



24/02/2017

Surfrider Foundation,
Sunshine Coast Branch,
Submission response to the Queensland Government's paper,
Regarding "Plastic Bag Ban" in Queensland.

Surfrider Foundation, Sunshine Coast Chapter, would like to thank the Queensland Government, for giving us the opportunity, to voice our opinion, via submission, to address the 4 questions on the paper, regarding the topic of "Banning Single Use Plastic Bags in Queensland".

Surfrider Foundation members are voluntary custodians of the Ocean, and we feel these changes, are necessary, and urgent.

We acknowledge the support and backing of the Opposition LNP for a ban on single use plastic bags (and cash for containers), with QLD taking this action it should encourage NSW, Victoria and WA to follow.

When decisions are to be made, the advantages, and disadvantages, of the decision, have to be weighed up, and compared.

In comparison, the advantages of a single use plastic bag, to the disadvantages of these items, there is no doubt, that the temporary convenience of a plastic carry bag, compared to the eternal devastation of plastic, in our world, is not justified in any way.

They are the cause of an environmental nightmare, that we are waking up in, to find it to be our reality.

We need urgent action by the Government, to regulate these items, by banning them.

Queensland has already taken a responsible step, by allowing the Container Deposit Scheme, to be implemented, Banning of the single use plastic bag, regardless of weight, would show insight, and pro environmental, protective management planning.

What is the problem with plastic?

As plastic does not degrade into any form of biological use, it is choking our world, with it's molecules, as it deteriorates, becoming ever smaller, with life forms of every comparable size, ingesting it, and then dying. They in turn are being eaten by larger creatures, which end up being, the beginning of the end, of food chains, of life, on this Earth. As the plastic micro particles filter their way down through either the Ocean, or the Terrain, they begin the toxic end of life of species, that live in the water, or the land. The plastic also absorbs adjacent toxins, becoming stores of poisons, which is a double insult, to the health integrity of our Planet.

All plastic is a problem, not just plastic bags, but this is a starting point for Queenslanders.

Question 1.

What are the appropriate timeframes and transitional arrangements to implement a plastic bag ban in Queensland?

Response:

We recommend Banning the Plastic Bags, to be implemented as soon as possible, at the very least, by 2018..

We need to urgently do everything possible, to prevent plastic degrading, and entering our food chains. This can be accomplished, by passing financially enforceable laws, banning the use of all plastic bags, thereby, removing them from mainstream waste, as they are not recyclable at the moment.

The production of these items, needs to be strictly limited, and other biologically hazardous items, should also become illegal.

This would include: Helium Balloons, and large Rubbish bin liners, plastic beverage containers, and food containers and snack and treat wrappers, plastic crockery and cutlery, straws, and single use bait bags, water bottles, take-away containers, film, coffee cups/lids, ring pulls and plastics micro-beads. These are also problematic, as these items are also found to be a cause of death of marine species, after they have found their way into the Marine environment.

Micro-plastics are an emerging problem and **need urgent examination**. Micro-plastics are pieces or fragments of plastic products that range from nano-metres to a few millimetres in size. They are usually fragments of film (bags, wrappers), foam (packaging, polystyrene, tyres), pellets (microbeads, nurdles) or fibre (clothing, cigarette filters)

Many studies show that shellfish and corals are digesting them. (EU study on Shellfish plastic contamination/ARC study of GBR Corals 2014) Plankton eats appropriate sized micro plastics as well.

Pass Laws

Until now, we have not had enough incentives for unenlightened people to recycle items. We need laws to protect our environment, and to raise revenue via fines, to fund the CDS and recycle program, as at present, Queensland is the most littered State.

Seggregate waste plastic.

To avoid landfill plastics decomposing, and entering the land, and water tables, we need to segregate waste plastic now, and stockpile it, until we have found the best way to repurpose this rubbish, to ensure the safety of all creatures, including humans.

Educate

It is important that to be implemented properly and fully understood, so that it is effective, and acceptable to Queenslanders, a key feature prior to the introduction of a ban is an education program for both consumers AND retailers.

Everyone needs to understand why a ban is being put in place and what alternative practices they should follow. It is important that these education programs are properly funded and achieve their outcomes. Boomerang is willing to assist in the public education efforts. It is important that the ban applies to all retailers and is introduced at an appropriate time. That time would be this year, and as soon as possible.

Extensive ads, and School programs, to enlighten people, about the dangers of plastic. Phthylate poisoning, is just one more plastic problem, for animals after ingestion of plastic which has reached high temperatures, and leaches this toxin into food for instance, if the plastic was a food or water container . This alters endocrine function, causing birth defects, and sterility in humans and other species. We need to stop this now.

Monitor

The State Government has flagged a long term Plastic Pollution Reduction Plan. To continue the plastic pollution reduction agenda, we support the establishment of an extra, Independent, taskforce, ideally the Boomerang Alliance, with other jurisdictions, to identify, and find alternatives and remove problem disposable plastics from use.

Question 2. Do you agree that biodegradable bags should be included in a ban?

Yes, absolutely. Degradable bags are designed to break into smaller pieces, and as they do, they resemble food for wildlife even more than standard plastic bags as a result. Biodegradable bags contain toxic agents to slow down their decomposition when in contact with liquid-so that they can be useful as a carrier bag. This means that they decompose slowly in the marine environment. Some experts estimate it takes up to two years to decompose. By that time, they have already done a lot of damage. Because they are 'biodegradable' they tend to be littered more as consumers think that they are okay to discard, because they are biodegradable! It just becomes ever smaller plastic particles, never going away. They are not organic, so are not compostable. Degradeable and compostable, are terms which the public confuses, due to deceitful marketing practises, and needs to be clarified, and laws made, to ensure that Advertising agencies, do not market plastics this way.

Question 3

Do you support the Queensland Government working with other states and territories to encourage industry to reduce the number of heavier weight plastic department store bags?

We need to reduce and eliminate all so called disposable plastic items. They all end up in landfill, or the ocean, which is not a good choice, or littered in the environment.

Landfill is the largest single point source for littered plastic bags and wind-borne plastic litter. Alternatives to thicker plastic bags, such as consumers just using their own natural fibre bags, must be encouraged. The best way to do this is ban thicker plastic bags.

Question 4

4. What else can be done by the Queensland Government to address plastic pollution?

The release of helium balloons in Queensland should be added to the plastic bag ban now. Similarly bait bags and heavier LDPE bags should be added. Calico or hessian bags could be substituted

Other problematic and so called 'disposable' plastic items such as polystyrene cups and plates, straws, plastic food ware, and assorted plastic packaging and food trays should be added to a list of problematic plastics for future policy consideration.

Discarded fishing tackle is a significant litter problem.

Microplastics-fibres, film, pellets and beads also need to be managed either through bans, take back schemes, filtration systems or simply using alternative, non-disposable, items. Cigarette butts are plastic fibres and usually contaminated with chemicals.

Microplastics are increasingly recognised as an emerging problem for the environment, wildlife and human health. The State needs to seriously examine these.

All plastic litter will eventually break into smaller pieces and become microplastics.

Synthetic plastics are derived from oil and have, depending upon their use, other compounds and chemicals added. When discarded they tend to break into their constituent parts, except in the aquatic environment where they tend to remain intact at a microscopic level.

Plastic products and materials are made using fossil fuels.

Reducing plastic use reduces our toxic load and reduces greenhouse gas emissions.

The draft Boomerang Alliance *Threat Abatement Plan on Marine Plastic Pollution* (released November 2016) outlines the impacts and potential policy responses to microplastics in the environment.

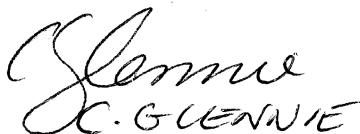
Options:

ITEM ALTERNATIVE PRACTICE Plastic water bottle Use Reusable bottle/upgrade and increase number of public water foundations/collection through a CRS Polystyrene/plastic coffee cup/lid Ban and use reusable/paper cups/lids Plastic straw Ban/use reusable item Plastic food ware (plate, knife, fork, spoon, cup) No single use plastic/ only reusable/compostable products Plastic bags Subject of QLD ban Heavier plastic bags Include in ban/introduce levy

Please see attached information from the Boomerang Alliance, which outlines statistical analyses of marine debris, and an action management plan which can be utilized immediately.

Thankyou for taking the time to read our Submission, and we look forward to a rapid decision by Government.

Yours sincerely,



C. GLENNIE

Christine Glennie

Secretary, for:

Surfrider Foundation Sunshine Coast Chapter,

U2. 27 Saleng Cres

Warana 4575 QLD.