

**Submission  
No 91**

**INQUIRY INTO WASTE AVOIDANCE AND RESOURCE  
RECOVERY AMENDMENT (PLASTICS REDUCTION)  
BILL 2021**

**Organisation:** The Hills Shire Council

**Date Received:** 7 May 2021

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## **Waste Avoidance and Resource Recovery Amendment (Plastic Reduction) Bill 2021** **The Hills Shire Council's submission to the inquiry**

### **Disclaimer**

This submission has not been endorsed by the elected Council of The Hills Shire Council (THSC). The submission is made at staff level.

### **Background**

THSC has proposed a number of initiatives to reduce its use of single-use plastics (SUPs) over the past year. So far, the Council has removed disposable plastic-lined coffee cups from its Council Administration building in Norwest, as well as removed plastic plates and serving platters, and replaced them with reusable crockery. Council has also developed a list of guidelines to look at practical ways to phase out SUPs that are most often littered – including water bottles, coffee cups and lids, straws, food ware (cups, plates and cutlery), takeaway containers, balloons and plastic bags – at Council events. More recently, the Institute for Sustainable Futures at University of Technology Sydney (UTS) carried out a building review of Council's use of SUPs and are due to provide recommendations to Council on how to reduce SUPs within all Council buildings. Given this backdrop, THSC invites further conducive legislative direction from the NSW Government as can be provided by the Waste Avoidance and Resource Recovery Amendment (Plastic Reduction) Bill 2021 if it were to be passed. THSC takes this opportunity to put forward recommendations for the inquiry's consideration.

### **Recommendations**

Proposed Section 48D puts forward a number ambitious elimination targets.

- The first target (i) sets the goal to reduce plastic waste by 90% (from 2019 levels) by the end of 2022. Although the bill does delegate responsibilities and timelines to assist in achieving this, more concrete guidelines will work towards ensuring that inaction as seen in the past is avoided.
- The sixth target (f) sets elimination targets for a range of plastic wastes over a three month to three year period.
  - The bill is silent on proposing direction for industry and government to appropriately recycle materials that have already been produced. This will be of particular importance for plastics that have elimination targets within 3-6 months after the date at which this Part commences.
  - All petroleum-based single-use plastics have an elimination target of 3 years after the date at which this Part commences. This definition should be expanded to include plant-based plastic as well because this plastic behaves in the same way as its petroleum-based counterparts when it is thrown away regardless of its origin.

The bill is silent on compostable and biodegradable plastics. Compostable and biodegradable plastics have the potential to complicate waste management when introduced without appropriate consumer education. Although the bill may not have the capacity to cover another large topic, it may be important for it to note that it is desirable that compostable and biodegradable plastics are appropriately labelled and used in ways that complement, rather than compromise, waste management systems (like the standard commingled yellow-bin stream used by most municipalities).

### **Conclusion**

THSC believes that the targets in the bill are attainable, necessary and in line with community wants. However, the bill has the potential to clarify the pathways to be taken to

achieve success further. If delivered and executed correctly, the bill has the potential to reduce and eliminate, where safe and feasible to do so, plastic items across the state and propel NSW's environmental positioning on the topic ahead of other states who are currently leading the charge.