




Speech By
Jessica Pugh

MEMBER FOR MOUNT OMMANEY

Record of Proceedings, 10 March 2021

WASTE REDUCTION AND RECYCLING (PLASTIC ITEMS) AMENDMENT BILL

 **Ms PUGH** (Mount Ommaney—ALP) (11.56 am): Our communities and our community groups are calling on the government loud and clear to act on the proliferation of single-use plastics currently clogging our community streets and waterways. As a former member of the committee that looked into this legislation, I rise with pleasure to support it.

Like many members of this House by the sounds of it, on Sunday my daughter Allegra and I headed out with some local Oxley families for Clean Up Australia Day. It is a tradition we have been participating in for many years now. Most of the items we collected were of course single-use plastics. I must say that generally speaking the streets were fairly clean, even though we collected along a main thoroughfare road—Oxley Station Road.

I have cleaned up many locations throughout Mount Ommaney. Generally, like the member for Jordan, I have found a year-on-year reduction in waste. I do believe that the recently introduced container refund scheme has a lot to do with that. I thank Yvonne who organised the clean-up that I participated in in Oxley, but there were several in my electorate of Mount Ommaney. I hope everyone in Queensland had as easy a clean-up as I did.

As I said, I think the reduction in waste is due in large part to the passion that our communities have shown for leaving the world a better place than we found it. This is seen clearly in the sheer number of environmental groups that we have in Mount Ommaney who drive the legislation that we are seeing today.

Our Rotary club of Sumner Park has long hosted monthly rubbish clean-ups along the Centenary Motorway. Former president Dennis lamented that the No. 1 type of rubbish that was found was Macca's detritus. I took that information to the local owner of Macca's—Chris. He listened to the community feedback and he voluntarily placed notices in the window of the drive-through asking people not to litter. That is just one example of good corporate citizenship trying to assist with this legislation.

Another much younger cohort who are equally passionate about the environment are the students at Jindalee State School. They have adopted a local waterway where again we find a lot of single-use plastics. Jamboree Heights are also driving waste reform in their own school with their waste warrior captain role.

As many speakers have already noted, we know that kids are often the driving force behind environmental and legislative change. Pretty much every school in Mount Ommaney has an environmental initiative. On a more wideranging note, the member for Townsville has been a proud champion of the campaign by a schoolgirl from his community who drove the banning of plastic straws with her Straw No More campaign. This is a fantastic example of advocacy that can come from the youngest in our community to drive the legislative change we are introducing today.

As I touched on earlier, the much awaited Containers for Change scheme has proven the willingness of the widespread community to embrace green initiatives like this one. The bill has received widespread support from a number of submitters, but more informally I think we know that it has the

support of our local electorates. Since its launch a few years ago Containers for Change has gone absolutely gangbusters in Mount Ommaney. Groups such as the Corinda and Middle Park P&Cs have at various times used the collection of these bottles as fundraisers, making it a double win for the coffers of our hardworking P&Cs as well as our environment.

As we look to the future, some families are also throwing back to the past when things were less disposable. Disposable nappies are a godsend for many families, mine included. That said, many families in our community have sought out cloth nappies like those created by the amazing local business bubblebubs. Bubblebubs has made modern cloth nappies for eco- and budget-friendly families. They are big business. This company has won several international awards and they export internationally. Their innovative owner, Vicki, created this product as a labour of love over 10 years ago. I am sad to say that she passed away earlier this year at a very young age. We can see that families are embracing products like these cloth nappies to reduce their carbon footprint. In many ways they are ahead of the curve; they are certainly ahead of the legislation.

By the time we banned plastic bags a few years ago my local Boomerang Bags in Oxley and Centenary had already put hundreds, if not thousands, of re-usable bags out into our communities. You may have seen me carrying my beautiful red bag around parliament. Ahead of the legislation we are introducing today they are now offering nifty little lunch kits featuring re-usable straws, knives, forks and beautiful little cloth wraps to store it in. We have also seen businesses that are keen to get in on the act of helping the environment. Many businesses right across Queensland have participated in the ecoBiz program, sponsored and promoted by the Queensland Chamber of Commerce, and have proactively worked ahead of this legislation to phase out single-use plastics so that by the time the legislation comes in they will be well and truly compliant.

I also want to acknowledge that during COVID it has been really difficult for a lot of the hospitality businesses which were moving away from single-use plastics. In the House we have to use plastic bottles rather than the glasses we have always been able to use. We are using plastic and disposable knives and forks for the first time in many years. I do want to acknowledge that COVID has been a setback for a lot of businesses in terms of introducing this legislation—and certainly in complying with it—but I know that once we are through the worst of it they will be keen to get on board and continue to reintroduce more sustainable long-term options.

My daughter Allegra loves to say ‘The world is not your garbage can.’ It is a popular children’s song. I think our kids ‘get it’. They know that we should not be throwing our rubbish on the ground, clogging our waterways and poisoning our planet. In keeping with the musical theme this morning, to quote the late, great Whitney Houston, ‘I believe that children are our future and we should let them lead the way.’ Judging by the number of young people who were out and about on Clean Up Australia Day, they know what is up. This piece of legislation is a key piece of the puzzle to keep Queensland beautiful. I commend the bill to the House.