




Speech By
Brittany Lauga

MEMBER FOR KEPPEL

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MATTERS OF PUBLIC INTEREST

Single-Use Plastic Bags, Ban

 **Mrs LAUGA** (Keppel—ALP) (12.02 pm): I rise in the House today to speak in support of the parliamentary petition to ban single-use plastic bags in Queensland which has been tabled in the House this morning. Plastic is a ubiquitous part of all of our lives, but it has also become a silent killer. Millions of tonnes are clogging the world's oceans and devastating sea life. Jo Stoyel, Dr Flavia Santamaria, Rolf Schlagloth and Paul Bambrick are local Capricorn Coast residents who are passionate about the environment and, importantly, our Great Barrier Reef. Jo, Flavia, Rolf and Paul make up the Plastic Bag Free Livingstone team who met with me earlier this year and told me about the impact that single-use plastic bags have on our environment. They asked me to sponsor a parliamentary petition to ban single-use plastic bags in Queensland and, based on the evidence, I could not refuse.

I was shocked to learn that Queenslanders use over one billion plastic bags every year. In fact, we are the most littered mainland state. The material which represents the greatest volume of litter in our state was plastics which break down and can also attract toxic chemicals, devastating marine life through ingestion and potentially entering our food chain.

In a single day Australians use over 10 million plastic bags. The average plastic bag is used on average for only five minutes yet can take up to 1,000 years to break down in the environment. The average supermarket shopper uses over 1,000 plastic bags every year. Multiply that by the number of shoppers and the picture is clear: plastic bag use in Queensland is an environmental epidemic.

Marine plastic pollution is devastating to wildlife and the environment. It must be stopped. Plastic bags suffocate, disable and kill thousands of marine mammals and seabirds worldwide each year. Studies in Moreton Bay have found the ingestion of plastic debris was responsible for about 30 per cent of all turtle deaths. Thousands of seabirds also die along the coast. A recent Commonwealth study showed that 43 per cent of seabirds were found to have plastics in their gut. When the animal dies and decays, the plastic bag is free again to repeat the deadly cycle. Globally, it is estimated that 100,000 marine mammals and turtles and one million seabirds die every year from ingesting or becoming entangled in marine debris.

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. Like South Australia, there are bans on plastic bags in Tasmania, the ACT and the Northern Territory. Over 25 countries have either banned the bag or imposed levies. These actions have all drastically reduced plastic bag use. South Australia has had a ban on single-use plastic bags since 2009, and it is estimated that this ban removes over 400 million bags from the economy every year. It remains a popular ban, with nine out of 10 South Australians taking their own re-useable bags to the supermarket.

Banning plastic bags in Queensland would immediately reduce the number of bags in circulation in Queensland by approximately one billion bags every year. With a little bit of change in our routines and help from re-useable bags like these ones, we can eliminate the problem. I congratulate Jo, Flavia, Rolf and Paul for their passion and ongoing dedication to protecting our environment and banning single-use plastic bags in Queensland. The team has worked tirelessly throughout the petition period, holding market stalls, talking with local businesses and promoting the cause on social media. I also thank Toby Hutcheon from the Boomerang Alliance for all of his advice and wisdom throughout this campaign and the Livingstone Shire Council for supporting the campaign to ban single-use plastic bags in Queensland. The team at Plastic Bag Free Livingstone has managed to attract close to 3,000 hard copy and electronic signatures to this conforming parliamentary petition. I also table in the House today a copy of the non-conforming change.org petition started by Emma Kent about five months ago which has almost 30,000 signatures in support of banning single-use plastic bags in Queensland.

Tabled paper: Non-conforming petition from change.org titled 'Ban plastic bags in Queensland' [[1058](#)].

I am pleased that Minister Miles has taken on board the strong community feedback and asked the advisory group established to consider options for a Queensland container deposit scheme to also advise on options for restricting the use of single-use plastic bags. I look forward to learning the outcomes of the process later in the year, as I am sure do the Plastic Bag Free Livingstone team and the tens of thousands of Queenslanders who have added their names to these petitions. Jo, Flavia, Rolf and Paul say that it is our obligation as residents and custodians of the Queensland environment to protect it for future and present generations of Queenslanders, and I agree.