

Environment groups: use Plastics Summit to mandate recycling target

The Boomerang Alliance and the World Wide Fund for Nature-Australia say the Federal government should use today's National Plastics Summit to announce it will mandate that 100% of plastic packaging will be reusable, compostable or recyclable by 2025.

There should also be a legal requirement that unnecessary and problematic plastics are eliminated by 2025.

While the federal government has already set those targets, they are voluntary.

But the Boomerang Alliance and WWF-Australia say unless they are mandated, plastic pollution will continue to plague the nation.

Plastic enters Australian oceans at a rate of 130,000 tonnes a year and with plastic recycling rates only reaching 9%, the federal and state governments must intervene where the market has failed.

The Boomerang Alliance and WWF-Australia say mandatory packaging targets would transform Australia's use and recycling of plastic packaging.

"One of the biggest contributors to plastic waste in Australia is packaging. After 20 years of voluntary action, recycling and recovery rates have gone backwards. This pitiful situation is contributing to the ocean becoming a plastic soup," said Jeff Angel, Director of the Boomerang Alliance.

Katinka Day, No Plastic in Nature Policy Manager at WWF-Australia said consumers are tired of unnecessary plastic packaging.

"There are alternatives to plastic packaging, but they won't be adopted unless governments take the lead. A Product Stewardship Scheme for packaging could mandate these targets. It would be a turning point in the fight against plastic waste," she said.

The Boomerang Alliance and WWF-Australia are calling for five key actions that can dramatically address Australia's plastic crisis:

1. **Phase-out problematic and unnecessary plastics.** Single-use plastic items are a major and destructive source of ocean plastic pollution due to their small size,

low residual value and disposable nature. State and territories should phase-out the most problematic and unnecessary plastics such as plastic straws, cutlery, plates and coffee cups while the Federal Government should provide leadership on single-use plastics by setting the direction on which plastics should be phased-out.

2. **Address plastic packaging by mandating Australia's National Packaging Targets.** One of the biggest contributors to plastic waste in Australia is plastic packaging. To reduce unnecessary and problematic plastic packaging and achieve higher-quality recycling, stronger regulations on packaging are necessary. This can be achieved through mandating packaging targets within the Product Stewardship Act.
3. **Improve packaging labelling to avoid false claims and give people clear recycling information.** With an increasing amount of environmental and recycling claims, consumers need clear information to help them dispose of their waste correctly and be assured that recycling will occur. The Australasian Recycling Label could reduce consumer confusion through mandatory application across all product labels. It should also be expanded to include reusable and compostable packaging and any company wrongly labelling its product as recyclable should be heavily fined.
4. **Investment in modernised composting and recycling facilities.** To implement the ban on plastic waste exports, the federal and state governments need to invest in Australia's recycling industry, so that all plastic waste can be processed in Australia.
5. Commit to a target for **zero plastic packaging in landfill, incinerators and waste-to-energy facilities by 2025** in all jurisdictions.

Media contacts

Jeff Angel, Director
Boomerang Alliance
0418 273 773

Katinka Day, No Plastic in Nature Policy Manager
WWF-Australia
0413 656 731