

Karli Rachel Thomas

Submitter Type:

Individual

Source: Web Form

Overall Position: Support

Overall Notes:

Clause

1. Do you agree with the Government's proposal to prohibit the manufacture and sale of personal care products containing microbeads (eg, body scrubs, facial cleaners, toothpastes) to reduce their impacts on New Zealand's environment and human health? Why/why not?

Position

Yes

Notes

I strongly support the proposal to ban the manufacture and sale of personal care products containing microbeads, and feel that New Zealand is lagging behind much of the developed world in not having made such a commitment earlier. I would like to see this ban made through legislative means, with penalties for breaches, not through any voluntary agreement. The timeline should be as rapid as possible (e.g. enacted immediately upon the completion of consultation and passing through parliament) with phase out only for sale of current stock and for any domestic manufacturing that requires equipment adaptation.

Clause

2. What are your views on the Government narrowing or widening the definition of the scope of personal care products containing microbeads to be prohibited from manufacture and sale in New Zealand?

Notes

I strongly support the ban being widened to all product formulations that involve the intentional release of microbeads (ie extended from personal care products to include household cleaners and industrial products). The recent IUCN report on microplastics in the world's oceans* found that, while personal care products are the smallest of the top 7 contributors to microplastic pollution globally, they are the only one of those categories that is released intentionally, therefore are the easiest to eliminate. In order to have a significant impact on reducing microplastic pollution and impacts, this legislation should be given the widest possible scope to tackle microplastics intentionally added and released through personal, household and industrial formulations. All should be banned from manufacture and sale. I also support the ban to be extended to include the importation of such products, though I realise this is more difficult to enact. There should be adequate warning of this ban, and the ability of customs and border control to intercept and confiscate shipments that breach New Zealand law by containing microplastics. Finally, this legislation should set the context that this ban is the first and simplest step towards tackling the full range of microplastic pollution sources, and indicate the intention of the New Zealand Government to begin tackling the more complex unintentional sources of such pollution, as identified in the IUCN report. * Boucher, J. and Friot D. (2017). Primary Microplastics in the Oceans: A Global Evaluation of Sources. Gland, Switzerland: IUCN. 43pp.

Clause

3. Do you currently manufacture, sell or use any personal care products containing microbeads? Please specify.

Position

Yes

Notes

Unfortunately, I have accidentally purchased toothpaste containing microbeads where this was not indicated on the packaging. I do not consider improved labeling to be an adequate solution, but the current lax labeling standards globally serve to exacerbate the pollution problem by making it difficult for consumers, even when they wish to avoid such products, to do so.

Clause

4. Do you currently manufacture, sell or use any personal care products containing microbeads for medically prescribed uses or purposes? Please specify.

Position

No

Notes

Clause

5. Do you currently import any personal care products containing microbeads into New Zealand, either for sale or personal use? Please specify.

Position

No

Notes

Clause

6. Are you aware of any personal care products containing microbeads for any purpose that could be considered an essential or critical use?

Notes

I do not believe there are any such products that could not be formulated with a biodegradable or naturally occurring replacement to the microplastics

Clause

7. Do you currently manufacture, sell or use any alternatives to personal care products containing microbeads (or components therein), which are designed and used for the same purpose(s)? Please specify.

Position

No

Notes

Clause

8. Do you consider the alternatives to personal care products containing microbeads (or components therein) to be reasonably practicable, readily available, and similarly priced for existing personal, business or other uses? Why/why not?

Position

Yes

Notes

Equivalent products using natural or biodegradable materials are already on the market. I understand that addition of microbeads to personal care products is a problem for manufacturing anyway, in terms of equipment wear and tear.

Clause

9. Is there any reason why the alternatives would not be reasonably practicable, readily available, or similarly priced for personal, business or other uses? If so, would you consider operating against the policy intent and importing personal care products containing microbeads from overseas?

Position

Yes

Notes

I do not believe this is the case, so don't consider this question relevant.

Clause

10. What would be the impact on you or your business if personal care products containing microbeads were prohibited for manufacture and sale in New Zealand and the alternatives were not reasonably practicable, readily available, or similarly priced?

Notes

I work in ocean conservation and such a ban would benefit both the oceans, consumer ethics and New Zealand's reputation.

Clause

11. Do you support the Government's approach to administration and enforcement of the proposed regulations under the Waste Minimisation Act? Why/why not?

Position

Yes

Notes

I think this approach is sensible, and support the penalties as outlined in the consultation document.

Clause

12. Are there any other considerations for administration and enforcement of the proposed regulations that have not been outlined in the Administration and enforcement section in the Managing microbeads in personal care products consultation document?

Notes

I find the following paragraph confusing: "The ban on sale of personal care products containing microbeads in New Zealand would not apply to any microbeads products produced in or imported into Australia that may lawfully be sold in Australia, by virtue of Section 10 of the Trans-Tasman Mutual Recognition Act." I assume this is simply saying that this ban does not extend to product sales in Australia, which I consider obvious as the New Zealand Government does not legislate for Australia. However, the inclusion of the paragraph gives cause for concern that "would not apply to any microbeads products produced in or imported into Australia that may lawfully be sold in Australia" might indicate that manufacturing of such products, for import into Australia, might still be permitted in New Zealand. I hope that this is not the case, as this would undermine and create a loophole in the ban. Assuming this is not the case, I suggest that the paragraph is omitted or made clearer if it does not represent any loophole to the New Zealand legislative ban. Alternatively, if it is referring to shipments transiting New Zealand, I do not consider this to be an acceptable loophole, and (if Australia does not enact its own ban to the same effect as New Zealand) Australian and other country importers should seek alternative import routes.

Clause

13. What are your views on the Government's proposed timeframe for entry-into-force of the regulations under the Waste Minimisation Act to prohibit the manufacture and sale of personal care products containing microbeads?

Notes

I consider this to be too long, and the proposal to align with the US ban is irrelevant. It should be possible to wrap up the consultation in the first half of the year, and the ban in place by mid- to late- 2017.

Clause

14. Are there any issues about the proposed timeframe for entry-into-force of the regulations that the Government should consider?

Notes

If a phase in period is allowed to clear current stock, this should be given an end date and a requirement for proof of ordering to be retained during that period. At the end date, all products should be off the shelf.

Clause

15. Are there any ways the Government could help industry or consumers transition away from personal care products containing microbeads ahead of the regulations' entry-into-force?

Notes

I would support a public education campaign on the ban, legislation, penalties and timeframe, combined with information on the other sources of plastic and microplastic pollution and the importance of reducing these impacts as well as recommendations for reducing other unintentional pollution (e.g. other sources of microplastic pollution) and supporting clean up efforts (more in the case of larger plastic refuse, such as declining or banning single use plastics and promoting reusing and recycling).

Clause

16. Do you have any further comments you wish to make about the Government's proposal?

Notes

Thanks for your efforts on this proposal, I hope that it can go ahead with the widest possible scope in the least possible time - and that it represents only the first step in tackling plastic pollution in our oceans.