



**Minister for Environment; Disability Services
Deputy Leader of the Legislative Council**



Your Ref: Petition No. 046
Our Ref: 62-07983

Hon Matthew Swinbourn MLC
Chair
Standing Committee on Environment and Public Affairs
Legislative Council Committee Office
Parliament House
4 Harvest Terrace
WEST PERTH WA 6005

Dear Mr Swinbourn *Matthew*

Thank you for your correspondence, received in this office on 15 May 2018, regarding Petition No.046 - Banning Plastic Bags. You have requested my comments on the petition and the submissions from the principal petitioner and tabling member.

The McGowan Government recognises the environmental impacts of plastic waste, and is progressing its commitment to implement a ban on supply of lightweight plastic shopping bags. Regulations to implement the ban will come into force on 1 July 2018. The Government is also working with industry nationally to phase out the use of plastic microbeads and supports the efforts of local governments to reduce use of helium balloons.

The *Environment Protection Amendment (Banning Plastic Bags and Other Things) Bill 2017* is not supported. Some of the issues it seeks to deal with are the subject of regulations that are currently being prepared (such as for lightweight plastic shopping bags) or that are being addressed through alternatives to regulation.

The petition seeks Western Australian information on single use plastic. While data are not collected in the form specified in the petition, useful data are available. One source of information is the Australian Plastics Recycling Survey. This survey is commissioned by state and Commonwealth governments, including Western Australia. The survey has been conducted annually since 2000 and provides a comprehensive picture of plastics consumption and recycling across all polymers and for all jurisdictions.

For 2016-17 the survey found:

- 3.5 million tonnes of plastics were consumed in Australia;
- 293,900 tonnes of plastics were recovered, a fall of 10 per cent from 2015–16;
- the national plastics recycling rate was 11.8 per cent; and
- of the 415,200 tonnes of plastics collected for recycling, 180,100 tonnes (43.4 per cent) was reprocessed in Australia and 235,100 tonnes (56.6 per cent per cent) was exported for reprocessing.

The survey is available at: environment.gov.au/protection/national-waste-policy/publications/australian-plastics-recycling-survey-report.

I have convened a Waste Taskforce chaired by my Parliamentary Secretary, Reece Whitby, to provide advice on recycling issues and opportunities in Western Australia following the Chinese Government's import restrictions on predominantly plastics. The Taskforce includes representatives from government, industry and the community.

The Keep Australia Beautiful National Litter Index is another valuable source of information on plastic litter. The index report on biannual litter counts at 983 sites across Australia and provides State and Territory data that can be compared to the national average.

The index is independent, audited research both by volume and item and covers beaches, car parks, highways, shopping centres and other urban areas. The index shows the positive effects of container deposit schemes and bans on lightweight plastic bags in the jurisdictions where these have been introduced.

The latest report is available at www.kab.org.au/litter-research/national-litter-index/.

I trust this information will assist with the Committee's deliberations.

Yours sincerely



Hon Stephen Dawson MLC
MINISTER FOR ENVIRONMENT

25 MAY 2018