




Speech By
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MEMBER FOR GREGORY

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WASTE REDUCTION AND RECYCLING AMENDMENT BILL

 **Mr MILLAR** (Gregory—LNP) (4.56 pm): It gives me great pleasure to talk on the Waste Reduction and Recycling Amendment Bill 2017. Firstly, I thank all committee members. This was an important bill before our committee. I take this opportunity to also thank the secretariat staff and all people involved, especially the submitters to the inquiry who gave us a great understanding of where people are on this issue. It is fair to say that about 98 per cent of people would support this legislation.

The LNP does not oppose the bill. The bill amends the Waste Reduction and Recycling Act 2011 to ban lightweight plastic shopping bags and introduce a container deposit scheme, which will start next year, to cut litter, increase recycling of containers and reduce the impact of harmful plastics pollution in the environment. Both the plastic bag ban and the container refund scheme require a legislative framework. All beverage manufacturers that manufacture a beverage product in a container covered by the scheme take responsibility to manage empty containers and pay for the costs of the scheme. Consumers have reasonable access to a refund, which is important, when they return eligible empty containers to a container refund point. This morning I noted a machine on level 3 of Parliament House, which I am looking forward to using.

The LNP supports banning single-use plastic bags and a container refund scheme and has announced a similar policy. I acknowledge the shadow environment minister, the member for Moggill, for the commitment he made to this issue quite a long time ago. In fact, I remember he made a very important announcement on this issue well over 12 months ago. The bill provides for the sale of beverages in containers, including restrictions on manufacturers selling a beverage product, refund amounts for empty containers, container refund points, an obligation on a container refund point operator, recovery amounts for empty containers recycled by material recovery facilities and approved containers for beverage products, including the relevant registers and application approvals.

I wish to talk about something that is very important in regard to legislation, which is the impact it will have on people in Western Queensland. There is a lot involved in putting together this legislation and making it work. It will have an impact and a cost on local governments. Many people in the House have been involved in local government and they would understand the costs that are incurred on local governments from time to time. This will be another cost incurred on local governments that, certainly in Western Queensland and regional Queensland, can ill afford to have any further costs put on their budget bottom line. We have to remember that their rate base is very small. It is not the rate base we see in South-East Queensland. They rely heavily on extra grants and funds, both from the federal and state governments. They also have to be very prudent in the way that they manage their budgets. This legislation will have an impact on local governments and I will talk about that later.

The LNP supports both policies and has led the announcements with the Palaszczuk government following. The member for Moggill, the shadow minister for the environment, made an announcement about this well over 12 months ago. The LNP has led the way on plastic bags and a container deposit/refund scheme to increase recycling, cut litter and protect the environment. The LNP announced its commitment to a containment deposit scheme in June 2016.

The LNP announced its commitment on plastic bags in November 2016. The opposition leader, Tim Nicholls, committed to phase out plastic bag use across the state should it be successful at the next state election. The LNP took the lead and was strongly supported by Clean Up Australia founder and chairman, Ian Kiernan. It is fair to say that the LNP has led the way in Queensland and the Labor Party has followed. I also note that supermarket majors Coles and Woolworths announced that plastic bags will not be used from 1 July 2018. The LNP has also taken the lead on a container deposit/refund scheme.

I now move to look at the impact that this legislation will have on local governments in Western Queensland. I note that there will be support for this legislation around South-East Queensland and coastal Queensland. There is obviously enough of a population and enough opportunity for someone to make a commercial opportunity out of recycling.

The problem in Western Queensland—and the Local Government Association of Queensland would be well aware of this—is that to have someone fulfil the requirements under this legislation in places like the Boulia Shire Council, the Diamantina Shire Council, the Winton Shire Council or the Longreach Regional Council will result in a financial impost on those councils. Councils out there can ill afford to spend more money and more money on—

Mr Rickuss: The West End ratepayers will prop it up.

Mr MILLAR: I take the interjection from the member for Lockyer. I would hope the West End ratepayers would prop it up, but that is highly unlikely.

Opposition members interjected.

Mr MILLAR: Of course. One of the major things for Western Queensland councils right now is cluster fencing, the eradication of prickly acacia and the elimination of wild dogs. Adding this to a local government's budget could be a quite hefty impost.

I call on the Minister for Environment to give special consideration to those Western Queensland councils when implementing this legislation. We all support the intent of this legislation. We support the banning of plastic bags. We support the recycling of containers, but we must remember that it will have an impost on local governments in Western Queensland.

I would ask the Minister for Environment to talk with the mayors in Western Queensland about this—whether it is Rick Britton, Ed Warren, Andrew Martin or Butch. They need to be involved in this and need to be given some assurance that this will not result in more costs for their budget bottom lines which are getting smaller and smaller all the time. My only request is that the Minister for Environment take their thoughts into consideration. I support the bill before the House.