

## MEDIA STATEMENT

### Industry making good progress on removal of solid plastic microbeads with an 81 percent reduction in the number of products containing beads

*Sydney, Wednesday, 31 January 2018.* Accord's *BeadRecede* campaign commenced in February 2017, following the decision in late December 2016 of the COAG Meeting of Environment Ministers (MEM) to endorse a voluntary industry phase out of solid plastic microbeads by 1 July 2018.

The campaign's goal is to raise industry awareness and rally companies involved in plastic microbead use to get behind the phase out.

Two progress reports have been submitted by Accord, both showing strong commitment to voluntary action across industry, with removal of microbeads on track to meet phase out timeframes. The timeframes sought by environment ministers in Australia are in line with those in place in the USA.

The MEM supported Accord's first progress report at its July 2017 meeting and stated in its meeting statement that "*Ministers welcomed industry progress to deliver a voluntary phase out of microbeads by mid-2018...*".

Despite the MEM not meeting again in 2017 as anticipated, Accord's second progress report was submitted to the federal Department of Environment and Energy and the NSW EPA for their expert consideration. It is now expected that the MEM will again review progress for the industry phase out at its first meeting for 2018, understood to likely occur in March or April 2018.

The *BeadRecede* campaign has engaged in comprehensive industry outreach, with 146 companies contacted.

Responses and market research reveal that 48 manufacturing or importing companies (excluding retailers) are relevant to the phase out, due to either current or previous use of solid plastic microbeads in their products.

Pleasingly, 80 percent of these companies have already completed the removal of solid plastic microbeads. The remainder are on track, having given commitments to reformulate their products by the deadline.

Usage surveys completed for *BeadRecede* show a substantial decrease in the number of solid plastic microbead containing products since this matter first received Australian media attention in late 2014. There has been an 81% reduction in the number of products containing solid plastic microbeads over that period.

Via *BeadRecede*, the Australian voluntary industry phase out has also got the buy-in of the industrial heavy-duty hand wash products segment. While media and policy attention has focused almost exclusively on face and body scrub cosmetic products, Accord's industry outreach has shown that solid plastic microbeads are also being used in manufacturing and trades workplaces as a hand soap abrasive to remove dirt. Pleasingly, many companies in this product segment are now committing to the phase out. And further outreach is planned for early 2018.

There is widespread commitment to effective action on this issue across all the major companies in the mainstream industry, and Accord is confident that an effective voluntary phase out will be achieved by mid-2018 as required by the nation's environment ministers.

The latest scientific reports\*, including a survey of marine sediments across eastern Australian states, show plastic microbeads are much less significant in the environment than many other sources of microplastics.

Our industry is taking timely action on solid plastic microbeads. What is now overdue is similar policy action on plastic microfibrils from automotive tyre wear and synthetic clothing/fabrics, as well as plastic raw material nurdles used in plastic product fabrication. These plastic nurdles, which look like microbeads to the untrained eye, can enter the marine environment via run off and stormwater drains.

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\* Some key reports on the latest science include:

- The **United Nations International Union for Conservation of Nature** report “*Primary Microplastics in the Oceans: A Global Evaluation of Sources*”, February 2017 concluded that “The largest proportions of these particles stem from the laundering of synthetic textiles and from the abrasion of tyres while driving...the main pathways of these plastics into the ocean are through road runoff (66%), wastewater treatment systems (25%) and wind transfer (7%)”.  
(Link - <https://portals.iucn.org/library/sites/library/files/documents/2017-002.pdf>)
- A report published in the **Marine Pollution Bulletin journal** in August 2017, “*Ubiquity of microplastics in coastal seafloor sediments*”, stated: “Enumeration of 9552 microplastics from 42 sub-tidal marine sediment samples spanning New South Wales, Victoria, South Australia and Tasmania revealed differences in the prevalent form of microplastics between region and size, but with plastic filaments between 0.038mm and 0.250mm the dominant categories of microplastics in all four regions. Overall, plastic filaments dominated the microplastic counts, with 84% of all extracted microplastics identified as filaments.”  
(Reference - Ling, S.D, Sinclair, M., Levi, C.J., Reeves, S., Edgar, G.J. (Institute for Marine & Antarctic Studies, University of Tasmania, Hobart 7001), Ubiquity of microplastics in coastal seafloor sediments, Marine Pollution Bulletin, Vol 121, 15 August 2017, Pages 104-110. See the following link to view a preprint version of this paper – [https://www.nesparine.edu.au/system/files/Ling\\_et\\_al\\_%20Ubiquity%20of%20microplastics\\_MarPoll\\_ms%20PREPRINT.pdf](https://www.nesparine.edu.au/system/files/Ling_et_al_%20Ubiquity%20of%20microplastics_MarPoll_ms%20PREPRINT.pdf))

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