

MEDIA RELEASE

7 May 2024

CRA Calls for Progress Towards a Circular Economy

Catholic Religious Australia (CRA) supports the Federal government's renewed focus on shifting towards a circular economy through improved waste management and recycling activities. However, CRA believes that the government is placing too much focus on increasing recycling, rather than reducing overall production and consumption, to achieve a circular economy.

In CRA's recent submission to a Senate Inquiry into the effectiveness of the government's waste reduction and recycling policies in delivering a circular economy, CRA expressed concern that current production and consumption levels will continue to put unsustainable demands on the recycling process, and that alternate strategies would offer viable ecological, social, and financial solutions.

"The spirit of Pope Francis' Laudato Si' message implies a committed attentiveness to actions undertaken in the name of environmental concern, and so CRA has called on the government to refocus its policies on a reduction in production and consumption and the reuse of already circulating materials," said CRA President, Peter Jones OSA.

"It is impossible to recycle our way to zero waste, as most materials will degrade into less and less recyclable material over time, with recycled plastic continuously shedding pollutant microplastics and toxic chemicals," he added.

CRA also expressed concern that Australia's plastic waste exports to non-OECD countries are increasing, despite a legislative ban on the export of unprocessed waste overseas.

"The Environment Minister granted a number of exemptions last year due to domestic stockpiling issues, essentially shifting our waste problem onto developing nations, who are also struggling to develop safe and effective infrastructure for waste processing," said Anne Walker, CRA National Executive Director.

"Resultant waste leakage into natural and residential areas is having a catastrophic impact on human and environmental health, harming wildlife, habitats and ecosystems, leaching toxic chemicals and emitting greenhouse gases," she added.

CRA urged the government to embrace strategies that convert our current throwaway economy into one where waste generation is avoided, finite resources are circulated, and nature is allowed to regenerate. This could include improving standards for imported goods and disincentivising the manufacturing and importation of plastic products, while extending and enhancing 'right to repair' legislation. In promoting the transition to a genuinely sustainable circular economy, CRA echoes the call of Pope Francis on World Earth Day 2024, "We are called to become artisans and caretakers of our common home, the Earth which is "falling into ruin."

Read CRA's [submission](#).

MEDIA ENQUIRIES: Anne Walker | M: 0409 936 711 | E: nationalexec@catholicreligious.org.au