

Mandatory Packaging Targets Can Turn Australia's Tide on Plastic

In a historic agreement, Australia's Environment Ministers have committed to introducing mandatory packaging waste recovery targets, which could transform Australia's packaging landscape. Reducing and recycling plastic packaging will no longer be a matter of voluntary or co-regulatory action.

The REDcycle collapse has highlighted the ineffectiveness of current arrangements and exposed the fact that other single use plastic packaging recovery rates are embarrassingly low and will miss agreed targets.

A new world class product stewardship scheme is now proposed to be in place by 2025. This will bring in new packaging rules to make manufacturers and retailers responsible for designing, reducing, collecting, and recovering their packaging.

"Properly implemented, this is a game-changer and will finally help Australia turn the rising tide on plastic waste and litter," says Jeff Angel, Director for Australia's leading waste and plastic pollution NGO, the Boomerang Alliance which represents 55 environment groups.

"As is the case in Europe, packaging producers should be responsible for better design, and all associated costs for collection, transport, and recovery of their packaging. The Commonwealth and State Governments now have the opportunity to develop a comprehensive world leading scheme with mandatory targets, that will deliver meaningful results" adds Jeff.

The national packaging target for plastic packaging is to have 70% either composted or recycled by 2025, with 20% of plastic packaging to contain recycled plastics.

Latest figures show that only 18% of plastics are currently being recycled and only 4% of plastic packaging contains recycled content. Virtually all 450,000 tonnes of soft plastics generated in Australia each year are currently destined for landfill", said Jeff.

"It is obvious that we cannot just recycle our way out of this. To meet current packaging targets, the industry needs to put greater focus on avoiding and reducing problematic packaging. The Boomerang Alliance is also proposing a 30% target for reusable packaging before 2030".



2025 National Targets. Latest data from APCO (graphic adapted to reference plastic recycled content target and plastic phase out reductions). Please note that reusability, compostability or recyclability does not mean products are recovered in practice.