

Waste tops environment ministers' agenda

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FEDERAL Environment Minister Peter Garrett is confident a solution to Australia's growing waste problem can be found.

Mr Garrett and his state and territory counterparts will hold a meeting of the Environment Protection Heritage Council in Perth today.

He said suggestions from a report presented to him yesterday by environmental coalition group the Boomerang Alliance, which called for a national waste policy, would be considered.

"I believe that we've got the opportunity to do something constructive and positive here which hasn't been done before," he told ABC Radio today. "But we are going to have to have a really thorough and what I expect to be a pretty engaged discussion about that when we sit down in Perth."

Total Environment Centre director and Boomerang Alliance member Jeff Angel said electronic waste, like televisions and computers, was one major issue that needed to be dealt with urgently.

"We have a new round of challenges, we have new types of products like e-waste and batteries, burgeoning numbers of beverage containers, that we really have to start a new recycling push on," he said.

The Australian Greens have backed the Boomerang Alliance's position, releasing their own policy paper calling for similar initiatives ahead of the environment ministers' meeting.

The Greens say their own proposed national recycling scheme would grow the industry by \$12 billion, create jobs and reduce greenhouse gas emissions.

"A national container deposit scheme has the potential to create over 2600 new jobs," Greens leader Bob Brown said. "Including other household and office items and e-waste could add a further 4000 jobs.

"The Greens' scheme will keep millions of tonnes of waste out of rubbish tips, and save millions of tonnes of greenhouse gas emissions."

<http://www.news.com.au/story/0,,26307734-1702,00.html>