

States must stand against Commonwealth roll over on waste

Perth, 1 July: Green groups and local government are calling on state environment ministers not to give in to the Commonwealth on a new packaging agreement. The groups are concerned Senator Campbell, the Federal Environment Minister is set to derail a unique opportunity to fix Australia’s appalling recycling performance.

Community groups are staging a day of action to demand state and federal environment ministers, meeting in Perth, listen to the community and set high recycling targets for plastics, glass and other forms of consumer packaging and phase out the use of plastic bags to protect the environment.

The day will commence with a vigil outside the Ministers’ meeting at the Sheraton Hotel in the morning, moving into a march through the streets of Perth and onto a rally at the Cultural Centre at midday. Rather than a protest, the day of action is being held to support the calls of environmental leaders such as Victoria’s Minister Thwaites and others, for an examination of new mechanisms to assist the National Packaging Covenant (NPC) to achieve its objectives.

“The Commonwealth government is a policy vacuum on environment issues and states must fill this vacuum. The commonwealth have just spent two months lobbying world governments to save the whales from the Japanese so that their packaging industry mates can choke them to death on plastic rubbish,” said Alliance spokesperson Dave West.

“The Federal Minister seems to think simply by setting new recycling targets for plastics, glass and paper they will be achieved - this is naive. While some state ministers like Judy Edwards are keen to begin determining new funding and collection systems to achieve the targets, Minister Campbell has vetoed any solution because he fears industry won’t agree.

“It’s clear the Federal Government has decided that regulation has no part in environment protection. If we won’t underpin the voluntary NPC with minimum standards of action by industry, we would be better off if states refused to sign and pursued their own regulatory solutions.”

A new report by the Boomerang Alliance, ‘Pathetic Package’, shows that under the government-led NPC Australia is earning a reputation as the developed world’s most wasteful society.

“While European countries continue to increase their recycling, Australia is one of the worst rubbish generators in the developed world,” said Mr West. “State ministers must unite against the Commonwealth and industry bullying and set the stage for a successful new NPC.”

WA Conservation Council President Sue Graham Taylor said, “Ministers must listen to the community and act to ensure we do not have another five years of low recycling rates and inaction on litter. The NPC should be fixed or ditched.”

Further info + COMMENT ON OUTCOME OF TODAY’S MEETING AROUND 1230 WST call:
 Dave West, 0404 093 718 or Sue Graham Taylor 0407 477 515

