

From: Sarah Briggs <web@greens.org.au>
Sent: Sunday, 28 April 2019 5:13 PM
To: recyclinginquiry
Subject: Fix Vic's recycling and plastic pollution problems

RE: INQUIRY INTO RECYCLING AND WASTE MANAGEMENT

*****Step One - Regulate the production and sale of unnecessary single use plastics and regulate green-washing claims that degradable plastic is any better**

Globally and on a state level, we are in the grips of a plastic pollution crisis. The planet that we rely on for our every breath, our whole existence is fast being choked with plastic and with the fossil fuel pollution from production and transport of mostly unnecessary single-use plastics. The oceans are filling with plastic debris and micro plastics are entering the food chain. Whales, turtles and birds are dying unnecessary deaths from ingestion of huge quantities of plastic. Around Australia our beaches are polluted by people littering - mostly plastic (1).

Fast food outlets, restaurants, cafes, grocers and supermarkets continue to supply vast quantities of single-use plastics, often for free, that consumers throw out of sight out of mind only for it to clog our waterways, oceans, landfills or contaminate recycling. Fruit and vegetables are unnecessarily packaged in plastic; plastic straws, that the majority of people have no genuine need for, are used once then thrown out; coffee and slurpees are sold in single-use plastic-coated cups, frequently littered. We need to stop this supply now by legislation to minimise it and incentives to offer non-plastic alternatives or encourage customers to bring reusables.

Manufacturers take advantage of lack of consumer awareness and regulation by promoting degradable plastic as good or other green-washing claims yet produce products that have the same detrimental effects as regular plastic (2) and are not recyclable like regular plastic (3). We need to stop this now.

*****Step Two: we need a container deposit scheme in Victoria. Now.**

Every walk I take, every creek I pass, every beach I visit I see single-use plastics, cans and bottles which would not be polluting the environment if we had a container deposit scheme in place. The time to observe other states and countries implementing this proven strategy has passed. It's time to stop hiding behind planning as a reason and to take action. The vast majority of Victorians want a container deposit scheme. We are lagging behind other nations and states. We have a massive litter problem in Victoria. Litter continues to be dumped irresponsibly in gutters (that eventually end up at sea) and reserves, parklands or creeks. A container deposit scheme is the way to fix this problem and redirect containers to recycling. (4)

Step Three: simplify/centralise recycling, improve and better fund sorting, set up processing here and set incentives, targets and regulate for the inclusion of recycled materials

Recycling is in ongoing crisis after the Chinese ban with Australians failing to understand and correctly sort items, government failing to set up processing systems set in Australia and no incentives or regulations requiring the recycled materials to be reused by industry or infrastructure. We need to address these issues now with a single, easy-to-follow state-wide system of recycling, with more funding to sort recycling more effectively, with processing plants in Victoria and with incentives and requirements for manufacturers to use recycled materials in making their goods. (5)

Step five: minimise waste to landfill and recycling overload by introducing product stewardship laws and regulate to minimise unnecessary packaging.

Landfills are fast filling up with our fast, quickly-damaged, cheap and synthetic single-use plastics, clothes and goods that don't last or have planned obsolescence. Recycling and landfill - along with much litter and dumping - is clogged by unnecessary single-use items, excessive packaging. We need to work to minimise this by ensuring manufacturers are held accountable for poor quality items, waste from planned obsolescence and unnecessary packaging or single-use items.

1. <https://www.csiro.au/en/Research/Oanda/Areas/Marine-resources-and-industries/Marine-debris>

2. Degradable bags just make microplastics quicker and when created unnecessarily they drain fossil fuels and contribute to climate change. See

<https://www.news.com.au/lifestyle/home/biodegradable-bags-arent-better-than-regular-plastic-bags-senate-inquiry-report-finds/news-story/ca75593f78db0da375f67c21682d2687>

<https://www.smh.com.au/politics/federal/the-big-green-furphy-experts-bust-degradable-plastic-bag-myth-20160425-goe569.html>

<https://www.sbs.com.au/food/article/2018d/09/04/why-compostable-plastics-may-be-no-better-environment>

<http://www.1millionwomen.com.au/blog/Do-biodegradable-rubbish-bags-work-and-alternatives/>

3. Redcycle cannot accept degradable bags as they turn to mush before they can be recycled. See

<https://www.redcycle.net.au/what-to-redcycle/>

4. <https://www.sbs.com.au/news/majority-of-victorians-want-a-container-deposit-scheme-but-government-not-convinced>

<https://www.theage.com.au/national/victoria/container-deposit-scheme-push-as-victoria-s-recycling-crisis-hits-home-20190224-p50zwb.html>

5. <https://www.abc.net.au/news/science/2018-03-03/recycling-industry-in-crisis-can-it-be-fixed/9502512>

-- Sarah Briggs



I wish to remain confidential.