
MEDIA RELEASE – 20 NOV 2020

NSW – ACT NOW ON PLASTIC POLLUTION

Environmental groups have called on the NSW government to “hurry up” on its Plastic Pollution Strategy, issuing their own [11-point plan](#) and observing 3 states (SA, Qld, WA) and the ACT have already moved with legislation, this year.

“Plastic pollution is a massive problem and NSW is on the slow track. Millions of takeaway plastics items like foodware, straws, bags, polystyrene, cotton buds and more enter our waterways every year. They are a proven danger to marine life and our food chain,” said Jeff Angel, Director of TEC and Boomerang of 53 NGOs.

“After developing and issuing a discussion paper, and considering public comments over the last 12 months - NSW needs a comprehensive Plastic Pollution Reduction Strategy now.”

Key Targets

1. Introduce a state ban on lightweight plastic shopping (including so-called ‘degradable’ and ‘biodegradable’) bags (< 35 microns). This ban should be implemented in 2021. Set a schedule to ban heavyweight plastic bags (35- 70 microns).
2. Legislate a ban on certain single-use plastics such as straws, stirrers, cutlery, coffee cups/lids and other foodware (plates, bowls and containers). This should include expanded polystyrene, and oxo-degradable (ie, fake green) plastics.
3. Take further action on *at home* plastic products such as personal care products for example, plastic-stemmed cotton bud, wipes, products containing microbeads, and other plastic bags and wraps bought through retail (e.g. produce bags and non-food packaging). Many of these could be avoided or have readily available non-plastic alternatives.
4. Strengthen regulations and policing around deliberate helium balloon releases. The release of more than 19 helium balloons is illegal in NSW but remains common practice.
5. Support a national program to remove disposable butts from cigarettes. Cigarette butts are made from plastic and are the most littered item in Australia (by item number).
6. Introduce packaging labels that guarantee and provide consumer assurance that packaging marked reusable, compostable or recyclable is designed to be and will be recovered in practice everywhere in NSW.
7. Regulatory action by the EPA to stop nurdle (plastic pellet) pollution by factories.
8. Introduce government procurement policies and incentivise business procurement for recycled content in products. Set a minimum 50% recycled content for plastic packaging.
9. Introduce new collection and processing infrastructure for Food Organics and Garden Organics (FOGO) collection across NSW and for soft plastics collection services.
10. Invest in new infrastructure development that will support full resource recovery of used plastics. This includes repair, reuse, composting of Australian certified bioplastics and recycling infrastructure.
11. Instigate research to examine the extent and impact of plastic pollution on the environment and wildlife and identify new innovative ideas that will avoid or reduce the need for unnecessary and problematic single-use plastics; and allow ongoing, effective monitoring.