

# AGREED STATEMENT

27 February 2015

## Meeting of Environment Ministers

Commonwealth, state and territory environment ministers met yesterday in Canberra to progress key environment issues of national significance.

### **Progressing the National Clean Air Agreement**

Ministers agreed that it is critical for governments and industry to take coordinated action to continue to improve Australia's air quality and to ensure our management of air quality keeps up with new scientific evidence of the impact of air pollution on the environment and human health.

Recognising the significant health, economic and environmental benefits that result from improved air quality, Ministers committed to finalising a National Clean Air Agreement by July 2016.

Ministers agreed to release a **discussion paper**, [Working towards a National Clean Air Agreement](#), which highlights ministers' commitments to consult broadly and explore partnerships with the community and industry on areas of priority including strengthening ambient air quality reporting standards for sulphur dioxide, nitrogen dioxide and ozone under the Ambient Air Quality National Environment Protection Measure.

Ministers will also consider specific actions in mid 2015 to establish new ambient air quality reporting standards for particles, clarify the application of the reporting standards to environmental regulation and to address emissions from wood heaters and non-road spark ignition engines and equipment (such as outboard motors and garden equipment).

### *Marine and diesel emissions*

The Ministers noted work underway in various jurisdictions to consider the benefits and costs of regulating non-road diesel emission and will further discuss these at the next meeting.

Ministers noted work underway to investigate marine diesel emissions.

### **Progress on Waste Initiatives**

Ministers agreed to continue to work cooperatively on waste management solutions.

### *Packaging Waste*

Ministers acknowledged the ongoing role the Australian Packaging Covenant plays in contributing to improved recycling outcomes and reducing litter. Ministers agreed to an extension of the existing Australian Packaging Covenant for 12 months with officials to engage with the packaging industry to come back to ministers by late 2015 on the approach to be taken from 1 July 2016. This industry-government partnership complements state and local level initiatives.

### *National Television and Computer Recycling Scheme*

Ministers noted the good progress on the operational review of the National Television and Computer Recycling Scheme and confirmed their ongoing support for a shared approach to e-waste management. Ministers also recognised that strengthened efforts from industry and governments are needed to complement any adjustments to the scheme to take effect from 1 July 2015.

Ministers agreed to share information on actions each jurisdiction was undertaking to address waste arising from e-waste which sits outside of the National Television and Computer Recycling Scheme.

### *Plastic bags and microplastics*

Ministers noted the increasing body of evidence of the significant detrimental impact that plastics are having on the environment including marine ecosystems.

Four jurisdictions have taken strong regulatory action to ban the supply of light weight plastic bags due to their persistence in the environment. Microbeads used in a range of consumer products are entering our waterways and emerging research into microplastics is highlighting the potential long term risks on marine organisms and human health.

New South Wales and South Australia agreed to lead work on a jurisdictional phase down of microbeads. New South Wales agreed to advance further work on practical solutions for jurisdictional approaches to dealing with light-weight plastic bags.

### **Emissions Reduction Fund / Environmental Science / Adaptation Working Group**

Minister Hunt provided information on the opportunities under the \$2.55 billion Emissions Reduction Fund to support state and territory government energy efficiency and land based emissions reduction projects.

Ministers welcomed the announcement of the \$142 million National Environmental Science Programme to support collaborative scientific research by leading scientist and research institutions across all states and territories. These hubs are the Clean Air and Urban Landscape Hub, Earth Systems Hub, Marine Biodiversity Hub, Northern Australia Environmental Resources Hub, Threatened Species Recovery Hub and Tropical Water Quality Hub.

Ministers agreed to establish a Climate Change Adaptation Working Group, and agreed that the group will be chaired by Victoria.

### **Reforming environmental regulation**

Ministers noted the release of the Interim Report of the National Review of Environmental Regulation, which outlines the current environmental regulatory reform effort and lists issues for further investigation.

Building on streamlining already being delivered under the One-Stop Shop reform, Ministers committed to considering removing unworkable, contradictory or incompatible environmental regulation, and identifying opportunities for collaboration between jurisdictions.

## **Working together on threatened species**

Ministers committed to work together to establish a common assessment method for assessing and listing threatened species and, where agreed by jurisdictions, ecological communities, resulting in a single operational list in each jurisdiction. The common assessment method will be consistent with the best practice standards set by the International Union for Conservation of Nature and will ensure that efforts by all Governments to protect species will be targeted at those species in the greatest need of protection. This commitment will be progressed through an overarching memorandum of understanding to be considered by Ministers by mid 2015. An expert advisory panel will provide scientific advice on the process and community input will be encouraged.

Minister Hunt invited all Ministers to attend a national Threatened Species Summit in mid-2015 to exchange ideas and agree on future actions that all governments can undertake to address the decline of Australia's native species. The Summit will take stock of current actions, as well as provide an opportunity to bring new commitments and approaches to this shared challenge.

Threatened species are also a focus of the review of *Australia's Biodiversity Conservation Strategy: 2010-2030*. Ministers undertook to engage with business, non-government organisations, local government and the broader community on renewing this important national policy.