

Waste Reduction and Recycling and Other Legislation Amendment Bill 2023

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Committee Secretary
Health and Environment Committee
Parliament House
George St
Brisbane
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RE: Waste Reduction and Recycling and Other Legislation Amendment Bill 2023

Dear Secretary,,

I write in reference to the Waste Reduction and Recycling and other Legislation Amendment Bill 2023.

9A-Meaning of a Circular Economy

We are concerned that the bill seeks to change the Principles of a Circular Economy (subsection 1) There are universally held views on these Principles that include the wording *that products and materials should be managed so that they remain and circulate in the economy to their highest resource value*. In the Bill, the Government is seeking to insert words to this principle, specifically, *for as long as they have value or remain useful*. These words are unnecessary to the expressed Principles of a Circular Economy. This is also subjective terminology, that will make the principles a matter of unnecessary re-interpretation.

In our view a distinction needs to be drawn between what is a principle (an ideal) and what the Government may determine to be the practices under a Circular Economy. When the Bill refers to Principles of a Circular Economy it should reflect the universally held Principles, without additions. That means the removal of the inserted words, such as *for as long as they have value or remain useful*.

The key Principles of a Circular Economy should be expressed as (1) the elimination of waste and pollution (2) keeping and circulating products and materials in the economy at their highest resource value and (3) the regeneration of nature through reduced resource use and supporting natural processes.

We also note that under subsection 2 similar wording adjustments have been made. These include that manufacturers designing, *to the greatest extent possible*, their products. Again,

an unnecessary insertion to a principle. An insertion that could undermine the entire circular economy process.

In recognising the key participants in a circular economy (subsection 2) the Bill seeks to identify those participants and the actions required to make the system function. (Again, the reference is still on the Principles of a Circular Economy) The bill lists manufacturers, business and industry, remanufacturing hubs and resource recovery, unavoidable waste (which does not exist under an ideal circular economy), ecosystem regeneration and adoption of circular economy products/incentivisation.

It would seem that in drafting the bill the writers have not distinguished between what is a principle and what could be a practice. They have also omitted key participants of a life cycle, namely consumers, waste/material collectors and not explicitly referenced, secondary resource markets. Without these components, a circular economy does not work.

For example: A consumer needs to know how to use a product correctly to maximise its usefulness and lifespan. A consumer needs to know how and where to repair, reuse or discard a used product at the end of its life. Without the consumer doing this correctly, there will be limited discarded resources going to repair, re-manufacturing hubs or resource recovery facilities. The consumer is an essential part of a circular economy. In the current iteration of the Bill, the consumer does not exist.

This section should be re-drafted to include all the key participants with expected actions, framed as the ideal actions needed to be taken.

73DC- Use of Annual Payments

(subsection 1) local governments must use these payments to mitigate any direct effects of the waste levy on households.

The purpose of a waste levy is to reduce waste generation by putting a price on waste. Annual payments to councils essentially reduce/remove the incentives to reduce household wastes by removing the pricing consequences. To improve arrangements the mitigation of direct impacts should explicitly include measures that will assist households to reduce the amount of waste they generate, not simply cover the expected levy costs.

Households that already reduce their wastes effectively subsidise those that don't under our current system. Councils should use available/additional funding to reward those doing the right thing through better tailored services and at discounted rates.

In the cause of greater transparency, it would be useful if council also report on what State funding has been allocated to directly reducing household waste generation and the impact of that funding.

Part 8-Efficacy of Waste Levy

The exemption to allow banned plastic items in pre-packaged products (straws with poppers, spoons in noodles, forks in salads etc) will be removed on 31 December 2025

(Clause 19 Amendment 99GC) we welcome a date being set for to remove the exemption that allows banned items in pre-packaged products but why wait until 2025? A 12-month review of this exemption was scheduled (2022). We presume that the Government has been informed that industry cannot change its practices before 2025. This is despite plenty of evidence that it is already doing so. In our view, setting a date for the removal of the exemption (2025) is wrong and should be fast-tracked.

For example: On the presumption that banned items in pre-packaged products were assembled prior to September 2021, that would mean that some food products would be over 4 years old when sold in 2025. In the case of the juice popper, we note that those currently on shelves have a Best Before date of 2023 featured, and we are led to believe, have a shelf life of 12-18 months. This suggests that these current products -which still include a plastic straw-were packaged after September 2021. In this instance, banned items remain in the packaging because the State still allows this, and not because suppliers could not remove or replace them.

The exemption for banned items in pre-packaged products should be removed in September 2023. This is two years after the ban was imposed.

Part 3 AB Lighter than Air Balloons

We welcome the inclusion of a ban on the release of lighter than air balloons (presumably from September 2023). We would urge that a further restriction on the sale of these products be limited to members of the Pro-Balloon Alliance industry group. This industry group could ensure that consumers are informed about the laws and discard practices for any balloons purchased. A major problem has been off-the- shelf purchases where consumers are unaware or not made aware of, relevant laws and practices.



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