



MEDIA RELEASE

The Hon Peter Garrett MP

Minister for the Environment, Heritage and the Arts

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MINISTERS BACK PLANS FOR A NATIONAL WASTE POLICY

Environment Minister, Peter Garrett, today welcomed the agreement by state and territory environment ministers to develop a national policy to deal with Australia's burgeoning mountain of waste.

"This decision represents a fundamental shift in thinking about how we manage Australia's waste issues," Minister Garrett said. "Waste policy hasn't been considered in the national context since 1992, when COAG agreed to the National Strategy for Ecologically Sustainable Development.

"Subsequent Commonwealth governments failed to seize that opportunity and have spent the past decade or so with a fragmented and ad hoc approach to this important issue.

"A recent snapshot of waste and recycling trends in Australia showed the amount of waste Australia generates has increased by 28 per cent between 2003 and 2007.

"This is in spite of a significant increase in recycling efforts, including through kerbside recycling programs widely embraced by Australians in their homes and communities and other actions by the commercial and industrial sectors..

"What this shows is that current initiatives on waste at community, industry and government levels, while commendable, need to be looked at in a comprehensive way to ensure we've got the right measures in place.

"In short, Ministers have today agreed that we need to stop trying to pick waste items off the list one by one and assess this in a holistic way.

Mr Garrett said a national waste policy will provide much-needed clarity on what is appropriately dealt with at which level. It also affords a timely opportunity to revisit waste policy in the context of broader Government policies on climate change and sustainability. Details of the process will be outlined in the coming weeks.

Council also agreed to compile a comprehensive report on waste ensuring that the approach to this issue is informed by a detailed analysis of action currently being undertaken and emerging issues, including e-waste