

Agriculture and Environment Committee

From: Mike Moller [REDACTED]
Sent: Sunday, 2 July 2017 12:41 PM
To: Agriculture and Environment Committee
Cc: Admin - Wide Bay Burnett Environment Council
Subject: WBBEC submission on the Waste Reduction and Recycling Amendment Bill 2017

Categories: submission

Committee Secretary

Agriculture and Environment Committee

Parliament House

George Street

Brisbane Qld 4000

[Waste Reduction and Recycling Amendment Bill 2017](#)

Dear Sir/Madam,

The Wide Bay Burnett Environment Council Inc (WBBEC) supports the enactment of the Waste Reduction and Recycling Amendment Bill 2017 and would like to make the following comments in support of the Bill.

Container Refund Scheme

The Bill contains the planned introduction of a Container Refund Scheme that puts a 10 cent refund on all covered beverage containers from July 2018. It is estimated that 2.4 billion containers are used in QLD every year. The state has a low recycling and high litter rate. The Container Refund Scheme could reduce container litter by at least 60% and increase recycling above 80%. The Bill also allows community organisations to get involved in collection and raise valuable funds. It is estimated that community groups, who collect cans and bottles, could share an expected \$25 million in refunds every year. The scheme should be self-financing with the beverage industry responsible for covering the costs of the scheme.

- The scope includes all glass, plastic, aluminium and LPB beverage containers between 150ml and 3 litres, these will have a 10 cent refund applied. Milk, some fruit juice and health tonics are exempted. WBBEC questions why beer bottles are included but wine and spirits are not included in the scheme. Wine bottles, in particular, are common in litter and their exclusion creates an unfair advantage over other alcoholic beverages.
- The scheme should be world's best practice with a recovery and recycling target trending up to > 95% and set in regulation. To achieve this target most collection points need to be situated at retail outlets where it is most convenient for people to return containers. Consequently the involvement of retail stores (above a certain size) should be mandated.

- The use of barcodes should be the primary means to verify refund containers on collection. WBBEC absolutely opposes the use of a weight formula to calculate container collections from public sources as it will inevitably be inaccurate and open to abuse.
- All communities should have reasonable access to collection points to redeem refunds as defined by regulation. Collection points could include reverse vending machines at retail outlets, council and community drop-off centres, kerbside recycling bins and donation points run by NFP organisations.
- Beverage suppliers should pay the Scheme Coordinator any required funds based on supply/sales (in advance) not on claims made by collectors, so that the scheme always has cash in the bank and is financially viable.
- Any excess funds received by the Scheme Coordinator should be used to improve the scheme and community environment projects. They should not be returned to beverage suppliers.
- All collected cans and bottles should be reused or recycled within a specified period (two years) or have refunds and handling fees returned.
- The scheme should be regularly reviewed with improvements introduced, including an increase in the refund if recovery targets are not met and penalties on beverage suppliers.
- The Producer Responsibility Organisation should accurately reflect all small, medium and large beverage suppliers as voting members, so the big beverage suppliers do not dominate.

Plastic Bags

The Bill announces a ban on single use lightweight plastic bags in QLD (including biodegradable). The ban will apply from July 2018. Approximately 1 billion bags are used and dumped in QLD every year.

- WBBEC supports a ban on single use plastic bags.
- The Bill proposes to ban lightweight bags up to 35 microns. This is consistent with other bans in Australia (SA, TAS, ACT and NT). However, WBBEC believes that bags up to 70 microns in thickness need to be addressed. The Bill includes, in regulation, the option to increase the thickness of banned bags, should retailers seek to provide slightly thicker bags. WBBEC accepts this as a compromise position but warn that should retailers provide increasing numbers of thicker bags the Govt must act quickly to increase the thickness of banned bags.
- A voluntary retailer scheme to phase out thicker bags has been mooted. This needs to establish a schedule to target when these bags will be phased out.
- WBBEC supports the inclusion of degradable and biodegradable bags and the proposal to begin the transition immediately by requiring retailers to supply alternative bags on request.
- A public and retailer education and awareness program to explain the reasons for the ban and alternative practices should be introduced ASAP.
- The mass release of helium balloons should be included in the ban. Discarded helium balloons are a littering offence in QLD but only when they land. The offence should be changed so the deliberate release of helium balloons is an offence.
- Bait bags are not included and should be. Bait bags should be replaced with reusable containers or a take-back scheme managed by bait suppliers.
- Banning plastic bags is just a first step in reducing plastic litter. The Govt should establish a Plastic Reduction Taskforce to identify other problematic, single use and disposable plastic items (ie. coffee cups, polystyrene, straws, takeaway containers, plastic food water and water bottles) for future policy action. Micro plastics, such as micro-beads, film, foam and fibres should also be part of the examination.
- Providers/retailers of plastic packaging should review all their packaging and eliminate all unnecessary packaging from use.

There should be severe penalties for breaching the proposed legislation. The Dept. of Environment and Heritage Protection should have sufficient compliance powers and resources. Furthermore, the penalties for littering should be reviewed, along with the level of enforcement by local Councils, to ensure that the current litter laws are acting as an effective deterrent to littering.

Thank you for the opportunity to comment.

Yours sincerely,

Mike Moller (on behalf of the WBBEC Executive Committee)
Regional Engagement Co-ordinator
Wide Bay Burnett Environment Council Inc
P.O. Box 97
Maryborough QLD 4650

[REDACTED]
[REDACTED]