



Committee Secretary  
Health and Environment Committee  
Parliament House  
George Street  
Brisbane Qld 4000

13 January 2021

Email: [hec@parliament.qld.gov.au](mailto:hec@parliament.qld.gov.au)

**Re: Submission Waste Reduction and Recycling (Plastic Items) Amendment Bill 2020**

Dear Secretary,

The Boomerang Alliance, representing 52 community organisations in Australia, would like to thank you for the opportunity to provide our perspectives on the above bill.

The Boomerang Alliance supports the introduction of this legislation and urges its implementation as soon as practical.

Specifically, we support:

- Enabling legislation to ban the supply of specific plastics products, starting with (1) plastic straws (taking into account the disability needs of people), stirrers, plates/bowls and cutlery and (2) following further analysis, regulation to include coffee cups, other plastics cups and heavyweight plastic shopping bags. We understand that these bans will be introduced in two tranches (1) and (2) as outlined above.
- The inclusion of expanded polystyrene cups and containers (e.g., clam shells) in the first tranche
- Exemptions only for products that meet the Australian Compost Standards (AS 5810/AS 4736).
- The banning of all oxo-degradable products, with no exemptions.
- The start date for the first tranche of products to be banned being July 2021, with no additional transition period.
- The introduction of the second tranche should be within 12 months of the enabling legislation being passed

We note that expanded polystyrene (EPS) cups and containers (after further public consultation) has been included in this revised bill. This is welcomed.

Banning EPS products is supported by a wide cross-section of business and community organisations. In a letter sent to the Environment Minister in June 2020, members of the Governments Advisory Committee on this legislation, strongly recommended *that expanded polystyrene (EPS) takeaway cups and containers (including clam shells) be included in the first tranche of the scheduled ban.*

That letter was supported by Local Government Association (Qld), National Retail Association, Australian Food and Groceries Council, Boomerang Alliance, WWF-Australia QLD Disability Advisory Council and the Master Grocers Association

**In our view the current proposed legislation (with some slight amendments as outlined here and including expanded polystyrene items) should be introduced, and as soon as practical.**

We question the exemption for plastic straws, stirrers or cutlery in shelf-ready products (e.g., a straw with a mixed drink or fork with a pre-packaged salad). This is inconsistent with the legislation and will add to public confusion. Under this exemption, these plastic items will still end up as waste or litter. There are viable non-plastic alternatives available that should and could be used now.

To strengthen the bill, we recommend that plastic items in ready-made products are not exempted

As outlined above, we also recommend that the ban start date of July 2021 (as earmarked in the original legislation) be retained.

## **Additional Comments**

The Waste Reduction and Recycling (Plastic Items) Amendment Bill 2020 is enabling legislation based upon delivering a continuous improvement strategy (as outlined in the QLD Plastic Pollution Reduction Strategy). We believe it would be helpful for the Committee to make further recommendations on future inclusions to the legislation that would add to its longer-term effectiveness and provide more policy certainty.

### **1. Add and confirm the list of problematic plastic items to be banned in the second tranche.**

The enabling legislation means that the most (but not all) littered takeaway packaging found in Queensland is captured by regulation. The first tranche includes straws, stirrers, cutlery, plates and bowls. It should now include expanded polystyrene products. The second list scheduled for a phase-out includes coffee cups, other plastic cups and heavyweight plastics

bags. (These items are listed in the Queensland Plastic Pollution Reduction Strategy as the next items for phase-out).

We recommend that a specific list of products be identified for this second phase-out. As outlined, we believe this second tranche should be introduced within 12 months of the legislation being passed by the Queensland Parliament. These would strengthen and make the legislation more effective in the longer term and provide more legislative certainty for the packaging industry, suppliers and providers. The specific list should include:

- coffee cups AND lids
- other single-use plastic cups AND other problematic packaging used in takeaway or away from home situations (e.g., plastic wrappers, sushi packaging)
- heavyweight plastic shopping bags (up to 70 microns thickness)

and that consideration be given to the inclusion of:

- condiment sachets and plastic wraps
- helium balloon releases of any number
- the use of helium to inflate balloons
- mylar balloons
- balloon sticks
- plastic barrier bags
- cotton buds with plastic sticks
- paper wipes (these contain plastic materials)

## **2. Address Cigarette Butts**

The largest single item of plastic litter is the cigarette butt. It has been estimated that billions of cigarette butts are littered each year. In Queensland the latest Clean Up Australia Report calculated that on an individual count basis that cigarette butt numbers represented nearly 20% of all litter. Butts contain toxins and other chemicals that are harmful in the environment.

As enabling legislation, the bill can include other items in the future. To address the problem of cigarette butts, we recommend that the State, working with other jurisdictions, identify policies that will reduce this litter and add these to the legislation in the future. These could include the removal of butts from cigarettes (these can be replaced by reusable filters), financial contributions for butt clean-ups or stricter and more effective policing of cigarette butt littering offences.

## **3. Exemptions**

We support exemptions for those with a disability being able to access plastic utensils they need, and for providers understanding this position.

Whilst the government could have simply banned plastic straws, stirrers, cutlery (as is the case in South Australia), we support allowing exemptions for plastic food ware that meets the Australian Compost standards (AS 4736/AS 5810). These standards mean that discarded plastics can be composted in either commercial or home compost systems, rather than being landfilled or littered. They are standards accepted by the compost industry. Setting this standard in Queensland will encourage other jurisdictions to follow and support national waste goals to have all packaging either reusable, compostable or recyclable by 2025.

Allowing only exemptions for food ware (utensils/packaging) that meets the Australian compost standards, means that oxo-degradable products will not be permitted. These products usually marketed as environmentally friendly (e.g., eco-straws) are neither biodegradable nor compostable.

As outlined above, we question the exemption for plastic items contained in ready-made products such as with juice boxes, salads or yoghurt containers. All of these plastic items have available non-plastic alternatives or compostable versions. Producers have had ample time to replace plastics with these alternatives or to have re-designed packaging to avoid the need for these utensils. Allowing these items sends a completely inconsistent and confusing message to the public.

#### **4. Date for the introduction of a Ban**

We support the introduction of a ban in July 2021. This schedule provides sufficient time for packaging suppliers and providers to have switched supply options. These products that include plastic straws, stirrers, cutlery plates and bowls have been on the public and industry agenda for several years, given their associated litter and waste issues.

The proposed bans were announced in November 2019 meaning that suppliers and their customers in Queensland will have had over 20 months (by July 2021) to prepare for the changes. In addition, the global manufacturing and supply chain for packaging has committed to making changes for a number of years. Many fast-food chains (e.g., McDonalds) have already switched from plastic straws and cutlery, whilst Coke announced they had stopped supplying plastic straws several years ago. Nobody can claim they did not foresee these bans. The retail, food services and hospitality sectors have been aware of government intentions to remove these products and many have already changed their procurement practices and use alternative options. Most of these businesses support this legislation and its purpose to avoid unnecessary plastic waste and litter.

#### **Additional Note**

The Plastic Free Places program run by the Boomerang Alliance in locations around Australia has demonstrated the willingness of the hospitality sector to switch away from single use plastic takeaway products. It is a proven transitional program for the implementation of single use plastic bans.

## our impact

We work in communities across Australia. Below is the combined impact of our full programs in Byron, Perth, Adelaide, Cairns and Townsville, plus our pilot program in Noosa and trial programs in Victoria (Elsternwick and Mt Martha) and WA (Victoria Park) as at **November 30, 2020**.



**559**  
Business  
members

**28**  
Event & market  
members

**150**  
Plastic Free  
Champions\*

**6,588,109**  
Pieces of plastic eliminated

*\*Plastic Free Champions are our member food retailers, markets and events that have eliminated all of our key plastic items (straws, coffee cups & lids, takeaway containers & lids, food ware (cutlery, plates, cups etc), water bottles & bags).*

The PFP program started in Queensland and will be operating in 5 locations in the State in 2021 -Cairns, Townsville, Rockhampton and Livingstone. A fifth location-Noosa was the first program in Australia initiated by the Boomerang Alliance- is now run by Tourism Noosa under PFP guidelines. (Please note the figures above are national figures and that Noosa data after 2019 is not included in these figures)

Despite COVID-19 restrictions on cafes in Queensland, the PFP programs in Cairns and Townsville (both started in March 2020) have been a remarkable success and demonstrate the willingness of many cafes and food outlets to recognise the single-use plastics problem and 'do the right thing'.

### CAIRNS

### TOWNSVILLE

KPI's - 1 MAR 2020 - 30 NOVEMBER 2020 (9 MONTHS)

**107**  
Business  
members

**6**  
Plastic Free  
Champions\*

**32,850**  
Pieces of plastic  
eliminated

**22**  
Business  
members

**4**  
Plastic Free  
Champions\*

**146,434**  
Pieces of plastic  
eliminated

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