

A Guide on Key Boomerang Alliance Plastics Policy Positions for Allies

Our Goals

- Transition to a zero-waste society by leveraging strategic opportunities to drive best practice resource efficiency, recovery, recycling, and product reuse practices
- Eliminate unnecessary and problematic single use plastics from use and reduce overall plastic production
- Cut Australia's (and neighbours) contribution to plastic pollution entering the oceans

International

A global Marine Plastic Pollution Treaty



Addressing marine plastic pollution at a global scale is essential. The first step in developing a comprehensive and enforceable treaty has just been taken (UN Meeting March 2022).

The UN resolution signed by 174 nations calls for a binding treaty and a whole of lifecycle approach to resolving the problems. This includes product design and production as well as addressing litter and waste issues.

- The treaty should be in place by 2024
- Support an enforceable treaty with global rules and specific targets for reduction in plastic use and pollution, and impact across the whole lifecycle of plastics
- Australia to take a leadership role in the Asia/Pacific region working with the High Ambition Group to encourage neighbouring nations to sign
- Allocate funding to assist regional neighbours to clean up plastic litter and waste, invest in infrastructure and services to recover collected discarded materials and develop a circular economy approach

National

Overview of policy positions

- National Plastics Plan
- Product Stewardship for Packaging
- Packaging standards
- Soft plastics
- Single use plastic bans
- Reusable shopping bags
- Coffee cups and lids
- Reusable packaging
- Recycling/recycled content
- Helium balloons
- Community clean ups
- PFAS
- Energy from waste
- Circular Economy
- Communities taking action



National Plastics Plan

The Commonwealth National Plastics Plan (NPP) has set phase out targets goals for EPS packaging (June 2022); all claimed compostable packaging to be certified to Australian standards (June 2022); and EPS containers, moulded packaging, and PVC labels to be phased out (December 2022). It also embraced the National Packaging Plan with its targets of by 2025 – 100% recyclable materials: 70% recycling and 20% plastic product recycled content.

The phase-out targets were not met, and it is now accepted that neither will the packaging goals.

The Commonwealth needs to develop, integrated with states and territories an expanded NPP that includes both Commonwealth/ state measures within a coordinated action plan, as matter of urgency.

This should:

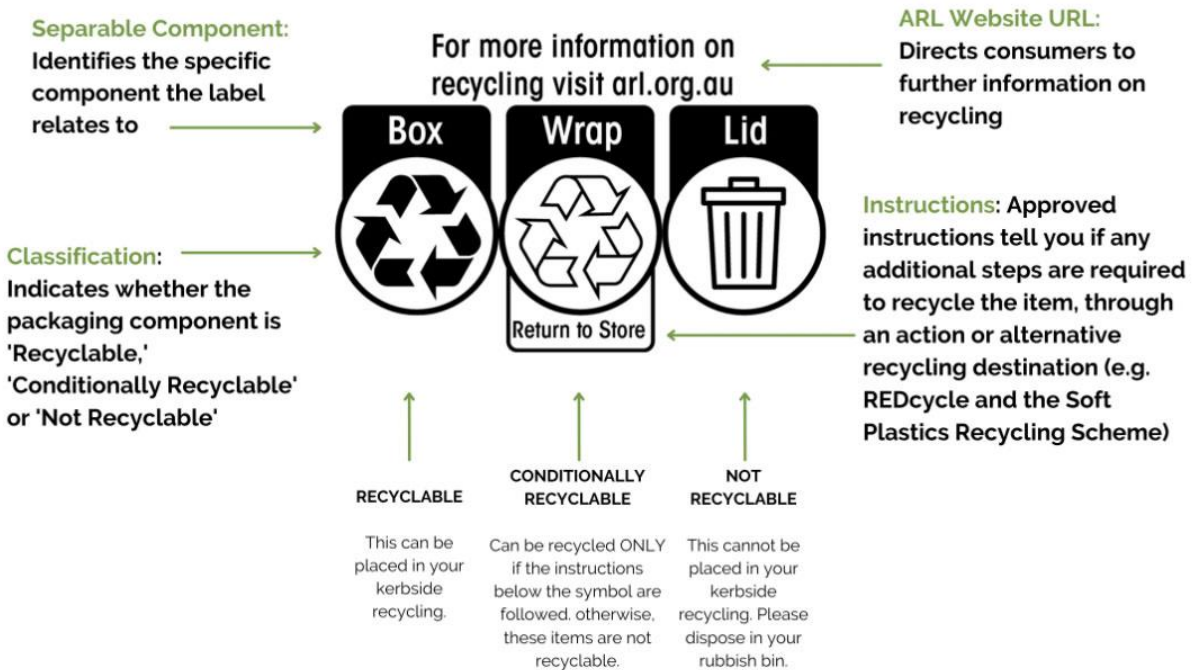
- Mandate announced phase-out and other targets
- Introduce new targets including schemes to reduce/collect soft plastics and business-to-business EPS packaging
- Introduce a Product Stewardship Scheme for cigarette butts and e-cigarettes
- Harmonise and support state/territory government actions (e.g, heavyweight plastic bags, single-use plastic phase-outs, balloon releases)
- Introduce Commonwealth/state procurement practices that support avoidance, reuse, recovery, and greater recycled content in new products
- Establish a national, publicly available database on macro and micro litter hotspots and locations

- Research alternative and preferred options to problematic plastic products
- Adopt specific microplastic management and reduction strategies
- Examine strategies to prevent ocean dumping by foreign flagged shipping

Product Stewardship

The Australian Packaging Covenant Organisation (APCO) has acknowledged that 2025 targets for packaging including plastics will not be met based upon current voluntary trajectories. This confirms Boomerang’s 2021 assessment. Industry commitments now need to be mandated.

- Introduce a mandatory Product Stewardship Scheme for Packaging to guarantee that National Packaging Plan goals (this includes the targets for recovery, recycled content, and the phase-out of problematic plastics) by 2025 will be met
- Require manufacturers to be responsible for eco-product design of products, their accurate labelling, collection and processing services, and responsibility for costs that may be incurred



Standards

All government commitments include an endorsed target of having all packaging either reusable, compostable or recyclable by 2025. However, there are no nationally adopted nor binding standards for such packaging. This allows suppliers to make misleading or uninformed claims about their products and will undermine essential outcomes.

- Set national standards and practices for all reusable, compostable or recyclable plastic products that ensure products can be recovered in practice and at scale
- Introduce accurate labelling of products to provide consumers with full information on recovery instructions and options

Soft Plastics

An estimated 350,000 tonnes of soft plastics are used annually in Australia (about 150,000 tonnes from households). The management of soft plastics should be included in Product Stewardship scheme for Packaging. In the immediate term, following the collapse of the REDcycle program:



- Interim measures must be introduced now to ban these materials from landfill and instead collect and store (until they can be recovered) soft plastics from households and business
- Put in place a national scheme with the capacity to collect all discarded soft plastics

Single Use Plastics bans

The Boomerang Alliance supports the banning of problematic single use plastics in line with national goals to phase these out by 2025. A start has been made mainly with takeaway plastic packaging by all states and territories. This includes straws, cutlery, bags and assorted other items.



We support the continued expansion of these bans to include other takeaway plastics and single use plastics/plastic packaging from retail, business, agriculture and in the marine/riverine environment. Where governments seek a harmonised approach, the lowest common denominator should be avoided.

Policy settings should be based upon the waste hierarchy of avoid, reduce, reuse, or recover.

In reference to recovery of takeaway food ware our hierarchy starts with avoidance and reduction, then reuse and where disposables are used, non-plastic, AS certified home compostables, AS Certified Commercially compostables. Where alternatives to AS Certified commercially compostable products are available, we do not support commercially compostable items. We do not support any recyclable food ware for takeaway purposes.

Reusable Shopping Bags

We are proposing the adoption of a reusable shopping bag standard based upon a Californian standard, also widely used in Europe. All retailers from 2024 would only be allowed to sell bags to customers that meet this standard. Some exemptions (for takeaway business could be allowed to supply paper bags). To comply with the standard all bags must be:



- Independently tested and certified against a 125 shopping cycles requirement
- Strong, durable, fit for purpose construction with separate, industrially stitched handles
- A minimum thickness above 70 microns (we recommend 100 microns)
- Not contain any hazardous or harmful components that would inhibit recycling
- Have a minimum 80% recycled content, increasing to 100% where possible
- With a minimum price to encourage multiple use. We recommend a minimum \$2
- Labelled as reusable and feature an unambiguous and verifiable Reusable Shopping Bag logo

At the end of its useful life a reusable bag should be collected at retail outlets for recycling.

Coffee Cups and Lids



Disposable coffee cups and lids, whatever they are made of, are not collected, and recovered. They are mainly littered or landfilled. They are the most obvious takeaway items where reusable/BYO alternatives could become common place.

Whilst governments support reusable cup/lid uptake, little has been done to comprehensively adopt this across the economy.

We call on all state/territory governments to set a national goal to phase-out all single-use coffee cups and lids by 2030 and implement a roadmap to achieve this.

To achieve this goal, the Boomerang Alliance is proposing a staged, transitional approach, where all single use plastic coffee cups/lids are banned in 2024 (with exemptions for AS certified cups and lids until 2026). Then all disposable coffee cups and lids, including non-plastic/home compostable, would be phased out between 2026 - 2030.

All single use coffee cups and lids would be replaced by reusable alternatives.

A Roadmap to make Reusable Coffee Cups and Lids a Common Practice

1. Introduce mandatory requirements that all outlets providing takeaway beverages also offer or sell reusable cups and lids. All outlets must accept returned cups and/or participate in a reusable cup network. Disposable cups /lids should not be used for dine-in.
2. A levy of 25 cents (or higher) will be charged on all disposable coffee cups, and their lids, sold from 2024 until 2030.
3. 'Controlled and managed environments' such as sports stadiums, festivals, airline and train services, government and public institutions should be early adopters and only provide reusable cups and lids from 2024.

Expanding Container Deposit Schemes

By the end of 2023 every state and territory will have a CDS. The Boomerang Alliance is now seeking to have all CD Schemes managed and delivered consistently, with performance data and strategic plans publicly available.

These schemes should also be expanded to other products and materials. This should include:

- wine and spirit bottles
- large juice containers and cordials
- milk containers
- other non-beverage glass and plastic containers
- bottle tops
- Consideration should be given to doubling the deposit amount to increase the container return rate above 90%



Reusable Packaging and Food Ware

The Boomerang Alliance supports the increased uptake of reusable packaging and foodware. Many in the community already use BYO coffee cups and other containers. However, the uptake is generally left to individuals. We seek more government action to make reusables mainstream. The reusable shopping bags and coffee cup positions (above) represent a starting point.

We support the further use of reusable food ware at:

- Public events and sporting fixtures
- Takeaway outlets
- Supermarkets and retail
- In transportation
- And in 'controlled environments' such as office blocks, public institutions, food courts and sports stadiums

Recycling/Recycled Content

The Recycling Modernisation Fund with contributions from national and state governments and business, was established to provide an expanded and modernised recycling industry for the domestic market. Its aim is to achieve an 80% resource recovery rate by 2030. We seek:

- Investment in infrastructure that supports a circular economy model
- Enforceable government procurement practices that support the use of recycled content by government and business
- Review and repeat scheme funding every 4 years until targets are met
- Ensure all regions have consistent standard waste, organics and recycling services and facilities operating by 2025
- Funding should be made available to assist the construction of organic recycling facilities around the country to achieve national targets

Helium Balloons

The Boomerang Alliance opposes the deliberate release of any helium filled balloons (with the exception of balloons used for weather or scientific purposes). Our position calls for:

- A ban on any release of balloons - every State and Territory to introduce specific laws or amendments to existing laws to clearly ban any release of helium balloons (any number)
- A ban on the sale of helium to the public to inflate balloons, with helium only available from businesses registered as balloon industry suppliers who can control the chain of custody, prevent releases, and arrange correct disposal (a national register of suppliers to be established or helium suppliers to provide only to registered industry suppliers)
- Every state and territory to advise all relevant agencies, local government and event/hospitality sectors about the ban and provide adequate policing to monitor and impose financial penalties to ensure compliance



Community Clean Ups/Data Collection

Community clean-ups are an essential activity. They educate, reduce litter, collect data, allow source investigation, engender community participation, and spread awareness about plastics and their use. Macro and micro plastic litter need to be targeted.

- Litter and community clean ups must be supported by governments and the broader community. They are important to reduce plastic pollution

- Fund research into the extent, sources and impacts of macro-plastics/micro-plastics on the environment and human and wildlife health
- Support a coordinated approach for citizen science programs that add to a national and accessible database on plastic pollution locations and impacts
- Commonwealth resourcing of global initiatives that reduce plastic use and litter generation. Assist regional neighbours with litter clean-up activities and economic development programs centred on plastics recovery and recycling

(Perfluoroalkyl Substances) or PFAS Chemicals

PFAS chemicals are a broad category of chemicals used as fire retardants, for oil clean-up operations, as stain resisters on furnishings and, in the case of packaging, as grease proofing. In packaging it is used as a barrier to hold hot or greasy foods and liquids. For example, pizza boxes, hot chip paper or food containers. That packaging could either be recyclable or compostable.

- The Boomerang Alliance view is that PFAS chemicals should be removed from all food packaging. It is the direct contact of these chemicals to food being consumed that represents the most likely way these chemicals can enter the body.

Energy from Waste



EfW comes in many forms. It can include anaerobic digestion or landfill/sewage gas capture, technologies that the Boomerang Alliance supports. It also includes refuse derived fuels and mixed waste incineration, technologies that add to GHG emissions, pollution and undermine recycling.

- The Boomerang Alliance opposes the thermal treatment (e.g, incineration, conversion to fuel) of disposed mixed materials is counter to the circular economy and has significant pollution dangers. It can also cannibalise organic and recyclable material via long term contracts, that would otherwise have a greater resource value.

Circular Economy

The Boomerang Alliance supports the establishment of a genuine circular economy. A circular economy model, a so-called cradle-to-cradle system, manages resources and products through their entire lifecycle so that they circulate and are retained in the economy, and not discarded as wastes. Incineration of mixed wastes is an example of a circular economy failure.

Boomerang Alliance considers the following actions to offer a good guide to achieving a circular economy.

- Prioritise the use of renewable, non-toxic, and sustainable materials in manufacturing, whilst minimising resource use
- Design products for post-consumer re-use or recycling
- Maximise product lifespans through maintenance and repair
- Manage discarded products so that they are efficiently collected for re-use or recycling
- Discarded products should be managed to achieve their highest resource value
- Collaborate throughout the product supply chain to maximise resource value, jobs and business opportunities in collection and resource recovery
- Educate consumers on the value of finite resources and the need to retain these in the economy, and specifically about best practice procurement and discard behaviour to achieve a circular economy

Communities Taking Action

There are many good examples of individuals, businesses, or organisations inspiring action in their communities to change plastic habits. Plastic Free July and Clean Up events being two of the best known.

This Boomerang Alliance Plastic Free Places project operates around the country encouraging cafes and food outlets to switch practices away from single use plastic food ware. As the project expands, an increasing focus is being placed on encouraging the mass uptake of reusable food ware in these sectors.

As of 1 January 2023, 1,255 cafes and food outlets had joined the program with nearly 18 million single use plastic items removed from use or replaced.



Further information is available on policies: www.boomerangalliance.org.au