




Speech By
Hon. Grace Grace

MEMBER FOR MCCONNEL

Record of Proceedings, 10 March 2021

WASTE REDUCTION AND RECYCLING (PLASTIC ITEMS) AMENDMENT BILL

 **Hon. G GRACE** (McConnel—ALP) (Minister for Education, Minister for Industrial Relations and Minister for Racing) (12.54 pm): It is great to stand up to support the Waste Reduction and Recycling (Plastic Items) Amendment Bill. I am proud to be part of a government that has a strong track record when it comes to protecting our environment. I welcome students from Runcorn State High School in the member for Stretton's electorate. Today we are debating banning single-use plastic items which I know is very close to their hearts. The products that we are banning through this bill are straws, stirrers, plates and cutlery.

At the moment there is an exemption for schools. One of the main reasons for the exemption is that we do not want to see students who need a plastic item have to request it and be singled out. I know that schools right throughout Queensland would embrace what is in this bill and take it on regardless of whether they are exempt. Once something is banned it is very hard for a school, a hospital or a pharmacy to use that item. At the moment those places are exempt, but we will review it. I know that schools are leading in this area and I congratulate Runcorn State High School because I know their school would be at the forefront. As Minister for Education I am very proud of the work that teachers, students and the community do together in relation to littering and single-use plastic items. Keep up the good work. It is great to welcome you here today.

The community continues to be concerned about single-use plastic items, particularly where it ends up in our waterways, in our seas and in areas of landfill. As a result of the initiative of the previous minister we now have this bill before us. I am also concerned about the amount of rubbish generated through packaging. That is the next issue we need to look at. I would like to see national rules around the size and amount of packaging.

When a bill is tabled in parliament it goes to a committee for investigation. During the committee's inquiry we get submissions. We had nearly 20,000 submissions to this bill, with well over 94 per cent in support. There is great community support for this bill. We have already banned single-use plastic bags and this bill is the next step. In my electorate of McConnel—one of the best electorates in the whole of Queensland; I know everyone would be saying something different to that but forgive me—restaurants, cafes and schools are already at the forefront when it comes to implementing what is in this bill. In a way we are catching up. I am pleased to see some flexibility with the start date. I think there is a preference around 1 July because businesses are still recovering from COVID. As I said, many businesses in my electorate are already doing this.

On Saturday I was at the Brisbane Racing Club in my role as the Minister for Racing. The Brisbane Racing Club had about 10,000 black plastic straws that they were wondering what to do with. They commissioned an artist, Colleen Lavender, to make a sculpture with the remaining 10,000 plastic straws. She made a sculpture of Black Caviar. I have a photo of it, along with Nev Bell, the chair of the BRC. It is on a wire backing. What she ended up doing with these plastic straws is amazing. Colleen was a jockey many years ago. She worked for a trainer at the Coonawarra Penola Racing Club. This plastic waste has been turned into art.

This bill is a great start. It will hopefully protect our waterways and our oceans. I think we can go further as the years go on. It is a pleasure to be a minister in a cabinet where we take these matters forward. We have the best environment ministers, Minister Scanlon and the previous minister, Minister Enoch, who have worked together to bring this bill to the House. With those few words I commend the bill to the House.