

**INQUIRY INTO WASTE AVOIDANCE AND RESOURCE
RECOVERY AMENDMENT (PLASTICS REDUCTION)
BILL 2021**

Organisation: Clean Up Australia
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Clean Up Australia Submission

Inquiry into the Waste Avoidance and Resource Recovery Amendment (Plastics Reduction) Bill 2021

NSW PORTFOLIO COMMITTEE NO. 7 – PLANNING AND ENVIRONMENT

3 May 2021

Clean Up Australia inspires and empowers communities to clean up, fix up and conserve our environment. We are best known for Clean Up Australia Day, the nation's largest environmental community mobilisation event.

Clean Up was created here in NSW when Ian Kiernan AO called on friends, colleagues and volunteers to join him to Clean Up the shores of Sydney Harbour in 1989.

In the 32 years since, over 19 million Australians have volunteered 38.5 million hours to remove rubbish from our streets, parks, beaches, waterways and bushland.

The overwhelming majority of rubbish that has been reported during that time has been plastic.



cleanup.org.au

In 2020 just under 300,000 volunteers donated more than 600,000 hours of time to clean up more than 3,000 locations across NSW. Together they removed the equivalent of 6,600 ute loads of rubbish that would, without their efforts, have remained in our environment. If we were to financially value their efforts at \$35 per hour, the cost to residents for NSW councils to undertake this work would be over \$20 million.

Each year, we ask volunteers to record the types and quantities of rubbish they remove at their event, which we compile into the annual Clean Up Australia Rubbish Report.¹

The 2020 report revealed half of all single items reported were either plastic or contained plastic and over 40% of rubbish found within parks was plastics. Packaging continues to dominate national rubbish counts, representing 49.8% of all reported rubbish during the year.

Within New South Wales single-use plastics [incl polystyrene] represented 44% of all reported rubbish, 4% higher than the national average. Plastics in NSW are most likely to be found in parks [25%], followed along roadsides [16.8%] then waterways [15.4%], and on beaches [12.4%].

Recognising that removing litter from the environment is only part of the solution, Clean Up Australia has, for the past three decades, worked with communities, businesses and governments to enact tangible and lasting change that protects our environment and stops litter at the source.

As such, we are heartened to see the NSW Government proposing to take firm actions to address the level of waste and litter generated in this state due to the prevalence of single use plastics.

As he sifted through rubbish collected by volunteers along the shores of Sydney Harbour 32 years ago, Ian Kiernan predicted that single use plastics would be the scourge of our generation.

Today, communities across the state and nation are demanding governments step up to lead solution-focused change which will see the eradication of single-use plastics in our environment.

Clean Up Australia's submission aims to amplify their voices.

¹ Clean Up Rubbish Reports can be found online at cleanup.org.au/rubbish-report



Clean Up Australia supports:

- A nationally consistent ban on single-use plastic shopping bags, including 'degradable', 'biodegradable' bags and heavyweight plastic bags (< 70 microns)
- A nationally consistent ban on single-use barrier and produce bags
- A ban on single use plastic straws, stirrers, cutlery, coffee cups/lids and foodware (plates, bowls and other containers). This should include expanded polystyrene, and oxo-degradable plastics but exclude certified compostable plastics.
- Taking further action on at-home plastic products such as personal care products: for example, plastic-stemmed cotton bud, wipes, cosmetics, personal hygiene products or household detergents containing microbeads and other plastic bags and wraps purchased through retail
- Strengthening regulations and policing around deliberate helium balloon releases. The release of more than 19 helium balloons is illegal in NSW but remains common practice.
- A national program to remove disposable butts from cigarettes. Cigarette butts are made from plastic and are the most littered item in Australia (by item number).
- Introducing packaging labels that guarantee and provide consumer assurance that packaging marked reusable, compostable or recyclable is designed to be and will be recovered in practice everywhere in NSW. Introducing labelling requirements that make clear to consumers how to recycle packaging products and supporting the widespread adoption of the Australasian Recycling Label as the best mode of achieving this.
- Introducing government procurement policies and incentives for business procurement of recycled content in products.
- Investing in new infrastructure development that will support full resource recovery of used plastics across waste streams and allow for the processing of waste on-shore. This includes repair, reuse, composting of Australian certified bioplastics and recycling infrastructure.
- Introducing product stewardship programs where manufacturers are responsible for meeting targets and the post-consumer recovery of their products.
- Mandating minimum recycled content in packaging (except where packaging meets required reuse or composting standards) and supporting the Australian Packaging Covenant Organisation's 2025 targets for:
 - 100% reuseable, recyclable or compostable packaging;
 - 70% of plastic packaging being recycled or composted;
 - 50% average recycled content included in packaging; and



- The phase out of problematic and unnecessary single-use plastics packaging
- Identification and development of new innovative ideas that will avoid or reduce the need for unnecessary and problematic single use plastics.
- Funding research to examine the extent and impact of plastic pollution that involves all sectors and examines the use and impacts of plastics in the home, away from home, in agriculture, in business, industry and in the environment



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