

STATEMENT

Australia's Environment Ministers give the go ahead for voluntary industry phase out of plastic microbeads

Accord Australasia, the Australian hygiene, cosmetic and specialty products industry body, is pleased Australia's environment ministers at their 25 November 2016 MEM meeting 'pressed go' on industry phase out of plastic microbeads.

The MEM issued the following statement on this matter:

"Ministers discussed the need to work with businesses to achieve a voluntary phase out of microbeads. Microbeads are typically found in personal care products, cosmetics and some cleaning products and are having significant impacts on our marine environment. Ministers agreed dumping products containing microbeads on the Australian market was unacceptable and that the industry must meet targets for the ban quickly and comprehensively. Ministers discussed the importance of working directly with smaller manufacturers and importers, alongside peak industry bodies, to make sure all affected businesses understand and ensure that all products containing microbeads were captured under the ban. Ministers will reassess the effectiveness of voluntary action in mid-2017. Ministers were clear that if the voluntary approach does not result in an effective ban they will move at that time to regulate to give effect to a ban."

During 2016 industry, via Accord, has been engaged in productive dialogue with the two lead agencies for this issue, the NSW EPA and the federal Department of Environment and Energy. The ministers' decision now opens the way for concerted effort across the industry to phase out plastic microbeads.

Early in 2017, Accord will seek commitments from manufacturers and importers of personal care and household cleaning products to phase out plastic microbeads in their products by the 1 July 2018 deadline called for by Australia's environment ministers.

It should be noted that many major companies have already either removed plastic microbeads from their products or given a public commitment to do so within a timeframe they have announced. As we go about this we will be in regular dialogue with NSW EPA and the Department of Environment and Energy.

While the phase out is broadly targeted across the industry, Accord notes ministers' statements regarding smaller manufacturers and importers. The 1 July 2018 deadline realistically recognises that reformulating products needs sufficient time for essential safety, stability and effectiveness testing of the new product. Reformulating can be a resource intensive activity for all businesses but especially for SME manufacturers and importers.

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