

SEVENTH MEETING OF ENVIRONMENT MINISTERS

Agreed Statement – 27 April 2018, Melbourne

Commonwealth, State and Territory Ministers and the President of the Australian Local Government Association met today to set a sustainable path for Australia's recyclable waste.

The meeting welcomed Assistant Minister Price and new Ministers Speirs, Enoch, Dawson and Archer and acknowledged the contributions of previous Ministers Hunter, Miles, Groom and Jacob. Ministers also heard from New Zealand Minister Parker on their government's environmental priorities.

Taking action on recycled waste was the focus of the meeting, following import restrictions announced by China.

Australia is one of over 100 countries affected by China's new restrictions, affecting around 1.3 million tonnes of our recycled waste. This accounts for 4 per cent of Australia's recyclable waste, but 35 per cent of recyclable plastics and 30 per cent of recyclable paper and cardboard. The restrictions include new limits on contamination for recycled material which much of Australia's recycling does not meet.

- On **recycling waste**, Ministers agreed to:
 - Reduce the amount of waste generated and make it easier for products to be recycled. Ministers endorsed a target of 100 percent of Australian packaging being recyclable, compostable or reusable by 2025 or earlier. Governments will work with the Australian Packaging Covenant Organisation (APCO), representing over 900 leading companies, to deliver this target. Ministers endorsed the development of targets for the use of recycled content in packaging, and this will be closely monitored.
 - Encourage waste reduction strategies through greater consumer awareness, education and with industry leadership.
 - Increase our recycling capacity. Ministers agreed to work together on expanding and developing our recycling industry to not only take the waste that would have gone to China, but also to grow our domestic capabilities.
 - Increase the demand for recycled products. Ministers agreed to advocate for increased use of recycled materials in the goods that government and industry buy, such as paper, road materials, and construction materials, and to collaborate on creating new markets for recycled materials.
 - Explore opportunities to advance waste-to-energy and waste-to-biofuels projects, as part of a broader suite of industry growth initiatives, recognising the reduction, reuse and recycling of waste is a priority, consistent with the waste hierarchy. This will include support from the Clean Energy Finance Corporation and the Australian Renewable Energy Agency.
 - Update the 2009 Waste Strategy by year end, which will include circular economy principles.
- On **microbeads**, Ministers were pleased to announce that a voluntary phase-out of microbeads, which Ministers initiated in 2016, is on track – with 94 per cent of cosmetic and personal care products now microbead-free. Ministers remain committed to eliminating the final six per cent and examining options to broaden the phase out to other products.
- On **food waste**, Ministers reaffirmed their commitment to halving Australia's food waste by 2030. Ministers agreed to align their community education efforts to cut food waste and to encourage residual food waste to be composted.

- On **product waste**, Ministers fast-tracked the development of new product stewardship schemes for photovoltaic solar panels and batteries. This builds on existing successful industry-led product stewardship approaches that manage products like televisions and computers, tyres and oil.
- Ministers also agreed to take action on a range of **other nationally significant matters** including: guidelines to manage chemical contamination from fire-fighting foams (known as PFAS), opportunities to grow the carbon farming industry, progressing the National Clean Air Agreement, collaboration on the management of flying foxes and their commitment to the recently agreed approach to national environmental-economic accounting. Ministers also acknowledged action taken on climate change. South Australia raised its proposal to nominate the Flinders Ranges to Australia's World Heritage Tentative list.

Ministers agreed to have a teleconference in mid-June to discuss progress on recycling, and to meet in late 2018 to further progress delivery of the commitments made today.