



Media release

Minister for Environment and Heritage Protection and
Minister for National Parks and the Great Barrier Reef
The Honourable Steven Miles

Environment Ministers to consider national battery recycling scheme

Australia's Environment Ministers resolved today to consider new laws to require battery manufacturers to collect and recycle used batteries.

Queensland Environment Minister Steven Miles welcomed the support of other states for Queensland's work towards increasing recycling rates.

"This is the first time ministers have agreed they may need to consider a legal response to low rates of battery recycling," Mr Miles said.

"Queensland has led separate recycling trials for power tools and rechargeable batteries and partnered with Lighting Council Australia to pilot a program for emergency and exit lighting batteries.

"Many batteries contain toxic chemicals like nickel cadmium (NiCd), which is a known carcinogen.

"It is estimated there could be about 90 tonnes of cadmium from used batteries is going to landfill each year.

"Many landfills are not designed to accept these toxic chemicals which can cause soil and water pollution and endanger wildlife."

Mr Miles said an estimated 400 million batteries (or 17,500 tonnes) are sold each year in Australia and about 14,750 tonnes reach their end-of-life every year.

"Many batteries are recyclable and for some such as lead acid car batteries the recycling rate is about 90%. But the current recycling rate for the rest of the batteries is very low, with fewer than three per cent returned for recycling," he said.

"Queensland has led the national effort to increase recycling, but its increasingly clear a voluntary scheme may not be enough. The collection trials showed that people want to recycle their batteries they just need a way to do this.

"We want to start with rechargeable batteries such as those found in power tools and other products like laptops and mobile phones as these are the ones that contain some of the harmful chemicals and are able to be more easily recycled."

The bi-annual Meeting of Environment Ministers also discussed plastic bag bans, container refund schemes and climate change.

"Minister Frydenberg outlined the work underway to achieve Paris treaty targets, including consideration of a clean energy target.

"Many states including Queensland expressed the view that the Turnbull government needed to do more to reduce carbon pollution," Mr Miles said.

The communique from the Sixth Meeting of Environment Ministers is available at:

<http://www.environment.gov.au/system/files/pages/4f59b654-53aa-43df-b9d1-b21f9caa500c/files/mem6-agreed-statement.pdf> (
<https://linkprotect.cudasvc.com>)

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