PFAS — PAPER STRAWS

929. Hon Dr BRIAN WALKER to the parliamentary secretary representing the Minister for Environment:

I refer the minister to a new study published last week in the journal *Food Additives and Contaminants*, which shows that 90 per cent of paper straws contain some levels of PFAS, the most common being perfluorooctanoic acid, which was banned globally in 2020.

(1) How will this research impact on the Cook government's staged reduction of single-use plastics across Western Australia?

(2) Will the Cook government invest in and support our local hemp industry to provide a safe and healthy alternative to wasteful paper and plastic products that have now been shown to be less eco and human-friendly than was previously thought; and, if not, why not?

Hon DARREN WEST replied:

I thank the member for some notice of the question. On behalf of the Minister for Environment, I provide the following answer.

(1) Western Australia's Plan for Plastics provides a road map towards a more sustainable, plastic-free Western Australia. The plan is consistent with the waste hierarchy and promotes actions that prioritise avoiding single-use plastics, including drinking straws. The plan recommends people refuse drinking straws.

If unavoidable, use of reusable straws made from stainless steel, glass, bamboo, steel, silicone and heavier reusable plastics is suggested. Disposable drinking straws made from non-plastic materials such as paper, wheat, pasta or bamboo are only considered if no other options are available and the public is recommended to look for products that are certified as compostable to Australian Standard 4736-2006 or 5810-2010.

(2) Innovation and new products entering the market, such as hemp-based bioplastics, are welcome if they align with the goal to reduce the use of single-use plastics. This is anticipated as part of global attention to reduce the impact plastic has on the environment.

Scientific knowledge regarding PFAS's environmental occurrence, effects of exposure —

Hon Dr Steve Thomas interjected.

Hon DARREN WEST: I thought that would get the member excited.

Scientific knowledge regarding PFAS's environmental occurrence, effects of exposure, test methods and remediation technologies is rapidly evolving worldwide. These threshold limits are in alignment with the growing scientific understanding of the extent of background levels of PFAS contamination in our surrounding environment.