

2016 ACTIVITY REPORT + 2017 ACTION PLAN



2016 has been an extraordinary year for the Boomerang Alliance. Three states (NSW, Qld, WA) and the ACT are now committed to implement container deposit schemes (CDS). A wide scale ban on plastic microbeads in cosmetics and cleaners is being introduced. Qld committed to phase out single use plastic bags including so-called biodegradables. We launched Australia's first Plan to combat Marine Plastic Pollution as the alarm about plastic pollution of the oceans and food chain grows. And our allied groups now number 45 from around the nation and one from Indonesia. Our Plan shows we've got more to do — so our program for 2017 is no less ambitious.

CONTAINERS, BEADS AND BAGS

Queensland leads the way

Our campaign in Queensland focused on building awareness of CDS and its benefits and moving the State Government forward on its election promise to investigate a container deposit scheme and restrict plastic bags.

We chose to seek bipartisan political support (ideally unanimous support from the whole Parliament) and active grass roots campaigning to bring on a decision. Our big challenge was to reverse the Queensland Opposition LNP position from a 'no' to a wholehearted 'YES' on both CDS and plastic bags.

Over the summer months a range of activities were held on the Gold and Sunshine Coasts with its mainly LNP electorates. We arranged surf actions, large beach sculptures, banners, facebook posts and beach clean ups. Our member groups, local environment organisations, as well as church groups, scouts and guides and local supportive businesses participated. The name of the game was to get community pressure and local news headlines - so there was a strong focus on creating great images for the press and social media.

Similar activities occurred on Bribie Island, Cairns and Yeppoon in Central Queensland. These locations were represented by either ALP MPs or Independents who also announced support. >>>





CONTAINERS, BEADS AND BAGS

>>> Contact was maintained with the two political parties. On 5 June 2016 - World Environment Day - the QLD LNP announced that they would support a CDS and introduce one, if elected. The LNP announcement cleared the way for a state government announcement to introduce a CDS in 2018.

Negotiations with both the State Government and LNP have always included a ban on single use plastic bags, as a complementary action to reduce plastic litter. BA with strong support from Wildlife QLD, lobbied hard.

BA was confident the government was supportive but a bipartisan position would lock it in. Also there was talk of a three eastern-state announcement. On 21 November, BA and Wildlife QLD attended the LNP media event in Cairns giving support to a ban on lightweight single use plastic bags (including degradable and biodegradable bags). On 25 November, the State Government announced a ban on plastic bags in Qld from 2018.

NSW breaks the CDS drought

After 13 years battling the big beverage companies our campaign finally broke through with the NSW announcement in mid-2016, that it would start a CDS on 1 July 2017. While we had originally sought a national scheme, it became evident that the federal government would not act – and it was up to the states. Once NSW moved, other states found it much easier to follow.

However, as a first mover setting the precedent for the scheme's architecture, it was crucial that NSW got its legislation right. We participated in the government's CDS Implementation Committee and our supporters and allies spoke out. Intense negotiations took place but we are not satisfied with the outcome. Legislation was passed in October.

The scheme may muddle through but it lacks key

settings such as a retail obligation which facilitates convenient container return by consumers and maximum use of barcodes to track returns, improve efficiency and limit fraud. It appears the big retailers have taken over from Coca Cola as the key opponents of a best practise CDS. We are working to improve the subsequent state schemes.

Nevertheless it is satisfying to see that now the entrenched polarised politics around the debate have ceased – there is enthusiastic participation by key industry sectors and recyclers and great interest from charities.

The bag ban hit a roadblock. While we were hopeful NSW would join with Qld to ban the plastic bag – they stalled at the last hurdle, getting hung up about the word 'ban', fearful about political perceptions. Their defensive resort is to say they have commissioned the CSIRO to investigate the harmful impacts of biodegradable bags. With over one billion bags littered in NSW and Victoria since state governments vowed to act in 2007 – neither state has any excuse for delay.

WA's surprise move

In a sudden move the WA government announced it would have a CDS by 2018. Boomerang had undertaken a significant campaign some years ago with massive community support, resulting in a state ALP government promise to have a CDS, but they lost the election.

Clearly the political parties had not forgotten about the necessity to stop the high litter rates and the community's demand for a clean environment. With both parties now supporting a CDS, whoever wins next year's election will have a mandate to bring the CDS to fruition.

The current government does not support a single use bag ban but says it would allow local councils to act for their area.



TURNING THE TOXIC TIDE

There's no doubt marine plastic pollution is becoming a pervasive problem, infesting every bay, inlet and the open ocean, contaminating the food chain to reach our dinner plates. This year the Australian Senate Inquiry heard from scientists, Boomerang and the community finding in a bipartisan report, "the magnitude of marine plastic pollution in Australia ... is a problem that cannot be ignored and is growing year-on-year." It was concerned there may be a "looming health crisis" associated with seafood consumption.

In a major research and policy effort, we released a Threat Abatement Plan – the first national plan for the multiple sources of pollution. We are seeking to engage a broad range of industry, government and community sectors to obtain a deep and widespread call for action. The Plan will be guiding our work during 2017.

Victoria – the laggard

The state claims it is the cleanest in the nation – but it's not. We have presented conclusive evidence that it has higher volumes of litter on beaches and parks than the national average and more than South Australia with its CDS and bag bans. For too long Victoria has basked in false glory and the current ALP government needs to find a solution.

In light of the state's recalcitrance Boomerang has launched a campaign for a CDS. We've been undertaking litter inspections and there are astounding amounts of plastic litter – much ending up in Port Phillip Bay.

Our campaign will be working with the dozens of community groups who have been agitating for years for a CDS and bag ban. The Greens have presented far reaching legislation seeking to cut the amount of plastic pollution and we gave strong support at its parliamentary hearing.

Microbeads

The proposed Australian ban by environment ministers is world leading as it not only embraces cosmetic uses but also cleaning products such as polishes and waxes which are an even greater source of microbeads polluting the ocean. Ministers have reiterated that if the industry agreement does not succeed in 2017, then they will take legislative action. This is the type of effective response needed to the alarming problem of marine plastic pollution.

PLASTIC POLLUTION IS EVERYWHERE

- Much of our plastic pollution is broken into microplastic and sunk to the bottom of our ocean where it is destroying our marine life and contaminating our food.
- In total, there are some 192.2 billion pieces of plastic in the Australian Marine Environment. This represents a weight of 1.7 million tonnes.
- Annually between 90-130,000 tonnes of Australian plastic waste enters the ocean – without government intervention, another 717,000 tonnes will enter Australian waters by 2020.



BOOMERANG'S PAST RECORD OF SUCCESS INCLUDES

- new regulations to stop dangerous fires from used tyre dumps and illegal activity
- a National Waste Policy
- e-waste product stewardship
- exposing pollution from mattress recycling
- opposing harmful waste to energy projects

THANK YOU TO ALL OUR SUPPORTERS AND DONORS!

2017 — A BIG AGENDA

We need to act fast and effectively on marine plastic pollution. Our solutions include:

- Container Deposits to eliminate 35-38% of all plastic entering the ocean
- Prohibit the plastics that are most likely to be ingested by sealife (bags and microbeads)
- Target the most toxic plastic products and packaging and adopt alternatives
- A pragmatic approach to difficult plastic emissions like synthetic fibres and tyre dust.

Our programs are ambitious and varied to influence all levels of society and economy.

The Solutions Conference

- 1 Inspire people to take action and mobilise the community
- 2 Finalise Boomerang Alliance's Threat Abatement Plan on Marine Plastic Pollution
- 3 Engage with our regional neighbours to provide them with the necessary knowledge, campaign pathways and potential solutions to their own plastic pollution challenges.

4 central themes:

- **Knowledge:** Providing a Regional and National Context of the current understanding of the impact of plastic within marine environments
- **Inspiration:** To highlight inspirational leadership and actions on Marine Plastic Pollution
- **Policy:** providing a toolkit of effective regulatory, market based and voluntary approaches that can reduce the potential for plastic to enter the Marine Environment
- **Action:** Sharing campaign and communications ideas to capture the interest of government and the community.

Communities Taking Control

Core to this activity is to seize community momentum to engage with local council and businesses to commit to cutting their area's plastic footprint in a community wide manner that is underpinned by local planning provisions and a formal commitment by local business.

The Boomerang Alliance will act in a facilitating role, where our team identify opportunities for our campaign leader to visit, discuss and introduce a suite of standardised initiatives for the community to consider and develop. In all instances the united community (council, business, local groups) decide what initiatives it will embrace and from there we provide a mentoring and support role to implement them.

Reuse & Refuse

The Reuse & Refuse campaign will target a broader group of single-use disposable plastics. We will develop a message for supporters to politely inform retailers that from July, they will not only be refusing single use plastics, they will refuse to shop at retailers that continue to stock such products and packaging. A community toolkit and alternatives will be provided to supporters.

The Fugitive

This campaign area focusses on identifying plastics that escape different commercial and industrial facilities. Commonly, these are 'nurdles' escaping plastic manufacturing and transport facilities, dusts and fibres escaping waste and recycling facilities, light weight plastics blown from landfills, litter that isn't properly managed at waterside hospitality and accommodation centres, spills and cargo accidents at ports and shipping operations, entangled fishing gear set adrift. The pollution breaches environment protection laws, but there are easy solutions and we will provide these to the facilities.

SPONSORSHIP

Can you join us to protect our oceans? Sponsorships start at \$5,000 and we welcome the opportunity to meet with business and philanthropists to discuss our more detailed plans and principal partnerships —Call Jeff (02 9211 5022) or Toby (0422 990 372) to find our more.

Individual donations can be made at: www.boomerangalliance.org.au

BOOMERANG ALLIANCE

Postal: PO Box K61, Haymarket. NSW. 1240. Street: Level 1, 99 Devonshire Street, Surry Hills. NSW 2010. Ph: 02 9211 5022. ABN 54152721302
Boomerang is hosted and managed by Total Environment Centre. More info at www.boomerangalliance.org