

Media Release

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Greater use of wood-fibre products could have helped solve plastics collision course on waste exports ban

A larger national take-up of renewable wood-fibre packaging products could have avoided the waste and recycling sector's collision course with today's ban on sending mixed plastics overseas for processing, Australian Forest Products Association (AFPA) Chief Executive Officer, Ross Hampton said today.

"We are living in a world where many plastic items are being replaced by products sourced from sustainable and renewable sources like wood-fibre. Had there been a more ambitious national uptake in wood-fibre products replacing non-renewable plastics over the past few years, Australia could have avoided the recycling sector's collision with the new ban on plastic waste exports, coming into effect tomorrow," Mr Hampton said.

In response to the ban, the recycling sector is working to process as much plastic waste as possible here in Australia, but industry leaders have still expressed they aren't ready. While today's ban is for mixed plastics, it will widen in the next year to cover even more plastic products.

"This collision course is a timely reminder to manufacturers in all industries that they should strongly consider sourcing renewable wood-fibre to manufacture the many different products we create. It's better for the environment and won't create disposal problems at the end of the product's life."

The recycling industry admits plastics are now headed for landfill if they can't be recycled, further harming the environment.

Momentum around replacement of single-use plastic items is building. The last year has seen more fast-food chains switch to fibre-based cutlery and packaging, take away coffee comes in recyclable paper cups with bioplastic lids, confectionary companies have moved to paper-based wrappers, and Woolworths has introduced paper bags.

"Renewable wood-fibre is already the answer to replacing many single-use plastics, but innovative technological breakthroughs are fast developing products that can replace the stronger, harder plastics. It's time for manufacturers to seriously consider getting on this train and time for consumers to demand it," Mr Hampton concluded.

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