

END THE WASTE & RECYCLING CRISIS

Creating less waste, cleaning-up recycling
and building a circular economy

For years Australians have diligently sorted our recycling into the yellow-lid bin. This has stopped millions of tonnes of waste from going to landfill and helped build an industry that employs 50,000 people across the country. But Australia's recycling industry is in crisis and plastic pollution is choking our oceans. The Greens have a plan to reboot the recycling industry to bring it up to scratch, to help build domestic demand for recycling, and to getting closer to the aim of zero waste.



THE GREENS WILL:

- **Phase out single use plastics**
- Invest \$500 million over five years into infrastructure and programs to **reboot recycling**
- Establish a **Plastics Research Centre** to **tackle marine plastic pollution** and help **increase recycling**
- Introduce **mandatory product stewardship schemes**, including a **national container deposit scheme**
- Aim for **zero waste**

PHASE OUT SINGLE USE PLASTICS

Improving recycling is important, but it's not enough. The core of the problem is that we consume too much plastic. Overconsumption of materials is contributing to global warming, depriving future generations of resources, and polluting the planet. The community is alarmed, and are looking for government to act. The Greens will introduce a ban on problematic single-use plastic items by 2025, including straws, stirrers, cutlery, utensils, plates, bowls, and polystyrene containers and cups.¹ The Greens will also establish mandatory targets for recycling plastics and reduction in the consumption of plastics.

\$500 MILLION FOR RECYCLING INFRASTRUCTURE

Recycling is a climate change issue. When something is thrown into landfill, all of the energy that goes into making that product is wasted. Alternatively, when waste materials are recycled into new products, this replaces the need to use more energy extracting and refining virgin materials. In effect, recycling 'sequesters' the greenhouse gases that are 'embodied' in the products we buy. The Clean Energy Finance Corporation (CEFC) already has waste reduction as criteria for its screening of investment for emissions reduction. The Greens will make an additional appropriation to the CEFC of \$500 million over five years to invest in waste avoidance and resource recovery initiatives, and provide funding to local groups for clean up activities through a \$6 billion environment fund.

A PLASTICS RESEARCH CENTRE

Marine plastic pollution is a global problem that needs global solutions. But Australia needs to be active locally too. A 2016 Senate inquiry into marine plastics recommended that the government support research to establish the extent of the threat posed by marine plastics. The Greens would establish a Plastics Co-operative Research Centre (CRC) to lead Australia's research efforts into reducing plastic waste, cleaning up our oceans and finding end-markets for recovered plastic. Federal funding of \$50 million over five years would be provided. The Plastics CRC would be based in Hobart to leverage off the hub of internationally renowned marine scientists.

¹ <https://peter-whish-wilson.greensmps.org.au/articles/greens-release-bill-will-clean-australia-every-day>

MANDATORY PRODUCT STEWARDSHIP AND A NATIONAL CONTAINER DEPOSIT SCHEME

After years of resistance from the beverage industry, most states have now introduced a container deposit schemes (CDS). The principle of container deposit schemes and other product stewardship schemes is to provide an incentive for people to recycle and for manufacturers to make recyclable products. In effect, the cost of recycling is built into the cost of the product.

The Greens would introduce a suite of national product stewardship schemes under the Product Stewardship Act to ensure that all states are covered and to ensure a consistent approach. The Greens would also introduce mandatory product stewardship schemes for a range of problematic waste streams, including:

- All e-waste, including televisions, computers, mobile phones, fluorescent lights and batteries
- Tyres
- Mattresses

BUY LESS AND BUY RECYCLED

Saving the recycling industry also requires increasing the demand for recycled products. It's not enough to improve the quality of material being collected and sorted. End-markets for recycled material actually need to be developed. Doing so will encourage local manufacturers to use recycled material, particularly plastic and paper that was previously being exported to China.

Governments can lead the way. Government is a very large buyer and it can use its purchasing power to help create new markets. The Greens will set mandatory targets for all government departments in relation to the recycled content of materials that they buy directly or that is provided by private contractors. This would include government procurement of paper and other office equipment, hospitality and cleaning contracts, and civil engineering.

This would be done in conjunction with state and local governments, and would also include commitments to avoid consumption. To make this commitment a reality, the Greens would make the provision of grants to state and local government contingent upon meeting procurement targets. Unless state and local governments commit to buy-recycled, they won't get funding.