

CREATING A CIRCULAR ECONOMY

Our plan to create jobs and clean up Australia

Investing in a circular economy provides benefits far beyond improving recycling and waste management.

Australians are missing out on jobs, innovation and economic opportunities as we don't take advantage of circular economy opportunities within Australia. For every 10,000 tonnes of material recycled in Australia, 9.2 jobs are created¹. Additionally, circular economy principles promote localised resource capture, repair and re-manufacture which can create jobs and enhance supply chain security.

Transitioning to circular economies could generate \$175 billion in direct benefit to the economy, and save 16.7 million tonnes of CO2 in Australia by 2040².

The Greens will build a waste and recycling industry that makes the best use of our recycled goods, will create thousands of jobs, and help us live more sustainably.

THE GREENS WILL:

- ▲ Provide \$1bn for a nationwide compostable processing scheme, supporting local councils to build industrial compostable facilities
- ▲ Legislate a national approach to phasing out key single-use plastics by 2025
- ▲ Legislate a national approach to container deposit schemes
- ▲ Support a Global Plastic Treaty
- ▲ Mandate national packaging targets in law
- ▲ Invest \$500 million over five years into infrastructure and programs to reboot recycling
- ▲ Invest \$50 million in waste avoidance and reduction research
- ▲ Ban industrial incineration of solid waste
- ▲ Support the Right to Repair to minimise e-waste

¹ <https://www.awe.gov.au/environment/protection/waste/publications/employment-waste-management-and-recycling>

² Building a More Circular Economy, PWC, March 2021, <https://www.pwc.com.au/assurance/esg/building-a-more-circular-australia.pdf>

PAYING FOR OUR PLAN

By making billionaires and big corporations pay their fair share of tax and winding back handouts to big polluters, we can build a better life for all of us.

1 in 3 big corporations pays no tax and many big corporations and billionaires send their profits offshore tax free.

The Greens will tax billionaires with a new 'billionaires tax', require big corporations making excessive profits to pay a 'corporate super-profits tax' and axe billions of dollars in handouts to the coal, oil and gas giants that are driving the climate crisis.

These measures have all been costed by the independent Parliamentary Budget Office.

BUILDING THE CIRCULAR ECONOMY

Building a circular economy that works means creating a whole-of-government approach. We will invest \$500 million over five years into infrastructure and programs to reboot recycling and support the growth of a robust, jobs creating waste and recycling system. We will also use this investment to support local councils with grants and other assistance to make the transition to a circular economy.

Consumers should be able to make informed choices about the products they buy, with honest and clear labelling. In addition to greater investment in composting infrastructure, a consistent national regulatory approach to avoidance and managing waste is much needed. States and territories are currently going it alone on regulation and inconsistent regulatory frameworks are being implemented across jurisdictions. At the forefront of this national approach, must be a national

avoidance strategy supported with a national education campaign. Australia cannot continue to overproduce and send millions of tonnes of food waste to landfill.

We will amend legislation to make the Australasian Recycling Label mandatory. The Greens will also empower community action and incentivise manufacturers to include recycled content in their products by introducing a Made with Australian Recycled Content label.

Waste to energy incineration contributes to emissions pollution, and defeats the purposes of a sustainable zero waste management and circular economy agenda. We will introduce legislation to ban incineration of general waste and plastic in Australia.

PHASING OUT PLASTICS

While educating people to avoid waste is a critical first step, the Greens will impose a national ban on the most problematic

single-use plastic items by 2025 to ensure a federally consistent approach across Australian jurisdictions. The banned items will include straws, stirrers, lightweight carrier bags, cutlery, plates and bowls, microbeads, six-pack ring holders, cotton buds, balloon sticks and polystyrene food or beverage containers (with medical exemptions). This is in line with the European Union Directive passed in 2019.

The Greens will review the provision of laws for managing plastic resin pellets (also referred to as 'nurdles'), to ensure that they are being enforced as rigorously as possible. Furthermore, the Greens will commit Australia to support international calls for plastic resin pellets to be classed as hazardous by the International Maritime Organization.

LEADERSHIP IN GLOBAL ACTION AND RESEARCH

Marine plastic pollution is a global problem that needs global solutions. That is why the Greens will take a leadership role in committing Australia to signing a binding Global Plastics Treaty.

But Australia needs to be active locally too. We have the opportunity to be a major driver of research and development, and entrepreneurship.

The Greens will support leadership in Australia's research efforts into avoiding and reducing plastic waste, cleaning up our oceans and finding end-markets for recovered plastic, through a Plastics Co-operative Research Centre (CRC) or other appropriate means.

Federal funding of \$50 million over ten years would be provided.

MANDATORY PRODUCT STEWARDSHIP AND A NATIONAL CONTAINER DEPOSIT SCHEME

Critical to establishing a circular economy is compelling producer responsibility for the waste they generate, including making sure products are designed for end-of-life recycling or repurposing. We will amend government legislation or introduce a private members bill to mandate voluntary packaging targets set by APCO. The first step the Greens will take is to make APCO a mandatory product stewardship scheme under the Recycling and Waste Reduction Bill.

After years of campaigning by the Greens and community groups, and resistance from the beverage industry, most states have now introduced container deposit schemes. It is important that we have a federally coordinated approach and the Greens will legislate for a national scheme. Even the beverage industry agrees with this.

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 Recycling and Waste Reduction 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

Making sure that products last longer, and can be more easily repaired, is an important way of reducing the environmental footprint of appliances and electrical goods like washing machines and mobile phones. Australia has lagged behind other countries when it comes to implementing adequate measures to help people repair their goods.

The Greens support the “right to repair”, helping households increase the usage time of products, and minimising waste. We’ll amend product stewardship schemes to allow for reused e-waste to be counted in scheme targets, and for support tracking of e-waste to ensure it is sent to the right facilities for managing waste.

BUILDING COMPOSTABLE RECYCLING

Organic waste is a major component of landfill in Australia, contributing to greenhouse gas emissions. It is a valuable resource and right now, due to a lack of federal leadership, infrastructure and education, millions of tonnes are being sent to landfill.

Compostable packaging as an alternative for plastic is a growing headache for the recycling industry, with considerable national focus needed to combat potential greenwash. The market for compostable packaging is expected to grow significantly over the next decade, and the greens will make it a priority to make sure all compostable packaging is properly labelled and composted under this scheme. We will fund \$1 billion of start up costs so that councils will have ready access to industrial composting facilities, diverting millions of tonnes of waste from landfill and reducing Australia’s greenhouse gas emissions.

The Greens will establish a Food Waste Working Group to provide independent advice by the end of 2022 to the Minister on the development of a national overarching policy framework to manage food waste in Australia and also hold Australia’s first National Food Waste Summit by the end of 2022.

Setting up infrastructure to recycle organic waste is costly and time consuming. The Greens will provide support and funding for every Council to have ready access to commercial composting facilities, diverting millions of tonnes of organic waste from landfill, reducing greenhouse gas emissions and protecting our climate. This funding would support the up-front capital costs of establishing the facilities.

HOW THE GREENS HAVE BEEN FIGHTING FOR YOU

The Greens have been at the forefront of driving change to tackle the waste crisis over the past decade.

In the last parliament, it was the Greens who:

- ▲ Introduced a Private Members Bill to mandate ineffective voluntary packaging targets in law, impose a national ban on the most problematic single-use plastics and legislate stronger labelling laws for harmful plastic products.
- ▲ Led on policy initiatives for recycling infrastructure funding, innovation and green jobs.