

Environment and Communications Legislation Committee

Answers to questions on notice

Agriculture, Water and the Environment Portfolio

Committee: Environment and Communications Legislation Committee
Inquiry: Product Stewardship Amendment (Packaging and Plastics) Bill 2019
Question No: 1
Hearing Date: 29 July 2020
Division/Agency: Department of Agriculture, Water and the Environment
Topic: Review of the product stewardship act/submissions
Hansard Page: 42-43
Question Date: 29 July 2020
Question Type: Spoken

Senator Urquhart asked:

Senator URQUHART: Thanks very much. I'd like to start off with the review of the product stewardship act. Can you tell me how many external submissions argued for greater use of schemes under a co-regulatory or mandatory framework?

Mr Mundy: I won't have the specific number.

Senator URQUHART: Do you want to take it on notice? That may be easier, if you're able to do that.

Mr Mundy: Yes, I'm happy to.

Senator URQUHART: Is there a place for these types of schemes in the current environment?

Mr Mundy: One of the beauties of the existing product stewardship act regime is that it has flexibility for application of either mandatory, co-regulatory or voluntary schemes. The levers to move to mandatory or co-regulatory approaches exist in the scheme. One of the findings of the review was that the act does provide an appropriate mixed regulatory framework for enabling product stewardship outcomes through those three different types of provisions.

Senator URQUHART: If you could take the first part of that on notice, that would be appreciated.

Answer:

In total 89 submissions made to the review of the *Product Stewardship Act 2011* (the Act) supported some form of increased use of co-regulatory or mandatory provisions under the Act.

Environment and Communications Legislation Committee

Answers to questions on notice

Agriculture, Water and the Environment Portfolio

Committee: Environment and Communications Legislation Committee
Inquiry: Product Stewardship Amendment (Packaging and Plastics) Bill 2019
Question No: 2
Hearing Date: 29 July 2020
Division/Agency: Department of Agriculture, Water and the Environment
Topic: National container deposit scheme
Hansard Page: 43-44
Question Date: 29 July 2020
Question Type: Spoken

Senator Urquhart asked:

Senator URQUHART: If you could take the first part of that on notice, that would be appreciated. Has there been any modelling undertaken by the department in relation to the pricing of a national container deposit scheme?

Mr Mundy: Not that I'm aware of, but I'll defer to colleagues in case there's been some modelling that isn't on my radar. I would say that the good progress that's been made at state level towards container deposit schemes in each of those jurisdictions has tended to obviate the thought and need for it at the national level. I might just pause there in case colleagues are aware of any research in that space that I don't know of.

Senator URQUHART: If you want, come back if colleagues have any further info.

Mr Mundy: Certainly, Senator.

Senator URQUHART: My question in terms of that is: would it have been cheaper in terms of rollout cost and cost per container that was then passed onto consumers if a scheme had been rolled out uniformly across the country rather than just state by state?

Mr Mundy: That's one that we'd need to take on notice

...

Mr Ryan: I have a couple of things to follow up there for Jason. At the Plastics Summit—I was just looking through the list—from the states, we had representatives from WA, Victoria, New South Wales and Queensland, and ALGA, the local government authority, also attended. Just earlier, I missed the question on the container deposit scheme. There is no work that the Commonwealth has done, but I would note for the committee that the heads of the EPA national waste working group are currently facilitating national agreement on best aligning aspects of the container deposit scheme, including the refund amount and container approvals.

Answer:.

Currently, all states and territories across Australia have implemented a Container Deposit Scheme (CDS) or have agreed to do so. Australia is therefore on track for nation-wide coverage of CDS without the need for Commonwealth intervention.

The Heads of Environment Protection Authorities' National Waste Working Group is currently undertaking work on options to align aspects of Container Deposit Schemes, including refund amount and container approvals.

At the Meeting of Environment Ministers (MEM) held on 29 April 2014, environment ministers considered the Packaging Impacts Decision Regulation Impact Statement (RIS). This statement analysed ten options to manage packaging waste and litter, including national CDS-based approaches.

The analysis did not involve a comparison of the rollout cost and cost per container of a nationwide rollout to a state-by-state rollout, and the Department is not aware of any other modelling on this subject. The RIS can be read in full here:

<https://www.environment.gov.au/system/files/resources/0d61a8da-4263-4844-928c-e4f9e07472ef/files/packaging-impacts-decision-ris.pdf>

Environment and Communications Legislation Committee
Answers to questions on notice
Agriculture, Water and the Environment Portfolio

Committee: Environment and Communications Legislation Committee
Inquiry: Product Stewardship Amendment (Packaging and Plastics) Bill 2019
Question No: 3
Hearing Date: 29 July 2020
Division/Agency: Department of Agriculture, Water and the Environment
Topic: Commitments under the National Waste Policy Action Plan
Hansard Page: 43
Question Date: 29 July 2020
Question Type: Spoken

Senator Urquhart asked:

Senator URQUHART: If you could take that on notice, that would be appreciated. I've got a couple more, and it may be that you need to take them on notice as well, but I'll run through them for you because I'm going to ask for a breakdown of things. You talked about the \$35 million that's been allocated in the announcement on 6 July by the minister to implement the Commonwealth's commitments under the National Waste Policy Action Plan. Can you provide a breakdown of what that \$35 million will be spent on? You then spoke about, I think, a further \$26.4 million. That's on top of that, I'm assuming.

Mr Mundy: Yes, that's correct.

Senator URQUHART: Can you provide a breakdown of what makes up those two total amounts?

Mr Mundy: I won't be able to provide a specific breakdown of the precise allocations of the first of those numbers—I'll address them each in turn—because the process is still underway for us to work through where we can achieve some of the highest-impact interventions at a Commonwealth level across each of the targets. What I can say is that the \$35 million will be spread across the seven targets and focused, in particular, on the 53 actions for which the Commonwealth has a role in delivering. We'll be seeking to make sure that we invest across that range of priorities in the most impactful way. Exactly where the funding goes might depend on where the most prospective opportunities for leveraging, in partnership with other players, emerge, and that may in turn dictate which areas the amounts of federal government funding go to. I wouldn't be able to provide a precise breakdown either now or on notice [inaudible] but happy to talk in general terms about the themes that we'd be pursuing.

Senator URQUHART: I understand what you're saying. Maybe on notice if you could provide some sort of information about where it's going to be, what those seven targets are, what the 53 actions are and what information you might have about where that might go.

Senator URQUHART: I understand what you're saying. Maybe on notice if you could provide some sort of information about where it's going to be, what those seven targets are, what the 53 actions are and what information you might have about where that might go.

Mr Mundy: We can certainly provide a flavour of the areas of focus that we expect that \$35 million to go towards. On your second question, Senator, \$24.6 million is for the creation of a national waste data visualisation platform, which will help to build a better understanding of our waste challenge. One of the consequences of different approaches across jurisdictions is that we don't have the ideal empirical basis on which to make policy decisions about waste and to understand where it's going and how our changes are having an impact. So that funding will go towards improving that situation, including through creating a visualisation platform for waste data that's accessible to all Australians, as well as policymakers, to help understand and make better decisions around waste and resource recovery.

Senator URQUHART: So the entire \$24.6 billion is going towards that?
Mr Mundy: Yes.

Answer:

What are the seven targets?

The seven targets are:

1. Ban the export of waste plastic, paper, glass and tyres, commencing in the second half of 2020
2. Reduce total waste generated in Australia by 10% per person by 2030
3. 80% average resource recovery rate from all waste streams following the waste hierarchy by 2030
4. Significantly increase the use of recycled content by governments and industry
5. Phase out problematic and unnecessary plastics by 2025
6. Halve the amount of organic waste sent to landfill by 2030
7. Make comprehensive, economy-wide and timely data publicly available to support better consumer, investment and policy decisions

What are the 53 actions?

The 53 Actions that are led by the Australian Government, or have joint responsibility with all governments, under the National Waste Policy Action Plan are:

1.1	Establish nationally consistent definitions and specifications for waste and recycled commodities to define the scope of export bans	Australian Government	2020
1.2	Ensure there is an effective Commonwealth legislative framework to ban the export of waste plastic, paper, glass and tyres	Australian Government	2020
1.5	Use the Australian Recycling Investment Fund through the Clean Energy Finance Corporation to support manufacturing of recycled content products	Australian Government	2020
1.8	Explore opportunities to improve environmentally responsible trade in high value commodities in the Asia-Pacific region	Australian Government	2022
2.6	Review and report on recommendations to introduce laws to improve consumers' 'right to repair' options	Australian Government	2021

2.10	Deliver a Cooperative Research Centres Projects (CRC-P) round with priority funding for new and innovative solutions to plastic recycling and plastic waste reduction	Australian Government	2020
2.15	Undertake research to better understand the contributing factors of household contamination of kerbside recycling collection, to inform future interventions	Australian Government	2020
3.01	Implement the Australian Government response to the review of the <i>Product Stewardship Act 2011</i> including consideration of regulatory measures.	Australian Government	2020
3.02	Establish a Product Stewardship Investment Fund to accelerate work on new industry-led recycling schemes, including for batteries, electrical and electronic products, photovoltaic systems and plastic oil containers	Australian Government	2020
3.03	Evaluate the effectiveness of product stewardship and extended producer responsibility activities across the country, to help inform future efforts	Australian Government	2021
3.06	Prioritise the development of national standards and specifications, or adopt appropriate international standards and specifications, for the use of recycled content in a broad range of capital works projects, prioritising road and rail	Australian Government	2020
3.18	Identify financial and other incentives that may assist key industries, including the waste and resource recovery industry, to transition to a more circular economy	Australian Government	2020
3.20	Taking into account relevant international standards, establish a nationally consistent framework to enable ships to discharge clean segregated recyclable materials at Australian ports to divert this waste from landfill	Australian Government	2022
4.1	Determine use of recycled content in road construction to establish a baseline and allow reporting on actions to significantly increase recycled content use	Australian Government	2020
4.2	Partner with Infrastructure Australia, the Green Building Council of Australia and the Australian Institute of Quantity Surveyors to improve demand for recycled materials	Australian Government	2020

4.11	Identify financial and other incentives to assist businesses to design for, and use, greater volumes of recycled materials across their supply chains	Australian Government	2020
5.1	Coordinate community campaigns to reduce and clean up waste on our coastlines and in our rivers, through the Environment Restoration Fund	Australian Government	2020
5.2	Implement the Pacific Ocean Litter Project, to reduce plastics and other waste in oceans.	Australian Government	2020
5.3	Implement measures to reduce shipsourced waste in accordance with the International Maritime Organisation's Action Plan to address marine plastic litter from ships	Australian Government	2023
5.5	Develop a national plastics plan to increase recycling rates and reduce plastic pollution	Australian Government	2020
5.8	Develop a strategy for consistent, transparent, predictable and streamlined regulation and reporting, to manage the environmental risks of chemicals and hazardous substances	Australian Government	2021
6.1	Consider whether updated national standards and specifications for organic waste products are required to improve industry and customer certainty	Australian Government	2021
6.5	Support the Fight Food Waste Cooperative Research Centre to undertake a range of research and activities to reduce food waste in the supply chain, transform unavoidable waste into co-products and influence behavioural change in businesses and households	Australian Government	2028
7.1	Establish a new National Waste Account to provide more detailed information on Australian waste and recycling markets	Australian Government	2020
7.2	Implement agreed national data and reporting improvements, harmonised data classifications and definitions for reporting, and sharing arrangements across jurisdictions	Australian Government	2022
7.3	Publish the National Waste Report every two years	Australian Government	Ongoing
7.4	Publish monthly international trade data on Australian recycled material exports	Australian Government	Ongoing

7.5	Publish the national Hazardous Waste in Australia report	Australian Government	Ongoing
7.6	Report on opportunities to grow markets in recycled glass, plastics and rubber	Australian Government	2020
7.7	Report on research to better understand business barriers to a waste circular economy	Australian Government	2020

1.3	Develop new markets for recycled products and materials	All governments	Ongoing
1.4	Build industry capacity and infrastructure to collect, separate, recycle and remanufacture recycled materials	All governments	Ongoing
1.6	Analyse and report on national infrastructure capacity requirements with a particular focus on plastics, paper, glass and tyres	All governments	2020
1.7	Adopt sustainable procurement policies, targets and guidance for the use of recycled content and support government agencies to improve their recycled content procurement practices	All governments	2020
1.9	Explore a legislative framework to prevent the landfilling of recyclable material	All governments	2022
2.3	Support the Fight Food Waste campaign, to divert foodstuffs from landfill	All governments	2020
2.4	Report on lessons learned and options to support waste reduction in the commercial and industrial, and construction and demolition waste streams	All governments	2021
2.5	Deliver targeted programs to build businesses' capability to identify and act on opportunities to avoid waste and increase materials efficiency and recovery	All governments	Ongoing

2.7	Support community-based reuse and repair centres, enabling communities to avoid creating waste	All governments	Ongoing
2.12	Support and promote circular economy principles in urban planning, infrastructure and development projects	All governments	Ongoing
3.07	Consider national standards for kerbside recycling collection and materials recovery facilities to improve consistency and performance	All governments	2022
3.08	Explore how to better align reporting systems to agreed national classifications and definitions for data and reporting, including surveys of recycling, to improve sharing of information	All governments	2020
3.09	Develop a common approach to restrict the disposal of priority products and materials in landfill, starting with lithium-ion batteries, materials collected for the purpose of recycling, and e-waste	All governments	2021
3.13	Investigate how to develop and best implement an agreed national approach to the movement of waste, to improve environmental outcomes of waste management	All governments	2020
3.16	Explore opportunities to leverage existing regional development programs to support better waste management and resource recovery	All governments	2021
3.17	Increase access to resource recovery and waste management infrastructure for regional, remote and Indigenous communities in every state and territory	All governments	2023
4.3	Work with industry to identify specific opportunities to increase uptake of recycled content in buildings and infrastructure with priority given to plastics, glass and rubber	All governments, Business sector	2020
4.4	Devise specific procurement targets across all government procurement, with details about how the target will be calculated, achieved and audited.	All governments	2020
4.5	Report on government procurement activities that have significantly increased the use of recycled material in infrastructure projects, including where possible the percentage of capital works projects that include recycled content.	All governments	2021

4.6	Report on progress in achieving procurement targets	All governments	Ongoing
4.7	Investigate ways to support and promote businesses using circular economy practices, such as awards or recognition schemes	All governments	2021
4.10	Support the Australian Packaging Covenant Organisation to develop and deliver an industry-led target for average recycled content to be included across all packaging	All governments	2025
5.9	Better manage the import, export, use, manufacture and end-of-life disposal of products and articles containing hazardous substances	All governments	2022

What information is there on where the targets and actions are going?

Work is progressing on both the development of baseline data to measure progress against the seven targets and the implementation of the actions.

Environment and Communications Legislation Committee

Answers to questions on notice

Agriculture, Water and the Environment Portfolio

Committee:	Environment and Communications Legislation Committee
Inquiry:	Product Stewardship Amendment (Packaging and Plastics) Bill 2019
Question No:	4
Hearing Date:	29 July 2020
Division/Agency:	Department of Agriculture, Water and the Environment
Topic:	Review of the Commonwealth sustainable procurement framework
Hansard Page:	44
Question Date:	29 July 2020
Question Type:	Spoken

Senator Urquhart asked:

Senator URQUHART: You may need to take some elements of this question on notice. During the National Plastics Summit back in March the Prime Minister announced that there was going to be a review of the Commonwealth sustainable procurement framework. Can you walk me through the department's review of this? In fact, it might be better if you take this on notice and provide when the proposed changes to the framework will be provided to the government? Will they be hard targets or a set of propositions by value for the use of recycled material in major infrastructure and other government funded projects?

Mr Mundy: I can offer a preliminary answer now if it's helpful?

Senator URQUHART: Yes. It would be great if you could give me something now and then maybe a bit more detail on notice would be really appreciated.

Mr Mundy: There are two key steps. The Commonwealth Procurement Rules, which are administered by the Department of Finance, will be updated to refer to the sustainable procurement guidelines, which are owned, produced and curated by the Department of Agriculture, Water and the Environment. Those sustainable procurement guidelines are in the process of being redrafted at the moment to make them as useful a tool to policymakers as possible and also to help to build our evidentiary basis for measuring and tracking progress against the sustainable targets, including use of recycled content. I'd expect that we're a couple months away from those two things being released but progress is underway and coming along well.

Senator URQUHART: Thank you very much. I'll leave my questions there. But if you can provide that detail on notice to all those points that I've asked that would be appreciated.

Answer:

1. On 2 March 2020 at the National Plastics Summit, Prime Minister Scott Morrison announced that the Australian Government 'will be strengthening the Commonwealth procurement guidelines to make sure every procurement undertaken by a Commonwealth agency considers environmental sustainability and the use of recycled content as a factor in determining value for money'.
2. Updates to the Commonwealth Procurement Rules and the Sustainable Procurement Guide will be released later this year. The Department of Agriculture, Water and the Environment will also work with procurement teams across Australian Government agencies to support the increased use of recycled content. This will include a range of outreach activities and procurement tools.
3. Target four in the National Waste Policy Action Plan is to "significantly increase the use of recycled content by government and industry".

4. An action under this target is to devise specific targets across all government procurement with details about how the target will be calculated, achieved and audited.
5. The Department of Agriculture, Water and the Environment is commencing work to establish necessary baseline information and to develop a mechanism for the ongoing collection and reporting of data on procurement of recycled content across Australian government agencies.

Environment and Communications Legislation Committee

Answers to questions on notice

Agriculture, Water and the Environment Portfolio

Committee:	Environment and Communications Legislation Committee
Inquiry:	Product Stewardship Amendment (Packaging and Plastics) Bill 2019
Question No:	5
Hearing Date:	29 July 2020
Division/Agency:	Department of Agriculture, Water and the Environment
Topic:	Plastic summit attendees
Hansard Page:	44
Question Date:	29 July 2020
Question Type:	Spoken

Senator Fawcett asked:

CHAIR: A number of the witnesses at today's hearing attended the Plastics Summit in March this year, but we can't actually find a list anywhere of who the around 200 industry and not-for-profit groups were who were at the summit. Are you able to provide a list for the committee?

Mr Mundy: Yes. I think we've got steps underway, having listened to the testimony earlier, to provide a list to the committee of the organisations that attended, so that should be coming your way soon. We've haven't provided names for privacy reasons, but you'll get a view of who the attending organisations were.

CHAIR: That's fine, as long as it's indicative of organisations and not-for-profits as opposed to individuals. That would be good. The point was noted by one of the witnesses that it was largely federal government that were there. Given the national nature of what we are seeking to achieve, I'm wondering why state governments weren't involved with that summit and what other actions are in place to coordinate the feedback that's coming from stakeholders with all levels of government.

Mr Mundy: Yes, I can clarify that. Contrary to a statement that somebody made earlier, state governments were invited. I don't have the specifics to hand. My recollection is that we got ministerial level participation from a couple of jurisdictions—I think it may have been Queensland and WA—and that state officials attended from most jurisdictions. We do regard the cooperation with states and territories as critically important. Our role at the Commonwealth level is one of leadership and coordination. We desperately need all parties to come together. The National Waste Policy Action Plan is predicated on collaboration and cooperation across jurisdictions. We've been working very closely with colleagues from states and territories, both in the preparation of the waste export ban to move that COAG reform forward and around the response strategies that each jurisdiction is going to implement to make sure that it's implemented effectively, and obviously through some of the new measures, such as the Recycling Modernisation Fund, which are very much joint initiatives with states and territories involving co-contributions of funding from states and territories to achieve some of the national goals around improving our capacity to use and remanufacture products.

Mr Ryan: I have a couple of things to follow up there for Jason. At the Plastics Summit—I was just looking through the list—from the states, we had representatives from WA, Victoria, New South Wales and Queensland, and ALGA, the local government authority, also attended. Just earlier, I missed the question on the container deposit scheme. There is no work that the Commonwealth has done, but I would note for the committee that the heads of the EPA national waste working group are currently facilitating national agreement on best aligning aspects of the container deposit scheme, including the refund amount and container approvals.

Answer:

The National Plastics Summit brought together over 200 leaders and technical specialists from across the plastic-supply chain, including multi-national plastic producers, brand owners, retailers, waste collectors, sorters and recyclers, as well as all three levels of government, community groups, students and associated peak bodies to achieve a broader representation of stakeholders. All state and territory ministers were invited to the Summit.

The Department has provided the committee with a list of the organisations and government stakeholders who attended the National Plastics Summit. Please refer to **Attachment A**.

Attendees by Organisation

Organisation
Act NoWaste
ALDI
Alliance Paper Pty Ltd
Amtor Flexibles Australia & New Zealand
ARUP Group
Australia Mobile Telecommunications Association
Australian Packaging Covenant Organisation
Australasian Bioplastics Association
Australia Post
Australian Academy of Technology And Engineering
Australian Capital Territory Government
Australian Food and Grocery Council
Australian Food Cold Chain Council
Australian Fresh Produce Alliance
Australian Institute of Marine Science
Australian Institute of Packaging
Australian Local Government Association
Australian Retailers Association
Australian Soil Management
BASF
Baxter Healthcare
Beechworth Honey Group
Bioelektra Australia
Boomerang Alliance
Bunnings Group Limited
Business Council for Sustainable Development Australia
Business Council of Australia

Chemistry Australia
City of Hobart's City Infrastructure Committee
City of Newcastle
City of Sydney
Cleanaway
Clean Up Australia
Close the Loop
Closed Loop
Coca-Cola Amatil
Coles Group
Container Exchange
Cromford Film
Commonwealth Scientific and Industrial Research Organisation
Dairy Australia
DB Packaging
Department of Environment and Science, Queensland Government
Department of Environment, Land, Water and Planning, Victorian Government
Department of Planning, Industry and Environment, New South Wales Government
Department of Water and Environmental Regulation, Western Australian Government
Detmold
Dow ANZ
Downer EDI
Dulux Group
Earth Champions Foundation
East Waste, South Australia
Envirobank
Environex
E Waste Watch
Expanded Polystyrene Australia
Fight Food Waste CRC
Food Innovation Australia

Green Industries South Australia
Greenbatch Pty Ltd
Griffith University
Horizon
Impact Recycling
Innovative Plastic Solutions
Inside Waste Magazine
Institute for Marine and Antarctic Studies, University of Tasmania
Integrated Recycling Pty Ltd
IQRenew
Kelmscott Scout Group
Kmart
Licella Holdings
Lids 4 Kids
Local Government Professionals Australia
LyondellBasell
Macquarie University
Mars
Mars Food
Mars Petcare
Martogg Group
Mav
McDonalds
Member for Leichhardt
Member for Wentworth
Minderoo Foundation
Mondelez International
Municipal Waste Advisory Council
Museum of Australian Democracy
National Association of Charitable Recycling Organisations
National Retail Association

National Waste and Recycling Industry Council
Nestlé
Nextek Consulting
Northern Adelaide Waste Management Authority, South Australia
NSW Smart Sensing Network
Office of the Chief Scientist, Australia
Officeworks
Pacific Regional Environment Programme
Pact Group
Paintback
PepsiCo ANZ
Planet Ark
Plastic Collective
Plastic Forests Pty Ltd
Plastic Free Foundation Ltd
Plastic Industry Manufacturers of Australia - PPC Moulding Services
Plastic Oceans Australasia
Plastic Police
Plastic Pollution Solutions
Polytrade Pty Ltd Trading as Polytrade Recycling
President World Packaging Organisation
Qantas
Qenos
Queensland Government
Recycling Plastics Australia
Red Group
Remondis
Replas
ResourceCo
Restaurant and Catering Industry Association, Manager - Policy and Government
Rimor Equity Research

Roadknight Investments (Aust) Pty Ltd / Myer Family Investments offices
Save Our Marine Life
School of Chemical Engineering, University of Queensland
Seabin Project
Sealed Air
Shared Value Project
Shopping Centre Council of Australia
Sims Metal Management
Southern Metropolitan Regional Council
Society of Plastics Engineers
Solo Resources Recovery
Specialised Textiles Association
Statewide Recycling
SUEZ
Tacca Industries
Tangaroa Blue Foundation
Tasmanian Government
Tetra Pak Pty Ltd
The Australian Beverages Council
The Ellen MacArthur Foundation
The Pew Charitable Trusts
The Plastics Circle
The Refoundry Australia
TOMRA Cleanaway
Twynam Investments
Unilever
Unpackaged Eco
University of New South Wales
University of Technology Sydney
Vanden Recycling
Veolia Environmental Services

Vinyl Council of Australia
Visy Industries
Waste Management and Resource Recovery Association Australia
Wesfarmers
Western Australian Government
Western Sydney Airport Delivery Partner
Woolworths
WRAP UK
World Animal Protection
World Packaging Organisation
World Wildlife Foundation
YCA Recycling

Environment and Communications Legislation Committee

Answers to questions on notice

Agriculture, Water and the Environment Portfolio

Committee: Environment and Communications Legislation Committee
Inquiry: Product Stewardship Amendment (Packaging and Plastics) Bill 2019
Question No: 6
Hearing Date: 29 July 2020
Division/Agency: Department of Agriculture, Water and the Environment
Topic: CRC projects
Hansard Page: 45
Question Date: 29 July 2020
Question Type: Spoken

Senator Whish-Wilson asked:

Senator WHISH-WILSON: I don't actually have too many questions, but there are some things I'm interested in getting some feedback on. Firstly, in relation to the CRC money that you mentioned earlier, why did the department go for a CRC-P structure versus a fully fledged cooperative research centre to look at the broader issue of marine plastics and their impacts through to solutions? Is there anything in train for a larger CRC-style structure?

Mr Mundy: I'm afraid I won't be able to give a perfect answer to that question largely because the carriage of the CRC responsibilities is with another portfolio, through Industry and CSIRO, so I wouldn't like to speculate about the reasons why it was structured in that way. I do have some information about some of the projects that have been funded under it, but, in terms of questions around the design decisions, I'm not going to be very helpful, I'm sorry.

Senator WHISH-WILSON: I might ask you to provide a list of those projects on notice; we don't need to go through it today. I just know that universities like my university, the University of Tasmania, the University of Western Australia and others were interested in pitching for a larger CRC structure. Who would I ask about that?

Mr Mundy: That would be best directed to the industry portfolio and CSIRO.

Answer:

The list of project funded under this program can be found at: business.gov.au/Grants-and-Programs/Cooperative-Research-Centres-Projects-CRCP-Grants/CRC-Projects-selection-round-outcomes.

The Department of Industry, Science, Energy and Resources (DISER) is responsible for the CRC-P, and any questions on this program should be directed to DISER.

Environment and Communications Legislation Committee

Answers to questions on notice

Agriculture, Water and the Environment Portfolio

Committee: Environment and Communications Legislation Committee
Inquiry: Product Stewardship Amendment (Packaging and Plastics) Bill 2019
Question No: 7
Hearing Date: 29 July 2020
Division/Agency: Department of Agriculture, Water and the Environment
Topic: National Waste Policy Action Plan
Hansard Page: 46
Question Date: 29 July 2020
Question Type: Spoken

Senator Whish-Wilson asked:

Senator WHISH-WILSON: That's the theme we've heard from other presenters today, and that was actually going to be my next question. One of the reasons given by APCO and some of their stakeholders as to why my bill shouldn't be supported is that there currently isn't the baseline data necessary to make those kinds of judgements. When will you be in a position to have that baseline data so that you can actually make accurate assessments of whether the targets are being met?

Mr Mundy: We're in the process right now of trying to establish some useful baselines on a range of things. I think the National Waste Policy Action Plan provides impetus to us. That identifies seven targets.

Senator WHISH-WILSON: What are the data that are outlined? What are your goals or objectives in terms of timing under that plan? Sorry, I don't know that off the top of my head.

Mr Mundy: The National Waste Policy Action Plan has a range of time frames associated with achievement of each of the each of the seven national targets. I can run through them now.

Senator WHISH-WILSON: No, just take it on notice. I'll look it up as soon as we finish.

Answer:

Target 7 of the National Waste Policy Action Plan (NWPAP) is to make comprehensive, economy-wide and timely data publicly available to support better consumer, investment and policy decisions. Within this target there are seven specific actions around improving waste data collection, sharing information and market development and research (looking for new opportunities for waste). The specific actions involve implementing agreed national data and reporting improvements, and publishing a number of regular waste reports (including monthly international trade data on Australian recycled material exports, National Waste Report and national Hazardous Waste in Australia report).

As detailed in Appendix A of the NWPAP, the Australian Government will report on progress against the seven national targets in the NWPAP via the two-yearly National Waste Report. This will be supplemented by additional reporting where relevant, such as for uptake of recycled content by governments and industry.

The Government has provided over \$250 million in new funding to implement the waste ban, deliver the NWPAP and develop a new digital platform that will improve public access to, and use of, waste and recycling data at both national and local levels. This platform will be developed and implemented in consultation with government and industry stakeholders over the next four years.

Environment and Communications Legislation Committee

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Agriculture, Water and the Environment Portfolio

Committee: Environment and Communications Legislation Committee
Inquiry: Product Stewardship Amendment (Packaging and Plastics) Bill 2019
Question No: 8
Hearing Date: 29 July 2020
Division/Agency: Department of Agriculture, Water and the Environment
Topic: APCO National Packaging Targets plan
Hansard Page: 47
Question Date: 29 July 2020
Question Type: Spoken

Senator Whish-Wilson asked:

Senator WHISH-WILSON: Are you expecting linear progress against these targets, though? Have you been able to work out what your expectations would be in terms of momentum towards those targets?

Mr Ryan: Yes. In my role as the representative on the APCO-GOG committee—that's where officials from government get together with APCO—we've been working through a number of these, specifically in relation to the Packaging Targets, looking at the different pathways through to the National Packaging Targets and what they need to do along way. They've got a plan over the next five years, to 2025, on what they expect in each of those packaging extremes. But they look at it by supply chain as well. I'm not sure how much APCO talked about that earlier today, but they have put together a plan on how they will step through those and meet those to 2025. Like others have said, I note that they are achievable but they are very ambitious; and they are the place we want to be.

Senator WHISH-WILSON: Is that publicly available?

Mr Ryan: I'll have to talk to APCO. If it is, I'm sure they'll be happy to make it available. I can take that on notice.

Answer:

The Department understands that the Australian Packaging Covenant Organisation's (APCO) plan to achieve the 2025 National Packaging Targets remains under preparation and that APCO is still consulting with its industry and government stakeholders on the content and final form of the plan. Timing and arrangements for finalising and possible release of the plan are a matter for APCO.

Environment and Communications Legislation Committee
Answers to questions on notice
Agriculture, Water and the Environment Portfolio

Committee: Environment and Communications Legislation Committee
Inquiry: Product Stewardship Amendment (Packaging and Plastics) Bill 2019
Question No: 9
Hearing Date: 29 July 2020
Division/Agency: Department of Agriculture, Water and the Environment
Topic: Modelling on international contributions of plastics in the ocean
Hansard Page: 47-48
Question Date: 29 July 2020
Question Type: Spoken

Senator Van asked:

Senator VAN: Following on from Senator Whish-Wilson, you alluded to contributions of different countries to the problem. Has the department done any modelling or is it aware of any modelling available on which countries contribute the most to the problem of plastics in our ocean?

Mr Mundy: Mr Ryan's in a position to answer that one.

Senator VAN: I'm quite happy for that to be done on notice, by the way.

Mr Ryan: I'm happy to take that on notice. The quick answer is I'm not aware of any research we've undertaken but I know of some research about, I think, the top 10 rivers that brought plastic pollution to the oceans. From memory, eight of those are in Asia and two are in Africa, and they produced 90 per cent of the plastic in the oceans. That was a study done that I'm aware of, but it's not from the department. I think it might've been an international study. I'm happy to take that on notice.

Answer:

The Department has not conducted any modelling into which countries contribute the most to the problem of plastics in the ocean.

The Department is aware of international research published in 2017 analysing export of plastics debris into the sea by rivers. According to this research, ten rivers transport 88 - 95 per cent of the global plastic waste load into the world's oceans, with eight located in Asia and two in Africa. The study can be read in full here:

<https://pubs.acs.org/doi/abs/10.1021/acs.est.7b02368>

The Centre for Scientific and Industrial Research Organisation's (CSIRO) Marine Debris Research Hub is also currently conducting a project into global plastic losses. The Department understands that CSIRO's project is still ongoing. The project fact sheet can be read here:

<https://research.csiro.au/marinedebris/?ddownload=1345>

CSIRO expects the research to allow for empirical validation of waste losses projected by an existing and most recent global estimate from 2015 of plastic losses into the world's oceans. This study provides data on waste estimates for the top 20 countries ranked by mass of mismanaged plastic waste. The study can be read in full here:

<http://science.sciencemag.org/content/347/6223/768>.