



Mark Speakman
Minister for the Environment

MEDIA RELEASE

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NSW AND QUEENSLAND CO-HOST PLASTIC BAGS ROUNDTABLE

NSW Environment Minister Mark Speakman and Queensland Environment Minister Dr Steven Miles today announced the establishment of a steering group to examine practical solutions to the damage caused by plastic bags to the environment.

Today's national stakeholder roundtable, led by the NSW and Queensland Environment Ministers and joined by the Federal Environment Minister Greg Hunt, was established to understand the extent of the problem and to identify the gaps and successes in what is already being done in other jurisdictions.

"The steering group will look at the growing scientific evidence about the ongoing detrimental effect of plastic bags on the environment and regulatory approaches to reduce plastic bag litter," Mr Speakman said.

"Minister Miles and I have expressed a commitment to continue working towards a harmonised approach to reducing the amount of plastic that makes its way into our marine environment. The steering group is a significant step towards achieving our aim."

Dr Miles said it was a no-brainer to try to reduce the harm to turtles, dugongs, dolphins and fish from suffocation or plastic ingestion.

"Plastic bags are often used once, maybe twice, but have a long lasting effect on our wildlife, at a time when the Queensland Government is doing so much to protect the Great Barrier Reef," Dr Miles said.

Mr Hunt said Australians consumed around 4 billion plastic shopping bags each year, which were often only used for a few minutes before being thrown away.

"Plastic bags and plastic fragments easily make their way across our land as litter, eventually entering our waterways and oceans with harmful effects on our wildlife and marine life, and can exist in the environment for hundreds of years," Mr Hunt said.

Ministers and scientific, business and environmental experts discussed jurisdictional experiences, lightweight versus boutique bags, citizen science, and the next steps for government.

About 30 to 50 million plastic bags are littered annually in Australia. The steering group will include NSW, Queensland, Victorian and Commonwealth members.