

## Going backwards on reducing ACT's waste

**Fail#1:** After a decade of achieving resource recovery rates above 70% in 2016-17 this fell to 61% (see chart below [2017-18 Budget Papers](#) Figure 10, Strategic Indicator 3.3). This means in 2016-17 almost 40% of our waste ended up in landfill. We failed to meet our target of 80% resource recovery by 2015. This will make it harder to meet our other targets of over 85% resource recovery by 2020 and over 90% by 2025.

**Fail#2:** We also fail on reducing per capita waste generation with ongoing increases – 2.7 tonnes per person in 2014-15 compared with 1.65 tonnes in 2001-02. We are not meeting the target “to ensure the growth in ACT waste generation is less than the rate of population growth”.

**Fail#3:** Public reporting of our performance on meeting waste targets and waste management goals is inadequate, almost non-existent. There has not been an annual report on our waste generation or performance in meeting targets in the [ACT Waste Strategy 2011-2015](#) despite this being a commitment of the Strategy.

**Fail#4:** Waste-to-energy proposals. The ACT Government has no clear guidelines or standards to assess ‘energy-to-waste’ proposals despite an inclination for such facilities to be part of our waste management strategies. A fundamental principle has to be the role of such facilities in the hierarchy of reducing waste generation, ensuring re-use and resource recovery and minimising waste to landfill.

ACT waste targets are outlined in the [ACT Waste Strategy 2011-2015](#)

### Priority#1 less waste generated

ACT's current waste generation target:

- ensure the growth in ACT waste generation is less than the rate of population growth.

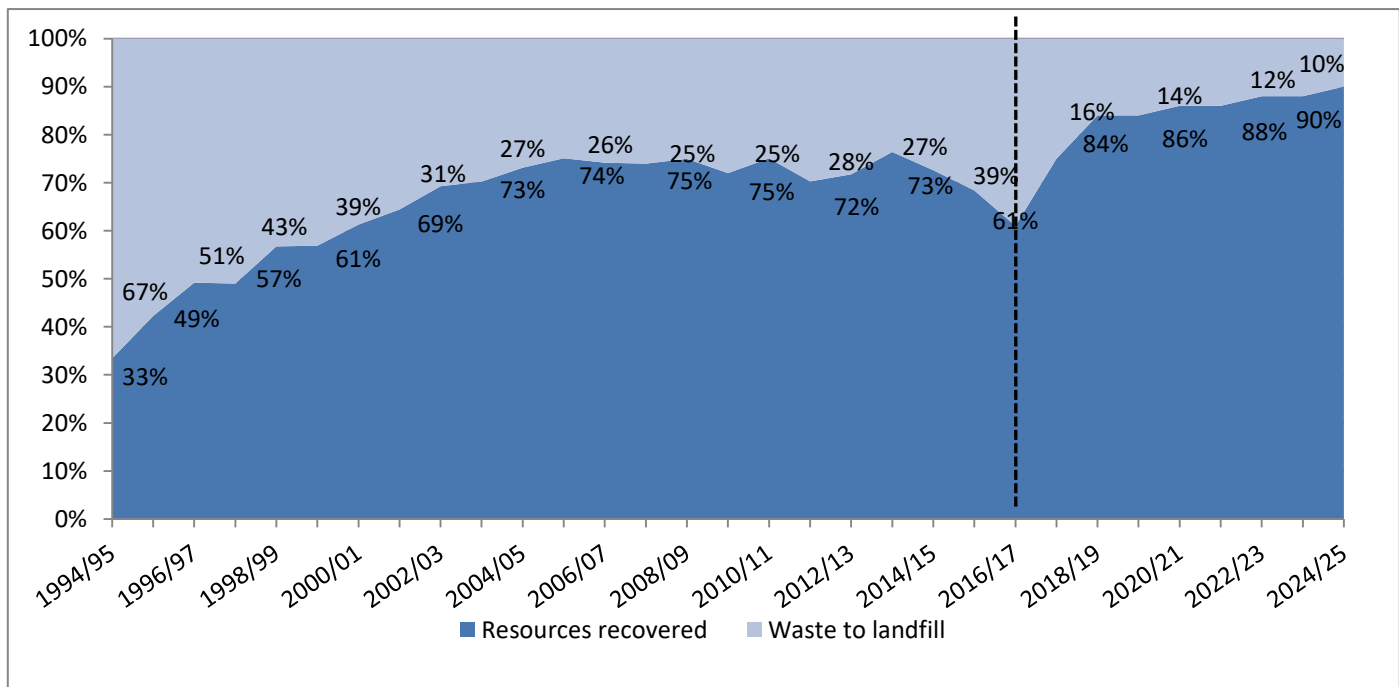
### Priority#2 increase resource recovery

The ACT's resource recovery targets are:

- over 80% by 2015
- over 85% by 2020
- over 90% by 2025.

### Priority#3: monitoring and review

- “The ACT Government will ensure timely production each year of waste generation, resource recovery and landfill data.”



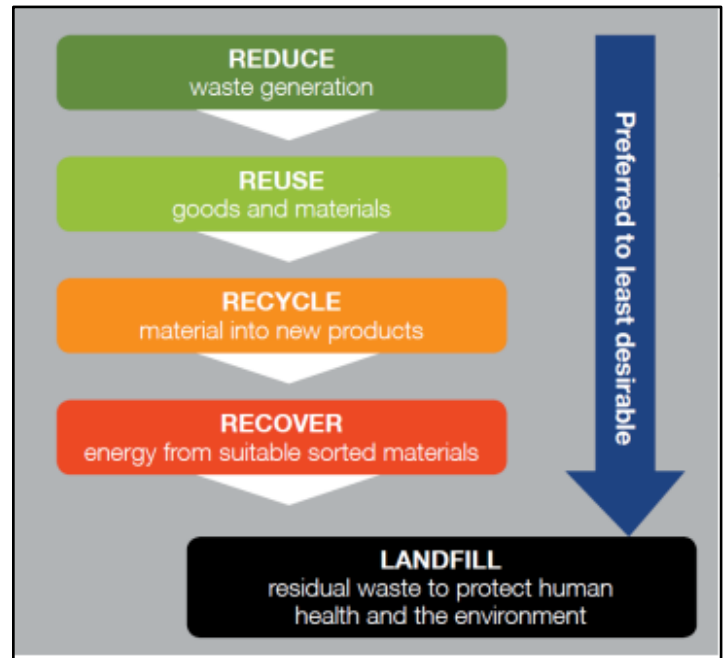
## Paying lip-service to waste management hierarchy

While both the [ACT Waste Strategy 2011-2025](#) and the [Waste Management and Resource Recovery Act 2016](#) acknowledge waste reduction as the number one priority – most of the actual tangibles of action focus on resource recovery. The Waste Strategy effectively washed its hands of responsibility for waste generation stating: “it is difficult for Governments to directly influence waste generation as this is the cumulative result of many individual decisions made within and outside of the ACT”.

Greater strategic, policy and legislative weight must be given to the waste management hierarchy (pictured here from [ACT Waste Strategy 2011-25](#)).

## Waste-to-Energy

There have been various proposals or discussions in ACT Government policy documents in recent years regarding ‘waste-to energy’ facilities. We support capture of methane from landfill given its greenhouse impact. However we have significant concerns regarding “incineration” of waste. The Conservation Council policy is that recovery of energy should only be considered as a last resort i.e. only after all resources possible have been extracted from the waste streams and principally should only be used for ACT generated waste. We are very concerned that such facilities may end needing waste to feed themselves – feeding the furnace. Costs might outweigh benefits and health impacts such as release of dioxins and other hazardous materials also need to be carefully considered.



Currently Capital Recycling Solutions is exploring the possibility of a waste to energy ‘incineration’ facility at Fyshwick and seems will soon submit an Environment Impact Assessment to the ACT Government. The Conservation Council does not support this particular proposal as it not ‘last resort’ use of waste stream materials and will need to rely on greater ‘feedstock’ than is available from the ACT – particularly if we meet our waste reduction and resource recovery targets. Likewise this proposal will increase our greenhouse gas emissions at a time when we are all needing to work hard on our pathway to zero net emissions as soon as possible. [Ten reasons why burning waste is a bad idea](#) by the [National Toxics Network](#) is a good overview of some issues associated with ‘incinerator’ waste-to-energy facilities.

## What is needed:

- Community Engagement: more resources to reduce waste generation, increase resource recovery
- Systems and processes: including minimisation and sorting of commercial and industrial waste
- Reduce: ban single-use non-recycled materials such as polystyrene in the ACT
- Legislative: amend Waste Act to require a statutory long-term waste strategy, with legislated overall targets, and targets for particular waste streams (i.e. e-waste, organic (kitchen) waste, demolition waste), annual reporting on performance tabled in Assembly, 5-year reviews of strategy
- Waste-to-energy: ACT Government to say no to current Capital Recycling Solutions proposal; develop a clear set of guidelines for considering waste-to energy proposals including a requirement that it is only a “last resort” measure.
- Waste Feasibility Study: to have a strong focus on waste reduction.

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