

## CASE STUDY 2

### PLASTIC POLLUTION AND MARINE DEBRIS

*Statement from the State of Environment Report*

*“The use of plastics continues to grow globally. As a result, the pressures being placed on the marine environment by dumped, discarded and lost debris continue to increase. This was reflected in a review of the threat abatement plan for the effects of marine debris on vertebrate marine life, which concluded that the objectives of the plan had not been met and the plan needed to be revised. Impacts on the marine environment associated with marine debris are high, with a deteriorating trend.”*

#### **Failure of the current system**

Rubbish contaminating our oceans represents a significant pollutant and damages our marine wildlife. It comes from our waste, especially plastics which do not biodegrade.

In order to address this problem we would need policies to reduce the creation of waste. This will mean bans on many single use plastic items, better waste management approaches, stormwater management and monitoring and investment in cleaning up waste.

The current approach is for local, state and federal governments to work independently with no individual level of government actually responsible for fixing the problem. The result is that the Threat Abatement Plan for the impacts of marine debris on vertebrate marine life failed with a new one in development.

#### **How the new system will help fix marine pollution**

Under the new laws the Federal Government would be responsible to ensure marine pollution is managed well. The Minister would have the power to work with local



and state governments under regional plans to identify the best strategies in each region for fixing this problem.

Instead of hoping each state government or local council or shopping mall will take steps to ban point sources of plastic waste we have one entity able to make this decision and drive responsible waste management.

The actions recommended by the Sustainable Australia Commission to the Federal Government to ensure marine pollution is fixed will be public and the decisions made by the government will also be transparent.