



Peel Preservation Group Inc.

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PPG is a non-profit organisation devoted to the conservation of the natural environment in the Peel Region of Western Australia

Peel Preservation Group Inc.

Hon. Stephen Dawson MLC
Minister for the Environment
2 Havelock Street
West Perth WA 6005

20 February 2018

Dear Minister

RE: PLASTIC BAN: STRAWS AND BALLOONS

Since its inception in the late 1970's the Peel Preservation Group has been dedicated to protecting our local wetlands, waterways and bushland, often in the face of a huge impetus for exponential development, ever since Mandurah was "discovered" in the 60's and 70's as a great place to retire and subsequently a great place to raise a family. Our group was instrumental in helping to save a substantial part of the Creery wetlands from the enormous pressures of development and we are very proud that our late founding President, the charismatic and tireless campaigner Len Howard was later honoured by having a nature reserve adjoining the Peel estuary in Erskine named after him.

With some significant tracts of bushland and wetlands set aside as sanctuaries for wildlife and places for people to observe and enjoy the natural environment, the Peel Preservation Group is now keen to raise awareness about the detrimental impact of human refuse and pollution on these reserves, and in our waterways in general. Of great concern is the impact of plastic refuse, both macro plastics such as plastic bags and packaging, and the miniscule micro plastics or micro beads used in cosmetics and cleaning products.

Statistics supplied by Greenpeace inform us that plastic pollution is killing our marine life. For example, 30% of the world's sea turtles and 90% of seabird species have ingested plastic debris in recent times. Mandurah is now a well-known tourist destination for its close encounters with our beautiful dolphins, but we don't want to see these denizens of the estuary choking on plastic, or choking on Australian flags which routinely wash up in the flotsam and jetsam after the Australia Day long weekend.

The Peel Preservation Group has previously written to the state Minister for the Environment strongly supporting the banning of single use plastic bags, which too easily find their way into our waterways. It is pleasing to see that the Minister is now going ahead with banning the bag.

We are aware that the State Government is now considering extending the ban to include plastic drinking straws, balloons and microbeads. Our group is very supportive of this ban, along with a public education campaign. Surely there is a way to move towards biodegradable or re-usable drinking straws, and balloons should be banned from outdoor use. A well supervised indoor children's party shouldn't be denied the joy of party balloon games, but of great concern is the mass release of hundreds of balloons at special outdoor functions. It may be a stunning and emotionally laden sight, but where are they going to land? Who in their right mind would tip twenty packets of uninflated balloons into Mandurah's waterways? But the result is the same. If we are not to ban balloons entirely at least they should be restricted to indoor use and we need a warning on the packaging that balloons are detrimental to the environment if not disposed of properly.

Plastic drinking straws take several hundred years to break down, before they become part of the toxic food chain. So what we discard deliberately or accidentally into the Peel estuary system will outlive our great-great grandchildren (who incidentally will probably be horrified at this generation's cavalier approach to treating the environment). We need to progress to utilizing both biodegradable straws (e.g. paper and bamboo) and re-usable straws, and drink containers that don't require straws.

The Peel estuary and our local environment belongs to all of us, but we are also custodians on behalf of our great-great grandchildren and beyond. Peel is a special place, so let's look after it well and not poo in our nest.

Yours sincerely
Melvyn J. Tuckey
Committee member
Peel Preservation Group (Inc.)