

COMMUNITY DEMANDS ACTION FROM GOVERNMENT ON PACKAGING: 'SAY NO TO THE WASTE CLUB'

2 December 2004: A Newspan survey released today shows the community wants strong government action to make packaging manufacturers and retailers take more responsibility for packaging waste.

The survey, commissioned by The Boomerang Alliance – a coalition of major environment groups committed to eliminating packaging waste – examined the views of a representative poll of three hundred adults residing in the five major capital cities across the country.

Results show that 94% of all adult Australians thought packaging waste and litter was a problem and that 75% thought we produced too much packaging.

Importantly, the survey revealed a majority of the population believes industry should be held most responsible for the problem of packaging waste – 77% nominated packaging manufacturers, 56% thought retailers.

This compared with 50% who thought consumers responsible. Only a low 34% thought rate payers, who currently pay all costs to dispose of waste via kerbside recycling, should continue to pay.

“It’s clear from the results that the community wants Government to take action,” said Dave West, a spokesperson for the Boomerang Alliance.

“An overwhelming majority of 91% of respondents believe Governments should make those responsible for packaging waste deal with the mess.”

Environment groups warn that the outcome of a meeting between State, Territory and Federal Environment Ministers held today could be a serious setback for waste management in Australia.

The Boomerang Alliance has today released a report, ‘National Packaging Covenant – Say No to the Waste Club’, which urges Ministers to reject the NPC’s industry self-regulation model and embrace robust waste recovery targets at Friday’s meeting. The Newspan research supports this report.

“Environment groups and Local Government are on a collision course with industry, and only direct intervention from the relevant Ministers can avert a major looming confrontation,” Dave said.

“A key group of Australia’s largest packaging industry players – commonly referred to as ‘The Waste Club’ – has continually argued that self-regulation is adequate in addressing their rubbish.

“But the ‘Say No to the Waste Club’ report found that packaging waste is out of control. Each year, Australia produces over 3.3 million tonnes of packaging, and only 20.1% of this is recycled.”

Despite Local Governments across Australia refusing to participate in the NPC as currently proposed, the National Packaging Covenant Council is completely reliant on councils to operate kerbside recycling as the sole method to recover packaging waste.

“The pressures on kerbside recycling services are huge, costing rate payers a massive \$294 million each year to fund. But the packaging industry suggests their own contribution should be just \$3 million.

“Tangible targets such as a minimum 80% packaging recovery rate and establishing mechanisms to ensure greater industry responsibility for waste are vital to achieve any real environmental progress.

“It’s unacceptable for governments to commit to a scheme that works against their own stated goals of zero waste, and in the era of corporate sustainability, it is unconscionable that industry continues to refuse to accept responsibility for itself and its consumers’ behaviour.”

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The Boomerang Alliance members:

Australian Conservation Foundation
Environment Victoria
Queensland Conservation Council

Conservation Council of WA
Greenpeace Australia-Pacific
Total Environment Centre

Clean Up Australia
NSW Nature Conservation Council
NCC Zero Waste Action Group