

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

Organisation: NSW Farmers' Association
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The Chair

Portfolio Committee No. 7 - Planning and Environment

6 Macquarie Street

SYDNEY NSW 2000

Via Email: portfoliocommittee7@parliament.nsw.gov.au

Dear Ms Faehrmann

RE: Waste Avoidance and Resource Recovery Amendment (Plastics Reduction) Bill 2021

NSW Farmers Association (NSW Farmers) welcomes the opportunity to provide comment on the *Waste Avoidance and Resource Recovery Amendment (Plastics Reduction) Bill 2021* currently under review by the NSW Parliamentary Portfolio Committee No. 7 - Planning and Environment. NSW Farmers is Australia's largest state farming organisation, representing the majority of commercial farm businesses in New South Wales, ranging from broad-acre livestock, dairy, wool and grain producers, to more specialised producers in the horticulture, egg, pork, oyster and goat industries.

NSW Farmers understands that the NSW Government in March 2020 released the issues paper *Cleaning Up Our Act: The Future for Waste and Resources Recovering in NSW*, highlighting that waste reduction is a key priority of the government¹. The proposed *Waste Avoidance and Resource Recovery Amendment (Plastics Reduction) Bill 2021* aims to further phase out the use of single-use plastics and certain other products that have a harmful impact on the environment; and for other purposes.

NSW Farmers would like to bring to the attention of the Committee the use of plastics within agricultural production systems. NSW Farmers supports balanced policy for sustainable development, production and protection of the rural environment and encourages the minimisation of waste and promotes waste recycling. However, the use of plastics in agricultural production systems should not be included in a plastics reduction strategy without extensive prior consultation with the agricultural sector.

A number of industries within the agricultural sector use plastics in the production or storage of products. For example, the grains industry use plastic wraps in the storage of grains in bunker storage systems; in hay production, plastic wraps are used to store hay bales and in the production of silage; in the cotton industry plastic wraps are used to protect cotton bales; and in horticultural production systems plastics are used in mulch coverings, protective row covers, and seedbed coverings. Additionally in horticulture, plastics are used

¹ State of New South Wales through the Department of Planning, Industry and Environment, March 2020, *Cleaning Up Our Act: The Future for Waste and Resources Recovering in NSW*, <https://s3.ap-southeast-2.amazonaws.com/hdp.au.prod.app.nswdpi-your-say.files/7515/8338/8082/19p2036-cleaning-up-our-act-20yr-waste-strategy.pdf>

in the packaging and supply chain to improve the shelf-life of horticultural products. In livestock industries, plastics are used in syringes for livestock husbandry activities and plastic ear tags are used for identification purposes.

We note that several programs exist to recycle some hard plastics used by primary producers. The 'drumMUSTER' program facilitates the recycling of a range of chemical drums and containers. Some large manufacturers also have direct schemes which allow empty containers to be sent back for reuse. Farmers have been quick to adopt these programs but unfortunately there are currently no viable alternatives to using single use plastics in the production and storage of agricultural produce.

Instead of increasing regulation, we implore Government to consider a staged strategy that supports plastic reliant industries and manufacturers to develop alternatives and reduce waste. Extensive and targeted consultation is required with agricultural stakeholders so that impacts are understood and can be minimised and investment can be made in plastic alternatives. NSW Farmers is happy to provide further information about the issues raised in this submission, if this would be helpful.

Yours sincerely

Bronwyn Petrie
NSW Farmers Conservation and Resource
Management Committee Chair