

Accord launches BeadRecede

*An initiative for responsible industry
action on plastic microbeads*

Environmental awareness, safety and consumer wellbeing have always been at the forefront of the Australian cosmetics and personal care products industry. That's why the industry has been looking closely at environmental concerns relating to plastic microbead ingredients. Over the last few years individual companies have acted to replace these ingredients. And over this time Accord has been in dialogue with Australian environmental agencies on effective policy approaches for their orderly phase out.

So, what's the deal with plastic microbeads? Well, firstly there is a growing issue with plastics of all types, not just exfoliating beads in facial scrubs, getting into the marine environment. And related to this is the characteristic that plastic materials in general neither break down nor biodegrade with any ease, once they are in the marine environment. All of which can be bad news for our oceans. While plastic microbeads are only estimated at around 1 percent by weight of the total sources of plastic waste entering the marine environment¹, via its responsible approach to sustainability, the Australian industry has heeded calls for a phase out of plastic microbeads. As has the global cosmetics industry, of course.

On 25 November 2016 Australia's environment ministers formally endorsed a voluntary industry phase out of plastic microbead ingredients from cosmetic, personal care and household cleaning products. This decision by the federal environment minister and his eight state and territory counterparts ratified an

earlier call for companies to voluntarily remove plastic microbeads "...by no later than 1 July 2018."

To help raise awareness of the ministers' goal and facilitate widespread participation in the voluntary phase out project Accord has recently launched our *BeadRecede* initiative. Via *BeadRecede* Accord is encouraging companies to actively support the phase out timing announced by Australia's environment ministers, as relevant to the products they make and supply.

And under the umbrella of *BeadRecede* we are also offering a convenient, one-stop-shop for coordinating participation in the voluntary phase out in a manner which best allows ministers to receive the comprehensive reports on progress they have requested. The costs of *BeadRecede* administration are being absorbed by Accord.

Letters inviting companies to participate were circulated in late February 2017. The initiative is voluntary, but participation sends a powerful message about a company's commitment to act on this issue. Both members and non-members of Accord are being asked to consider *BeadRecede*.

What all companies should note is the fact that the nation's environment ministers have stated unambiguously that they will "reassess the effectiveness of voluntary action in mid-2017" and "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."

Accord has always been a supporter of effective industry stewardship approaches to tackle concerns which have been substantiated



as needing attention by policy evidence. Our previous schemes for negligible phosphorus in laundry detergents and voluntary ingredient disclosure for household cleaning products (the What's in it? program) are tangible examples of this commitment.

However, it remains a concern that despite the pro-active, responsible approach of the industry both here and overseas on plastic microbeads, we still face an element of undue political focus and unbalanced media reporting.

If putting the environment first is the driving rationale, then political attention should now be directed at other more significant, but unresolved, sources of marine microplastic waste, such as microfibrils from fleece and other synthetic clothing. The goal, after all, must be action on all dimensions of the marine plastic waste problem, not just the 1 percent factor which our industry is already working to address.

'The environmental advocacy group Boomerang Alliance has estimated the following as significant sources [by weight] of marine plastic waste: tyre dust (18%) plastic manufacturing (9%) and synthetic fibres (9%), compared to 1% for plastic microbeads – see <http://www.boomerangalliance.org.au/sources>

Accord Australasia is the peak body representing all companies operating in the cosmetic, fragrance, personal care and toiletries sector – from multinationals to small Australian-owned businesses, importers to local manufacturers.
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