RIS Ref: DES0203-0220
File Ref: DOC20/561

4 March 2020

Ms Kylie Hughes
Director
Department of Environment and Science
400 George Street
BRISBANE QLD 4000

Dear Ms Hughes

Consultation Regulatory Impact Statement—Single use plastic items

Thank you for your enquiry of 3 February 2020 and further information provided to 3 March 2020, seeking advice on the adequacy of the Consultation Regulatory Impact Statement 'Single use plastic items' (Consultation RIS).

Background

On 7 November 2019 the Queensland Government released 'Tackling Plastic Waste—Queensland's Plastic Pollution Reduction Plan' (the Plan), which identifies actions to reduce plastic waste and pollution. The Plan proposes to ban the supply of specific single use plastic items, starting with straws, hot and cold drink stirrers, plates and cutlery.

Proposal

The Department of Environment and Science (the department) has prepared this consultation RIS to assess options to reduce the amount of plastic pollution resulting from single use plastic items in the environment.

The consultation RIS presents the following options:

- Maintain the status quo.
- Introduce a legislated ban on the supply of single use plastic straws, stirrers, plates and cutlery (preferred).
- Implement non-regulatory approaches, including greater education and awareness.
- Install additional litter collection and clean up infrastructure.

Assessment

In undertaking its assessment of a Consultation RIS, the Commission has regard to 'adequacy criteria' in the Queensland Government Guide to Better Regulation (the guidelines). Key elements include the identification of a policy problem, rationale for government action and analysis of costs and benefits.

The Commission acknowledges the effort made by the department in preparing the consultation RIS to allow the broader community to assess the merits of a ban on single use plastic items and other options to reduce plastic pollution. The RIS presents the department's assessment of the issues including high level analyses of the estimated impacts of the options to business and community stakeholders, and governments. However, acknowledging departmental timelines to commence consultation, the Commission is not able to assess the consultation RIS as adequate in accordance with the guidelines.

Queensland Productivity Commission
Lvl 27, 145 Ann Street, Brisbane Qld 4000
PO Box 12112, George Street Qld 4003

TEL 07 3015 5111
EMAIL enquiry@qpc.qld.gov.au
WEB qpc.qld.gov.au
ABN 18 872 336 955

The Commission will issue an adequacy assessment for the Decision RIS following consultation, which should assist in informing and gathering evidence to assess the regulatory proposal. In order to be considered adequate for decision-making purposes, the Decision RIS will need to:

- provide evidence of the magnitude and costs of the single use plastic pollution problem generated in Queensland, and demonstrate that existing efforts (for example, voluntary industry and consumer changes) will not adequately address the problem
- present adequate analysis on the extent to which each option would address the problem (in particular, the likely overall reduction in litter or pollution from banning specific plastic items once product substitution is accounted for) and the costs and benefits involved, including social and environmental impacts
- identify any potential unintended impacts, for example, costs on people with a disability or whether substitute products may impose a greater adverse impact than the banned plastic items
- consider any alternative options that may achieve the stated objective to reduce plastic pollution at a lower cost (that is, whether alternative policies can more effectively and efficiently reduce plastic pollution, including options targeted at broader plastic pollution rather than specific single use plastics)
- demonstrate that the community will be better off if the preferred option is implemented, including:
  - the reduction in choice for consumers under a ban is outweighed by the benefits
  - the introduction of a ban and the associated implementation and enforcement costs will deliver a net benefit to the Queensland community.

Consistent with the guidelines, once a Consultation RIS has been approved for release it is published on the Commission's website along with this letter. After consultation has concluded, a Decision RIS incorporating the consideration of public comments should be provided to the Commission for assessment before the matter is finally referred to Cabinet for decision.

Please contact Robert Sugden, Senior Analyst on (07) 3015 5113 if you require any additional information or guidance in relation to the above comments or the guidelines in general.

Yours sincerely



Christine Tozer
Team Leader