

FROM PROMISE TO POLICY. CALLING FOR COMMITMENTS TO CUT WASTE, LITTER, EMISSIONS & COST OF LIVING.



“ Australians are the second largest consumers of single use plastic packaging in the world*and we only recycle 18% of the plastic we use. **It's time for change.**
*Plastic Waste Maker Index, Minderoo Foundation

1 AN EXTENDED PRODUCER RESPONSIBILITY (EPR) SCHEME FOR PACKAGING BY 2026

Shifting the cost of packaging from households to producers, as supported by respondents to the 2024 Commonwealth packaging reform consultation paper. This scheme should include mandatory targets on packaging reduction, reuse, recycling and recycled content.

WHY? In the last 25 years of voluntary product stewardship, little progress has been made to address the impacts of single use packaging.

Current plastic recovery rates are lower than in 1999 (APCO 2024). The current Commonwealth Government has proposed reforms and received advice from industry and community, calling for EPR.

A producer funded scheme will make packaging producers responsible for collection and recovery costs. By setting mandatory targets, the scheme will ensure that packaging waste is addressed.

With producers covering the full cost recovery of their packaging and moves to increase reusables, Councils can reduce waste collection and service fees to ratepayers and price imposts from single use items will cease – easing cost of living pressures.



2 FAST TRACK A NATIONAL SOFT PLASTIC COLLECTION SERVICE, FUNDED BY PRODUCERS

WHY? Since the demise of REDcycle virtually all estimated 150,000 tonnes of discarded household soft plastics are being landfilled or stockpiled by consumers. According to Clean Up Australia, soft plastics are now the most littered items in Australia.

A new convenient collection service that ensures these materials are recycled is urgently needed. An EPR scheme for soft plastics should be based upon full cost recovery by producers and provide collection services convenient to consumers.

These could include in-store, kerbside or self-haul, depending upon the circumstances of communities.

3 LEGISLATE THE PHASE OUT OF PROBLEMATIC AND UNNECESSARY SINGLE USE AND SUPERCHARGE REUSABLE PACKAGING

WHY? In the last 10 years, States and Territories have introduced bans on problematic and unnecessary single use items. This has significantly reduced plastic waste and litter. The Commonwealth has proposed this should continue.



The next Government should support State and Territory actions to phase out problem plastics, including improvements to container refund schemes.

It's time that governments enact new laws for reusable packaging in public places, cutting costs, waste, resource use and emissions.

**IT'S TIME FOR CHANGE
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“We will introduce rules to produce less waste in the first place, in line with an approach agreed by state and federal environment ministers last June. Rules will include mandatory packaging design standards and targets – including for recycled content and to address the use of harmful chemicals in food packaging.

Labour Election Campaign, SMH, 2 May 2025

85% of Australians are concerned about plastic pollution*, yet previous Governments have consistently failed to deliver on promises to reform outdated and ineffective packaging policies.

Australians are fed up and are calling on the new Federal Government to turn the tide on waste and litter – committing to packaging reform that cuts emissions, household costs and the adverse impacts of plastic on human health.

On behalf of our community and 56 allied organisations,,

Jeff Angel
Director | Boomerang Alliance

WE ARE CALLING FOR:

1

Mandatory national 'Product Stewardship for Packaging' applying targets and extended producer responsibility by 2026.

2

Nationally harmonised State & Territory policies and regulations to progressively phase out single-use plastics and introduce reusables, alongside national action where required.

3

New national mandatory packaging standards and labelling to combat greenwash – incl. requirements for packaging to be reused, composted, or recycled in practice and at scale.

4

Urgent introduction of product stewardship for soft plastics, noting 88% of Australians support soft plastic collection & recovery funded by packaging producers (YouGov 2024).

5

National regulations for the adoption of Circular Economy Principles by all states & territories, based on Commonwealth Government Circular Economy Advisory Taskforce recommendations.

6

Expansion of 'Recycling Modernisation Fund' to a 'Circular Economy Fund', facilitating the transition to reusable packaging.

7

International Plastics Treaty: continued advocacy for Australia's high ambition framework to curb global plastic pollution.

8

A national microplastic pollution reduction plan as unanimously recommended by the joint party House of Reps inquiry.

9

Supporting improvements to State Container Refund Schemes, to grow recovery beyond the current national 65%.

10

A Commonwealth Reusable Packaging Plan to introduce policies and practices in areas of Commonwealth responsibility and support State and Territory reuse policies.

11

Funding assistance for regional neighbours to address plastic pollution and effective mechanisms to prevent shipping waste being discarded at sea.

12

Continued support and funding of community litter clean ups and citizen science projects.

13

An effective national cigarette butt litter reduction plan and a national EPR scheme to collect and manage discarded vapes.

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“The world will be unable to cope with the volume of plastic waste in 10 years time, unless countries agree to curb plastic production.

Anne Tvinnereim | High Ambition Nations | UN Plastic Treaty 2024

BACKGROUND

1. Addressing problem packaging waste and household cost of living pressures

In the last 25 years of voluntary product stewardship, little progress has been made. Current plastic recovery rates are lower than they were reported in 1999 (APCO 2024).

The Commonwealth Government has proposed reforms and received advice in 2024 from both industry and community respondents supporting **mandatory extended producer responsibility**.

A producer funded scheme will make those who produce packaging responsible for collection and recovery costs. With producers contributing to full cost recovery of their packaging and a shift to increase the use of reusables – Councils can reduce waste collection and service fees to ratepayers and price imposts from single use items will cease – easing cost of living pressures.

By setting mandatory targets, the scheme can ensure that packaging wastes are addressed.

Targets should be based on current National Waste Plan and include packaging reduction (20%) and reuse (30%) by 2030.

Introduce an Extended Producer Scheme (EPR) for Packaging by 2026 with full cost recovery by producers and mandated targets,

2. Maintain and harmonise the phase out of problematic single use plastics

In the last 10 years, states and territories have introduced bans on problematic and unnecessary single use items. This has reduced both plastic waste and litter.

The Commonwealth should continue to support these jurisdictional actions to phase out problem plastics and support preferred alternatives. Environment Ministers have agreed to act on key items. Commonwealth actions may also be necessary, as previously outlined in the Plastics Plan (2021).

Support the phase out of problem and unnecessary packaging and items by the Commonwealth, State and Territory Governments, including the regulated introduction of reusable packaging.

3. Establish national standards for packaging

There are no adequate or nationally consistent standards for packaging. These should be established to assist retailers with their procurement practices and provide consumers with accurate information. Too often consumers are given misleading, greenwash advice.

All consumer packaging placed into the market should be either reusable, compostable or recyclable. To be labelled as such they need to be designed and have consumer services available that ensure their recovery.

Introduce national standards and labelling for reusable, compostable and recyclable packaging. Standards must require that products labelled as such can be reused, composed and recycled in practice and at scale.



BACKGROUND CONT'D



4. Soft Plastics Collection. Fast track an EPR scheme for soft plastics in 2025. Since the demise of REDcycle virtually all of the estimated 150,000 tonnes of discarded household soft plastics are being wasted or stockpiled by consumers at home. According to Clean Up Australia, soft plastics are now the most littered items in Australia, representing 34% of all litter collected. A new convenient collection service that ensures these materials are recycled is urgently needed. An EPR scheme for soft plastics should be based upon producer full cost of recovery and provide collection services convenient to consumers. These could include in-store, kerbside or self-haul, depending upon the circumstances of communities.

Urgently introduce a product stewardship scheme for the collection and recovery of soft plastics (note: the AFGC have proposed a stand-alone company).

5. National Circular Economy. A circular economy approach is essential to efficiently manage products through the economy, without creating waste and pollution.

The Commonwealth Circular Economy Taskforce has produced principles, based upon international best practice. To ensure consistency, these Commonwealth principles should be regulated and applied in all jurisdictions.

Introduce national regulations for the adoption of Circular Economy Principles by all Australian Governments based on Commonwealth Government CE Advisory Taskforce recommendations.

6. Expand the Recycling Modernisation Fund to a Circular Economy Fund. A key adjunct to supporting recovery and reprocessing targets and capacity has been the Recycling Modernisation Fund (Commonwealth, state, business contributions) to assist establishment of facilities and repurposing collected material. It should be expanded to fully embrace the circular economy, including support for mainstreaming reuse.

7. Plastic Pollution Treaty. International negotiations are currently underway to develop an international legally binding instrument on plastic pollution that addresses the full life cycle of plastic, including its production, design, and disposal. The resumed Intergovernmental Negotiating Committee INC session, INC-5.2, is expected to take place in 2025. Since 2022, the Australian Government has taken a leadership role in the negotiating sessions, as a member of the High Ambition Coalition to End Plastic Pollution.

Maintain high ambition at Global Plastics Treaty negotiations, to deliver a strong treaty including that stops plastic pollution at the source through binding measures and targets to reduce plastic production and consumption.

8. Microplastics. With microplastics increasingly being implicated in human health impacts, as well as the marine food chain, develop a national microplastic pollution reduction plan (as unanimously recommended by the joint party House of Reps inquiry (2024).

9. Support improvements to State container refund schemes, to grow recovery beyond the current national 65%. This will involve review of the refund level, increased refund point convenience and expanded container eligibility.

10. Establish a Commonwealth Reusable Packaging Plan to promote reuse and introduce policies & practices in areas of Commonwealth responsibility and support State and Territory reuse policies.

BACKGROUND CONT'D



11. Provide funding to assist regional neighbours to address plastic waste and pollution problems; and effective arrangements to prevent shipping wastes being discarded at sea. Littered plastics are an ever-present danger to wildlife and clog up natural system and urban stormwater. Every plastic product littered will break up and eventually becomes microplastics. Microplastics are more readily absorbed by flora and fauna, causing both direct harm and potentially entering the human food chain. Many of our regional neighbours are subjected to coastal plastic debris, often from other countries or international shipping. Our neighbours do not have the infrastructure to collect and recover this debris or the plastic waste generated domestically.

Australia needs to support regional efforts to reduce and clean up plastic pollution in our region. Initiate new regulations and proper policing at Australian ports to ensure all on-board (non-putrescible) generated wastes are discarded appropriately on land. Standard waste service fees (e.g. based on crew size) should be included in port fees and charged irrespective of wastes volumes unloaded.

12. Continue to support and fund community litter clean ups and citizen science projects and including funding support for regional neighbours. We recommend a \$200 M fund be allocated for this purpose.

13. Develop cigarette butt reduction plan and vape EPR scheme. Cigarette filters should be included in the harmonised list of plastic products to be phased out nationally. NSW and SA have already called on the federal government to take a national approach to dealing with the most littered item in the country and the National Plastics Plan already features a specific action to tackle cigarette butt waste. Further, a national EPR scheme must be established to ensure the collection and management of discarded vapes.

Research completed by members of the Australian medical community has indicated that plastic filters do not provide any benefit to human health, yet significantly damage the environment.

HOW ARE WE TRACKING ON THE CIRCULAR ECONOMY?

- Australians generate **2,280 kg of plastic waste per capita each year**
- Of the **1.2 million tonnes of plastic packaging** used nationally each year, **most goes to waste**
- **Only 20% of plastic packaging is recovered**
- **47.7% of plastic packaging (88% of soft plastics)** has **poor recycling potential or is deemed unrecyclable**
- **Only 6% of packaging contains recycled plastics**
- **Reusable packaging is minimal**

Australian Packaging Consumption and Recovery Data 2021-22 (April 2024)
| National Waste Report 2022 (latest publication)

RETURNABLE PACKAGING

Can reduce GHG emissions and water up to **70%** and material use up to **75%**.

*Ellen MacArthur Foundation

2025 Year of REUSE

The Paris Olympics provided spectators with reusable cups and containers. The Rugby World Cup 2027 and the Brisbane Olympics (2032) must do the same.

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