

To The Parliament of Australia,

As a concerned citizen and public health professional I **strongly endorse the Product Stewardship Amendment (Packaging and Plastics) Bill 2019.**

This Bill

1. makes the Australian Packaging Covenant Organisation's 2025 National Packaging Targets mandatory and
2. emulates the European Union's directive that bans and otherwise restricts the most problematic of single-use plastics.

This Bill addresses market failures by establishing a mandatory product stewardship scheme that will require manufacturers, importers and distributors of consumer packaging and certain single-use plastics to tackle the problem: our current approach to packaging and plastics which has led to an ineffective recycling industry and a torrent of plastic waste in our oceans.

This Bill will force industry to act, and constitute the decisive action we need to deal with the problem and restore the trust and goodwill of millions of Australians who want to help in ensuring further degradation of the environment is prevented. This Bill is the least this Parliament should be doing to keep faith with our constituents and to keep pace with the rest of the world.

As they stand, the current packaging targets are a non-binding commitment made by some of the packaging industry. They do not capture the entire market and they are not compulsory. If they are not met, no one has to answer for it. In particular, the Packaging Covenant's track record in addressing plastic packaging is unacceptable. The rate of recycling of plastic packaging has been stuck at around 30%, while the consumption of plastic packaging has been growing exponentially.

A mandatory product stewardship scheme will ensure the integrity of the current 2025 National Packaging Targets and ensure that the aims of the Packaging Covenant translate into meaningful action that is of benefit to the recycling industry and that improves the health of our oceans (and by extension, the health of our population). A mandatory product stewardship scheme will also ensure that the entire industry—manufacturers, importers and distributors—are all required to participate.

Marine plastic pollution is one of the big environmental problems of the 21st century. An estimated eight million tonnes of plastic makes its way into the world's oceans every year. Plastic packaging is a particularly significant contributor to this problem, with around 30% of it escaping collection systems, and much of it making its way through stormwater systems into the sea. On current trends there will be more plastic than fish in the ocean by 2050.

This is a problem that is global in scale. But it is a problem that requires local action by every national government around the world. This Bill emulates the approach taken by the European Union in the development of their directive for the reduction of the impact of certain plastic products on the environment.

The EU started by identifying those items that are the most problematic sources of marine plastic pollution. It did this by selecting those plastic products and packaging that were most prevalent on the beaches of Europe. It then evaluated the nature of these products and packaging, their usefulness, the availability of alternatives, and the avenues for disposal. Having undertaken this extensive analysis, the EU then adopted a range of measures, including targets, prohibitions, design requirements, labelling requirements, and financial contributions.

This Bill emulates the following measures from the EU directive:

- A ban on the following single-use plastics: cotton bud sticks, cutlery, plates, straws, stirrers, sticks for balloons, food and beverage containers made of expanded polystyrene, and products made of oxo-degradable plastic.
- Consumption reduction targets for plastic food containers and beverage cups.
- Labelling requirements for plastic food containers and beverage cups; and cigarette filters, sanitary products, and wet wipes containing plastic.
- A container deposit scheme and a recycling target for beverage containers.
- The requirement for industry to cover the cost of disposal, clean-up and public awareness campaigns for food containers and beverage cups, beverage containers, packets and wrappers, wet wipes, balloons, and tobacco filters; and the costs of public awareness campaigns for sanitary products.

The European Parliament agreed to these measures by a majority of 560 to 35. The Australian Parliament copying this approach would not be a radical step.

Thanking you for your consideration.

Yours Sincerely,

Dr Tamzyn Davey