

Plastic bag ban considered by Queensland Government in bid to reduce toll on marine life

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ABC NEWS 8 Jun 2015 By Isabella Higgins



Photo: Environment Minister Steven Miles said an alarming number of turtles are eating plastic. (ABC News: Isabella Higgins)

A ban on single-use plastic bags in Queensland is one option being considered by the State Government to reduce the amount of pollution entering waterways and taking a toll on marine life.

Environment Minister Steven Miles said there was more litter in Queensland than in any other state, with discarded rubbish recorded at levels almost 40 per cent above the national average.

On a boat trip around Moreton Bay off Brisbane on Monday, Mr Miles led the charge for change.

He said marine wildlife and turtles in particular were bearing the brunt of the littering problem.

"Forty per cent of the small turtles travelling through the bay have been recently found to have consumed plastics and more than two thirds of the endangered loggerhead turtle," Mr Miles said.

"All of us need to take some responsibility for that.

"Banning single-use plastic bags is one really practical way we can reduce litter and to help our turtles."

Marine park ranger Steve Hosek said it was not only plastic bags causing deaths and injuries to wildlife.

"There's fishing line as well so a lot of birds and turtles eat hard little plastic beads and things like that and it gets stuck in their gut," he said.

The State Government has established an advisory council with representatives from regional councils, the retail industry and conservationists to assist in preparing for public consultation later this year.

Mr Miles said the Government was also investigating the viability of a cash for containers scheme to foster recycling.

"There's a range of different models that we could consider - one is a small fee for plastic bags, another is a deposit on bags," he said.

Toby Hutcheon from the Boomerang Alliance said he believed such moves would lead to a drastic decrease in litter across Queensland.

"States like South Australia that have a cash for container scheme and a single-use plastic bag ban have considerably less plastic litter than other states like Queensland," he said.

"We look forward to the Government putting these things into action."