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## STOPPING PLASTIC POLLUTION – URGENT FOCUS FOR ENVIRONMENT MINISTERS AT FIRST MEETING

The Boomerang Alliance and its allies are calling on the Commonwealth, State and Territory Governments to step up action to phase-out polluting single-use plastics and stop greenwash at their 21 October meeting, the first since the election of the ALP government.

“Whist progress is being made state by state on very obvious problem items such as plastic straws, cutlery and polystyrene products - our organisations have nominated heavyweight plastics bags, coffee cups/lids and the lack of binding packaging standards to eliminate greenwash as critical and urgent issues,” said Jeff Angel, Director of the Boomerang Alliance of 55 NGOs.

Shane Cucow, Plastics Campaign Manager of the Australian Marine Conservation Society said: “With only 16% of plastic packaging recycled in Australia, and plastic pollution in our oceans projected to triple by 2040, we need to urgently accelerate action. It’s time to follow Western Australia’s lead and set our sights on widely littered or dangerous plastics like cup lids and thicker plastic bags.”

The two groups are calling for new national policies and measures to include:

- The introduction of a **national standard for reusable shopping bags**, based upon overseas models. To be labelled reusable, bags must be designed to achieve a minimum 125 shopping cycles, be well constructed with sewn handles, have minimum recycled content, be priced to encourage continued reuse and able to be collected for recycling at the end of their useful life. Current thick plastic bags do not meet this standard. Retailers could only provide reusable bags in future.
- **A ban on plastic coffee cups and lids in 2024.** Many EU countries are taking similar steps and also requiring all cafes to offer or sell reusable cups. A levy on disposable coffee cups is being introduced in many countries. A similar approach in Australia should be applied to make reusables common place and replace the 1.8 billion disposable cups used every year, most of which are landfilled or littered.
- **Binding standards for packaging** to prevent manufacturers making false claims for their products. Setting standards for reusable, compostable and recyclable packaging that ensures these products are recovered in practice will put an end to any greenwashing, and prevent consumers from being misled. Under current labelling practice - recyclable does not mean it will be recycled; nor does reusable mean reusable.

“Our organisations do welcome the growing state support in expanding the container deposit schemes around Australia, which is also on the Ministers’ agenda. All states should get on board,” Mr Angel said.