

Submission on Product Stewardship Amendment (Packaging and Plastics) Bill 2019

I most strongly support this bill.

Australians want to see decisive action when dealing with waste and recycling. Unfortunately, for too long, Australia governments have not taken seriously the need for wide ranging, effective, nationally standardised and environmentally sustainable ways of dealing with recycling. It is totally unacceptable that our oceans and waterways are filling with plastic and our landfill sites ever encroach onto native bushland.

It is prudent, therefore, to follow the lead of the EU and adopt practices that ban and restrict problematic sources of marine plastic pollution as a means of tackling the devastating effect plastics are having on our rapidly decreasing marine life.

It is also vital that the voluntary 2025 National Packaging Targets are put into law so that all levels of government as well as industry and the general public understand their responsibilities regarding packaging and how it is to be dealt with.

I recently attended the Waste and Recycling Expo held in Sydney. The message from all the exhibitors and speakers was the same and can be summarised as follows.

1. There must be a closed loop for all recycling. This will mean no need for the reliance on oil for new plastics to be made, no felling of native forests for paper and no sand mining for glass and construction.
2. Recycling dramatically reduces our use of water and energy in the manufacture of plastics, glass and paper.
3. Recycling must be standardised not just from council to council but from state to state. That means a national standard must be implemented.
4. Infrastructure must be put in place so that regional centres can set up their own recycling plants and avoid the need to put recyclables into landfill or to have it transported long distances to recycling plants. This will also have the benefit of providing employment in these areas. Infrastructure also needs to be set up near cities to recycle and reduce the need to transport recyclable materials from one state to another.
5. We need to be much smarter on how we can use materials currently seen as waste. European building and road construction, for example, use products that we currently dump in landfill.
6. The value of recycled material must be recognised.
7. There needs to be financial support from the government for research and development of innovative ways to recycle. Not only will this have benefits regarding employment but could also be a source of revenue from the export of products and intellectual property.
8. Procurement of products made from recycled materials should be a priority in any purchase made by government, industry or organisation.

9. Education of everyone from government, industry and the general public on the benefits of recycling and how to recycle.

We can no longer wait. The Australian public recognises the importance of recycling and the need for immediate action. This bill is the first major step in that direction.