

EIGHTH MEETING OF ENVIRONMENT MINISTERS

Agreed Statement – 7 December 2018, Canberra

Delivering on the commitment they made to Australians in April, Environment Ministers set a new unified direction for waste and recycling for our country, agreeing to a new National Waste Policy.

The Policy is based on ‘circular economy’ principles, recognising the economic and job opportunities in re-circulating valuable resources within the Australian economy.

Ministers agreed, by their next meeting, to the urgent development of a strong, national action plan that includes appropriate funding, robust targets, and milestones to implement the 2018 National Waste Policy.

Ministers also agreed to strengthen the national action plan to address Environment Ministers’ waste priorities. These include reducing plastic pollution, supporting industry development, increasing demand for recycled materials through procurement, and a national approach to waste policy and regulation, for example in regard to cross-border transportation of waste, consideration of proximity principles, and a coordinated approach to waste levies on the mainland.

Ministers agreed to annually review the future targets and milestones to ensure that priority actions stay focussed on the issues most important to effectively manage our waste.

Today’s announcement builds on actions by governments across Australia over the last 8 months, including:

- Putting in place significant investments and actions to manage waste in their jurisdictions
- Advancing the development of new product stewardship schemes to ensure that end-of-life batteries and photovoltaic solar panels are safely managed, in response to Australia’s boom in renewable energy
- Phasing out of almost all microbeads from cosmetic and personal care products
- Sharing information with consumers and companies about how they can play a part in managing our waste.

Chemicals management

Today, Australia’s Environment Ministers agreed to consult on new draft guidance on PFAS in an updated *PFAS National Environmental Management Plan*.

Countries around the world have identified the risk to the environment from some per- and poly-fluoroalkyl substances (PFAS), which were commonly used in fire-fighting foams.

The new guidance will help Australians and regulators make well-informed decisions about the reuse of PFAS-contaminated soil, storing and containing PFAS on-site, and on managing PFAS in wastewater.

Air quality

Australians enjoy some of the best air quality in the world, and Australia's Environment Ministers took steps to keep our air clean.

Ministers agreed to pursue changes to the National Environment Protection (Ambient Air Quality) Measure standards for some key air pollutants - ozone, nitrogen dioxide and sulfur dioxide.

The proposed new standards reflect the latest science on the health risks from these air pollutants. The proposed standards for nitrogen dioxide and sulfur dioxide would become significantly stricter, while the ozone standard would include a new, eight-hour standard.

A detailed Impact Statement on the proposed variations will be released for public consultation in early 2019.

Other nationally significant matters

Ministers discussed a range of other nationally-significant matters, including:

- Trade in elephant ivory and rhino horn, and cruelty to native animals
- The Commonwealth and Western Australia Governments support the listing of Murujuga, located in the Pilbara Region of Western Australia, on to UNESCO's World Heritage list.

Ministers had a substantial discussion on the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC) *Special Report on Global Warming of 1.5°C* and strategies to address climate change.