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Queensland Plastic Bag Ban and Cash for Containers Bill Introduced in Parliament

The Boomerang Alliance has welcomed the tabling of the Waste Reduction and Recycling Amendment Bill 2017 into the Queensland Parliament as one of the most important environment protection measures in a generation. The bill legislates a ban on lightweight plastics bags and the introduction of a Container Refund Scheme, both in 2018.

‘These two measures can reduce litter volume, particularly plastic litter, by at least 50% in Queensland,’ said Toby Hutcheon, QLD Manager, Boomerang Alliance of 47 environment groups.

‘This package represents the most significant policy on litter reduction in a generation.’

The combination of a ban on bags, a refund on cans and bottles and associated public litter awareness will make Queensland a cleaner, safer and more resource-efficient state.

A Container Refund Scheme (cash for containers) will slash container litter, currently the number one litter volume item in Queensland. It will increase recycling above 80% for containers and create jobs in collection and recycling. The scheme represents a potential financial boost for community organisations who choose to collect bottles and cans.

It is estimated that Queenslanders use over 2.4 billion bottles and cans every year, most of which are either littered or landfilled. Only a small proportion are recycled.

The ban on single use lightweight plastic bags leads the nation in its provisions and will reduce the devastating impact these products have on the environment and wildlife. Approximately 1 billion plastic bags are used in Queensland every year, with an estimated 20 million littered. With a ban in place, consumers can use their own BYO bags and reduce a major litter problem.

Unlike in other states degradable and biodegradable bags will be included in the ban and the government has the power to stop retailers undermining the ban by providing marginally thicker bags (>35 microns).

‘Boomerang Alliance congratulates the State Government for introducing the bill, the Opposition LNP for taking the initiative to publicly back these measures and the Independents in the Parliament for supporting these plans.’ said Hutcheon

The Parliament needs to pass the legislation as soon as practical to allow the timely introduction of both measures in July 2018.

Boomerang Alliance has welcomed the \$2.5 million allocated in the State budget for the roll out of a Container Refund Scheme and plastic bag ban.

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