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19 October 2016

The Secretary
Environment and Planning Committee
Parliament House, Spring Street
EAST MELBOURNE VIC 3002

Dear Secretary

Surf Coast Shire Council Submission to the Inquiry into the Environment Protection Amendment (Banning Plastic Bags, Packaging and Microbeads) Bill 2016

Thank you for the opportunity to make a submission to the Parliamentary Inquiry into the Environment Protection Amendment (Banning Plastic Bags, Packaging and Microbeads) Bill, 2016.

The Surf Coast Shire is committed to reducing the amount of single use plastic within our Shire. Single-use plastic bags represent largely unnecessary resource consumption and plastic litter that is toxic to aquatic and other wildlife. By eliminating them and switching to reusable bags we can cut shopping bag use dramatically from around 3.7 billion/year across Australia and reduce the risks of harm to the environment.

On the 7 October 2014 the Surf Coast Shire Mayor wrote to the then Minister for Environment and Climate Change to express Surf Coast Shire Council's concern about the lack of state government regulation of lightweight plastic shopping bags.

The letter followed Council's 23 September 2014 meeting at which Council resolved to strongly advocate to the Minister for Environment and Climate Change to create regulations prohibiting the free distribution of lightweight plastic shopping bags by Victorian retailers (similar to the action taken in Tasmania, South Australia, the ACT and the Northern Territory), using the State Government's existing authority under section 71 of the Environment Protection Act 1970.

In Victoria, section 71 of the Environment Protection Act 1970 was amended in 2006 to allow for regulations to be made prohibiting the provision of plastic bags by a retailer in the course of a retail transaction without an amount being charged. To date no such regulations have been passed. Council strongly encourages the state government to consider passing these regulations.

On 26 April 2016, Council resolved to endorse a policy for Plastic Wise Events and Markets on Council owned and managed land. This policy was the first of its kind in Australia and is demonstrative of the Shire's commitment towards a plastic free future. The policy has since been endorsed by the Great Ocean Road Coastal Committee, and generally is well supported by private event operators who also understand the importance of the sustainable management of our coast and inland waterways.

The Shire is working with a number of community groups, businesses and schools to ensure we continue to transition to a plastic free community. The Bill is a step in the right direction

and will assist our organisation and community Council to further transition away from single use plastic bags.

Council currently has no resolution on microbeads, however based on our experience working with our community to reduce single use plastic bags it is likely that the Surf Coast community would generally support a ban on the supply and sale of plastic microbeads.

If you have any inquiries, please contact Rowan Mackenzie, Manager Environment & Community Safety on 5261 0600 or rmackenzie@surfcoast.vic.gov.au

Yours faithfully

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Kate Sullivan', with a small dot at the end of the line.

Kate Sullivan
General Manager Environment and Development

Cc: Keith Baillie, Chief Executive Officer, Surf Coast Shire