




Speech By
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MEMBER FOR WHITSUNDAY

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WASTE REDUCTION AND RECYCLING (PLASTIC ITEMS) AMENDMENT BILL

 **Ms CAMM** (Whitsunday—LNP) (12.15 pm): I am pleased to rise in the House to speak in support of the Waste Reduction and Recycling (Plastic Items) Amendment Bill. I would like to take the opportunity to recognise the work of the committee, in particular the members on this side of the House who have contributed to this amendment bill over the course of several terms—including the member for Buderim, the member for Condamine, the former member for Bundaberg, the member for Oodgeroo and the member for Southport. I also recognise the contribution of those opposite and the committee support provided by the parliamentary staff.

This is a very important piece of legislation and I am very pleased to support it. In August 2016, the Whitsunday Regional Council voted unanimously to submit a policy motion to the Local Government Association of Queensland for inclusion at their then upcoming conference in October. This policy motion to ban the single-use, lightweight, non-biodegradable plastic bags was subsequently endorsed. This really started the conversation in Queensland and showed the leadership of the Whitsunday Regional Council, given the pristine environment that they operate in and that their residents live in. I was proud to be at that LGAQ conference where, as a former local government deputy mayor, we were pleased to support that motion. It is fantastic to see an extension of those initiatives now played out in this draft amendment bill.

I would like to highlight some of the potential unintended consequences of this bill in regards to local government. While we all want to ensure that minimal waste ends up in landfill, there needs to be a continuing dialogue by the government with local governments across the state. Many local governments have invested significantly in landfill sites—utilising their ratepayers' funding—to meet strict environmental regulation, as they should do, but there will be ongoing unintended consequences around their assets, the life of those assets, the depreciation of those assets and how local governments raise revenue through the collection of waste. It is important that the government continues to have an open dialogue there. I know local governments are committed to reducing waste to landfill, but there will be an impact on the balance sheets of local governments.

I would also like to highlight, as other members have highlighted, the benefits that will be delivered by this legislation in a local context. I look forward to welcoming my colleague the shadow minister for environment to the Whitsundays in the very near future. He will be meeting one of my amazing stakeholders and community organisations, Eco Barge Clean Seas. If members have not heard of Libby Edge, they need to google her because she is an amazing woman. As their founding chair, she is dedicated to protecting the local marine environment. She established the organisation after realising the effects of marine debris on the local marine life. The project initially began through the Whitsunday Marine Debris Removal Program in the Whitsundays. The group also protects our local waterways through the Clean Streets and Clean Creeks program, as well as caring for turtles at the Whitsunday Turtle Rescue Centre, and it is fantastic.

Mr O'Connor: Are we going there?

Ms CAMM: We are going there. Eco Barge also runs education and awareness activities in the local community about marine debris and the importance of thoughtful waste disposal. It is important to note—and I certainly urge the Minister for the Environment to come and meet with Libby Edge—that when she announces on her Facebook page that she is heading out on Eco Barge to one of the beautiful Whitsunday islands, less than three hours later it is fully subscribed with volunteers. On their last trip out to Border Island on 8 February, which was trip No. 349, six volunteers removed 90 kilograms of marine debris from that island.

Libby does not receive state government funding. It is a registered charity that has some loyal corporate partners but she is always looking to increase the number of partners. Her team comprises a dedicated committee along with 55 members and over 1,600 volunteers. Their efforts to protect the natural environment have so far seen 208,483 kilograms of marine debris and litter removed from the Whitsunday Islands since July 2019. It is just a fantastic community organisation.

As this amendment bill outlines the exemption for schools, I would like to encourage the government to continue the dialogue, as we do as local members in our communities, with our schools and P&Cs, in particular P&C run tuckshops, to further engage and encourage schools to participate in initiatives where they can reduce their single-use plastics. I know many of them already are doing that. I would like to highlight Cannonvale State School, a wonderful school in our local community.

Mr Kelly: Hear, hear!

Ms CAMM: I take that interjection. I know that the member for Greenslopes has a deep connection with Cannonvale State School and it is fantastic. It is a great school led by a very competent principal. I highlight their sustainable efforts to ensure that the reef remains healthy and continues to thrive. They have a project that is led by year 6 students who encourage recycling, reduce food and reduced electricity consumption. The school has also adopted the local Cannonvale Beach and participates in events such as World Tree Planting Day, which is also fantastic.

I would also like to highlight the impact on our natural environment and in particular our turtle populations across the Whitsunday community but more broadly globally. The Mackay and District Turtle Watch Association is a volunteer group that dedicates their time to the cause. They do amazing things across the northern beaches of Mackay. They tag turtles, maintain records and undertake citizen science around our turtle species. During the nesting seasons members have to excavate turtle nests and relocate them. They are very mindful of our beaches and the community. While we do not focus on Clean Up Australia Day in North Queensland, we participate later in the year as part of our 'clean up the north' initiatives. I know that this amendment bill is going to be very much welcomed by the Mackay and District Turtle Watch and Queensland turtle conservation groups across the state.

I would also like to highlight the impacts that single-use plastics have had on birdlife across our community and recognise an outstanding advocate, Daryl Barnes. He is a former president of Mackay Birdlife and was recently awarded the Environmental Achievement Award for his contribution to environmental conservation and education. I have spoken at length with Daryl about the impacts of single-use plastics, on both our native birds across the community but, more importantly, the shorebird population and species that visit our shores each year from all over the world, from places like Serbia and Russia. This legislation will ensure that many species that are somewhat vulnerable will be supported in such a way that they can remain sustainable across the globe.

I would like to take a moment to outline and recognise also the concerns that were shared by my shadow minister in his initial words around the need for our state to sign up to the Recycling Modernisation Fund. That fund will generate \$600 million of recycling investment across the states with the support of the federal government and will obviously attract industry investment as well. It should not take the significant amount of time that it has already for our state to sign up to it. This government continues to lag when it comes to signing up to federal government initiatives and partnerships. As a state that wants to generate jobs and keep people safe, we really should be leading the charge on this. I encourage the government to act with haste in the sign-up to the RMF.

I would also like to formally highlight and endorse the member for Nanango and the member for Glass House in their instigation as previously outlined with regard to plastic bag bans and their leadership in this. I commend the bill to the House.