



**THE HON SUSSAN LEY MP
MINISTER FOR THE ENVIRONMENT**

MC19-010384

Mayor David O'Loughlin
President
Australian Local Government Association
8 Geils Court
DEAKIN ACT 2600

24 OCT 2019

Dear Mayor *David*

Thank you for your letter concerning resolutions made by the National General Assembly of Local Government as they relate to waste, recycling and climate change. I acknowledge the important role of the Australian Local Government Association in helping to highlight local issues and address local government challenges on a national scale.

The Australian Government knows that Australians care deeply about the environment, and want to be confident that when we put things in our recycling bins that they will be recycled. This is why the Government, together with all other governments in Australia, agreed to introduce a ban on exports of waste plastic, paper, glass and tyres. This commitment is a game changer for our recycling industry. It will ensure we are truly recycling more of our waste and turning it into valuable products. It will encourage innovation in how we design, make, and use plastics and packaging, and it will create new jobs in waste processing and remanufacturing.

It is also why the Government has committed to a \$167 million Australian Recycling Investment Plan to increase Australia's recycling rates, tackle plastic waste and litter, accelerate work on new product stewardship recycling schemes, and continue action to halve food waste by 2030.

Australia has mature financial, welfare and regulatory systems, well-governed institutions, and internationally recognised scientific expertise, and we are well positioned to meet the challenge of climate change. In 2015, the Government released the National Climate Resilience and Adaptation Strategy which recognises that national, state, territory and local governments, businesses, households and communities all have different but important roles in managing climate risks in Australia.

Thank you for bringing the National General Assembly resolutions to my attention.

Yours sincerely

Sussan Ley
SUSSAN LEY

CC: Minister for Energy and Emissions Reduction the Hon Angus Taylor MP

The following responses are provided to each of the resolutions put forward by the Australian Local Government Association (ALGA) Board.

Resolution 26

That the National General Assembly calls on the Federal Government to establish a regional focus through the provision of funding models for waste management systems with an aim to develop a more entrepreneurial framework.

Response

The Australian Government has committed to a comprehensive \$167 million Australian Recycling Investment plan to increase Australia's recycling rates, tackle plastic waste and litter, accelerate work on new recycling schemes, and continue action to halve food waste by 2030. The focus of this Plan is on creating the right investment environment so that new technologies are commercialised, preventing pollution from entering our oceans, and creating valuable new products. It includes:

- \$100 million Australian Recycling Investment Fund through the Clean Energy Finance Corporation to support the manufacturing of energy-efficient recycled content products
- \$20 million Cooperative Research Centre Project grant program to identify new and innovative solutions to plastic recycling and waste
- \$20 million Product Stewardship Investment Fund to accelerate work on new industry-led recycling schemes
- \$16 million to work with our Pacific neighbours to reduce plastics and other wastes in our oceans
- more than \$11 million for community campaigns to clean up plastic from our beaches and rivers and create tools to help Australians know what can be recycled and where to take it for recycling
- a commitment to continue work with state, territory and local governments on opportunities to get more recycled content into road construction building on \$2.6 million funding provided to the Australian Road Research Board.

Resolution 27

That the National General Assembly calls on Federal Members of Parliament in support of actions listed in the MAV "Rescue Our Recycling" action plan being:

Action 1 - Mandate Product Stewardship

Introduce mandatory product stewardship for all products that generate waste. Put clear and binding targets within the Product Stewardship Act to drive action by industry. This approach would align with the polluter-pays principle, incentivising designers and producers to take responsibility for the environmental impacts of their products.

Action 2 - Tackle Consumer Packaging

In partnership with state and territory ministers, review the National Environment Protection (Used Packaging Materials) Measure 2011 to impose mandatory participation and binding obligations across the consumer packaging chain. As an interim measure, clarify obligations on industry so that it is easier to hold them to account.

Action 3 - Strengthen the National Waste Policy

In partnership with state and territory ministers, adopt an action plan for the national Waste Policy that includes firm and ambitious targets and timelines to fast-track our transition to a circular economy.

Action 4 – Regulate/ Ban Production and Importation of Hard to Recycle Materials.

*Action 5 – Standardise Package Labelling and Certify Use of Recycled Content
Mandate adoption of the Australasian Recycling Label for all consumer packaging sold in Australia and adopt a certification system for recycled content in line with the US or European models.*

Response - Action 1

The Australian Government views product stewardship as a critical approach in helping to address Australia's waste and recycling challenges. The Government has committed \$20 million to a new Product Stewardship Investment Fund to fast-track industry led recycling schemes. The Department of the Environment and Energy is undertaking a review of the *Product Stewardship Act 2011*. The review has involved public consultation and an independent evaluation of the National Television and Computer Recycling Scheme. Stakeholders have expressed strong support for the product stewardship regulatory framework and the need for Government support to enable stronger product stewardship outcomes. Mandatory product stewardship schemes and targets are being considered as part of this review which is expected to be finalised in the last quarter of 2019.

Response - Action 2

In April 2018, Australia's environment ministers agreed to the ambitious target of making 100 per cent of Australian packaging reusable, recyclable or compostable by 2025 or earlier. In September, the Australian Government endorsed industry-led targets to better manage Australia's packaging waste which will see by 2025,

- 70 per cent of Australia's plastic packaging being recycled or composted;
- 30 per cent average recycled content included across all packaging, and;
- phasing out problematic and unnecessary single-use plastic packaging through design, innovation or introduction of alternatives.

The Australian Government is working closely with the Australian Packaging Covenant Organisation to support delivery of these national packaging targets. The Government is also working with all other Australian governments and the Australian Packaging Covenant Organisation to effectively implement the *National Environment Protection (Used Packaging Materials) Measure 2011* so that packaging waste is reduced. An independent review of the *National Environment Protection Council Act 1994* has been completed and will be presented to Ministers at the Meeting of Environment Ministers in November 2019. The review will provide the framework for considering any future amendments of the *National Environment Protection (Used Packaging Materials) Measure 2011*.

Response - Action 3

The new National Waste Policy agreed by all Australian governments in 2018 will create jobs, protect the health of communities and reduce environmental impacts by increasing recycling and reducing waste. The Australian Government is supportive of the development of a strong Action Plan to implement the Policy. The Action Plan will be considered at the next Meeting of Environment Ministers on 8 November 2019. The Action Plan will include appropriate funding, robust targets, and milestones to implement the National Waste Policy. It will also address Environment Ministers' waste priorities including plastic pollution, supporting industry development, increasing demand for recycled materials through procurement, and a national approach to waste policy and regulation.

Response - Action 4

On 9 August 2019, the Council of Australian Governments committed to establish a timetable to ban the export of waste plastic, paper, glass and tyres, while building Australia's capacity to generate high-value recycled commodities and associated demand. Work is now underway

across all jurisdictions to implement the COAG agreement which will include consideration of regulation of hard-to-recycle materials. Proposed timetables and a response strategy will be considered at the next Meeting of Environment Ministers on 8 November 2019.

Response - Action 5

To support standardised packaging labelling and use of recycled content in packaging, the Australian Government has committed funding to a number of projects as part of the \$167 Australian Recycling Investment Plan. This includes:

- up to \$1.1 million for the Australian Packaging Covenant Organisation for consumer education to increase recycling rates for packaging waste, including further development and national deployment of the Australasian Recycling Label. This label is an evidence-based system that provides clear, consistent on-pack recycling information to inform consumers how best to recycle,
- up to \$2 million to support the Australian Council of Recycling to develop “Project Yellowsail”, a national recycling app to reduce contamination by helping Australians identify which packaging can and can not be recycled, and
- up to \$1.6 million funding for Planet Ark and the Australian Packaging Covenant Organisation to establish a Circular Economy Hub to drive innovation and establish an online marketplace to match buyers and sellers of waste and to promote use of recycled materials in manufacturing.

Resolution 28

The National General Assembly (NGA) call on the Australian Government to develop a national approach to recycling textiles and clothing waste to minimise waste being sent to landfills

Response

The Australian Government is committed to reducing Australia’s waste going to landfill. The Government has committed funding to a range of measures under the \$167 Australian Recycling Investment Plan to reduce waste, including \$20 million for a new Product Stewardship Investment Fund to accelerate work on new industry-led product stewardship schemes. The National Waste Policy, agreed by all Australia’s governments in December 2018, highlights waste reduction and reduction of organic waste going to landfill as priorities. The Plan to implement the 2018 National Waste Policy will include targets and actions to address these priorities.

Resolution 29

That the National General Assembly call on the Australian Government to:

- *Declare a Climate Emergency*
- *Establish a \$10 billion national fund for councils to build the resilience of climate change vulnerable communities*
- *Commit to providing maximum protection for all people, economies, species, ecosystems and civilisations, and to fully restoring a safe climate*
- *Move the required resources and take effective action at the necessary scale and speed across Australia*
- *Transport the economy to zero emissions and make a fair contribution to drawing down the excess carbon dioxide in the air*
- *Encourage all other governments around the world to take these same actions.*

Response

The Australian Government takes the issue of climate change seriously. The Government is taking the action that is needed to address climate change. As a result of the policies that the

Government has put in place over the last six years, the Australia will exceed its Kyoto 2020 targets by 367 million tonnes. The Government has set out, to the last tonne, responsible targets to ensure that Australia meets its Paris 2030 commitments. Emissions per capita are now at the lowest level in 29 years and by 2050, emissions per capita will fall by 50 per cent. Due to the Government's commitment to meeting its Renewable Energy Target, Australia's investment per capita in renewable energy is currently the highest in the world. The Government will continue to take responsible action on climate change in a way which ensures both jobs for the future, and a clean and green environment.

Resolution 30

That the National General Assembly call on the Australian Government to establish a consistent framework and provide guidance on measures (including planning controls and asset protection) to be taken by all levels of Government including Local Government with respect to climate-change.

Response

The Australian Government released its National Climate Resilience and Adaptation Strategy in 2015. The Strategy recognises that, in Australia, national and subnational governments, businesses, households and communities all have different but important roles in managing climate risks. The Strategy sets out that the Government is responsible for the provision of national climate science information and management of climate risks to its own policies, programs and assets.

The National Disaster Risk Reduction Framework was released by the Department of Home Affairs in 2019. The framework outlines a coordinated approach to reducing disaster risk and leverages the work undertaken across sectors. It recognises that limiting the impact of disasters requires a coordinated effort to better understand and reduce disaster risks, improve resilience and bolster the capability and capacity of communities to withstand natural hazards.

The framework will be supported by a five-year national implementation plan to be developed in conjunction with all levels of government and non-government sectors. The national implementation plan will detail initiatives to be undertaken by all sectors of society to reduce disaster risk and limit the impacts of disasters on communities and the economy.

Resolution 31

That the National General Assembly calls upon the Federal Government to:

- *Agree that they have a significant obligation to recognise the scientific consensus that the climate system continues to be affected by known activity, and;*
- *That a Minister be appointed, and funds be allocated, to assist Councils in their strategic response to the potential impacts of a changing environment.*

Response

The Australian Government accepts the science of climate change and is delivering on commitments in line with its roles and responsibilities as set out in the National Climate Resilience and Adaptation Strategy. The Strategy recognises that national and subnational governments, businesses, households and communities have different but important roles in managing climate risks (www.environment.gov.au/climate-change/adaptation/strategy).

Resolution 32

That the National General Assembly calls on the Australian Government to:

Establish a National Strategy for climate change adaptation and resilience comprising the following:

1. *Processes for the integration of climate change adaptation into local/state strategic planning*
2. *A system for gathering, storing and reporting information/mapping on climate change risks, exposure, impacts and vulnerability*
3. *Establish sea-level rise benchmarks and associated policy and implementation guidelines for Local and State Governments*
4. *Clarification of liability issues in relation to coastal inundation, present and future.*
5. *Strategies for engaging the community and all relevant stakeholders in climate change adaptation projects*
6. *Engagement/education materials for communities in becoming climate change resilient, building on work done through the 'Resilient Sydney' project.*

Response

The Australian Government released its National Climate Resilience and Adaptation Strategy in 2015. The Strategy recognises that, in Australia, national and subnational governments, businesses, households and communities all have different but important roles in managing climate risks. The Strategy sets out that the Government is responsible for the provision of national climate science information and management of climate risks to its own policies, programs and assets.

States, territories and local governments play a major role in the direct management of risk and have responsibility for on-ground action and decision making to manage climate risks. Information to assist with managing climate risks is available in *Climate Compass* – a climate risk management framework developed for Commonwealth agencies that may also be relevant to local governments (www.environment.gov.au/climate-change/adaptation/publications/climate-compass-climate-risk-management-framework). The Climate Change in Australia website (www.climatechangeinaustralia.gov.au) provides comprehensive information about the future climate, and the CoastAdapt website (www.coastadapt.com.au) provides an accessible means of identifying, assessing and responding to climate risks in the coastal zone.

Resolution 36

That the National General Assembly calls on the Federal Government to work with ALGA to provide advice on how councils across Australia can approach the aim of achieving carbon neutrality in as much of the sector as possible.

Response

The Australian Government's voluntary National Carbon Offset Standard helps businesses, councils, universities and other organisations reduce and manage their emissions. The Standard sets out how to measure, reduce, offset, report and audit emissions. Organisations can be formally certified as carbon neutral against the Standard. Several local councils are certified including Brisbane City Council, City of Melbourne, City of Sydney, City of Yarra, Moreland City Council and Randwick City Council. The Standard is based on best-practice international carbon accounting standards and is available for organisations, products, services, events, buildings and precincts. Further information is available at: www.environment.gov.au/climate-change/government/carbon-neutral.

Resolution 37

That the National General Assembly calls on the Australian Government to support initiatives by councils to develop and implement coastal climate change adaptation plans, to improve the sustainability and resilience of coastal settlements vulnerable to increasing climate change risks.

Response

The CoastAdapt website (www.coastadapt.com.au) provides an accessible means of identifying, assessing and responding to climate risks in the coastal zone. This website includes tools to help councils develop and implement coastal climate change adaptation plans.

Resolution 39

That the National General Assembly calls on the Australian Government to commit to:

- 1. The establishment of National Coastcare Program, facilitated by Local Government and/or regional/state government facilitators to support local community coastal conservation and education initiatives; including the development of a long-term financial investment plan and state government grant program to fund Coastcare*
- 2. Undertake a review of the future costs to local government associated with managing risks and liabilities of coastal hazards*
- 3. Establish national Coastcare program with funding (funding model provided under the NSW Coastal Management Program with a view to providing long-term funding for local councils and reviewing the appropriateness of the 50/50 grant funding contribution requirement).*

Response

The Australian Government released its National Climate Resilience and Adaptation Strategy in 2015. The Strategy recognises that, in Australia, national and subnational governments, businesses, households and communities all have different but important roles in managing climate risks. The Strategy sets out that the Government is responsible for the provision of national climate science information and management of climate risks to its own policies, programs and assets.

The Government committed \$25 million in the 2019-20 Budget towards the establishment of a National Centre for Coasts, Environment and Climate at Point Nepean - hosted by Monash and Melbourne Universities - to improve understanding of the impacts of climate change on coastal environments.

The Environmental Restoration Fund will help deliver national priorities, including threatened and migratory species and their habitats, protecting coasts, oceans and waterways and the clean-up and recovery of waste.

CoastAdapt (www.coastadapt.com.au) is a tool to support decision-makers manage climate change risks in Australia's coastal zone. CoastAdapt includes detailed information on coastal erosion risk, including tools and maps to help understand local and regional coastal landforms and geology and sediment patterns.

Resolution 51

That the National General Assembly calls on the Federal Government to substantially increase levels of funding for the environment in the 2019/20 Budget and to increase future funding for the environment with the aim of achieving at least 5% of the Federal budget's dedicated to environmental protection.

Response

The Australian Government is committed to protecting the environment. In the 2019-20 Budget over \$500 million was allocated to the Environment and Energy Portfolio to fund new measures. The Government is investing in environmental protection programs to benefit all Australians, noting the Government's other priorities.

Resolution 111

That the National General Assembly calls on the Australian Government to:

- *Formally review and rewrite procurement policies for all Australian Government departments to require a level of recyclable content in materials procured, to assist in the creation of domestic markets*
- *Pass new legislation during 2019 that applies strong national product stewardships laws, creating significant disincentives to companies to mass produce or import products (including packaging) that are not economically recyclable.*

Response

The Australian Government's Sustainable Procurement Guide was revised in 2018 to coincide with the development of the 2018 National Waste Policy. The 2018 National Waste Policy sets a roadmap for collective action by businesses, governments, communities and individuals to improve Australia's waste management. It highlights sustainable procurement by governments, businesses and individuals as an important strategy to better manage waste in Australia. The Plan to implement the 2018 National Waste Policy will include targets and actions to promote the development of domestic markets for recycled materials through procurement by all Australian governments, businesses and industry.

The Australian Government views product stewardship as a critical approach in helping to solve Australia's waste management and recycling challenges. A review of the *Product Stewardship Act 2011* is expected to be finalised in late 2019. This review is taking into consideration calls for mandatory product stewardship schemes and targets. In addition, the Government has committed \$20 million to a new Product Stewardship Investment Fund to fast-track industry led recycling schemes.

Legislation to enact the August 2019 COAG agreement to ban exports of waste plastics, paper and glass (including packaging) will be introduced as soon as possible, likely commencing in 2020. The response strategy to implement the COAG agreement will consider measures to avoid products and materials that are not easily or economically recyclable.