

Construction and Demolition Waste in Queensland: A Review of Policy and Progress

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Queensland, like other rapidly urbanising Australian states/territories, faces a significant environmental challenge with construction and demolition (C&D) waste, which constitutes a substantial portion of the headline waste stream. This waste, generated during building and construction activities, includes materials such as concrete, scrap metal, asphalt, and masonry, and is typically treated separately from Commercial and Industrial (C&I) waste. In Queensland, the three main waste streams are municipal solid waste, C&I waste, and C&D waste. According to the Department of Climate Change, Energy, the Environment and Water (DCCEEW), in the 2022-23 financial year, Queensland generated 15.3 million tonnes of waste, with 3.2 million tonnes ^[1] (21%) being C&D waste. While more recent data is not available from DCCEEW or the Queensland Government website, the available data highlights the significant volume of C&D waste produced in the state.

In 2019, the Queensland Government released the first version of the waste strategy document titled, *Waste management and resource recovery strategy*, which set a 75% target for both diversion of C&D waste from landfill and recycling rates by 2025 ^[2]. These targets were exceeded by the state in 2024, with an actual achievement of 83% for both ^[3]. The next targets are 85% diversion from landfill by 2030, and 80% recycling rates. A review of the waste strategy has been completed and reported in 2024.

🔗 The report is available here: <https://www.qld.gov.au/environment/circular-economy-waste-reduction/data-reports/qld-waste-resource-recovery-infrastructure-report>

The recommendations from the review, as reported in 2024, were incorporated, where appropriate, into the draft *Queensland waste strategy 2025-2030*, released earlier this year (consultation closed in June 2025). The targets for the C&D waste stream set in the draft strategy document remain the same as those contained in the original version. This has been somewhat disappointing, given that for one of the metrics - recycling rates - the state has already exceeded the 2030, 2040 and 2050 targets. For the other – waste diversion from landfill - the state is very close to meeting the 2030 goal. In addition, this suggests that further improvement of C&D waste diversion and recycling rates may be given lesser priority in the coming years and decades.

Government initiatives

There are a number of initiatives introduced by the Queensland Government to address waste management and resource recovery, some of which have contributed to the attainment - or even the exceeding – of set goals for some waste streams. Key initiatives include:

- **Waste Disposal Levy (2019)**
Introduced in 2019, this levy has been a major contributor to the increase in resource recovery seen in the C&D and C&I waste streams. It also helped reduce the transport of waste into Queensland from interstate, particularly in the early years.
- **Resource Recovery Industry Development Program (RRIDP) (2018)**
This initiative aimed to boost Queensland's resource recovery and recycling industries. It included a \$100 million fund to support local governments, businesses, not-for-profits, and consortia in projects that divert waste from landfills, reduce stockpiling, and recover valuable resources. The program has now closed for applications.
- **Resource Recovery Boost Fund (2025)**
This \$130 million fund was established to help QLD councils address key waste reduction and recycling priorities. It supports the development of critical resource recovery infrastructure, diverting household waste and increasing recycling.
🔗 Explore more related to this fund: <https://www.qld.gov.au/environment/circular-economy-waste-reduction/funding-grants/resource-recovery-boost-fund>
- **End-of-waste (EOW) framework (2016)**
Introduced in 2016, the EOW framework aims to facilitate the use of resources derived from waste and improve the perception of waste. It includes a process through which waste can be considered a resource, if determined by the Department of the Environment, Tourism, Science and Innovation to meet specific criteria.

The use of resources approved under EOW framework offers the benefit of reduced regulatory burden (as approvals are not required for use), in addition to the financial benefits gained from reduced waste disposal costs. From an environmental perspective, the framework delivers a dual benefit: reducing the amount of waste sent to landfill and promoting the reuse of materials previously considered as waste.

A review of the framework was undertaken in 2022 and reported in 2023. The report included 37 recommendations to improve the framework, including refining the process for determining when waste qualifies as a resource, clarifying the application of the EOW framework, defining clearly the term waste, outlining how the framework fits within the circular economy, and providing suggestions for stakeholder engagement.

 The report is available here:

https://environment.desi.qld.gov.au/_data/assets/pdf_file/0025/352663/eow-framework-review-project-report.pdf

Conclusion

From the perspective of C&D waste stream, the QLD Government has been active, as demonstrated by the number of initiatives introduced to support the state's waste strategy. The review programs that follow various projects provide opportunities for further enhancement of future initiatives.

In terms of the effectiveness of the various C&D initiatives, there have been some notable successes - such as the meeting or exceeding the targets set in the 2019 *Waste management and resource recovery strategy* - as well as areas that present opportunities for improvement.

References

^[1] DCCEE National waste and resource recovery reporting

<https://www.dcceew.gov.au/environment/protection/waste/publications/national-waste-resource-recovery-reporting/glance-2024#:~:text=13.5%20Mt%20of%20municipal%20solid,57.8%20Mt%20in%202016-17.>

^[2] Waste management and resource recovery strategy

https://www.qld.gov.au/_data/assets/pdf_file/0028/103798/qld-waste-management-resource-recovery-strategy.pdf

^[3] Queensland Government – Recycling and waste in Queensland report

<https://www.qld.gov.au/environment/circular-economy-waste-reduction/data-reports/recycling-waste>

^[4] End of waste framework review – Project report

https://environment.desi.qld.gov.au/_data/assets/pdf_file/0025/352663/eow-framework-review-project-report.pdf