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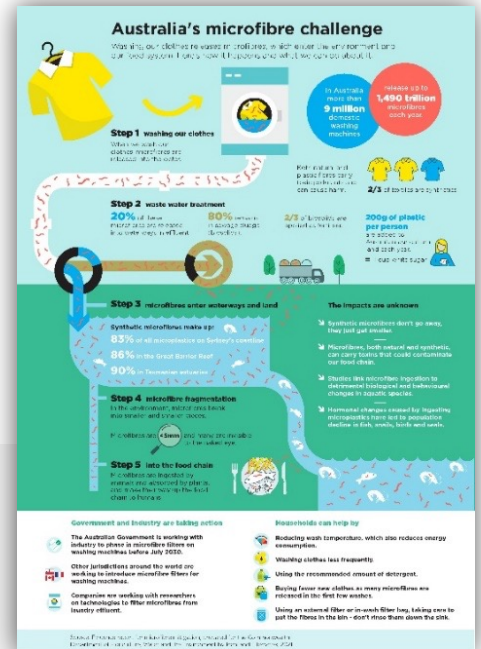
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New voluntary standard for microfibre filtration on new commercial and residential washing machines

Department of Agriculture, Water and the Environment, Standard for Microfibre Release

Summary

In this success story we share how Iceni partnered with the Department of Agriculture, Water and the Environment (DAWE) to deliver the first proposal for a national Australian Standard for microfibre release into the natural environment and food chains.



DAWE's challenge

Under the National Plastics Plan, the Australian Government, through DAWE, has committed to phase-in microfibre filters on new commercial and residential washing machines by 2030 to reduce microfibre release into the natural environment and human food chains.

Developing a voluntary Australian standard for microfibre filtration on washing machines is considered a sensible starting point for this work, given that microfibre filter design is in its infancy.

DAWE engaged Iceni to develop an application to Standards Australia and an evidence report developed through desktop research along with engagement with key stakeholders.

Our approach

Iceni delivered the assignment as a joint venture with Lifecycles – a firm specialising in lifecycle assessment. Engagement was split into phases to manage the process and allow a strong co-design approach across each phase. We undertook a review of current research and policy development in the field to identify stakeholders that will be impacted by the new standard. This resulted in a significant stakeholder list of 45 international and domestic researchers, peak industry bodies, government agencies, subject matter experts, and commercial manufacturers of washing machines and external filtration devices.

We undertook international and domestic stakeholder interviews to gain insights on the impacts, benefits and requirements for the development of a standard and their level of support.

We then developed the draft Standards Australia proposal, supported by the evidence report along with an extensive register of key stakeholders.

Value-adds

WWe focused on creating greater value by also developing an infographic to assist our stakeholders.

There are a significant number of complex issues surrounding microfibre filtration from washing machines, their impact on the environment and human health. By creating content that can support a conversation with stakeholders, we provided our client with additional communication support.

We also outlined the federal government's considerations to manage microfibre filtration and suggestions for household action.

Client Outcome

Iceni delivered a draft proposal that was accepted by Standards Australia.

A key achievement was the extensive stakeholder consultation which has resulted in connecting the department to international and domestic researchers, peak industry bodies, international government agencies and industry.

As a result, our client was invited to attend the first stakeholder workshop for the study on unintentional release of microplastics hosted by the European Commission in late 2021. The department will also be represented in the development of a potential international standard through Standards Australia.