

QUESTION ON NOTICE

No. 2199

asked on Tuesday, 29 November 2016

MS FARMER ASKED THE MINISTER FOR ENVIRONMENT AND HERITAGE PROTECTION AND MINISTER FOR NATIONAL PARKS AND THE GREAT BARRIER REEF (HON DR S MILES)—

QUESTION:

Will the Minister outline the State Government's plan to ban single use plastic bags to protect the environment?

ANSWER:

On 25 November 2016, I announced the Government's decision to pass laws that will ban single-use plastic bags in Queensland, with effect from 1 July 2018.

In Australia and internationally, there is increasing evidence about the impact of plastic pollution, especially on marine environments and fauna. Over time, plastic breaks down into smaller and smaller pieces, compounding the problem and leading to a reported 90% of all seabird species and 30% of all sea turtles ingesting plastic debris.

Plastic bags are one of the most conspicuous plastic litter items, and they easily find their way into our waterways and parks. Four Australian states and territories have passed legislation banning the supply of banning the supply of the supply of lightweight, single-use plastic shopping bags.

The Government has released a discussion paper seeking feedback on how best to implement a ban in Queensland. Consultation on the discussion paper closes on 27 February 2017. Submissions can be lodged at www.getinvolved.qld.gov.au and submissions received will be used to inform development of the legislative framework for the plastic bag ban. Targeted consultation activities such as forums and bilateral meetings are also occurring.

The ban is proposed to apply to the supply of single-use lightweight shopping bags by retailers and to include degradable and biodegradable single-use plastic shopping bags. It is proposed that the ban will not cover plastic bags without handles such as fruit and vegetable bags or barrier bags, or bags designed to be used multiple times.

It is planned to introduce legislation to ban plastic shopping bags in mid-2017, with the ban coming into force on 1 July 2018. This timeframe is to allow sufficient lead time for retailers to find alternatives to the light-weight bags and raise awareness of the ban among consumers. The Government will also work with retailers to raise awareness of the ban and provide training to enable successful introduction of the ban.

The discussion paper also outlines a proposal to work with department stores on voluntary actions to reduce the supply of heavier-weight, single-use plastic bags.

Discussions with the retail sector on national voluntary measures to reduce the use of heavier-weight, department store-style plastic bags will commence in early 2017.