



Committee Secretary
Environment & Communications Legislation Committee
Department of the Senate
PO Box 6100
Parliament House CANBERRA ACT 2600 AUSTRALIA

SUBMISSION: Recycling and Waste Bills 2020

Dear Committee Secretary

Thank you for the opportunity to provide a submission to the **Recycling and Waste Bills 2020**. The Surfrider Foundation Australia believes that the health and pollution effects of waste to be one of the most critical environmental threats facing our own personal health and well-being, our oceans, our lifestyles, and the planet.

We therefore strongly encourage government policy to immediately address the waste problem so that we have a national and consistent approach across all Australian States and Territories.

Background on Surfrider Foundation Australia

Surfrider Foundation Australia is a community of everyday people who passionately protect our oceans, waves and beaches through an activist network of over 20 branches around Australia. We are a not-for-profit organisation and part of the global Surfrider Foundation family that has over 250,000 supporters, activists and members worldwide. Much of the waste on land eventually makes it's way to the sea therefore our membership is active in campaigning for policy that will eliminate waste entering the marine environment. Since 2007, our Rise Above Plastics campaign has been raising awareness about the impacts of plastic pollution in our marine environment. In 2017, Surfrider Foundation Australia introduced the '*Ocean Friendly*' program which encourages businesses to refuse single-use convenience items in order to prevent the plastic problem at the source.

Summary of Submission:

Plastic pollution comes in many forms; it can be a corporation deliberately choosing cheaper manufacturing materials that they know will never be recycled, right back down the chain to the consumer who buys a product made from plastic thinking that it will be recycled. Plastic pollution also can be from inaction from policy makers who COULD do more for the environment but are holding off so that they don't offend the fossil fuel industry. Plastic is a fossil fuel byproduct. Mixed plastics, single resin or polymer plastics, microfibres in clothing and tyres are all a part of the problem however irresponsible recycling and incineration are also a part of the plastic pollution problem.

I urge our government to force manufacturers and polluting corporations to introduce stricter policies and fines, so that the offending producers are held accountable and responsible for the waste that is produced; only then will there be far less of a waste problem; in fact, what little waste was produced could in fact become a resource.

There are not many facilities that can dispose of or recycle the polyethylene plastics such as those found on supermarket shelves efficiently. The plants are expensive to set up and run, and there's little demand for using the recycled material to make new products. Plastic packaging is in such huge demand yet most of it is thrown away as soon as it is opened. Approximately 33% of plastic packaging goes directly into domestic waste, and much of that ends up in our oceans.

The Government suggests that voluntary schemes are set in place and yet this only makes an unfair playing field between companies who do the right thing and comply and use more expensive materials that are in sympathy with the natural environment – and those who deliberately choose to ignore the guidelines and continue in their polluting ways making profits over the environment.

Conclusion:

I urge the Government to take strong leadership to drive this via policy and waste levies & taxes so that we have LESS waste to recover, repurpose and recycle. Recycling is not the only answer. The government must force corporations to make less products out of materials that cannot be effectively absorbed by nature. In other words, we have to move away from being dependent upon fossil fuels and move back to materials that can be easily and effectively recycled. This will cost companies more but in the long run – it will cost Australia less by creating a cleaner and greener country.

Incineration is not the answer – incineration has been proved to be ineffective in countries across the globe and has created not only another layer of pollution, but worse - health problems.

The government has the opportunity to create a world class policy to protect our environment, to build an economy out of sourcing new industry to support greener and cleaner packaging systems, and most importantly, to create clever policies will protect the health of all Australians.

Taking greater responsibility for the environment should NOT be an option but a prerequisite for obtaining a license to produce. We must think for the future and insist that all manufacturers and producers be forced to act more responsibly. Together with enforced compliance, (rather than voluntary actions which only water down and weaken laws), the government must run educational campaigns for all small businesses and consumers alike. We ALL play a role in cleaning up the mess that we have made by being so reliant upon convenience, the most obvious being single-use plastics.

Regards,
Susie Crick – Director
Marine Plastic Pollution