



Householders' Options to Protect the Environment Inc.

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Sunday, 30 August 2015

Committee Secretary

Senate Standing Committees on Environment and Communications

PO Box 6100

Parliament House, Canberra ACT 2600

EMAIL: ec.sen@aph.gov.au

Dear Committee Secretary,

Re: Submission into Senate Inquiry on the Threat of Marine Plastic Pollution in Australia

On behalf of Householders' Options to Protect the Environment (HOPE) Inc., I thank you for the opportunity to provide a submission to this inquiry. "The problems and threats posed by marine debris, in particular plastic debris, are of great concern to our organisation and we urge you to act decisively to recommend urgent action to address these growing problems." as stated by the Boomerang Alliance.

HOPE endorses the position of our colleagues in the environment sector who noted the following points for your consideration.

- The Commonwealth Government has identified marine debris as a key threatening process under the Environment Protection and Biodiversity Conservation Act 1999.
- The CSIRO, *Marine Debris: Understanding the Effects of Marine Debris on Wildlife (2014)*, stated:

'We found that within Australia, approximately three-quarters of the rubbish along the coast is plastic. '

- The report observed that:

'The most effective way to reduce and mitigate the harmful effects of marine debris is to prevent it from entering the marine environment.....schemes, such as South Australia's container deposit scheme....appears to be very successful, reducing the number of beverage containers, the dominant plastic item in the environment, by a factor of three.'

1. The Threat of Marine Plastic Pollution in Australia

- Marine plastic pollution is a growing global threat to biodiversity and is already having a devastating impact on the Australian environment.
- Globally it is estimated that 1 million sea birds and over 100,000 mammals die every year as a result of plastic ingestion or entanglement
- The CSIRO suggest that by 2050 '95% of all sea birds will have plastic in their gut'

- In Queensland, over 70% of loggerhead turtles found dead have ingested plastic
- 30% of sea turtles deaths in Moreton Bay are attributable to plastic ingestion, with a further 6% due to entanglement
- The Great Barrier Reef Outlook Report 2014 and the GBR Long Term Sustainability Report, have identified marine debris as a major threatening process requiring action

2. Major sources of Marine Plastic Pollution

- The single largest component of plastic litter and marine debris is beverage container waste, with plastic bottles, along with associated items and packaging representing around half of the material (by volume) of the litter stream.
- Consumption of single use plastic bags is estimated at over 5 billion a year in Australia. It is reasonable to expect that the amount of plastic bags entering the litter stream each year is likely to be as high as 150 million bags p.a.
- Microplastics, including nurdles and microbeads, are increasingly causing great concern. Tangaroa Blue have carried out a number of studies and sampling over a broad geographical range in five States have found concentrations as high as 6000 nurdles per square metre of beach. A recent study by the Coral reef ARC at James Cook university found that corals eat microplastics, causing reproductive problems and eventual starvation

3. Proven Measures to Reduce Plastic Pollution

- A Container Deposit System would reduce beverage litter of the marine environment by 60% and almost triple bottle and cans recycling rates to 85%.
- It would also create an incentive that would see the private sector investing hundreds of millions of dollars into new collection and processing facilities while also providing a significant financial boost for both local government and community organisations.
- Banning plastic bags and microbeads would have a significant impact on the amount of plastic that enters the marine environment and effectively target those plastics that are most likely to be mistaken as a source of food.
- Recent Newspolls (for Boomerang Alliance) shows that nationally 69% of respondents are concerned about plastic packaging in the environment
- The phase out of microbeads would reduce the impact of microplastics. Many manufacturers are already voluntarily phasing out these materials in favour of other better alternatives

Conclusions

Taking into account all of the matters listed above, we urge you to support urgent action to address Australia's marine debris issues. In particular to support the introduction of container deposit schemes, bans on problematic plastics and the phase out of microbeads.

- These measures would represent an effective and proven first step in addressing Australia's problems with the plastic pollution of our marine environment.
- They would also provide economic and social benefit though reducing the unnecessary use of finite resources and encourage greater resource recovery, job creation and community-based financial stimulus.

Regards,



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