



Cr Darriea Turley AM
President
Local Government New South Wales

lgnsw@lgnsw.org.au

Dear Cr Turley

Thank you for your letter to the Minister for the Environment and Water, the Hon Tanya Plibersek MP, concerning a call for a comprehensive mandated Extended Producer Responsibility (EPR) scheme for soft plastics in Australia. Minister Plibersek has asked me to thank you for your correspondence and to reply on her behalf.

Reducing and responsibly managing Australia's plastic waste is a priority for the Australian Government (the government). At the Minister's request, the Department of Climate Change, Energy, the Environment and Water (the department) is working closely with industry bodies including supermarkets, the Australian Packaging Covenant Organisation and the Australian Food and Grocery Council (AFGC) to ensure robust soft plastic recycling systems.

The government is committed to ensuring businesses that place products and packaging on the market, including soft plastic packaging, take greater responsibility for these items. At the Environment Ministers' Meeting on 21 October 2022, Minister Plibersek secured her counterparts' agreement to reform the regulation of packaging by 2025 to ensure all packaging in Australia is designed to be recovered, reused, recycled and reprocessed safely in line with circular economy principles.

To support delivery of this commitment, the government is working closely with all state and territory governments and industry to develop a new, fit-for-purpose regulatory framework for packaging. Reforms will include mandatory targets and packaging design standards for industry to design out waste, increase the use of recycled content and take greater end-of-life responsibility for the packaging they place on the market.

The government has committed \$250 million under the Recycling Modernisation Fund for new and upgraded recycling infrastructure. This includes \$60 million for a new Plastics technology stream announced in the October 2022 Budget, which will support advanced recycling solutions for hard-to-recycle plastics, including soft plastics. Under the Recycling Modernisation Fund 48 plastic recycling facilities have been announced and 11 of these have already been delivered.

A product stewardship approach supports the government's packaging reforms and infrastructure investments. The AFGC has reported positive results from trials of the National Plastics Recycling Scheme in selected local government areas in Victoria, New South Wales and South Australia. We will continue to monitor the activities carried out under the NPRS and their impact on all levels of government and industry.

I note your concerns regarding the responsibility shift and cost shift to local government councils. The government expects industry to take a leading role in managing the products and materials they bring into the market, and will consider all approaches, including regulatory extended producer responsibility under the *Recycling and Waste Reduction Act 2020* if industry does not appropriately act to improve the environmental outcomes of their activities.

Thank you again for bringing the concerns of New South Wales local governments to the government's attention.

Yours sincerely

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'K Bunfield', with a long, sweeping horizontal line extending to the right.

Kirsty Bunfield
Branch Head
Waste & Resource Recovery Branch
9 June 2023