

6 May 2019

## Single Use Plastics key target in next 3 years

Most countries, including Australia, have recognised the threats posed by marine plastic litter, but our nation lacks any concrete plans to make a substantial difference and the next Commonwealth government needs to fill the gap, environmental groups said today.

“Most states and territories have a plastic bag ban and container deposit schemes are spreading throughout the country. The microbead ban has made good progress. We now must move onto the next single use targets which are polluting our air and waterways quickly, to stop the build-up of plastic pollution that will last decades and decades. This will require nationally binding plastic pollution reduction plans,” said Jeff Angel, Director of the Boomerang Alliance of 48 groups.

“The Commonwealth and all State and Territory jurisdictions have agreed to having all packaging reusable, compostable or recyclable by 2025. The Australian Packaging Covenant Organisation (APCO) have a target of 70% of packaging actually composted or recycled by 2025. To meet these targets, the Commonwealth needs to act now and set a schedule to achieve those outcomes. In ‘away from home’ circumstances, the most obvious and achievable policy setting is to support reusable and compostable practices and set a phase-out date for single use plastics that do not meet those requirements.”

“The Boomerang Alliance has identified 6 items that should be included in a phase out: coffee cups and lids, straws, cutlery, cups and containers, plastic bags and plastic water bottles. All have readily available alternatives and, as many citizens and businesses are proving, the community is ready to change,” said Mr Angel.

### Single Use Plastic Facts

- Estimates show that at current rates of littering there will be more plastic than fish in the ocean by 2050 (by weight).<sup>1</sup> In Australia, the CSIRO calculate that ‘two thirds of the marine debris found along our coastline is plastic, most from local sources.’<sup>2</sup>
- Plastic packaging is routinely in the top 5 littered items in both the National Litter Index and Clean Up Australia reports. The most recent Clean Up Australia (2018) report estimates that 39% of all litter is plastic. If left uncollected that plastic will break up into microplastics, threaten wildlife that consume it and potentially enter the human food chain.
- As the largest component of litter, removing many single-use plastics will cut litter collection costs currently borne by Commonwealth, State and local Governments. Boomerang Alliance estimate that cost to be approximately \$500 M spent annually on litter clean-ups.<sup>3</sup> There are also the additional unrecognised costs associated with community litter clean ups, and the efforts made by ordinary Australians over a quarter of a century.
- Australia has supported the UN Environment Program to reduce Marine Debris and needs to lead by example, and assist and lobby others in our region to change practices. This cannot be done without a domestic policy shift on single use plastics.

- This year, the European Union announced an intention to ban a range of single use plastics by 2021.
- To date Labor policies state the party is 'open to extending phase-outs to single use plastics'. The Greens have committed to this policy by 2025. The Coalition has not made any statement, although it supports all packaging being reusable, compostable or recyclable by 2025, but this does not actually mean they are reused, composted or recycled.

Check out our blog [https://www.boomerangalliance.org.au/federal\\_election\\_2019\\_blog](https://www.boomerangalliance.org.au/federal_election_2019_blog)

Authorised by Jeff Angel, Boomerang Alliance, 99 Devonshire St, Surry Hills, NSW 2010

<sup>1</sup> Ellen Macarthur New plastic Economy Report 2016

<sup>2</sup> Understanding the effects of marine debris on wildlife CSIRO study 2014

<sup>3</sup> Turn Back the Toxic Tide Report-Boomerang Alliance/Dave West 2016