



Speech by

Peter Wellington

MEMBER FOR NICKLIN

Hansard Wednesday, 8 March 2006

CONTAINER DEPOSIT LEGISLATION

Mr WELLINGTON (Nicklin—Ind) (6.13 pm): It is a privilege to speak in support of the important motion moved by my Independent colleague the member for Maryborough at this important section of our business agenda today. It is great to hear the minister and government members, speaker after speaker, supporting this motion. Quite frankly, tonight we are seeing a real example of the important role that Independent members can play in parliament. We are able to bring matters before the parliament and to prompt members, prompt the government, prompt backbenchers and prompt the opposition to consider them, and to advise Queenslanders of their views and the time frame in which they propose to pursue the issues we have raised. Therefore, I congratulate the member for Maryborough and my Independent colleagues. This is important and this is relevant.

It is also timely. We have just seen thousands and thousands of Australians out and about on Clean Up Australia Day, volunteering their time to help clean up Australia. Now we are here in the Queensland parliament debating a proposal that calls on the government and on all members to support and follow the lead of South Australia, New South Wales and West Australia in introducing our own container deposit legislation.

It is time that we took stock of this important issue. No longer should we sit back and simply rely on the efforts of hundreds of thousands of volunteers in Queensland who give up their time to go out and clean. Government members, opposition members and crossbenchers have an important role to play in prompting the government to bring forward its agenda and to bring this legislation into parliament. Then we will have laws in Queensland that could be very similar to the laws that currently operate, and have been operating for almost 30 years, in South Australia.

It is high time that the big end of town—the manufacturers that make big, big dollars from the production of containers in Queensland—took responsibility and played a part. They have an important role to play in sharing the responsibility of keeping our great state of Queensland a clean state. If it is good enough for South Australia, if it is good enough for New South Wales and if it is good enough for the Commonwealth parliamentary commission to undertake an inquiry, then it is high time that Queensland got on the bandwagon and actually took some action to implement new legislation in Queensland.

I have looked at the submission of the Packaging Council of Australia to the federal Productivity Commission inquiry on waste generation and resource efficiency. Its submission is dated February 2006. I table it for the benefit of all members. Page 35 of that submission, under the heading 'Litter and Container Deposit Legislation', acknowledges that, 'Litter is a serious problem in Australia. It is a social problem.'

I challenge the manufacturers of containers to take action, take responsibility and put some money on the table. It is also timely that we are almost two months away from this parliament bringing down the next state budget. I challenge the minister, the Premier and the cabinet committee to consider allocating money in that budget to challenge our councils, our community and the Packaging Council of Australia to do more.

We all have a role to play. Tonight is an opportunity for all members of parliament—the government, the opposition and crossbenchers—to stand shoulder to shoulder with the member for Maryborough and

show that we are genuine and passionate and that we believe this is an important issue. It comes in the lead-up to a by-election that is not too far away. Perhaps this time next year we will all be going to the polls.

It is timely that we are now talking about what I believe is an important issue. It is important because no longer should we, as elected members of the 51st Parliament, be seen as taking advantage and assuming that every year thousands of volunteers will turn out to be involved in helping clean up Australia. We can play an important part as members of this parliament by introducing the relevant legislation.

I urge the minister to fast-track the investigation. Let us not be tardy. Let us be smart Queenslanders and follow the lead of South Australia, New South Wales and Western Australia. We should look very carefully at the report that the Commonwealth Productivity Commission will hand down in October. That is just a few months away. I urge the minister and her backbench committee to consider making a submission to the commission of inquiry. I also urge the opposition to consider making a submission and my fellow crossbench members to consider making a submission. This is important. If all Queenslanders and Australians show their concern and passion for this important issue, perhaps we might see more action.

I thank the minister for supporting the motion moved by my Independent colleague the member for Maryborough. It is great news. We can show Queenslanders how we can work together, shoulder to shoulder, irrespective of our different views on politics and our agenda for the future. I commend the motion to the House.