

8.1 NOTICE OF MOTION- FEDERAL DECISION REGARDING SHELVING OF MANDATORY NATIONAL PACKAGING STANDARDS AND PLASTICS RECYCLING

Submitting Councillor/s:	Cr B Little and the Mayor, Cr James
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RECOMMENDATION

That Council

1. Writes to the Prime Minister of Australia, the Hon. Anthony Albanese MP, expressing Monash City Council's extreme disappointment at the Federal Government's decision to shelve the introduction of mandatory national packaging standards, including minimum recycled content requirements and packaging design standards.
2. Writes to the Minister for the Environment and Water, the Hon. Murray Watt MP, urging the Federal Government to honour the commitments made by Australian Environment Ministers in 2023 to introduce national packaging regulation and mandatory packaging design requirements. These commitments included:
 - a) Mandatory packaging design obligations;
 - b) Minimum recycled content requirements;
 - c) Restrictions on harmful chemicals in packaging; and
 - d) Nationally consistent measures to support a circular economy and reduce packaging waste.
3. Calls on the Australian Government to:
 - a) Reconsider its decision not to proceed with a national mandatory packaging regulatory scheme during the current term of government;
 - b) Provide a clear timetable for the implementation of mandatory packaging standards;
 - c) Deliver nationally consistent regulation that provides certainty for industry and investors; and
 - d) Support the growth of Australia's recycling and remanufacturing sectors through policies that increase demand for recycled materials.
4. Distributes internally any responses from the Prime Minister and Minister for the Environment and Water.

INTRODUCTION

Packaging waste remains one of Australia's most significant waste management challenges. Despite decades of voluntary targets and industry commitments, Australia continues to generate millions of tonnes of packaging waste annually, with plastic packaging continuing to experience relatively low recovery and recycling rates compared with other packaging materials.

In June 2023, Australian Environment Ministers reached a landmark agreement to establish a new national packaging regulatory scheme. Ministers agreed to develop mandatory packaging design



obligations to ensure packaging would be designed to minimise waste and be recovered, reused, recycled or reprocessed. The proposal included mandatory packaging design standards, minimum recycled content requirements, and measures to address harmful chemicals in packaging. The agreement acknowledged that voluntary targets and design guidelines had not delivered the required outcomes and that stronger regulation was necessary.

The commitment was reinforced at a subsequent Environment Ministers' Meeting in November 2023, where ministers agreed that the Commonwealth would become the national regulator of packaging standards, mandating packaging design requirements, minimum recycled content levels and restrictions on harmful chemicals. Ministers recognised that stronger regulation would provide consistency and certainty for businesses, drive investment, reduce waste and support circular economy outcomes.

However, in September 2026 it was reported that the Federal Government had decided not to introduce a new Commonwealth packaging scheme during the current term of government and would instead pursue harmonisation initiatives with states and territories. The decision effectively shelves the previously announced mandatory national packaging standards and minimum recycled content requirements.

This decision is deeply concerning for local government, the recycling sector and businesses that have invested in Australia's transition to a circular economy.

Councils across Australia, including Monash City Council, bear significant costs associated with the collection, sorting and management of packaging waste. Stronger packaging standards are widely recognised as an essential mechanism for reducing waste generation at source and improving the recyclability of products placed on the market. Packaging that is difficult to recycle, contains mixed materials, or lacks clear disposal pathways increases processing costs, contamination rates and landfill disposal costs. These costs are ultimately borne by local government and ratepayers.

The decision also risks undermining investor confidence in Australia's recycling and remanufacturing sectors. In recent years, governments and industry have encouraged substantial private investment in plastics recycling, advanced sorting technologies and local recycled-content manufacturing. These investments have often been justified on the expectation that future mandatory recycled-content requirements would create stable demand for recycled materials.

Without national requirements for recycled content and consistent packaging design standards, businesses that have invested in recycling infrastructure may face reduced market certainty, weaker demand for recycled plastics and longer investment payback periods. This may discourage future investment at a time when Australia needs increased domestic recycling capacity to support a circular economy and reduce reliance on landfill.

The absence of national standards also risks perpetuating a fragmented regulatory environment, with different approaches potentially emerging across states and territories. This would create greater complexity for manufacturers, retailers and recyclers compared with a nationally consistent framework.

ALIGNMENT WITH COUNCIL POLICIES

The Motion aligns with Council's sustainability objectives and broader efforts to reduce waste and support resource recovery within the City of Monash.



Monash City Council has consistently supported initiatives that reduce waste, increase recycling, lower greenhouse emissions and promote circular economy outcomes. The Council therefore has a strong interest in advocating for policies that reduce packaging waste at its source and strengthen markets for recycled materials.

ATTACHMENT LIST

1. Officers Response to NOM [**8.1.1** - 1 page]

RESPONSE TO ITEM 6.1 FEDERAL DECISION REGARDING SHELIVING OF MANDATORY NATIONAL PACKAGING STANDARDS AND PLASTICS RECYCLING

Responsible Manager:	Kristy Green, Manager Sustainable Monash
Responsible Director:	Jarrod Doake, Director City Services

BUDGET IMPLICATIONS

No budget implications

IMPACT ON INTERNAL RESOURCES

No Impact on internal resources if passed.

COUNCIL PLAN AND COUNCIL POLICIES

This Notice of Motion relates to the Council Plan strategic objectives A healthy, safe and connected community (Our people) and A city that promotes environmental sustainability (Our future) as well as aligning with the Community Vision 2031 and the Health and Wellbeing Plan 2025–2029

RELEVANCE TO WORK ALREADY UNDERTAKEN BY OFFICERS OR COMMITTEES

The Motion supports Council's sustainability objectives and ongoing work to reduce waste and improve resource recovery across the City of Monash.

Monash City Council supports initiatives that reduce waste, increase recycling, lower greenhouse gas emissions and encourages circular economy outcomes.

FURTHER CONSIDERATIONS

No Further considerations.