



**COOK ISLANDS
NATIONAL
SOLID WASTE
MANAGEMENT
STRATEGY
2013 - 2016**

A “Zero Waste Cook Islands”
with an informed and proactive
Cook Island community taking
responsibility for sustainable
waste management

**ZERO
WASTE
COOK
ISLANDS**

A National Solid Waste Strategy

The Cook Islands faces a number of unique challenges as it deals with economic development and integration in to the global economy. Chief amongst these, is the problem of waste and its management. Inherent in dealing with the challenge of waste management are the contextual challenges of the Cook Islands including:

- * Small land mass
- * Geographic isolation
- * Narrow and limited economic base,
- * Small population and limited human capacity

The National Solid Waste Management Strategy represents an important milestone in locally-led action to address these challenges, and proposes a way forward for the future of waste management in the Cook Islands.

The strategy is action-focussed. It presents a policy framework, from which five strategic action areas are derived. We believe if these priorities are addressed and actions completed, the Cook Islands will be one of the first countries in the world to implement a Zero Waste vision.

The Purpose of the Strategy...

The purpose of this strategy is to establish an integrated waste management framework that improves the Cook Islands management of waste, and promotes shared responsibility for waste management by all stakeholders.

This strategy explores options to create sustainable waste financing; the necessary legislative and institutional modifications and other activities to achieve a waste management framework that is both economically and environmentally sustainable.

Defining “Solid Waste”

In this document we define
“Solid Waste” as follows:

“Solid Waste” includes the following:

- a) Garbage, refuse, or litter;*
- b) Hazardous waste; c) medical & bio-waste;*
- d) Building and demolition waste;*
- e) Other discarded or superfluous things industrial, commercial, mining, agricultural, community, or other activities;*
- f) that is not of a liquid or gaseous nature in its raw form.*

Policy Objectives

In achieving the vision set forth, the following are the policy objectives proposed for Waste Management:

1

Minimize the production of waste materials utilising the “**waste hierarchy**” (**Refuse, Reduce, Reuse, Recycle**)

2

Develop appropriate **Infrastructure** and utilise **policy levers** and instruments to make Waste management **cost neutral** and capitalise on economic opportunities that might arise

3

Create a ‘**Culture of responsible waste management**’ embedded amongst individuals, business and public, where “Waste Management is everyone’s responsibility” through:

Education

Enforcement

Advocacy

4

Develop a strong **Monitoring and Evaluation** system to track improvements and changes in waste flows and management

5

Have a clear and strong **Institutional and Legislative Framework**, with procedures in place for **capacity building** for Cook Islanders to ensure the successful implementation of waste management strategies and the fair & consistent enforcement of laws and regulations.

Strategic Action Areas

This strategy prioritises actions into five priority areas reflecting the key policy objectives

Integrated Waste Management Framework

- Formalised regulations around waste management practices for individuals and business supported by enforcement and public awareness campaigns to:
 - REDUCE and REFUSE the importation of Waste products
 - REUSE products and discourage products that cannot be reused
 - RECYCLE AND COMPOST products including glass, plastics, scrap metals and Composting of green waste
- Specific products identified for banning and regulation, eg. Plastic bags, Disposable nappies
- Implementation of incentives to encourage the use of certain products that minimise by-products and their impact
- The establishment of recycling and waste storage centres around the country

MOU with the Ministry of Education to include Integrated Waste Management principals in schools and in throughout the school science curriculum

Reward appropriate waste management behaviour at households, schools, government ministries, and businesses

A baseline survey of current good waste management practices now being undertaken

Education and Awareness

Education and awareness is the most crucial part of developing and embedding a culture of Sustainable Waste Management with an informed and proactive Cook Island community taking responsibility for sustainable waste management.

Promote and raise the awareness of the environment champions working with the outer islands

Designate local 'CLEAN Cook Islands' champions in different sectors

Establish partnerships with other organizations

Development of a template for communication and success measurement

Infrastructure, Institutional Arrangements and the Legislative Framework

Strategies in this area will focus around:

Infrastructure

- Assessing current infrastructure and conducting a needs assessment for an adequate infrastructure framework
- Development and acquiring appropriate infrastructure required to achieve zero waste vision including recycling and storage centres

Institutional Arrangements

- Explore options for the establishment of a single institutional entity to be responsible for the collection and management of waste in the country
- Look at establishing this entity as an SOE with Outer Islands waste-management being outsourced to them at cost under the SOE's social responsibility obligations.
- Strengthen regulatory arrangements under the new Waste Management entity to effectively enforce laws and regulations violations in waste management practices.

Legislative Framework

- Develop legislature to enact a body to be responsible for waste management and collection in the Cook Islands
- Updating of relevant acts and legislature to legally enforce Integrated waste management solutions (Reduce, Re using, Recycling/Composting and Repatriation of Hazardous and Non biodegradable waste).
- Legal enacting of measures of cost recovery/neutrality in the waste management (covered further below)

Sustainable Financing

Strategies in this area will focus around

- **Cost Assessment of Waste Management**
- **Cost benefit analysis of different options** of the costs of delivering an acceptable level of waste management services across all of the Cook Islands, need to be undertaken.
- Explore the introduction of new **taxes and levies** to discourage the importation of excess waste products and aid in cost recovery on waste management
- Develop a **user pays system** for waste collection and disposal that discourages the use of non recyclables and incentivises reuse and recycling
- Implement **refundable deposits** (container deposit legislation) on glass bottles, plastics, aluminium cans, tin cans, electrical and electronic goods, tyres, cars, and lead acid batteries

Monitoring and Evaluation

Strategies in this area will focus around:

- A Waste Audit study that will look at quantities and flows of specific waste streams (to be conducted in conjunction with above Cost assessment of waste management)
- Develop updated national waste statistics (including relevant information from all businesses, industries and communities) regularly available through a central agency, which can be used as the basis for strategic action.
- Waste disposal facilities are monitored and managed to minimise environmental damage

Immediate Priorities

To implement this strategy in a timely fashion it is crucial that the following actions are taken:

National Waste Audit
Begin by Sept 2013

**Economic Assessment
of the Costs of Waste
Management in the Cook
Islands**

Begin by Dec 2013

**Legislative Review
and Drafting of Waste
Management Act**

Begin by July 2014

These are vital pre requisites in ensuring that the strategy is implemented in a coordinated and timely manner.

Budget

	Year 1	Year 2	TOTAL
Waste Audit (12 months)	100,000	120,000	220,000
Eco Assessment (3 - 4 months)	220,000		220,000
Legislative Review (2 - 3 months)		60,000	60,000
TOTAL	320,000	180,000	500,000

Solid Waste Policy Framework

This diagram explains or maps out how the Policy Objectives fulfil eight (thematic) priority areas which then flow into the Strategic or Policy Action Areas



