

Proposed Motion 2: Battery Waste Crisis

ALGA CATEGORY	Circular Economy
MOTION SUBJECT <i>Short summary of the specific topic, or issue.</i>	<p>The disposal of batteries in residual waste streams, which leads to fires, is becoming an increasingly unacceptable risk for local government waste services and infrastructure, as well as worker and community safety.</p> <p>There is an urgent need for legislative and regulatory mechanisms, extended producer responsibilities, and a review of product design standards. The Australian Government is called to act now while propelling forward a circular economy for loose and embedded battery products.</p>
MOTION	<p>This National General Assembly urgently calls on the Australian Government to address the risks of battery disposal by:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Implementing appropriate battery product stewardship legislation, that includes extended producer responsibilities. 2. Moving to a mandatory national product stewardship scheme, to ensure all producers and importers of loose and embedded batteries are captured and contribute to the end-of-life risk mitigations and disposal and recovery costs. 3. Support local government efforts through funding, to manage and mitigate battery related risks to waste services and infrastructure.
GRC STRATEGIC ALIGNMENT	<p>Corporate Plan – Resilient Economy Corporate Plan – Our People Corporate Plan – Accountable Council GRC Waste Strategy 2029 GRC Risk Management Policy</p>
NATIONAL OBJECTIVE <i>Why is this a national issue and why should this be debated at the NGA?</i> <i>(maximum 200 words)</i>	<p>It is commonplace across Australia for loose and embedded battery products to be disposed at local government waste facilities which leaves ever-present risks of fire, injury and infrastructure damage for local governments to manage.</p> <p>The Australian Government has the power to create or amend existing legislative instruments regarding national recycling and waste matters and product stewardship concerns, for this national issue.</p> <p>Currently, a national voluntary and industry led battery product stewardship scheme is in place. A voluntary scheme is not resulting in the required recovery and elimination of all battery types from residual waste streams. Batteries continue to damage and destroy waste infrastructure and pose a significant safety risk to local government employees and users of waste facilities.</p> <p>The Australian Government has the power to implement the required legislation and appropriate product stewardship schemes for batteries that:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Provide design standards for these products • Incorporate extended producer responsibility

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Ensure equitable access to a scheme for all regions and local governments in Australia.
<p>SUMMARY OF KEY ARGUMENTS <i>Background information and supporting arguments.</i> <i>(maximum 500 words)</i></p>	<p>Waste industry research and analysis estimates that between 10,000 to 12,000 battery related fires occur across waste and recycling streams each year in Australia. These events range from self-managed heating events with minor to no consequence, to events requiring emergency services response and the partial or total loss of equipment and infrastructure in addition to causing environmental harm.</p> <p>Although there have been gains through the current voluntary and industry led scheme, the success of the voluntary scheme is impacted by market failures such as free-riders, coordination challenges and the high risk of loose and embedded battery products, particularly in relation to new and emerging technology batteries such as lithium iron phosphate batteries.</p> <p>The Australian Government currently has a range of levers for the establishment of national product stewardship schemes, from industry and government led voluntary schemes, to co-regulated and mandatory schemes regulated by the government. The current risk posed identifies the need for a government led and regulated scheme that provides a greater level of effectiveness in removing battery products from residual waste, as it requires specified action to be taken by producers.</p> <p>A review of the Recycling and Waste Reduction Act 2020 is currently in development, with the review terms of reference developed by the Australian Government. The current terms of reference for the review incorporate considerations for future circular economy needs and resource recovery and waste challenges, including approaches to product stewardship schemes.</p> <p>Where local government, community and the broader waste industry wait for an outcome of the review, more public property will be lost, costs to the community for waste services will increase, and worker and community safety will be at risk from batteries.</p> <p>The time to act on this issue is now. Existing mechanisms are available to the Australian Government to act pragmatically on this issue, with a future updated Recycling and Waste Act supporting implementation and effectiveness.</p>