the installation/management of on-site systems.
- f) It was suggested that some form of government incentives may be required to encourage appropriate on-site installations.

### Issue 2: skills and responsibility

These issues relate to effective and ongoing management of on-site systems.

- a) Effective training is required for installation and management.
- b) Commitment of both management and staff is required for sustainability.
- c) Creating a sense of organisational ownership and shared responsibility towards the operation and management of an on-site organics management system is necessary for sustainable operation and effectiveness.
- d) Information and education support needs to be readily available and accessible to provide support for C&I sector organisations.
- e) There is a need for further research and development.

### Issue 3: effective use of space

Because vermiculture technology has been shown to process relatively small quantities of food organics per unit area, the availability of space is likely to be a key issue for those organisations for which vermiculture technology may be feasible. Two options suggested:

- a) That vermiculture is probably most suited to organizations that produce suitable compostable organic materials and also have grounds (eg. schools, corporate offices with grounds).
- b) That there may be potential for locally centralised installations to process material from a number of enterprises located in a strip shop, for example. This option does recognise the challenges posed by 'communal' installations, some of which are alluded to in 'Issue 2' above.

## Feedback from participants

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An evaluation form was provided to participants at the end of the workshop session. Feedback from participants highlighted the following unfulfilled needs:

1. Reinforced the need for training into the knowledge and practical skills associated with planning, installation and management of on-site organics management systems.
2. Highlighted viability as a key issue. Reinforced the need for consideration of triple bottom line in terms of evaluation of viability.
3. Expressed a desire for best practice case study installations.

According to participant feedback, the most enjoyable aspects of the seminar/workshop were:

- a) Panel discussion session,
- b) Collaborative nature of communication,
- c) Good expertise at a practical level,
- d) Clear communication,
- e) Workshop / brainstorm and open discussion session,
- f) Direct access to the people who actually did the research,
- g) Comprehensive information,
- h) Practical data,
- i) The identification of solutions.

According to participant feedback, areas where the seminar/workshop could be improved were:

- j) Longer and/or more information,
- k) Build on work completed with training program,
- l) More technical information,
- m) More research data,
- n) Longer panel discussion,
- o) More time for workshops,
- p) Practical case studies of actual installations.

The Recycled Organics Unit (ROU) is heartened by such encouraging feedback from participants, and the expressed thirst for more knowledge and practical skills. Importantly, the feedback validates the ROU's approach to research and development, our focus on the application of outcomes and our emphasis on triple bottom line considerations in terms of viability.

## Acknowledgements

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Thankyou.

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