

**ENVIRONMENTAL PROTECTION AMENDMENT
(BANNING PLASTIC BAGS AND OTHER THINGS) BILL 2018**

Introduction and First Reading

Bill introduced, on motion by **Hon Robin Chapple**, and read a first time.

Second Reading

HON ROBIN CHAPPLE (Mining and Pastoral) [10.09 am]: I move —

That the bill be now read a second time.

The purpose of the Environmental Protection Amendment (Banning Plastic Bags and Other Things) Bill 2018 is to restrict the supply of plastic bags, balloons, plastic drinking straws and polyethylene and polystyrene packaging; to prohibit the supply of products containing plastic microbeads; and for incidental and related purposes. The bill is for an act to amend the Environmental Protection Act 1986. The bill seeks to prohibit plastic bags, plastic drinking straws, and balloons. Exceptions apply to medical or health-related products, policing or security products, meteorological balloons, passenger-carrying hot-air balloons, plastic bags made wholly from biodegradable material that is suitable for composting, and classes of products exempted by the minister pursuant to section 6(1) of the parent act.

The bill seeks to prohibit plastic microbeads, which are manufactured plastic particles less than five millimetres in size that are found in cosmetics, personal hygiene products—including toothpaste—and household detergents. The bill seeks to prohibit packaging made wholly or partly of polyethylene or polystyrene. A prohibited plastic bag means a bag that is made in whole or in part of polyethylene. Changing the micron thickness of plastic bags to make them more durable means they take longer to break down, if at all. A prohibited plastic drinking straw means exactly that, a plastic drinking straw. These have an average usage life of two to five minutes, and contain toxic BPA, which means they cannot be recycled. A prohibited balloon means exactly that, a balloon. These are made from natural or synthetic latex, which is rubber but acts like plastic. Once they have served their purpose, balloons can and do end up in the ocean.

The bill makes it an offence to sell or supply any of these prohibited plastic products, with a penalty of \$5 000 for each offence. The bill requires retailers to display a notice on their premises describing the prohibition relating to plastic bags and plastic packaging. To not display a notice is an offence, with a penalty of \$5 000 for each offence. The bill also makes it an offence for a manufacturer, importer or supplier of shopping bags or packaging to provide false or misleading information about their composition. The penalty is \$5 000 for each offence.

The bill requires the Waste Authority to include in its annual report details of exemptions granted by the minister under section 6(1) of the parent act in relation to plastic bags, balloons and plastic drinking straws; the amount of plastic reported in public places and water and the impact of the plastic on fauna; and any information relating to the use of plastic bags, plastic packaging, balloons, plastic drinking straws and plastic microbeads that the authority considers necessary. The bill provides for a review and report by the minister regarding the operation and effectiveness of the bill.

These measures come at a critical time in addressing the issue of single-use plastics. Plastics are made from non-renewable natural resources such as crude oil, gas and coal. The energy consumed in the life cycle of one plastic bag is estimated to be equivalent to 13.8 millilitres of crude oil, about a teaspoonful. There is increasing concern about microplastic consumption by sea life. Shellfish consumers could be ingesting up to 11 000 microplastics a year. This is a particularly troubling outcome as plastic is very efficient at absorbing harmful pollutants. After one month of cleaning up Western Australian beaches, Sea Shepherd Australia's Marine Debris Campaign collected 15 000 plastic items over an area of 4.5 square kilometres. During 2017, 2 000 volunteers, covering 37 square kilometres, gathered 196 000 plastic items. Far more plastic remains uncollected. Australians dispose of an estimated four to five billion plastic bags every year. These can be recycled, but only approximately three per cent actually are.

Plastic has remained the most common category of rubbish picked up on Clean Up Australia Day over the last 20 years. It never breaks down; the pieces just get smaller until they enter the food chain. It is estimated, in the most conservative estimates, that by 2025, there will be enough plastic in the oceans to cover five per cent of the earth's surface in cling wrap, and that by 2050, the volume of this plastic will be greater than the volume of sea life.

Plastic production has surged over the last 50 years from less than 15 million tonnes in 1964 to more than 311 million tonnes in 2014, and is expected to double again over the next 20 years. The government's plan to ban plastic bags by January 2019 is an unnecessarily long time frame and does not solve the problem. The time to act is now. By implementing a ban, consumers are effectively given more choice as retailers will be forced to provide more options. The public is already moving in this direction. People are already rejecting single-use plastic in favour of reusable options. There is a groundswell of action on this issue. This is the direction in which the country, and rest of the world, is heading. Instead of playing catch-up, why can we not we take the lead?

Pursuant to standing order 126(1), I advise that this bill is not a uniform legislation bill. It does not ratify or give effect to an intergovernmental or multilateral agreement to which the government of the state is a party; nor does this bill, by reason of its subject matter, introduce a uniform scheme or uniform laws throughout the commonwealth.

I commend the bill to the house and I table the explanatory memorandum.

[See paper 1200.]

Debate adjourned, pursuant to standing orders.