

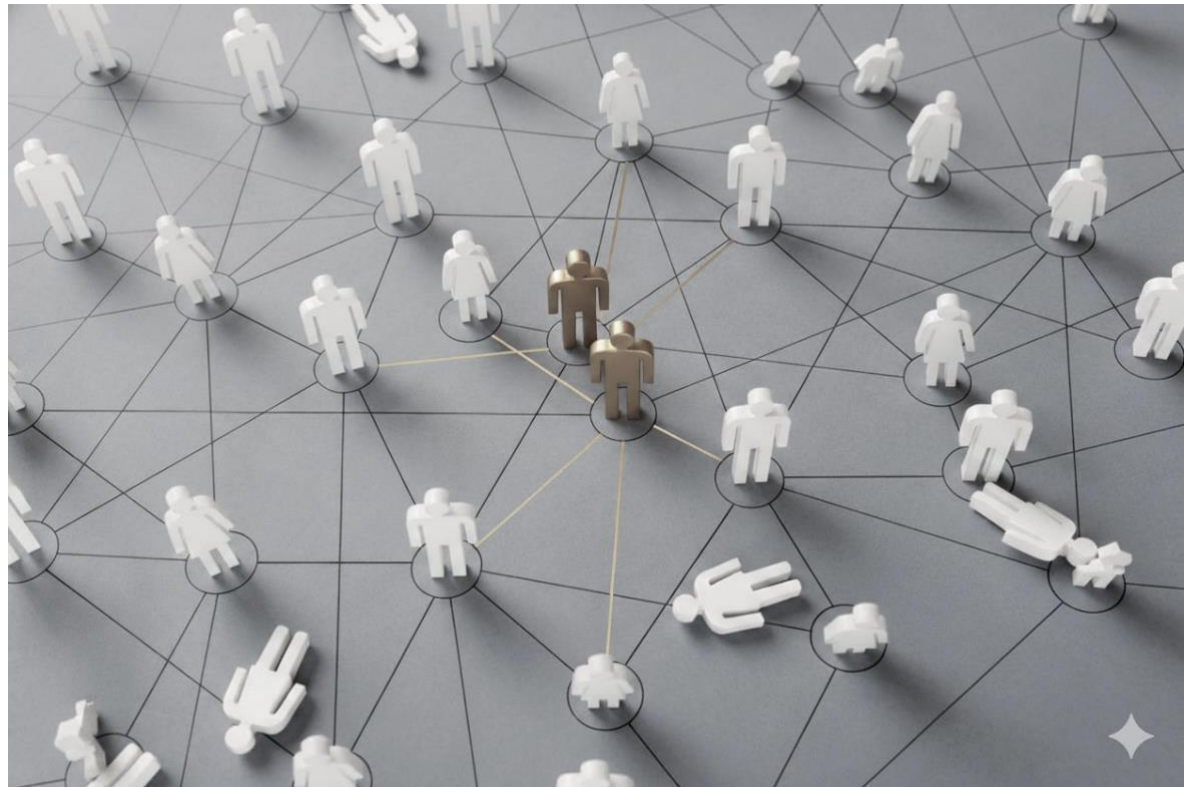
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ONLINE TRAINING FOR THE WASTE AND RECYCLING INDUSTRY

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The Evolution of Dry Waste: From Backyard Burners to a Regulated Industry

By Andrew Swann

For those working in Victoria's highly regulated and specialized modern waste sector, it can be hard to imagine a time when waste management was largely left up to individual households. Today, the handling of dry waste involves complex infrastructure, strict compliance measures, and dedicated advocacy from organizations like the Waste Recyclers and Processors Association of Victoria (WRAPA).

However, Victoria has been on quite a long and transformative journey to reach this point. Boasting the second oldest environmental protection laws in the world, the state's path to becoming a global leader in environmental oversight was born out of a chaotic, unregulated past. Understanding this history is crucial to appreciating how our modern commercial waste industry was ultimately built.

The Era of Backyard Burning

Up until the late 1960s and early 1970s, the management of dry waste was incredibly primitive. It was common practice for Victorians to simply burn their rubbish in their backyards or along train lines using 44-gallon drums or dedicated waste incinerators. Open fires were a normal part of domestic life; in fact, a typical Sunday tradition for residents was to set fire to piles of fallen leaves right out on the street.

While these practices were convenient, they came at a heavy environmental cost. The widespread burning of household waste and organic matter created severe air quality issues across the state. Coupled with growing concerns over the pollution of local waterways, these environmental impacts became a significant public concern.

A Legislative Turning Point

The mounting crisis was enough to hasten the introduction of a dedicated environmental watchdog. This urgent need for oversight resulted in the establishment of the *Environmental Protection Act 1970* (Vic.). The following year, in 1971, the Victorian Environment Protection Authority (EPA) was officially established, marking a monumental milestone that made Victoria's EPA the second (or perhaps third) oldest environmental regulator in the world.

“The establishment of the EPA marked a crucial transition away from burning waste in the city toward a highly regulated model of waste management. Rather than stifling the sector, these new rules laid the foundation for the modern commercial waste industry.”

Levies and the Boom of Outsourcing

As regulations grew, so did the economic frameworks supporting them. In 1992, the Municipal and Industrial Landfill Levy (MILL) was officially introduced as a direct tax on waste sent to landfills. The levy started at just \$3 per tonne. Over the decades, it has increased dramatically to \$169.79 per tonne—a 56.6-times increase over 34 years—to establish a strong price signal making landfill more expensive than recycling.

Furthermore, in 1994, current Local Government structures were established, bringing with them Compulsory Competitive Tendering. Councils began outsourcing their waste collection services to contract bid winners. These environmental regulations, paired with outsourced contracts, created the perfect conditions for a vibrant business environment, and waste companies began to grow drastically.

The Rise of Specialization

With the dry waste sector booming, the industry broke into more and more specialized categories. What used to be a simple trip to the local dump evolved into a complex network of material destinations:

- **Specialized Vehicles:** The industry transitioned to highly technical fleets, including automated side loaders for household wheelie bins, hook lifts, rear lifts, and front lifts for commercial skip bins.
- **Advanced Facilities:** Instead of everything going into a hole in the ground, dry waste is now routed to Transfer Stations, Material Recycling Facilities (MRFs) for commingled plastics and cardboard, and dedicated Construction & Demolition (C&D) sorting facilities.

About SQPT

Suitably Qualified Personnel Training (SQPT) was founded by industry experts with over 40 years of combined experience in Victoria's waste and recycling industry.

The Authors have not only managed operational businesses for some of the world's largest waste and recycling businesses, but also in the environmental compliance space, helping the waste and recycling industry and other waste producing organisations to operate both efficiently and compliantly.

SQPT has extensive experience in the compliant management and operation of waste and recycling businesses throughout Victoria.

We understand the pressures faced by people working in our industry and this is the driver behind the creation of courses such as this one, to help you improve your knowledge and understand the requirements associated with conducting your valuable role, compliantly.

Our knowledge comes from hard-earned experience. We understand the industry and how it operates.

SQPT believe that sharing our knowledge about the waste and recycling industry will help create a stronger industry and better prepare participants for their work in this vitally important sector.

SQPT produce a range of courses. These can be viewed at our website, www.sqpt.com.au.

We thank you for choosing SQPT as your Training supplier and remind you to always operate safely and compliantly.

Kind Regards,

The SQPT Team

