

## **Submission by Sarah Cameron-26 August 2025**

As a conscientious consumer, concerned about petrochemical derived soft plastics waste, and mother of a young family during a cost of living crisis, I am pained by recent years' escalation of unnecessary packaging in supermarkets including of fresh produce. Too frequently, shoppers are financially penalised for choosing 'naked' produce. However, there is an accounting logic issue: we pay also for plastics removal and recycling programs through rates and taxes, and there is mounting evidence of a micro plastics health crisis. Plastic pollution contributes also to Australian and global ecological decline and species extinction, a uniquely upsetting reality in which ecosystem collapse is considered 'the new normal' and we risk losing iconic, beloved Australian species including the koala in short decades. Soft plastic waste is particularly dangerous for marine and tidal creatures, which are already suffering the impacts of climate change as observed in South Australia's upsetting algal bloom and the Great Barrier Reef's increasing bleaching events. I believe that the Australian public has paid enough- real money and in psyche cost- for soft plastics management, and the future must be a 'polluter pays' system. The major supermarkets and other corporate food entities must be made responsible for the plastics problem so that there is pressure to reduce waste at its source. Never again should communities risk shouldering the fire risk of storing soft plastic waste in industrial suburbs when too often these plastics are unnecessary in the first place. Future waste management structures should not include community subsidies at all.