

There were three questions on notice to which I provide the following responses.

QUESTION BY SENATOR PETER WHISH-WILSON

The European Parliament is the first parliament in the world to ban single-use plastics or at least the 10 most common packaging items found in the ocean at beach clean-ups. It was based on that data. What is the feedback of your membership over there about how that's been rolled out and whether it's had any effect or impact at all on the kinds of plastics they're seeing on their own beaches? You may not know that now. I understand you might have to seek that feedback. But, if you could get any feedback on that, it would be very useful.

Marina Hansen, Sea Shepherd Australia: The European Union's ban on single-use plastic items such as straws, forks and knives as well as cotton buds do not come into force until 2021 so as such we cannot yet provide quantitative data on any reductions observed at our beach clean-ups.

What we do know however is that across European Union nations there is strong public support for action on single-use plastics. A [Eurobarometer Survey](#) (European Commission) published in March 2020 reveals that citizens want more to be done to protect the environment, and that they believe responsibility should be shared by big companies and industry, national governments and the EU, as well as citizens themselves.

Amongst the more than 27,000 people interviewed, there was solid support for policy measures aimed at reducing plastic waste and littering.

Results of the [survey](#) found that more than nine in ten respondents (94%) say that protecting the environment is important to them personally, 78% of Europeans agree that environmental issues have a direct effect on their daily life and their health, almost nine in ten (88%) are worried about the environmental impact of microplastics, and a similar proportion (89%) are worried about the impact of plastic products on the environment.

These results are consistent with public consultations on single-use plastics conducted by the Governments' of [South Australia](#), [Queensland](#) and the [Australian Capital Territory](#).

QUESTION BY SENATOR DAVID VAN:

I'll note just one thing, and this might be a question on notice. The explanatory memorandum to this bill affirms:

A voluntary phase out of microbeads supported by the Australian Government has resulted in 94% of products now being microbead free.

On notice, perhaps, could you come back and say whether you agree that the current voluntary and industry-led approach has been successful in phasing out microbeads?

Marina Hansen, Sea Shepherd Australia: As stated during the hearing we would judge success of Australia's voluntary industry phase-out of plastic microbeads (found in 'rinse-off' personal care, cosmetics and some cleaning products) to be that products containing microbeads have been completely phased out.

It has been more than 5 years (February 2015) since the Meeting of Environment Ministers initially expressed concern about the impact of microbeads on the marine environment and subsequently a target phase date of 1 July 2018. Our understanding from public information available on the Department of Agriculture, Water and the Environment's (DAWE) [website](#) that there is still 6% of products/businesses that are yet to come on board and phase out products containing microbeads.

Due to a microbead's small size and their volume, in just one product (some reports indicate one tube can have 300,000 microbeads) we are extremely concerned about the "damaging effect on marine life, the environment and human health" (as quoted by the DAWE) from microbeads.

QUESTION BY SENATOR DAVID VAN:

Have you looked at asking all your members to sign a mandatory thing that they won't buy any further plastics?

Marina Hansen, Sea Shepherd Australia: Sea Shepherd is a marine wildlife conservation organisation – not a zero waste organisation - that focuses on the enforcement of existing international conservation law protecting marine species and habitats.

Sea Shepherd has a diverse range of members, volunteers, supporters and participants at our community beach clean-up events which reflect the desire of the broadest sections of society to protect our oceans and marine wildlife. As such, we feel it is important that everyone is made to feel included regardless of their lifestyle/ age / race / gender / religion / financial status, etc. Support for our mission statement should be the main prerequisite for somebody being made to feel welcome by Sea Shepherd.

Sea Shepherd Australia has a Single-Use Plastic Policy for our events, and through the educational and in-the-field components of our campaigns, we actively utilise, support and promote plastic reduction and elimination initiatives, our branded merchandise includes eco-ethical and plastic-free products and we have participated in many plastic free events, as well as the Plastic Free July initiative since 2015.

If the Committee has any further questions please do not hesitate to contact me.

Yours sincerely
Marina



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