

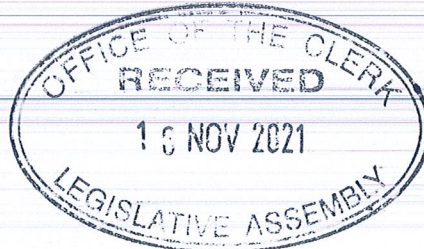


The Hon. Matt Kean MP
Treasurer
Minister for Energy and Environment

MD21/6677

Ms Helen Minnican
Clerk of the Legislative Assembly
Parliament House
Macquarie Street
SYDNEY NSW 2000

By email: helen.minnican@parliament.nsw.gov.au



Dear Ms Minnican *Helen*

I am writing to respond to petition 2882 that was lodged in the NSW Legislative Assembly by Mr Mark Coure MP, Member for Oatley on behalf of over 500 citizens requesting a ban on ring-shaped items to protect native wildlife from the risk of entanglement and death.

I appreciate Mr Coure bringing citizen's concerns about the environmental impacts of ring-shaped items to the attention of the NSW Government. Many of the items the petition references are single-use plastics. I assure you the NSW Government is committed to taking strong action to reduce plastic waste and protect our environment.

The Government introduced the Plastic Reduction and Circular Economy Bill 2021 into NSW Parliament on 20 October 2021. The Bill will give effect to the Government's commitment to prohibit problematic or unnecessary plastic items, set design standards for certain items and establish mandatory product stewardship requirements for brand owners of regulated products.

If passed, the new legislation will prohibit the supply of lightweight plastic bags, single-use plastic cutlery, stirrers, straws and cotton buds with plastic stems and the use of plastic microbeads in personal care products. Like ring-shaped items, these items can be harmful to wildlife when littered. Items such as lightweight plastic bags cause entanglement and death to marine creatures and other wildlife. By phasing out these targeted items, we will stop almost 2.7 billion pieces of plastic from being littered in NSW over the next 20 years.

The design standard powers in the Plastic Reduction and Circular Economy Bill 2021 may provide a framework to address ring-shaped items in the future. These powers will create a legal framework for the Government to set design standards for certain items for environmental, human health or economic reasons. These powers could be used to mandate certain design standards for ring-shaped products to prevent the harmful impacts you have outlined. However, comprehensive analysis of the costs and benefits of any proposal and stakeholder consultations would be required before any design standard is introduced.

The Bill will give effects to the key reforms and targets as set out in the NSW Plastics Action Plan which was released in June 2021. The Action Plan also outlines a commitment to review other plastic items, including plastic cups and their lids (including dome lids), for a future phase out. The Government will review these items and the available alternatives in three years to determine whether a phase out is appropriate at that time.

When the Government reviews any item for a potential phase out or a design standard, there is always consideration of the availability of practical and sustainable alternatives. For some of the items you have outlined, such as facemasks with loops, there are currently limited alternative items. In these cases, the Government is supportive of awareness campaigns, such as the #SnipRingsforWildlife you have outlined to reduce impacts.

The NSW Plastics Action Plan includes a suite of other actions to address plastic at all stages of the lifecycle, including:

- making producers of plastic packaging more responsible for their packaging
- accelerating the transition to better plastic products through the \$10 million Circular Materials Fund
- providing funding to support innovative recycling solutions
- investigating product stewardship for cigarette butts
- providing funding and guidance to help reduce nurdles entering NSW waterways
- supporting plastics research with \$2 million towards a new Plastics Research Partnership.

The NSW Plastics Action Plan can be viewed at dpie.nsw.gov.au/our-work/environment-energy-and-science/plastics-action-plan.

The NSW Plastics Action Plan is just one part of the Government's commitment to achieving a circular economy. The Government has also recently released the NSW Waste and Sustainable Materials Strategy 2041. The strategy outlines the Government's approach to making the transition to a circular economy over the next 20 years and introduces a new overall litter reduction target of 60 per cent by 2030 and a plastic litter reduction target of 30 per cent by 2025. To help us achieve these targets, the strategy will invest \$38 million over five years in litter prevention programs to protect our natural environment, waterways and wildlife.

Yours sincerely



Matt Kean MP

Treasurer

Minister for Energy and Environment

cc: Mr Mark Coure MP, Member for Oatley

16.11.21