




Speech By
Charis Mullen

MEMBER FOR JORDAN

Record of Proceedings, 10 March 2021

WASTE REDUCTION AND RECYCLING (PLASTIC ITEMS) AMENDMENT BILL

 **Mrs MULLEN** (Jordan—ALP) (11.26 am): I note that the member for Nanango did not mention the revocation of the waste levy as an achievement of the LNP. I certainly think they have a future in recycling and I am rooting for the member for Surfers Paradise.

Honourable members interjected.

Mr HINCHLIFFE: Mr Deputy Speaker, I rise to a point of order. I draw to your attention to the warnings that have been issued earlier. The member for Nanango might have some concerns.

Mr DEPUTY SPEAKER: Thank you, member for Sandgate, for your guidance and for reminding me to alert the following members that they are on warnings, which continue until the lunch break: Nanango, Callide, Gregory, McConnel, Mudgeeraba, Mermaid Beach, Buderim, Woodridge, Everton, Logan, Clayfield and Southern Downs. Members, be aware that you are on warnings and cease your interjections accordingly.

Mrs MULLEN: I rise to make a short contribution to the Waste Reduction and Recycling (Plastic Items) Amendment Bill 2020. Like many members in this House, last Sunday I attended the yearly Clean Up Australia Day activities in my electorate. This is the fifth year that I have participated and I am always happy to see so many members of our community joining us for a morning of litter collection.

Over the past five years I have noticed that we are collecting less and less rubbish. I could put that down to having an incredibly responsible and environmentally conscious community and that may be the case in some instances. However, I believe the biggest change has come from the key initiatives and law changes that the Palaszczuk government has made since our election in 2015 and that are making a transformative difference in our communities.

Our banning of single-use plastic bags has been an important change. With the help of our wonderful local Scouts groups on their canoes and kayaks, we used to fish out huge amounts of plastic bags from the Springfield lakes. We do not see those large numbers any more, which is particularly good news for local birds and wildlife.

The container refund scheme has also had an incredible impact in the community. Plastic bottles and cans formed by far the greatest volume of rubbish we would collect from our parks, roadsides and waterways. Because the Jordan community has embraced the container refund scheme with great gusto, it is now particularly rare to find a plastic bottle or can. Our local charities are particularly benefiting from this initiative. I want to give a special shout-out to Our Lady of the Southern Cross Parish and the wonderful Father Mauro. Since the scheme was launched the church has raised more than \$20,600, with all of these funds being used to support those in need within our community. This is an amazing effort.

We know that government policies and laws can have an important and transformative impact on our local communities and on our natural environment and wildlife. The Waste Reduction and Recycling (Plastic Items) Amendment Bill 2020 makes amendments to the Waste Reduction and

Recycling Act 2011 to introduce a ban on single-use plastic items. This, of course, includes single-use plastic straws, stirrers, plates and cutlery. The bill also provides for other items to be added by regulation following a consultation process.

It is clear that our Queensland communities want to be and are deeply engaged in this important issue. It is rare at times to get overwhelming numbers of submissions on Queensland laws, despite our best efforts to engage our communities, but during consultation on options with this bill it was incredible to see that 19,622 submissions were received and that 94 per cent of these submissions supported the introduction of a ban. This is an overwhelming expression by our community that they want something done about single-use plastic items in Queensland.

I am pleased also that the government has provided some flexibility with regard to the start date, recognising that where we were at the beginning of 2020 is very different from where we are now following the onslaught of a global pandemic. Businesses, particularly small businesses, have been affected, and I think it is incumbent on our government to listen to the voices of our small retailers, coffee shop owners and cafe owners. The ban will commence on proclamation so that the Queensland government can monitor the impacts and determine an appropriate date to start the ban.

For many of our local businesses in the Jordan electorate, I am already seeing the banning of single-use plastics like plastic straws before the ban has even been imposed. I want to particularly acknowledge my office neighbours, Raw Energy, a fantastic local cafe that has been using paper straws and bamboo cutlery for a long time now. Tim and Kristie, a fantastic young couple who own this business, have told me they have been committed to reducing waste from their business and understand the incredible benefits it brings to our local environment.

We have also included a range of practical exemptions in this bill, including where the item is supplied to an exempt business such as a hospital, pharmacy, school or medical or dental clinic, or to a business that supplies an exempt business. This recognises the need to provide access to certain items such as a single-use plastic straw to meet the temporary or permanent disability and healthcare needs of individuals.

The bill also provides for other items to be banned. We know that many in our community wish to go even further, supporting a ban on coffee cups, expanded polystyrene takeaway food containers and cups and other plastic items. I commend the minister's amendment to the bill which will seek to include expanded polystyrene items. There will also be a review that will help determine how effective the ban has been and the level of awareness among the community and businesses about the ban and banned items. I congratulate Minister Scanlon for her ongoing commitment to this important policy change, which I know is supported broadly by our wider communities. I commend the bill to the House.