



**MEDIA RELEASE  
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## **Thousands wowed on Manly Beach by pop-up cemetery for marine animals killed by plastic; death of Risso's Dolphin possibly linked to Coles and Woolworths**

Angered by the tragic loss of a rare Risso's dolphin 2 weeks ago after ingesting a plastic shopping bag,<sup>1</sup> one of only 35 recorded in NSW since 1929, environment groups built a dramatic pop-up #banthebag cemetery on Manly Beach on Sunday, to honour the Risso's Dolphin and the hundreds of thousands of Australian marine organisms victimized every year by plastic waste.

The cemetery, cordoned off by a chain of 128 plastic bags – the number used every second in Australia – stopped thousands in their tracks at Manly Ocean Care Day and was dedicated to NSW Premier Baird, one of the last people to see the gravely ill dolphin the day before it was euthanised.<sup>2</sup> Environment groups are calling on the NSW government to follow through on its bold waste reduction targets by supporting a ban on single-use plastic bags by the election.

"Hundreds of regions, states and countries around the world, including 4 Australian states and territories, have banned single-use plastic bags," said Take 3 co-founder Tim Silverwood. "It's time for NSW to follow the global trend & do the same! If we continue to provide over 4 billion free shopping bags to consumers every year, thousands more marine creatures will suffer and die like Risso."

"Four states and territories have already taken action to eliminate free plastic bags and the evidence is a drastic reduction in litter," said Jeff Angel, National Convenor of the Boomerang Alliance. "Consumers adapt quickly, the environment is cleaner and marine life safer. New South Wales needs to step up - it could do even better and become the leader on removing the plastic scourge from our streets, parks and ocean. The plastic bags polluting the marine environment come from us and we have a responsibility to act by supporting proven government action."

### **Death of Risso's Dolphin possibly linked to Coles and Woolworths**

An autopsy of the euthanized Risso's Dolphin revealed that the grey plastic bag found in the stomach of the Risso's Dolphin was identical to the type used by retail giants Coles and Woolworths. The Plastic Bag Free NSW coalition, representing a growing number of anti-waste organisations, is also calling on retailers to practise Extended Producer Responsibility (EPR) for the plastic waste they create by phasing out or charging for plastic bags.

<sup>1</sup> <http://www.abc.net.au/news/2014-11-28/autopsy-finds-plastic-bag-in-dolphin-stomach/5926650>

<sup>2</sup> <http://www.dailytelegraph.com.au/newslocal/northern-beaches/nsw-premier-mike-baird-on-the-scene-of-a-dolphin-rescue-at-north-curl-curl-while-on-his-morning-run/story-fngr8hax-1227132730272>





“I’ve been chasing Coles and Woolworths for decades warning them to stop using plastic bags,” said veteran marine researcher Sylvia Adam, who has documented the deaths of hundreds of marine animals due to plastic ingestion along the eastern NSW coast. “Coles and Woolworths state that if a customer asks for a plastic bag, they will never refuse. They say they are waiting for legislation from state parliament. They removed their branding from plastic bags following the Dee Why incident some years back to avoid scrutiny of their poor environmental practises.”

Woolworths has also attracted criticism over its Aussie Animals program, a so-called marine education conservation program where it incentivises sales by offering trading cards of the very animals endangered by the large-scale distribution of free plastic bags.<sup>3</sup>

“Woolworths’ hypocrisy is shocking,” said Paul Sharp, found of the Two Hands Project. “Disposable plastic bags are a clear and present danger to our wildlife. “We have recovered countless dead birds and sea turtles on Sydney’s Northern Beaches with plastic bags in them. The big two supermarkets need to take the lead and help us protect our wildlife by voluntarily withdrawing disposable shopping bags and supporting a statewide ban.

Community groups are overwhelmed with the increase in litter and waste, particularly single-use plastic.

“Our volunteers have picked up tens of thousands of plastic bags on beaches across NSW, many with visible teeth marks,” said Responsible Runners founder Justin Bonsey. “Along with container deposit legislation, banning plastic bags is the most effective way to clean up our communities and environment. We call on the Premier and Environment Minister give clean-up groups like ours reprieve from an endless stream of waste and litter.”

Further information: Tim Silverwood 0420668114 or Justin Bonsey 0451837466; [www.plasticbagfreensw.org](http://www.plasticbagfreensw.org)

High-resolution images of the cemetery are available here:  
<http://bit.ly/RIPRisso>

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<sup>3</sup> [http://www.woolworthslimited.com.au/page/The\\_Newsroom/Press\\_Releases/Archives/2013/Hold\\_on\\_to\\_your\\_cards\\_-\\_Woolies\\_prints\\_more\\_Aussie\\_Animals\\_albums](http://www.woolworthslimited.com.au/page/The_Newsroom/Press_Releases/Archives/2013/Hold_on_to_your_cards_-_Woolies_prints_more_Aussie_Animals_albums)

