

Committee Secretary
Senate Standing Committees on Environment and Communications
PO Box 6100
Parliament House
Canberra ACT 2600

6 April 2024

**Submission to the inquiry into waste reduction and recycling
policies**

Dear Committee,

As a concerned family, we submit that the only way to solve the plastic aspect of the waste problem is to act to force manufacturers to stop producing plastic.

Everyone's mindset is that plastic is necessary. This is wrong.

Stopping plastic waste is the focus of our submission. We address the terms of reference for this inquiry to the extent they are relevant to stopping plastic waste.

(a) Recycling export regulations

We believe Australia should not be exporting plastic waste at all. It distracts us from the real problem of reducing our plastic production and use.

(b) Circular economy deliverables

The circular economy is a misconceived objective. Plastic cannot be effectively recycled and **that is the hard fact that must be admitted**. Pilot schemes for reusing plastic (e.g. the failed REDcycle program) do not work. Funding more research in this area is wasting time and money.

(c) mandated product stewardship schemes

As the sole mandated stewardship scheme is about oil, we see no progress on plastic waste.

(d) other matters

We strongly believe that the Australian Government should and must do much more to eliminate plastic packaging.

Almost all products in supermarkets are packaged in plastic. Manufacturers are increasing their use of plastic despite global awareness of this growing problem. As the world's population grows the problem will only get worse.

The solution is for manufacturers to stop producing plastic and retailers to **stop selling it**.

Instead of plastic, manufacturers should use cellophane (plant based biodegradable material) which can be substituted for virtually all plastic packaging. There are many

types of cellophane This material can be printed and is heat sealable. It has an excellent shelf life.

Manufacturers are not doing the right thing voluntarily, so governments need to force them to use biodegradable alternatives.

There are obvious and practical means which government can use to do this.

- ☐ **Tax plastic** to properly reflect the social and environmental cost of its disposal.
- ☐ **Prohibit manufacturers** and retailers from unnecessarily using or selling items in plastic packaging.
- ☐ **Prosecute** and fine manufacturers and retailers who continue to use plastic.
- ☐ If necessary, **subsidise** manufacturers for using alternatives.
- ☐ If the government thinks exceptions (i.e., permitted plastic use) are necessary, they should be limited to essential items (e.g. medical) where the manufacturer can demonstrate that there are currently **no** alternatives.

Australia needs to take drastic action if it is to meet its waste policy goals. The 2019 National Waste Action Plan aimed to phase out problematic and unnecessary plastics by 2025. All plastic is problematic, and virtually all of it is unnecessary. Plainly we are falling short.

This is a problem that can be solved quickly by **government action**.

Sincerely,

Barry, Leith and Edward Brackin