

# TURN BACK THE TOXIC TIDE

## MEDIA BACKGROUNDER:



**BOOMERANG**  
ALLIANCE

THE TOXIC TIDE OF PLASTIC IN AUSTRALIAN WATERS & HOW TO SOLVE IT!

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### 1. PLASTIC POLLUTION IS EVERYWHERE:

- ✎ The amount of plastic in Australian waters is MUCH worse than previously thought – in the order of 1.7million tonnes;
- ✎ Much of that is invisible to everyday Australians; broken into microplastic and sunk to the bottom of our ocean where it is destroying our marine life and contaminating our food.
- ✎ In total, there are some 192.2BILLION pieces of plastic in the Australian Marine Environment. This represents a weight of 1.7million tonnes.
- ✎ Annually between 90-130,000 tonnes of Australian plastic waste enters the ocean - without government intervention, another 717,000 tonnes will enter Australian waters by 2020.



### 2. PLASTIC THREATENS OUR ENVIRONMENT, ECONOMY AND HEALTH:

- ✎ As we start to understand micro plastic better it has become apparent that some 96% of all biodiversity could be ingesting plastic. On the Great Barrier Reef, scientists have concluded that coral is ingesting plastic at about the same rate as their food. Testing in the U.K has also show plankton ingests plastic.
- ✎ Greenpeace international have found that across 10 international studies an average of 27.1% of all seafood tested was found to be contaminated by plastic.
- ✎ Plastic is being found in a range of food sources beyond sea food, testing in Europe and Nth America are finding plastics in table salt, honey and even beer. Across the APEC community marine plastics have been identified as causing losses of some \$2.5billion.

#### IN QUEENSLAND

- Queensland is regarded as the most littered state in Australia (National litter index) with some 72 items found every 1000 square metres-41% above the national average.
- According to the Clean Up Australia 2015 Rubbish Report, plastics represented 41% of all litter collected in QLD-double the amount from the previous year.
- Recent Government announcements of cash for containers and a ban on lightweight plastic bags, will improve this. Both are scheduled for introduction in 2018 and enjoy bi-partisan support from the LNP. If properly implemented, marine plastic litter will drop by 40%.



- Other types of problematic plastics include plastic packaging like polystyrene and plastic food ware and microplastics, remain a major source of pollution
- Microplastics are pieces or fragments of plastic products that range from nanometres to a few Millimetres in size. They can be fragments of film (bags, wrappers, straws, balloons), foam (packaging, polystyrene, tyres, cups), pellets (microbeads, nurdles, plastic fragments) or fibre (clothing, cigarette filters).
- Their size means that they are often left unnoticed on beaches and waterways. Their size also means they are more likely to be eaten by wildlife and more likely to pollute the environment. All plastic litter eventually breaks up into microplastics.
- During preliminary investigations around SEQ, Boomerang Alliance has found microplastics concentration near the Brisbane River mouth and astronomical amounts at a site in Manly with <400 pieces per square foot. The source of this contamination was a playground in disrepair.

#### 4. ACTION IS NEEDED:

Boomerang Alliance has released the first [Threat Abatement Plan in the world](#) – outlining the key steps necessary to achieve a 70% cut in Marine Plastic Pollution by 2020.

We urge Queensland to maintain its leadership and keep pressing NSW and Victoria to act on plastic bags; and for Victoria to adopt a container deposit system.

In addition a range of other plastic pollution sources and products (eg plastic straws, polystyrene food containers, heavier weight plastic bags) should be removed from the market. Governments should adopt new policies to prevent their entry into the environment.