



Speech by

Ronan Lee

MEMBER FOR INDOOROOPILLY

Hansard Tuesday, 4 September 2007

ENVIRONMENTAL PROTECTION AMENDMENT BILL

Mr LEE (Indooroopilly—ALP) (4.46 pm): I join with the member for Capalaba in congratulating the minister for this piece of legislation. I also thank the hardworking staff of the EPA for the work that they do to protect our environment here in Queensland. I am obviously delighted to support this piece of legislation, but I think I should put on record I am also deeply disturbed that in this day and age we still need this legislation. I have to wonder what must go through the minds of some people who continue to litter. I can understand talking to people about some distant part of Queensland and saying that it is important to protect maybe Cape York or parts of western Queensland or the Barrier Reef. I can understand that people who have not been there would have some difficulty in understanding that they need some environmental protection, but I cannot understand how people can persist in littering in the places where they live, work, travel and where their kids go to school. It strikes me as an incredibly ignorant thing to do. I am looking forward to a day when this legislation becomes completely obsolete because people stop littering.

I want to not just put that on record but also once again mention to the House that I think there is an opportunity at the same time as encouraging people not to litter to ensure there is an increased amount of recycling in our community. I have spoken before about what happens in some parts of the world, notably Japan, where there are drink-dispensing machines. You put your money in and buy a can of soft drink or bottled water and within a reasonable distance of the machine, if not attached to it, there is some capacity for recycling of the packaging. So you might buy a can of lemonade from a dispensing machine and drink it. One of the great frustrations I have is then finding somewhere to not just dispose of it but to recycle it.

It is not unreasonable to ensure that the people who are making significant sums of money out of selling us bottled water and canned soft drink also do their bit for the community by ensuring that there are adequate recycling facilities available nearby—not just facilities to put the packaging in general refuse.

I also agree with the member for Capalaba about the disposal of apple cores. As I was walking in the Bunyas recently on trails that were a significant distance away from car parks I was struck me by the number of cigarette butts and other litter that I saw. Someone mentioned to me that people often do not realise when they are in places like that that they should not dispose of banana peels and particularly apple cores. I am not someone who regularly leaves apple cores in national parks—and I can see the minister nodding—but I have to confess that it had never crossed my mind that it was a significant issue. Apparently it is a huge issue in national parks: apple trees are an invasive species and are very unhelpful. I commend the minister for being more enlightened than I on this matter but also for ensuring that there are greater opportunities for us to make sure that litterers in national parks are dealt with in the way that they in fact should be.

I mean no disrespect to the member for Burdekin at all, but she mentioned that often the people who are the cause of a deal of litter in her part of the world are young people travelling to and from school. I say here in parliament that I am greatly impressed with the young people in my electorate. I actually have the view—and I think it is entirely accurate—that it is the young people in my part of the world who are much more sensible about littering. I am greatly impressed with the young people in my electorate in terms of

their understanding of the importance of not littering. I am also impressed by the gumption that some of them show in that when someone else litters they actually make the point that it is not a good thing to do.

It is for this reason that I thought I would launch a community award in my electorate, and I am going to make sure that, starting with schoolchildren, there is a special award available for each and every school to give out either at their speech nights or on an awards day for those students who have shown particular commitment to protecting our environment. We have decided to call them the Indros. I look forward to coming back into this parliament later this year and talking about the young people in my electorate who have done good work for our environment. They might be people who have educated their fellow students about saving water, they might be people who have done particular work in combating littering or they might be people who have shown a particular commitment to protecting parts of Queensland or the world. I look forward to giving the details of those particular students who have been outstanding and who have been recipients of the first Indros of 2007. I am thrilled to support this legislation.