



**Liverpoolcitycouncil**  
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Contact: 9821 9245

2 October 2015

To The Committee Secretariat  
Senate Standing Committees on Environment and Communications  
PO Box 6100  
Parliament House  
**CANBERRA ACT 2600**

Dear Committee Secretary

**Re: Senate Committee Inquiry Submission “Threat of marine plastic pollution in Australia”**

I write in response to the Senate Committee Inquiry currently open for response on the “Threat of marine plastic pollution in Australia” of which submissions are due to close on 9 October 2015. I would like to take this opportunity to advise that Council fully supports the separate submission on this issue made by the Georges River Combined Council Committee (GRCCC) however, makes this submission independently.

Council understands that the main focus of the inquiry into the threat of marine plastic pollution in Australia has particular reference to:

- a) The review of current research and scientific understanding of plastic pollution in the marine environment;
- b) Sources of marine plastic pollution;
- c) The impacts of marine plastic pollution, including impacts on species and ecosystems, fisheries, small business and human health;
- d) Measures and resourcing for mitigation; and
- e) Any other relevant matters.

This submission from Liverpool City Council will assist the Inquiry by providing some information relating to items b, c and d.

**Sources of marine plastic pollution**

From observations made and materials collected via the 114 Gross Pollutant Traps (GPT's) in Liverpool, it is evident that plastic products are the most common visual pollutants in our waterways (Photo's & 1 & 2). If not removed from the waterways, these pollutants will often travel through the system, especially during heavy rain events, and be deposited in the ocean.

**The impacts of marine plastic pollution, including impacts on species and ecosystems, fisheries, small business and human health**

Plastic items are a very common part of the waste stream. Numerous products are now stored and sold in plastic containers. Due to the light and buoyant nature of plastic containers, they very easily create pollution in our local waterways. If left in open rubbish bins or on the ground

the containers can easily be blown around and often end up in the stormwater system, our creeks and rivers and ultimately the ocean. As a result, a large proportion of waste which ends up in creeks and waterways throughout Liverpool is plastic in origin (Photos 1 & 2).



## **Measures and resourcing for mitigation**

### *Liverpool Council's Programs for removal of Plastic Pollution*

Council's main response to the reduction of plastic pollution in waterways is through the installation of Gross Pollutant Trap (GPTs). Council removed approximately 1,200m<sup>3</sup> of gross pollutants (including plastics) from our existing 114 GPTs in 2013/14.

In addition, a large volume of waste (including plastics) was removed from the George's River Catchment by the George's River Combines Council's Committee (GRCCC) Riverkeeper program. The program removed 99.4 tonnes of rubbish (including large quantities of plastics) from the George's River Catchment in 2014/15.

### *Environment Restoration Plan (ERP)*

Council has an Environment Levy program called "The Environment Restoration Plan" (ERP). Some programs delivered under Council's ERP program include litter and rubbish removal from our bushland, creeks and waterways.

In 2014/15, a total of 606m<sup>3</sup> of rubbish and litter was removed from the program sites. This litter and rubbish was collected by Volunteers under Councils Environment Volunteer program (EVP), Bush Regeneration Contractors and Bush Regeneration team. Photos 1 and 2 above show that plastics make up a substantial proportion of litter found, especially in riparian, creek or waterway areas.

### *Liverpool Council's participation in the GRCCC and the Riverkeeper Program*

Council's on-going and long-term involvement in the Georges River Combined Council Committee (GRCCC) demonstrates Council's commitment to catchment health and coordinated management. The GRCCC consists of nine member councils, as well as agencies and community representatives within the Georges River catchment.

The GRCCC's mission is to advocate for the protection, conservation and enhancement of the health of the Georges River, by developing programs and partnerships and by lobbying government organisations and other stakeholders. One of the programs is the Riverkeeper Program. The program mainly focuses on removing pollution and litter from priority areas (as illustrated in the photos).

### *Container Deposit Legislation (CDL)*

The State Government have proposed to introduce a Container Deposit Legislation by 1 July 2017. Council supports the implementation of a CDL program which will apply a value to used plastic container, and encourage consumers to return plastic bottles to a recycling station. This program has worked successfully in other states and Council will support the implementation of CDL program.

### *Additional resourcing for reducing plastic pollution*

Council supports the provision by the State or Federal Government to provide additional resources and funding to enable strategic programs to be implemented which target plastic pollution. Litter and pollution issues occur Australia wide, and any programs to be developed to address this issue should be occurring at a State and Federal Level in order to ensure consistency in approach. Due to existing resources Local Government only have the capacity to address this issue reactively, and more broad strategic programs need to be developed to reduce this issue.

Yours sincerely

**Kevin Smith**  
Acting Director, Infrastructure & Environment