



www.boomerangalliance.org.au

PLASTIC, PACKAGING, RECYCLING & WASTE TO ENERGY POLICIES FOR THE NSW STATE ELECTION

The issues of plastic pollution, waste, recycling and the circular economy have come to the fore in the last few years. The various state and national strategies posit deadline dates of 2025 and 2030 – thus the next four years are crucial to achieving these; and further advancing the recycling agenda to deliver very significant environment and economic gains.

1. Plastic Pollution

While NSW was late to ban plastic bags and some other single use plastics, it has now caught up on the first tranche. However leading states such as WA, SA and Qld are moving to further problematic items and the current state Plan Action Plan will again put NSW near the back of the pack – making the state a dumping ground for such items and ongoing litter. Particular targets include heavyweight plastic bags and coffee cups (see below), as well as other itemsⁱ. A major focus should be reusables.

In addition, various sectors, such as retail, construction, transport and fishing contribute to plastic waste and litter. These should have plastic reduction, waste management and recycling plans.

1.1 Policy Ask: Urgently review the Plastic Action Plan in 2023 and announce a new strategy, consistent with other jurisdictions and targeting new single use items and including problem plastics in other key polluting sectors. Reusable products and practices should be incorporated into the solutions agenda. Single-use foodware should be banned for dine-in at all food outlets (see pic below).

2. Bags and Coffee Cups

Boomerang Alliance has released two essential policies to target plastic bags that are still permitted but which are single use and wasteful (and carry greenwash marketing); and for disposable coffee cups, which increasingly feature in the litter stream.

We propose adoption of a reusable shopping bag standard based upon the Californian approach, also widely used in Europe. To be reusable, a bag should be independently tested against a 125 shopping cycle requirement, labelled as reusable, be strong and durable with industrially stitched handles, a minimum thickness (we recommend 100 microns), have minimum 80% recycled content; and priced to encourage habitual use. Bags need to be collected at end of life by retail outlets for recycling. A national standard on reusable shopping bags has the support of the National Retailers Association.

We want all state/territory governments to set a national goal to phase-out all single-use coffee cups and lids by 2030 with these being progressively replaced by reusable cups. Prior to 2030 there would be a levy on all disposable cups/lids. After 2024 no plastic/plastic lined takeaway coffee cups/lids would be allowed, with up to 2026 compostable cups (AS 5810, 4736) permitted; then only non-plastic or home compostable (AS5810) items after 2026 - with a complete phase out by 2030. This approach is consistent with current policies being introduced in the UK and EU now.

2.1 Policy Ask: Implement the specific policies – Reusable Bag Standard; Disposable Coffee Cup Phase Out.

3. The Packaging Challenge

NSW signed up to the National Packaging Plan which sets a date of 2025 to achieve recyclability, recycling and recycled content targets. These are not on track to be achieved and the recent REDcycle disaster exemplifies the significant problems. We understand the Federal Government is reviewing the national plan and NSW should be an active participant, as well as maintaining the option to deploy instruments in state plastic legislation.

3.1 Policy Ask: ensure the Packaging Targets will be met and reject attempts by the packaging industry to weaken the recycling and recycled content goals and deadlines. NSW should introduce its own mandatory product stewardship regulations, if national arrangements are not forthcoming in 2023.

4. Expand the Container Deposit Scheme

Return & Earn is now well established and achieving over 65% recycling of eligible drink containers. A number of states and territories, including NSW are now canvassing extension to wine and spirits, juice, cordials and all containers up to 3L. Apart from the wine industry, there is broad support for this expansion by other industry and environment sectors. A recent IPSOS poll by the Total Environment Centre found that 9 out of 10 Australians supported wine and spirits in a CDS. Significant environmental, economic and employment benefits will be obtained.

4.1. Policy Ask: Implement expansion of eligible drink containers by February 2024 and investigate further additions in 2025. Consider ways to raise the recycling rate to above 90%.

5. Waste to Energy

The incineration industry promotes itself as recyclers and even part of the circular economy. This is a false narrative. It produces a one-off energy product and worse it requires long term contracts for materials that could be recycled in the short and medium term. Local councils effectively underwrite the facilities while undermining the move to a genuine circular economy. NSW has a number of major WtE proposals. Anaerobic digestion and landfill gas capture may be permitted.

5.1 Policy Ask: Amend the state's Waste to Energy policy framework to reject such facilities and significantly energise more investment in reprocessing the collected material from the waste stream.

6. Changing Consumer, Business and Industry Behaviour

Boomerang manages the successful [Plastic Free Places](#) (PFP) programs across Australia with national, state and council support. So far the NSW Government has been absent in funding support for this program. To date the PFP program has removed over 17 million problem plastics from use (nationally). The [AUSMAP](#) project is focussed on tracking microplastics and developing reduction plans. There are microplastic pollution hotspots in NSW that need attention.

6.1 Policy Ask: Provide financial support for PFP and AUSMAP; and adopt microplastic reduction strategies.

7. Continue Funding to Modernise Recycling and Adopt Recycled Content

The Recycling Modernisation Fund with contributions from national and state governments and business, was established to provide an expanded and modernised recycling industry for the domestic market. Ongoing funding is required to deliver a circular economy. A further critical policy is to mandate recycled content in government procurement – the current approach is too weak.

7.1 Policy Asks:

- Review progress and repeat scheme funding for a further 4 years.
- Strengthen the Waste Strategy to mandate recycled content in products purchased by government and for producers generally.



Eating-in with single use foodware – what a waste!

Authorised by Jeff Angel, Level 1, 99 Devonshire St, Surry Hills. NSW. 2010
January 2023

ⁱ For example - plastic lined plates and bowls, plastic laminated paper bags, coffee cups and lids, cups for cold products, plastic lids for plastic and plastic lined bowls, plastic lids for plastic and plastic lined cups, single use condiment sachets and sauce containers, balloon sticks and ties, barrier bags, wipes (note: new Aust Standard prohibits plastic), integrated packaging, plastic wrappers, sushi packaging, confetti, bread tags and neck rings, beverage can ring, heavyweight plastic shopping bags not meeting reusable standard, helium balloon releases of any number and use of helium to inflate balloons, mylar balloons, plastic barrier bags and bin liners, fruit and veg package netting, paper wipes (these contain plastic elements)