1. What are the economic, environmental and social costs and benefits of waste and waste-related activities?

Economic

- The concept of waste needs to be considered as an inefficiency of the production process.
- The externalities of waste generation and treatment need to be addressed by this commission. Those producers ‘free riding’ need to be held accountable for hidden costs.
- Market identification and development for resources generated though the production process needs to be a priority.
- The public face and image of consumerism needs to be changed.
- The economic cost of waste imposes costs to existing and potential future generations. Any process or product that produces waste that can not be assimilated back into the environment safely should not be permitted.
- Financial benefits to business through reduced expenditure on waste disposal, but also through more intelligent purchasing.
- Opportunity costs of clean up campaigns and behaviour change initiatives.

Environmental

- Further research into CO_2 and methane emissions associated with landfill and transport need to be considered.
- Life cycle assessment and the environment performance of products produced and imported into Australia needs to be highly considered.
- Further research into incineration and energy recovery should be undertaken.
- Risk of contamination to ground water systems
- Dust and litter increase to surrounding areas

Social

- Education of industry about the responsibilities and opportunities for improved waste management and resource efficiency within the Vocational Education sector need to be improved. At present industry education through the formal sector focuses on the lower end of the waste hierarchy. Avoidance through design and streamlining production processes should be the focus.
- Competencies in trades and other industries need to highlight the importance of natural resources and the ecological environment.
- The profile of recycling within the public needs to be changed so that recycling is not seen as doing enough for the environment. The emphasis needs to be on purchasing what is needed, or purchasing products with improved environmental characteristics.
- Equitable resource use for global citizens today and tomorrow needs to be the focus of a resource efficiency strategy. Arguing that Australia is resource rich is not an acceptable excuse for being wasteful. Resource needs of citizens globally also needs to be highly considered within a resource strategy.
- Greater waste volumes lead to greater waste disposal costs which hit poorer the hardest as a proportion of their disposable income.
- Increasing demand for landfill sites competes with more sustainable land uses.

2. What are the market failures (including externalities) associated with the generation and disposal of waste?

Externalities include:

- Methane and other air emissions from landfill and transport.
- Contamination
- Resource depletion
- No accountability for full cost of waste throughout the life cycle of products and services
- Future costing and site remediation risk

Barriers include:

- A lack of market incentives for recycled or environmental benign products
- Insufficient labelling schemes around design and production processes
- No market that incorporates, or values, the use of environmental assets such as air quality.

3. What strategies should be adopted by government and industry to improve economic, environmental and social outcomes in regard to waste and its management?

Strategies include:

- Product stewardship
- Producer and consumer pays principles for waste management externalities and waste management efforts.
- Ensuring that Life Cycle Thinking and environmental education are incorporated into industry training
- Improved waste options and opportunities for small to medium enterprises
- Life-cycle analysis and product stewardship are important concepts which should underpin our societies productive efforts
- Integrate sustainability education into trades and professions with significant waste management issues, creating less dependence on regulation.
- Increased regulatory environment on design, purchasing, importing, manufacturing and production and waste
- Improved governance structures such as consistency and management of waste management policies and improved labelling schemes.
- Emphasis on the high end of the waste management hierarchy.

4. Are there any items (either specifically noted above or not listed) that should be included or excluded from this inquiry? What are they and why should they be included / excluded?

- Industry practices are dictated by education and training programs. Industry training undertaken through Vocational Education and Training programs needs to incorporate the principles of sustainable development. Specifically addressing waste and resource issues, Training Packages need to start incorporating strategies at the higher end of the waste hierarchy, rather than focusing on waste disposal and regulations. There also needs to be further understanding about how knowledge and skills in industry are generated and transferred. A long term approach is essential.