

Subject: Submission to the consultation on banning the sale and manufacture of plastic microbeads in personal care products in New Zealand

Recipient: microbeads@submissions.mfe.govt.nz

Sender: Microbeads.submissions@mfe.govt.nz

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I congratulate the Minister on his proposal for a legislative ban on microbeads in New Zealand, which I most emphatically support, and urge the Government to introduce the ban as quickly as possible. I am aware that bans in other countries have fallen foul of loopholes or relied on ineffective, voluntary self-regulation. I believe the approaches outlined below will help the New Zealand Government to avoid making these same mistakes. Definition of coverage I strongly agree with the intention to "define the scope of products as broadly as possible" and advocate for a comprehensive ban on personal care products containing microbeads. Specifically, I ask the Ministry to follow the below guidelines developed by Fauna & Flora International: - Any definition of 'microbeads' must include all solid plastic ingredients smaller than 5mm used for any purpose (not just for exfoliation). There should be no lower size limit included in the definition; - The legislation should cover all products that are washed down the drain. This includes a wide range of cosmetic and personal care products as well as cleaning products, make-up, and other product categories; - Legislation should not allow so-called 'biodegradable' plastics to be used as alternatives, as these materials do not degrade in the marine environment and therefore are not a solution to the problem; - There should be a clear and prompt timeline for phasing out these ingredients, and a date after which products containing microplastics must not be sold. This should be within two years of the ban. Voluntary self-regulation is so seldom truly effective that I believe it is an inadequate approach and a legislative ban is needed. I therefore strongly support the consultation document's recommendation to introduce a legislative ban under the Waste Minimisation Act. In the face of the ineffectiveness of voluntary self-regulation by so many New Zealand industries to date, I see anything less than a legislative ban as tantamount to negligence on the Government's part. Just a few months ago, the organisation Plastic Diet exposed how companies who claimed to have largely phased out microbeads - such as Foodstuffs and Progressive - still had numerous microbead products for sale. For this reason, it is essential that the New Zealand Government introduce an outright legislative ban from 2018 at the latest. Products entering New Zealand via Australia I am concerned that the Trans-Tasman Mutual Recognition Act means that microbead products could still enter New Zealand via Australia, despite the ban. Given that nearly a quarter of our cosmetic products enter New Zealand via Australia, I would strongly encourage the Government to explore all options (i.e. exemptions allowed for health, safety and environmental reasons) to ensure that products containing microbeads do not enter New Zealand shops via Australia, until such a time that Australia introduce a comprehensive legislative ban. I believe a legislative ban on microbeads in New Zealand is essential to the health of our environment and our people and I therefore strongly support the proposal for such a ban. Yours sincerely, Sue Hirst