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REDcycle Collapse Exposes Packaging Industry Flaws

The collapse of the REDcycle soft plastics recycling scheme and “secret stockpiling” has revealed deeper problems that must be fixed if the community is to have confidence in plastics recycling, the Boomerang Alliance of 55 NGOs said today.

“REDcycle has been the flagship of industry and government claims they are taking action on soft plastics recycling, but it has only ever been a small operation compared to the 336,000 tonnes of soft plastics used and dumped every year. The fundamental problem is the lack of a market to support an ongoing effort and this can only be fixed by mandatory recycled content rules, which to date have been opposed by industry and government,” said Jeff Angel, Director of the Alliance.

“All producers need to be part of a mandatory product stewardship scheme that requires investment in comprehensive collection systems and use of the material in new products. This can be achieved under federal law; or a state like NSW which has some good legislation. Reliance on the voluntary, small scale approach was always going to fail. Producers also need to find alternatives to plastic, so the pollution problem is lessened.”

“REDcycle and buyers of the collected plastics have been a good proving ground, but much more needs to be done to make it mainstream. Use of reprocessed material should not be an option in roads or new packaging. This has been a fundamental flaw in the National Packaging Plan which won’t reach its 2025 targets. Environment ministers need to take forceful action. Putting a label on packaging that says “recyclable” does not mean it is recycled in practice or at scale,” Mr Angel said.