




Speech By
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MEMBER FOR IPSWICH

Record of Proceedings, 10 March 2021

WASTE REDUCTION AND RECYCLING (PLASTIC ITEMS) AMENDMENT BILL

 **Ms HOWARD** (Ipswich—ALP) (12.08 pm): I am pleased to support the Waste Reduction and Recycling (Plastic Items) Amendment Bill 2020. The Palaszczuk government is committed to reducing the devastating impact of plastic on our environment and marine life. Plastic waste affects our oceans, waterways, groundwater and soil and even ends up in our food chains. Around eight million tonnes of plastic waste leak into the ocean each year, which is equivalent to dumping more than 170 wheelie bins of plastic into the ocean every minute.

The Ellen MacArthur Foundation, which has done extensive research on the New Plastics Economy, reports that given our projected growth of consumption in a business-as-usual scenario our oceans by 2050 are expected to contain more plastics than fish by weight. This is an alarming statistic and one which shows we need to take urgent, swift action to change our habits in terms of dealing with plastic waste. Plastic residues have been found in marine wildlife such as turtles, fish, whales, seals and birds and can even enter our food chain through seafood. Poor management of plastic waste in industrial processes contaminates our soils, and each time we do a load of washing microfibres in clothing get released into our waterways.

In Ipswich, multiple landfill sites take in hundreds and thousands of tonnes of rubbish each year, much of it likely to be plastic waste that has only been used once and then thrown away. The large landfill facilities in Ipswich, which actually sit adjacent to fast-growing residential suburbs, are not getting any smaller and the waste companies operating them still seem to have major issues complying with their environmental obligations.

Only last week, we heard that the Department of Environment and Science had fined Cleanaway \$26,000 for releasing contaminated water from its stormwater facility, exceeding its prescribed limits. The department has recently issued an EPO to BMI Group ordering them to stop releasing contaminated water into Six Mile Creek at New Chum. Last year Cleanaway was issued an environmental protection order for two fires that broke out at its resource recovery areas. Bio-Recycle at Swanbank were fined \$300,000 last year for brazenly exceeding the amount of waste they were licensed to dispose of by 125,000 tonnes between 2017 and 2019 and unlawfully exceeding the approved height of their landfill by one metre, even though the Ipswich City Council had rejected their application to increase their landfill height.

These landfill companies are not the only ones causing problems and flouting the rules. Two composting companies in Swanbank—WMI and NuGrow—have been penalised repeatedly for generating gut-wrenching odours, making daily life a misery for residents living in Ripley, Flinders View, Silkstone, Booval and Raceview. No amount of fines or penalties appear to stop these companies from flagrantly breaking the rules and doing it again and again, because the bottom line for them is profit. Corporate social responsibility does not seem to be on their radar.

These examples show that the waste industry in Ipswich is in urgent need of a shake-up. The people of Ipswich are fed up with their city being used by companies that abuse their environmental obligations and disregard community values just so they can turn a quick profit. Is it any wonder then

that so many people in Ipswich are against the proposed Remondis waste-to-energy facility after what they have had to put up with already? An incinerator in Ipswich would not only be the last straw for many Ipswich people who are already fed up with the odours; it would also fail to support our goal of Queensland becoming a zero waste society where waste is avoided, reused and recycled.

An incinerator relies on large quantities of non-recyclable rubbish, including plastic waste, being converted into enough energy to power homes and businesses. This begs the question: how can that be a viable business model going forward when Queensland's goal is to eliminate unnecessary waste as much as possible through reusing and recycling products and materials?

We are already fast moving down the road of removing plastic waste with our single-use plastic bag ban, our Container Refund Scheme and now with this bill—a ban on single-use plastic utensils and cutlery as well as polystyrene food containers and cups. Our government is also investing in infrastructure and markets that will encourage the recovery of plastics to make new products, create new industries and jobs, and eliminate unnecessary waste going to landfill or ending up as litter.

We have already seen fantastic results with the single-use plastic ban generating a 70 per cent reduction in plastic bag litter and the Container Refund Scheme generating a 35 per cent reduction in plastic container litter. The banning of single-use plastic utensils, straws, containers and cutlery will take us one step further. These items predominantly end up in landfill as they are unable to be recovered for recycling, and they can also contaminate recycling streams creating more waste for landfill.

Surveys that have been done on litter show that a major source of plastic entering the environment is generated from single-use plastic items, including plastic straws and cutlery. During the consultation stage of the bill 19,622 submissions were received, and 94 per cent of those submissions supported the bill and 90 per cent supported introducing the ban as of 1 July 2021. This gives businesses time to transition to alternative products and source suppliers but it is great, as many of the other speakers have said, that so many businesses are already doing this and have been for some time. The Boomerang Alliance have said that many of the big fast-food chains like McDonald's have switched from plastic straws and cutlery and that retail food services and hospitality sectors are in support of the ban and changing their procurement practices.

Queensland is in the process of delivering a fundamental shift in the way we deal with plastic waste, and I am confident that we can stay the course because we have already seen the results in action. I want to commend the former minister for the environment and the current Minister for the Environment for their outstanding contribution to addressing the urgent issue of waste reduction. I am proud to be part of a government that is doing such good work. I commend the bill to the House.