




Speech By  
**Hon. Dr Steven Miles**  
**MEMBER FOR MOUNT COOT-THA**

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### **WASTE REDUCTION AND RECYCLING AMENDMENT BILL**

 **Hon. SJ MILES** (Mount Coot-tha—ALP) (Minister for Environment and Heritage Protection and Minister for National Parks and the Great Barrier Reef) (8.30 pm), in reply: The debate tonight has made it clear that this parliament is determined to reduce litter and increase recycling in Queensland. Tonight this parliament is ready to make the historic decision to stop the use of nearly one billion lightweight plastic shopping bags each and every year. We are ready to respond to our community and take real action to increase the recycling of the 2.4 billion beverage containers that are used in Queensland each year.

In his contribution the member for Sunnybank said that this one is for Joe and his kindy mates. I think we can all agree that this one is for our kids and our grandkids, the strongest advocates for cash for cans and a plastic bag ban. It is for all those primary school kids who made the member for Redlands shell out 10 cents per can and bottle. I hope for his sake that those kids were not as wily as the member for Hervey Bay was in his younger years—double claiming his sixpence refund by stealing back the bottles he had just returned.

I acknowledge that during his contribution the member for Moggill asked a number of questions, primarily about how the scheme will be funded and the impact on taxpayers. I am happy to address those questions. Firstly, let me assure members that the design of this scheme ensures that the beverage industry will be responsible for funding the Product Responsibility Organisation as well as for paying for the cost of the scheme itself. This will include the initial outlays required to establish the scheme and the requirements to promote the scheme amongst consumers. The PRO will also be required to provide its quarterly and annual reports to the minister, and those reports will be made public on the EHP website.

Assuming the bill is passed with the support of honourable members tonight, the government, through the environment department, will consult the Local Government Association of Queensland and the implementation advisory group on how to best target the small-scale grants the government is funding in association with the container refund scheme. It is intended that small communities in remote and regional Queensland will be provided with financial support to ensure these communities can participate in the scheme. The consultation process will ensure that best use is made of the over \$500,000 that will be available for the grants.

I note that the member for Gregory in particular expressed concerns about the potential cost to small local governments. I assure the member that the government is aware of those concerns and will work to ensure the appropriate supports are in place for those communities. My department is already working with the LGAQ and other members of the implementation advisory group on statewide access targets for the scheme. These targets will ensure the Product Responsibility Organisation, which will operate the refund scheme, has container refund points located in communities right across the state and not just in our large cities.

The member for Moggill also asked some questions about the implementation of the plastic bag ban. On the question of the head of power that will allow a regulation to ban a plastic bag of greater than 35 microns thickness, this power can only be implemented through a regulation with the approval of the Governor in Council. The purpose of this provision is to ensure that the plastic bag ban is not undermined by retailers supplying very similar bags that are ever so slightly thicker, for example 36 microns. Those members who saw the excellent ABC program *War on Waste* will know that this is an issue faced in Tasmania. Given the strong support of so many retailers for this ban in Queensland I do not expect that the government will need to call on this measure, but we have learned from the experience of other jurisdictions that we need to avoid this type of loophole. This is why the bill ensures the government has the ability to respond quickly if anyone does try to get around the ban in this way.

The member for Moggill asked about enforcement of the ban. This will be undertaken by the environment department as part of responsibility for the administration of the Waste Reduction and Recycling Act. Again, given the overwhelming support of the community for the plastic bag ban, I hope that the penalties for a breach of the ban are never used, but the government will be ready to deal with any breaches that do occur. This is a good illustration of why community awareness and preparation ahead of the ban are essential.

I am happy to inform the House that the National Retail Association's activities across the state preparing retailers for the ban are supported with \$155,000 in funding from the government. Over 100 workshops are being held across Queensland to support retailers to get ready for the ban ahead of 1 July 2018. I thank the National Retail Association for its hard work to reduce plastic litter and to protect Queensland's environment.

The Boomerang Alliance has also been working in partnership with the environment department to promote awareness throughout the community of both the plastic bag ban and the container refund scheme. The partnership with Boomerang includes \$70,000 in funding from the department. This includes \$10,000 for online tools to spread the message far and wide about how the community can prepare for the plastic bag ban and benefit from the container refund scheme. A number of members tonight, including the members for Currumbin, Noosa and Burnett, have pointed out how much they value the contribution of the Boomerang Alliance and look forward to community forums planned in their own electorates. I want to extend my thanks and congratulations to Toby Hutcheon and the Boomerang Alliance for their efforts and acknowledge that Toby is here in the gallery tonight, as he has been for the entire debate.

I also thank the other NGOs, Greenpeace, WWF, Sea World, Boomerang Bags, QCC and others, and everybody who signed a petition, took an action or in some way supported this bill, because we certainly would not be here without the level of community support that we saw. I thank the officers of the Department of Environment and Heritage Protection who have worked diligently throughout the consultation and bill preparation and of course tonight. I thank the staff of my office who have worked on this pretty much since the day after we were elected. I acknowledge the work of the implementation advisory group, who have contributed to the development of the bill and, ultimately, the scheme we will have in place here in Queensland. I have no doubt that our scheme will be stronger and more effective as a direct result of the close consultation with industry and the community sector. I commend this bill to the House.