



Australian Marine Conservation Society MEDIA RELEASE 13 November 2025.

ACCC approves flawed soft plastics scheme, flags virtually no environmental benefit

- **Less than 5% of soft plastics used in Australia could be recycled through the scheme**
- **Overall consumer-facing soft plastics usage still set to skyrocket by up to 115,000 tonnes per year**
- **Scheme provides no incentive for brands to reduce disposable plastic packaging**
- **Supermarkets and other scheme members can pass on costs from the scheme to consumers by increasing the price of goods**

The application by Soft Plastic Stewardship Australia (SPSA) to collect and recycle soft plastic packaging, [approved](#) yesterday by the ACCC, will not reduce soft plastics or soft plastic pollution, says the Australian Marine Conservation Society (AMCS), Boomerang Alliance, and Port Phillip EcoCentre. The ACCC's decision imposes extra conditions on SPSA, including the requirement for at least two independent directors and increased reporting requirements to improve transparency.

AMCS Program Manager Tara Jones said: "It's clear that this scheme will not lead to a reduction in soft plastic packaging used in Australia. The companies involved are far too focused on downstream measures rather than cutting plastic at the source.

"The ACCC's determination states the scheme is likely to deliver no environmental benefits aside from diverting a tiny fraction of soft plastics away from landfill. Less than 5% of consumer-facing soft plastics are estimated to be recycled in Australia under the scheme, all while total soft plastics use is predicted to skyrocket.

"Around 400,000 tonnes of consumer-facing soft plastics were used in Australia in 2022-2023. By 2033, the SPSA itself estimates this usage will increase by an additional 70,000 to 115,000 tonnes every year.

"We know that the more plastic that gets produced, the more plastic ends up polluting our environment. Soft plastics are already the most commonly recorded litter item in clean ups around Australia, making up [32%](#) of the litter collected. Recycling plays an important role in a circular economy, but recycling alone cannot solve the plastic pollution crisis.

"Scheme members, including the major supermarkets, can also choose to pass on levy costs to customers through the price of goods including groceries.

“As revealed in the [2025 Unwrapped audit report released this week](#), customers already pay a plastic-free penalty on most loose produce, and have little choice to avoid disposable soft plastic packaging both in store and online.

“Our ocean and beaches are drowning in plastic pollution. It harms marine ecosystems, and is increasingly being linked to human health issues.

Boomerang Alliance spokesperson Jeff Angel said: “This scheme is unfortunately a win for the soft plastics sector who may seek to use it as justification to further delay highly anticipated national packaging regulation that has been promised by the federal government.

“We're concerned that the same brands that are pumping packaging into the market are the ones controlling the collecting, processing and selling the materials under the scheme. There's a clear lack of independence in the SPSA proposal.

“It's disappointing that brands aren't instead collaborating to reduce disposable packaging including through shared reuse systems for customers.

“We urgently need the federal government to get cracking on promised reform to national packaging legislation. Progress is too slow, and inaction is putting marine life and people at risk.

Port Phillip EcoCentre Executive Officer April Seymore said “It is great to see producers acting on their plastic footprint, but this superficial scheme skips over slowing the flow of plastic. The scheme solves only part, the wrong part, of the plastics problem.

“Collection points will not solve the plastics reprocessing gap, where more plastics exist than can be recycled within Australia's maximum capacity. The Australian Government projects that, despite proposed improvements, we will only have capacity to recycle [4 out of every 10](#) plastic items by 2029. Circular solutions to plastic waste will never catch up if producers don't slow the plastics flow in the first place.

For further information or comment contact AMCS Program Manager Tara Jones on 0402 188 326.

[Images of packaging, including supermarket packaging, polluting the Australian environment are available via Hightail.](#)

About the Australian Marine Conservation Society (AMCS):

The Australian Marine Conservation Society (AMCS) is Australia's leading voice for ocean conservation. As an independent charity, we have been protecting our precious marine life and habitats since 1965.

We are a passionate community of scientists, educators, and advocates dedicated to safeguarding Australia's oceans. Our work has helped establish vital marine reserves, protect endangered species like the Australian sea lion, stop super trawlers and lead efforts to ban whaling.

From the Great Barrier Reef to Ningaloo, together with our community of ocean lovers, AMCS fights for healthy oceans and marine wildlife every day.

About the Boomerang Alliance:

Established in 2003 the Alliance has grown to 56 groups and led key campaigns for the introduction of container refund schemes across Australia and the banning of single use plastics. Its Plastic Free Places program has several thousand food service outlets enrolled showing the way to reduce plastic footprints.

Boomerang is currently pursuing the mainstreaming of reusables (eg, drink cups) across the venue and events sectors and reform of packaging laws to implement reduction, reuse and recycled content.

About the Port Phillip EcoCentre:

The Port Phillip EcoCentre is a community-led organisation whose team of qualified scientists, teachers and 2800+ volunteers have designed and implemented innovative environmental programs since 1999. We deliver specialist education, original scientific research and community action projects across Nairn, Melbourne; and work collaboratively at all scales for evidence-based policy, planning and legislation. The EcoCentre is home to Australia's first Citizen Science Lab, engaging the community to help answer big questions about nature and how to protect the world we love.

Our Port Phillip Baykeeper program is part of the global Waterkeeper Alliance of grassroots organisations protecting waterways across six continents, which all face significant plastic pollution impacts. The EcoCentre's recent joint report *Existing legal solutions to microplastic pollution* highlights the scale of plastic pollution leaking from the plastics industry itself, including recycling, and practical ways that existing environmental law should be applied to plastics.

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