



MEDIA RELEASE

Scamps and Chaney back Boomerang Alliance's call for urgent packaging reform to tackle Australia's plastic crisis

Independent MPs Dr Sophie Scamps and Kate Chaney have joined with the Boomerang Alliance to call for urgent national packaging reform ahead of this week's Environment Ministers' Meeting.

Australians use more than 1.3 million tonnes of plastic packaging each year, and more than one million tonnes end up as landfill or litter. The Alliance is urging federal and state governments to adopt a strong, unified approach that shifts responsibility for plastic packaging waste from individuals to producers.

In 2023, federal and state environment ministers committed to national packaging reform by 2025, including mandatory design standards and greater responsibility for producers over the lifecycle of their packaging. Three years on, key elements have not been delivered.

The Alliance and members of the crossbench are urging the Albanese Government to introduce legislation in 2026 that will:

- establish a comprehensive producer responsibility scheme (EPR) covering the full lifecycle of packaging and all producers;
- set mandatory national targets for reduction, reuse, recycling and recycled content for plastic packaging; and
- immediately roll out a national, producer-funded soft plastics collection scheme with mandatory producer participation.

Quotes attributable to Director of the Boomerang Alliance Jeff

Angel:

"Kerbside recycling transformed how we manage waste, but it's no longer enough. Less than 20% of plastic packaging is recycled, reuse remains negligible, and less than 8% of new plastic contains recycled content. It's time to act.

"The Commonwealth Government needs to stop procrastinating and introduce packaging reforms to eliminate and reduce problem packaging and ensure that the packaging we do use is collected, reused or recycled into new products. Without urgent action the domestic recycling industry is predicted to collapse."

Quotes attributable to the Independent Member for Mackellar Dr Sophie Scamps MP:

“Australia’s plastic problem won’t be solved by households alone. This is about turning the tide on plastic waste and putting the responsibility where it belongs, on the companies producing it.

“The only way we will turn the tide on plastic pollution is for the corporations creating the waste to take responsibility for it - both in how much they create, and how it is recycled and reused. This must be mandatory as voluntary schemes have failed terribly.

“For too long corporations have shirked responsibility by putting the onus on individuals and households to deal with the problem. That is like asking individuals to stop the waves at our beaches.

“With increasing evidence of microplastics in our bodies and environment, this is no longer just a waste issue; it’s a health one too. In coastal communities like ours, the impact on beaches and marine life is clear and deeply felt. I’ll be backing this push and working throughout the year to deliver real packaging reform.”

Quotes attributable to the Independent Member for Curtin Kate Chaney MP:

“Plastic pollution is a systems problem. And if we want to fix it, we need to control the waste at its source, not just deal with it after the fact.

“Households and local councils can’t keep footing the clean-up bill, because year-on-year these costs are growing.

“By making producers responsible for the full life-cycle of packaging, an Extended Producer Responsibility scheme encourages less plastic, better design, and stronger reuse and recycling systems, so communities aren’t left dealing with the waste.”

A Press Conference will be held TODAY (Tuesday 24 March) at 9:00am in Senate Courtyard 28L.

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Background:

Since 1999 single use plastic packaging has been managed through a co-regulatory (voluntary) scheme run by the industry. This scheme has failed to meet its targets.

2025 Target	Latest Industry Figures
All packaging to be reusable, compostable or recyclable	86%
70% to be composted or recycled	Less than 20%
50% average recycled content in packaging	44% (non-plastic)
20% average recycled content in plastic packaging	Less than 8%
All problem plastic packaging to be phased out	40%

A recent Commonwealth Government packaging consultation report stated:

‘Over 80% of respondents preferred Commonwealth regulation of packaging and 65% support Option 3, an EPR scheme with mandatory requirements.’

How Extended Producer Responsibility (EPR) Works?

An EPR scheme is based upon polluter pays principles. It requires producers to design products for cost effective recovery and pay the costs of collection, processing, and reuse of recycled materials through a circular economy framework. Most schemes require producers to contribute to an EPR scheme fund that can be used to fund any collection and recovery services. The Container Refund Schemes now operating in every State and Territory are examples of EPR.

EPR for Packaging

Internationally, Australia has endorsed the ‘high ambition’ goals for a global Plastics Treaty. This position supports capping production, banning high-risk single-use plastics and enforcing polluter pays principles to foster a circular economy.

Support for an EPR scheme for Packaging already includes most State, Territory and local Governments, the packaging industry, environmental groups and concerned Australian consumers.

A YouGov survey (Boomerang Alliance December 2024) found that 73% of Australians support a packaging EPR scheme and 88% support producer-funded soft plastic collections.