

# MEDIA RELEASE



## FOUR CORNERS PLASTICS STORY HAS LESSONS FOR AUSTRALIA

The Australian Organics Recycling Association (AORA), the national voice of the organics recycling industry, believes that last night's Four Corners contains valuable lessons for Australia in better managing its waste and recycling tasks.

*Plastic Wars*, a PBS Frontline production from the USA, was featured on Four Corners on Monday and provides an overview of the disastrous state of reduction, reuse and recycling of plastics in the United States.

"Obviously, the story was specific to issues in the US. However, it would be wrong to claim that there are no common issues between Australia and the US, and a greater mistake not to pay heed to the lessons to be learnt from their errors", said Peter Wadewitz OAM, AORA National Chair.

The Australian recycling crisis following the China National Sword bans, and subsequent waste export bans, have brought home the challenges facing several Australian waste streams.

"In the midst of addressing the challenges in plastics and other streams, it must be remembered that there are parts of the Australian recycling industry which consistently deliver on their promises. The circular economy works best in organics recycling because it is the industrialisation of a natural process.

"Uniquely among recycling streams, the supply of the organics recycling industry's products such as composts and mulches does not always meet demand.

"Most major organic recycling processing facilities are located within 90 minutes travel time from their largest input and end user markets. Both supply of feedstocks and demand for the industry's products are domestic, and usually local. The organics recycling industry does not export its problems", said Mr Wadewitz.

AORA and the organics recycling industry are targeting a national organics recycling rate of 95% by 2030, up from the current 51.5%. At that level, the industry would generate an additional \$1.6 billion in supply chain opportunity with an extra \$612 million in industry value add towards the Australian economy. This would deliver 4,094 extra jobs paying \$309 million in livelihood to Australians.

An extra 3.2 million tonnes of greenhouse gas emissions would be saved: equivalent to 4.8 million trees planted or 742,000 cars taken off the road each year.

For more information contact Peter Olah, AORA National Executive Officer, on 0458 404 898 or [peter@aora.org.au](mailto:peter@aora.org.au).

*The Australian Organics Recycling Association Limited (AORA) is the national industry body for the Organics Recycling Industry, its suppliers and customers. AORA works with stakeholders to facilitate the conditions through which surplus organic material can be sustainably and cost-effectively recycled; and to promote the beneficial use of compost, soil conditioners and mulches in primary industries.*

The biggest challenge in achieving these significant benefits is the contamination of organic feedstocks, usually by plastics. For this reason, AORA advocates that Australia's governments must urgently ban single-use plastics which are not recyclable, reusable or compostable, with exemptions for plastics used in medical and similar devices.

"Our industry's products are needed for programs to meet state and national targets to reduce waste to landfill, mitigate the impacts of drought, retain water, improve soil quality, address soil salinity, improve agricultural productivity, and to deliver the benefits of soil carbon capture.

"These opportunities must not be lost with the current focus on other, more problematic recycling streams", concluded Mr Wadewitz.

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