



PO Box 173 Bangalow
NSW 2479 Australia
info@ntn.org.au

www.ntn.org.au

Working globally for a toxic free future

Dear Prime Minister,

Re: Basel Ban Amendment, Australia's waste export ban and leadership in the South East Asia and Pacific region.

Congratulations on your decision to ban waste exports from Australia, including waste plastic, paper, glass and tyres that have not been processed into a value-added material.

We welcome this decision and the potential it creates for important upstream waste management solutions and the reuse, recycling and resource recovery sectors in Australia.

We acknowledge the consensus that has been achieved between states, on these issues through the recent COAG meeting of ministers where ambitious timeframes have been agreed to.

As such, we write to encourage this work and this great leap forward by highlighting the importance of Australia's commitment to and obligations under the Basel Convention, including ratification of the Basel Ban Amendment and the recent listing of plastic wastes under Annexes II, VIII, and IX which were agreed at COP 14, May 2019.

Australia is in a unique position to be a compassionate and responsible neighbour in the South East Asian region through its leadership and commitment to the Basel Convention.

Given the ambitious timeframes that state ministers have agreed to in relation to the waste export ban, we therefore request that the Australian government immediately ratifies the Basel Ban Amendment and further, that the federal government includes Basel Annex II listed wastes in the Basel Ban implementation language, as the EU has done.

Australia's ratification of the Basel Ban Amendment and the inclusion of Annex II wastes into the Amendment implementation language would be consistent with the decision to ban waste exports and demonstrate that the Australian government cares about the health and environment of not only Australians but of citizens in those countries we trade with.

We urge you to join Austria, Belgium, Bulgaria, Chile, Croatia, Cyprus, Czech Republic, Denmark, Estonia, Finland, France, Germany, Greece, Hungary, Ireland, Italy, Latvia, Lithuania, Luxembourg, Malta, Netherlands, Norway, Poland, Portugal, Romania, Slovakia, Slovenia, Spain, Sweden, Switzerland, Turkey, and the United Kingdom in ratifying the Basel Ban Amendment.

The global plastic pollution crisis demands immediate action. There is no doubt about the contamination of our oceans, environment, atmosphere and food chain that plastic waste

has caused. Indeed, many scientists have described this disaster as the very signature and greatest threat, of the Anthropocene.

As recent media has shown, the trade of plastic waste to developing countries has caused significant adverse environmental and human health impacts in those receiving countries and beyond. China's National Sword policy to ban contaminated waste imports was followed by many other South East Asian countries and Australia responded swiftly and positively with a national ban on exports.

To strengthen these progressive waste trade policy decisions, there is an urgent need to protect against further, potential negative externalities and to ensure a level playing field for a true circular economy. This requires Australia to uphold its commitment to the Basel Convention by ratifying the Basel Ban Amendment with the inclusion of Annex II wastes and issuing mirror legislation Federally and across the state including through regulations.

The inclusion of Annex II wastes into our Basel Ban ratification would in effect strengthen our own national environmental laws and those of our trading partners and neighbours in the South East Asian region.

Recent [studies](#) in Indonesia have revealed dioxin contamination of the food chain caused by plastic waste imports and the absence of recycling infrastructure capable of processing this waste safely and effectively.

The propensity for industry and state governments to rush towards false plastic waste management solutions such as process engineered fuel and refuse derived fuel products for export to developing countries, underscores the urgency and justification for Australia's ratification of the Basel Ban Amendment and the inclusion of Annex II wastes into the ratification language in our national laws and regulations as the EU has already enacted.

The scourge of hazardous waste exports and plastic waste pollution and its dire impacts on our planet can only be resolved through strong political leadership, robust national legislation and a commitment to the principles of international environmental justice and human rights.

Therefore, we the undersigned request your urgent attention to our requests so that they may be finalised and enacted at your next COAG meeting of ministers in early 2020.

Yours sincerely,

Jo Immig
National Toxics Network

Jane Bremmer
Zero Waste Australia

Jeff Angel
Total Environment Centre

Sam Cossar-Gilbert
Friends of the Earth International

Anine Cummins
Transform Waste Coordinator
Friends of the Earth Victoria

Fiona Armstrong
Climate and Health Alliance



CLIMATE AND
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ALLIANCE



Total
Environment
Centre
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