

MEDIA RELEASE

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Call on Commonwealth to Get Serious about Plastic Pollution

Environmentalists today called on the Federal Minister for Environment to get serious about plastic pollution of the land and oceans.

The 'Risso' petition sparked by the death of a rare Risso Dolphin from a plastic bag was signed by 10,400 people and directed at Greg Hunt because he had quietly gazetted a regulation removing packaging (which covers all types of plastic packaging) for priority action under the Commonwealth Product Stewardship Act.

'Greg Hunt issues media releases claiming his concern about plastic bags and microplastics but to date these have just been thought bubbles. He needs to give the issue priority. The scientific evidence is alarming - 90% of all seabirds have ingested plastic; corals mistake microplastic for food; and fish and sea salt contain plastic,' said Jeff Angel, Director of the Boomerang Alliance of 34 groups.

"There is wide public concern."

"Most of the plastic in our near oceans comes from our activity – whether litter (a 2L bottle will break up into 50,000 pieces); flushed down our sewerage system as microbeads and clothes fibres; waste from plastic manufacturing plants; and other sources such as paint and cigarette butts."

"While bodies such as the CSIRO can report on visible plastic pollution – 124 billion pieces have been found as litter along our coasts – microplastic is far larger by orders of magnitude and it grows each year as the legacy plastic does not go away. A lot sinks to the ocean floor with the most recent study finding 4 billion microplastic pieces for every square kilometre of ocean."¹

"We estimate that 70% of future marine plastic pollution can be eliminated by taking four steps:

- Introduce a container deposit scheme
- Ban all single use plastic bags
- Remove microbeads from personal care and laundry products
- Ensure plastic producers prevent pollution leaving their premises."

¹ Woodall et al (2014), 'The deep sea is a major sink for microplastic debris'. R.Soc.open 1:140317.
<http://dx.doi.org/10.1098/rsoc.140317>

The Boomerang Alliance allies are: - AFROCAB - Australian Conservation Foundation - Australian Marine Conservation Society - Arid Lands Environment Centre - Beach Patrol - Cairns and Far North Coast Environment Centre - Clean Up Australia - Conservation Council ACT Region - Conservation Council of South Australia - Conservation Council of Western Australia - Cooks River Alliance - Environment Centre NT - Environment Tasmania - Environment Victoria - Friends of the Earth - Greenpeace Australia Pacific - LEAD Group - Living Ocean - Local Government NSW - Mineral Policy Institute - Nature Conservation Council of NSW - Project AWARE Foundation - Queensland Conservation Council - Responsible Runners - SEA LIFE Conservation Fund - Surfrider Foundation Australia - Take 3 - Tangaroa Blue Foundation - Tasmanian Conservation Trust - Total Environment Centre - Two Hands Project - Wildlife Preservation Society of Queensland