




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

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WASTE REDUCTION AND RECYCLING AMENDMENT BILL

Introduction

 **Hon. SJ MILES** (Mount Coot-tha—ALP) (Minister for Environment and Heritage Protection and Minister for National Parks and the Great Barrier Reef) (5.47 pm): I present a bill for an act to amend the Waste Reduction and Recycling Act 2011 for particular purposes. I table the bill and the explanatory notes. I nominate the Agriculture and Environment Committee to consider the bill.

Tabled paper: Waste Reduction and Recycling Amendment Bill 2017 [\[977\]](#).

Tabled paper: Waste Reduction and Recycling Amendment Bill 2017, explanatory notes [\[978\]](#).

I am pleased to present to the House a bill that will substantially reduce plastic pollution in Queensland. The Waste Reduction and Recycling Amendment Bill 2017 introduces two important initiatives: firstly, a statewide container refund scheme; and, secondly, a ban on the supply of lightweight plastic shopping bags in Queensland. The bill also amends the end-of-waste framework in the Waste Reduction and Recycling Act 2011 to ensure conditions can be applied to end of waste codes and approvals.

Queensland tops the country in many respects. We have the best beaches and certainly the best reef, but we are also top of the leaderboard for littering. We have one of the lowest recycling rates in Australia. It is not something Queenslanders are proud of. Many of those in the House tonight will remember collecting aluminium cans as kids in order to earn a refund. For me it was to raise money for the Lawnton Scouts. For others it might have been for some extra pocket money. It helped keep those cans and bottles from clogging up our public spaces or, worse still, being eaten by marine life.

Mr Hinchliffe: Some of us remember collecting tin cans.

Dr MILES: Collecting tin cans is before my time, Leader of the House. This bill establishes Queensland's own Container Refund Scheme. Empty containers that are returned for recycling will earn a 10 cent refund. This incentive will reduce the amount of litter in the environment and increase recycling. A statewide scheme will also mean that communities that do not currently have access to a kerbside recycling service will now be able to recycle eligible beverage containers—and, just like those days of collecting cans and bottles for Scouts, this scheme creates an opportunity for community groups and social enterprises to establish a source of independent revenue for themselves.

The public-facing elements of the scheme are consistent with those in South Australia, the Northern Territory and the scheme that will soon commence in New South Wales. These elements include the value of the refund amount set at 10 cents, the refund marking on eligible containers and the types of containers to be included in the scheme.

The Queensland scheme will be administered using a product stewardship approach. This approach recognises that manufacturers of products—in this case beverage producers—have a responsibility to manage and reduce the impact of their products. Through this bill, the government is providing the legislative framework to ensure the necessary transparency and accountability for industry to fund, operate and administer the scheme.

To ensure the success of this approach, the government has worked closely with key stakeholders on a Container Refund Scheme Implementation Advisory Group. This group includes representatives from the beverage and retail, local government, waste and recycling, and environment and community sectors. I would like to take this opportunity to commend the members of the advisory group and the technical working groups who have led the development of the scheme that is reflected in this bill. Some of them are here tonight—Toby Hutcheon from the Boomerang Alliance, Rick Ralph from WRIQ and David Stout from the National Retail Association. A successful scheme in Queensland will be due in large part to their efforts.

The bill recognises that the Container Refund Scheme has the dual objectives of reducing litter and increasing recycling. The bill provides for the minister to invite an application from a suitable entity to form a product responsibility organisation to administer the scheme in Queensland. The bill also legislates the responsibilities and reporting obligations placed on the product responsibility organisation, and it provides for regulation to describe certain performance targets that the product responsibility organisation must meet, including container recovery and community accessibility targets. This means that the product responsibility organisation will be required to perform—required to meet those objectives—and to deliver on the expectations of the community and the government for what percentage of containers must be recovered for recycling purposes and how convenient it is for members of the public to recycle their containers and redeem them for refund. Penalties will apply for failure to meet the performance targets.

The bill also provides that individual beverage manufacturers have obligations under the scheme. The primary obligation is to ensure that beverage manufacturers contribute to the cost of the scheme. In order to fulfil this obligation, a beverage manufacturer must enter into a container recovery agreement with the product responsibility organisation that outlines their responsibilities. Failure to meet their obligations would ultimately prevent a beverage manufacturer from selling their product in Queensland.

The product responsibility organisation will be obliged to work with other scheme participants such as waste operators, community groups and container refund point operators to ensure the scheme is viable and successful. It will be up to the product responsibility organisation to determine the costs associated with the scheme including handling and transportation fees. The proposed fee structure will be included in information that is provided to the minister as part of the application process for the entity seeking to be the product responsibility organisation.

The government is imposing strong legislated reporting and auditing requirements, as well as possible substantial financial penalties for non-performance on the product responsibility organisation. The bill provides for the product responsibility organisation to be governed by a board to oversee the operation of the scheme. The bill specifically states that the composition of the board must include large and small beverage manufacturer representation, community interest representation, financial and legal expertise representation, and an independent chair—that is, independent of the beverage industry.

A number of further matters to do with the board and the performance of the product responsibility organisation will be established in the regulation. For the independent board positions, this includes criteria concerning satisfactory experience and knowledge of waste and resource recovery, local government and community interests. This is to ensure appropriate representation on the board and that the board has the knowledge and expertise it needs to make decisions. The performance targets for container recovery and statewide coverage and accessibility to container refund points will also be established in the regulation. The product responsibility organisation is required to act as the 'provider of last resort' in the absence of a suitable market based provider.

In order to establish a scheme that recognises innovation and the use of technology such as reverse vending machines, the regulation will also establish an innovation target for the organisation. These targets will hold the organisation accountable for delivering an efficient, accessible and transparent scheme for all Queenslanders. Extensive consultation will be undertaken in the development of the regulation to ensure stakeholder views are fully considered.

I turn now to the provisions of the bill to do with plastic bags—those ubiquitous plastic shopping bags that seem to multiply in number under the kitchen sink no matter how many you throw away. Close to one billion lightweight shopping bags are issued in Queensland every year. As environment minister, I regularly receive letters from schoolchildren imploring me to do something to protect the turtles and seabirds who become sick from ingesting this plastic. While the majority of those billion bags does end up in landfill, 16 million bags enter our environment as litter every year. Those members who have participated in Clean Up Australia Day year in, year out will know just how often these bags make their way into the cleaning-up bags.

There is increasing evidence about the cumulative impact plastic has on our soils, waterways and marine environment. All plastic but particularly plastic bags pose a significant threat to our unique wildlife as choking hazards and through ingestion. Plastic does not break down in the animal's digestive system and is a known cause of starvation.


In November 2016, I released a discussion paper on implementing a lightweight plastic shopping bag ban in Queensland for public consultation. More than 26,000 submissions were received in response to this discussion paper. An extraordinary 96 per cent of respondents supported the introduction of a ban. Unlike the ban in other states and territories, the ban introduced by this bill also applies to biodegradable shopping bags. This reflects the views of over 60 per cent of respondents to the discussion paper. Biodegradable bags can be as dangerous for wildlife as 'traditional' plastic shopping bags. Queensland is leading other states in relation to the inclusion of biodegradable bags under the ban.

The bill clearly defines the obligations placed on retailers not to supply banned plastic shopping bags as well as penalties for failing to comply. The bill provides for a transition period prior to the 1 July 2018 commencement so that retailers and the community have a chance to change their practices. What we want to see is retailers and consumers rethinking their use of bags in the first place and then, if a bag is necessary, using or asking for re-useable alternatives.

Both the container refund scheme and the bag ban will commence on 1 July 2018. Some people have asked why we cannot start sooner. In both cases industry asked for a well-planned implementation and time to educate consumers. The good news is that we do not have to wait until the ban is in place to stop collecting plastic bags. We can stop using them now. My message to members and to all Queenslanders is: if you are doing your grocery shopping this weekend do not forget to bring re-useable shopping bags.

The Queensland government recognises that increasing resource recovery with appropriate controls is important to Queenslanders. On 8 November 2016 the end-of-waste framework took effect—

(Time expired)

 **Hon. SJ MILES** (Mount Coot-tha—ALP) (Minister for Environment and Heritage Protection and Minister for National Parks and the Great Barrier Reef) (7.45 pm), continuing: The Queensland government recognises that increasing resource recovery with appropriate controls is important to Queenslanders. On 8 November 2016 the end-of-waste framework took effect, replacing the previous beneficial use approval framework. This bill clarifies the administration of the end-of-waste framework, particularly with respect to the current inability to control the use of end-of-waste resources.

The intention of the original end-of-waste framework was for waste to be approved for use as a resource provided it met very strict quality criteria that minimised the potential for environmental harm. The bill seeks to enable better control of the end-of-waste resources by enabling conditions to be placed on the holder of an end-of-waste approval while encouraging appropriate and acceptable uses of waste materials such as biosolids. Additionally, the bill introduces efficiencies and streamlines the way in which end-of-waste codes or end-of-waste approvals are made.

Most of the time the waste industry is invisible to us—we throw something in the bin and it disappears—but behind the scenes is an entire industry of hardworking businesses and workers taking our waste away, sorting it and processing it. It is a vital industry employing thousands of workers in secure, well-paid, skilled jobs.

I want to acknowledge the industry leaders who have helped me put together this and our other waste initiatives: Rick Ralph from WRIQ, Grant Musgrove from ACOR, Richard Taylor from JJ Richards, Roy Wilson from NuGrow and all of the other leaders of the waste industry who have worked with me on this. This bill and our other waste initiatives are designed to support them to create more jobs.

This bill helps protect our beautiful and iconic natural environment. It creates revenue opportunities for sports and community groups and supports the growth of the waste, recycling and resource recovery industry in Queensland. It is a bill all Queenslanders should welcome. I commend the bill to the House.

First Reading

Hon. SJ MILES (Mount Coot-tha—ALP) (Minister for Environment and Heritage Protection and Minister for National Parks and the Great Barrier Reef) (7.48 pm): I move—

That the bill be now read a first time.

Question put—That the bill be now read a first time.

Motion agreed to.

Bill read a first time.

Referral to the Agriculture and Environment Committee

Mr DEPUTY SPEAKER (Mr Elmes): In accordance with standing order 131, the bill is now referred to the Agriculture and Environment Committee.

Portfolio Committee, Reporting Date

Hon. SJ MILES (Mount Coot-tha—ALP) (Minister for Environment and Heritage Protection and Minister for National Parks and the Great Barrier Reef) (7.48 pm), by leave, without notice: I move—

That under the provisions of standing order 136 the Agriculture and Environment Committee report to the House on the Waste Reduction and Recycling Amendment Bill by 11 August 2017.

Question put—That the motion be agreed to.

Motion agreed to.