

WERRIBEE RIVER ASSOCIATION INC.

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No. A0017169K ABN No. 45 866 719 214



Waste and Resource Recovery Team
Department of Environment, Land, Water and Planning
PO Box 500
Melbourne VIC 8002

wastepolicy@delwp.vic.gov.au

Friday 12 Jan 2018

To whom it may concern

Re: Submission to Engage Victoria Plastic Pollution Survey

Werribee River Association Inc. (WRivA) is pleased to submit its response to Engage Victoria's Plastic Pollution Survey.

WRivA works with many partners in the Werribee River catchment, such as municipalities, water authorities, business, schools and community groups to:

- protect water quality in the Werribee River, other local waterways and wetlands flowing to the coastline and into Port Phillip Bay
- promote the re-establishment of natural habitat for wildlife in the Werribee River catchment
- conserve and enhance attractive natural places for people to access and enjoy
- provide educational programs about environmentally sustainable practices, educating a growing and diverse population living in the west of Melbourne

WRivA is aware that the problem of plastic pollution causes harm to the community, human health, the economy, and the environment. WRivA takes part actively in encouraging clean-ups, data collection, networking, research and advocacy.

We therefore submit our thoughts and some of our writing on the matter.

We wish to thank Engage Victoria for the opportunity to take part in this initiative.

John Forrester

Werribee Riverkeeper

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1a. Do you support a ban on single-use lightweight plastic shopping bags?

Yes

1b. Why?

Plastic bags:

- Are over-supplied
- Blow into waterways
- Break up into many pieces
- Break up into microplastics
- Become snagged in waterways
- Reduce amenity and community pride
- Cover habitat
- Are a danger to wild life

2a. Should a ban include thick plastic shopping bags?

Yes

2b. Why?

As above, plus:

- Will simply replace lightweight bags
- Break up over a longer time span
- Cover habitat even more densely
- Take more resources to manufacture

3a. Should a ban include plastic bags that break down over time such as biodegradable, degradable or compostable bags?

Yes

3b. Why?

Because:

- Research on such items is limited
- The labelling of such items is not exact
- The bags do not live up to their claims
- The descriptive terms lack trust in consumer eyes
- No clear regulations exist
- Enforcement is doubtful

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4. If lightweight plastic bags were banned, we will need to consider exemptions for some purposes, like medical or security activities. Are there any types of businesses, organisations or activities that you think should be exempt from a plastic bag ban?

YES

Plastic bags can be used for frozen foods, medical, security and other reasons.

However, the consumer needs to have trust in retailers and government, that recycling is available, secure and sustainable.

5. If lightweight plastic shopping bags were banned, what alternative bags would you prefer to use? (select up to 2 options)

Other (please specify)

Commercially available alternatives such as:

- Apiwraps (<https://www.apiwraps.com/>)
- FregieSack (www.thefregiesack.com.au)
- Re-usable bags as now sold in supermarkets

Community-led reusable alternatives such as Boomerang Bags (<http://boomerangbags.org/>)

6. What other options should the government consider to reduce plastic packaging in Victoria?

Develop a long-term vision for a future with plastic, giving faith and leadership to the community.

Conduct a litter-smart review of existing regulation, laws and protocols, to reduce littering.

Research alternative packaging for non-recyclable foil-lined snack packaging, a very large component of litter.

Continue other work. E.g. On healthy eating programs, to reduce packaged food intake.

Impose a tax on take away food and other packaging to fund litter initiatives

7. What else should the Victorian Government do to reduce the impacts of litter at a local level and across the state?

Add building litter and take-away food packaging to Victoria's Litter Report Card

Ensure government managers develop litter-free practices on their land. E.g. Victrack

Co-design with the community, a litter survey able to cope with changing consumption, products and materials

Acknowledge other credible litter data sources & findings

Introduce a container deposit scheme

Target cigarettes – at manufacture, sale point, and consumption stages

Develop circular economy purchase protocols to lift demand for recycled plastic products

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8. How can Victorians be encouraged to further reduce the impacts of litter in their communities?

Provide a comprehensive marketing program about the impacts of litter, effects on human and environmental health and effects on the economy

Impose costs on items which are purchased by those least willing to bin their litter

Provide adequate, transparent and well-known enforcement

Affirm support for volunteers and organisations who work on the litter problem

9. What other plastic pollution issues should government, business and communities work together to address?

The need to make waste a resource

The need to price plastic at its whole of life cost

The need to research chemical and other polluting long-term effects of plastic

The use of polystyrene as a building, packaging and consumer item

The use of plastic throw away products at parties and other festivities

10. What strategies to address plastic pollution do you think would be most effective?

Acknowledge plastic pollution as a human health issue

Acknowledge plastic pollution as a future economy risk likely to cost jobs

Openly and collaboratively research the issue and its likely impacts

Market the issue to the manufacture, retailer and consumer

Introduce carrot and stick measures such as discussed above and others

11. The attached file contains relevant pages from the Werribee Riverkeeper Newsletter

- WRivA Riverkeeper News No.27 Feb 2016 p.1 *We Just Want the Mess to Stop*
- WRivA Riverkeeper News No.32 Dec 2016 p.5 *Litter Measurement Tool*
- WRivA Riverkeeper News No.35 Jun 2017 p.6 *No CDS Stance Plainly Wrong*
- WRivA Riverkeeper News No.38 Dec 2017 p.3 *Plasticity Sydney*