

26 March 2026

Senator the Hon. Murray Watt
Minister for the Environment
Australian Federal Government
Parliament House, Canberra ACT 2600

RE: An Urgent Call for Mandatory National Packaging Reform

Dear Minister Watt,

We write to you today as a united front of retailers and recyclers, brand owners and conservation groups, manufacturers and environmental foundations because what we face is no longer a matter of ambition. It is a matter of strategic urgency.

Australia's voluntary packaging system has failed. Not incrementally. Categorically. We missed every single one of our 2025 National Packaging Targets, when almost 60% of litter collected in Australia is packaging. Pollution is not only an environmental catastrophe, it is also a loss of valuable materials from the system. With over one million tonnes of plastic packaging sent to landfill annually, the strain on current facilities is reaching capacity, presenting an even greater challenge through the significant costs of building new infrastructure and the lack of suitable locations close to urban areas. Unlike many policy problems on the horizon, this is one we are standing in.

The consequences are real, and they are landing now. Australia's recycling facilities (built with government support, patient capital and genuine industry commitment) are operating well below capacity because we have failed to create demand for locally recycled material. Without reform, independent analysis by Rennie Advisory projects that facility utilisation will fall to just 32% within five years. This isn't a hypothetical scenario. We are talking about the closure of plants, the loss of thousands of jobs, and the effective dismantling of the circular economy infrastructure that taxpayers have already funded. At the same time, our major trading partners, China, Japan, South Korea, the United Kingdom, the European Union, Canada, have all moved to mandatory Extended Producer Responsibility schemes. Around 63% of Australia's total two-way trade is with partners already operating or actively implementing EPR. **We are becoming an outlier, and outliers become dumping grounds.**

The best solution is well understood and has been modelled exhaustively. A mandatory, nationally harmonised Extended Producer Responsibility scheme transitions the cost of packaging waste from councils and ratepayers, where it currently sits, to the companies that place packaging on the market. Producers pay material-based fees into a single national system that funds collection, sorting and recycling infrastructure. Fees are higher for hard-to-recycle formats, discounted fees for easier to recycle materials, creating an incentive to do better and an overall reduction in packaging and cost. **One country, one system: one set of rules, one reporting framework, one fee schedule.** The compliance certainty that business has been asking for, and the structural funding that our recycling sector desperately needs.

OPEN LETTER TO THE FEDERAL MINISTER FOR THE ENVIRONMENT

We anticipate the concern about cost of living, and we address it directly: **the consumer impact of EPR is negligible**. Independent modelling, drawing on the United Kingdom's confirmed 2025 EPR base fees and Australian packaging volumes, shows a household cost of approximately 25 cents per week at conservative initial fee levels, less than the normal variation in a weekly grocery bill. ACOR and APCO's own analysis, prepared by Rennie Advisory, confirms EPR adds just 0.1% to product costs. These are not sunk costs. Every dollar collected is reinvested into the system, reducing long-term waste management costs for households and councils. And as the scheme matures, packaging improves, fees reduce, and the system pays for itself many times over.

The economic case is equally compelling. The same analysis projects that packaging reform, delivered within this term of government, could generate **\$2.5 billion in gross value-add** to the Australian economy, attract **\$220 million in new private capital**, create **close to 20,000 new jobs**, and avoid **700,000 tonnes of CO₂ emissions annually**. These are the numbers behind the jobs, communities and industries that are waiting for the government to act.

Minister, we are not asking for another consultation. We are not asking for a working group, a review, or a timeline for action. The direction of reform has been clear since Environment Ministers agreed in 2023 that the Commonwealth would step up as regulator. Your department's own consultation process found that 65% of respondents supported full EPR with mandatory requirements, and over 80% backed Commonwealth regulation. The evidence is in. The alignment is unprecedented. The window to act is now.

We call on you to introduce, in 2026, legislation for a mandatory national Extended Producer Responsibility scheme covering all packaging materials placed on the Australian market – a single national framework, with producer-funded fees, mandatory recycling and design targets, and enforceable compliance.

This letter is signed by the leaders of organisations representing millions of Australians, including shoppers, workers, conservationists, consumers, business owners, and families, who share one belief: that Australia can and must do better. We stand ready to work with your government to get this right. But the time for waiting is over.

Yours sincerely,

Signatories listed below.

SIGNATORIES

The following leaders sign this letter on behalf of their organisations and the communities they serve.

David Ritter

Chief Executive Officer
Greenpeace Australia

Raphael Geminder

Executive Chair
PACT Group

Dermot O'Gorman

Chief Executive Officer
WWF-Australia

Ricardo Pinto

Sustainability Manager
MECCA

Rebecca Prince-Ruiz OAM

Executive Director
Plastic Free Foundation

David Singh

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Markus Fraval

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Jeff Angel

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Elliot Costello

Chief Executive Officer
Phantm Pty Ltd

Paul Gamblin

Chief Executive Officer
Australian Marine Conservation Society

Dr Kate Wylie

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Jenny Geddes

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Clean Up Australia

Tim Silverwood

Chair & Cofounder
Take 3 for the Sea

Martin Collings

Founder & CEO
Charopy Pty Ltd

Lachlan Hill

Cofounder
Skipper

Martin Salter

CEO & Cofounder
WOSUP

One Country. One System. One Year.

