



AUSMEPA MEDIA RELEASE

ISSUED BY THE AUSTRALIAN MARINE ENVIRONMENT
PROTECTION ASSOCIATION (AUSMEPA)

For further information please contact Michael Julian
Executive Director

02 62542559

0417 657 951

mjulian@bigpond.net.au

Plastic bottles and plastic bags pose one of the greatest threats to our seas and oceans.

We have all heard this cry so many times before and tend to dismiss it as somebody else's problem. Thankfully, at long last, something is being done which if adopted will reduce plastic bottles and plastic bags ending up in the sea and destroying our valuable marine life.

Michael Julian, Executive Director of the Australian Marine Environment Protection Association (AUSMEPA) said today he was very pleased that Federal and State governments were beginning to seriously tackle the problems caused by plastic bottles and bags ending up in the sea and killing a range of marine life from turtles to whales which swallow these items mistaking them as a food source.

AUSMEPA strongly supports the initiative of the Federal and State governments in announcing a move towards a national scheme for a deposit levy on cans and containers referred to as CDL, which will include plastic bottles.

The Environment Protection and Heritage Council agreed last month to undertake the development of a Consultation Regulatory Impact Statement (RIS) which will be based on the substantial work already completed on options to address environmental impacts and the reduction of litter from packaging wastes such as beverage containers. However, the RIS will go beyond just a Container Deposit Levy and look at other options to reduce the environmental impact of discarded packaging.

AUSMEPA also congratulates the Northern Territory government which will be joining South Australia in the banning of plastic bags used by shops and supermarkets. The Northern Territory announced this week that it will ban the use of plastic bags from the middle of next year; the ban will be phased in over 4 months and will help reduce the 40 million plastic bags used in the Territory. Mr. Julian said this should happen right across Australia not just in those proactive States and Territories which have already taken this action, pollution of the sea knows no boundaries.

The disposal of packaging material is a global problem, the Asian Development Bank has announced the work it is doing to reduce major litter pollution in the Citarum River in Indonesia. A video clip on U-Tube which can be seen on the AUSMEPA Oceans Whispers Blog site <http://ausmepa.blogspot.com/> tells the horrifying story.

David de Rothschild recently drew international attention to the problem of pollution and the considerable harm to the marine environment caused by plastic bottles when he sailed his boat "*Plastki*", made with 12,500 plastic bottles, across the Pacific Ocean from San Francisco to Sydney.

Michael Julian fully endorses David de Rothschild's comments that governments have to step up their endeavours in reducing the community's reliance on plastic. Mr. de Rothschild said voters need to rediscover people power to force change and bring about real and meaningful policies to help the planet.

He said it is well known that 80% of the pollution in the sea comes from the land and we all have a responsibility to do much more to stop this happening.

In an effort to make Australians more aware of the problems of litter and chemicals getting into stormwater drains AUSMEPA has developed an educational unit of work for schools titled Marine Stormwater Pollution which is freely available for all middle year students at schools throughout Australia from AUSMEPA's website (see <http://www.ausmepa.org.au/marine-stormwater-pollution/>), a free poster which highlights the problems of storm water pollution is available on request. The simple message from this education unit is what you put down your drains can end up in the sea.

For more information about AUSMEPA and the suite of marine environment education units of work, please visit the AUSMEPA website <http://www.ausmepa.org.au/>
