




Speech By
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MEMBER FOR GREGORY

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WASTE REDUCTION AND RECYCLING (PLASTIC ITEMS) AMENDMENT BILL

 **Mr MILLAR** (Gregory—LNP) (6.44 pm): I am delighted to have an opportunity to speak to this bill, which aims to ban the supply of what has come to be called single-use plastics. I congratulate the minister, the previous minister and the department for the effort they have put into developing the definitions in the legislation that we rely on. I also sincerely thank all of the stakeholder industry members who, at the cost of their time and effort, have assisted in the development of these definitions. It has involved having to think about different containers and how we best define them. When does a large plate become a platter, for instance?

I have some concerns that I am sure the minister and the department will be able to fix up for small businesses and groups across the seat of Gregory who do not have the same knowledge of the bill. In order to assist them, I do ask the minister to ensure that a statewide publicity and education campaign about the new laws is conducted well before they commence. In this regard, the department needs to publish a list of the banned items on a website. These items are in such common use that more will be needed, including mainstream and social media campaigns, directing people to that website. With so many different forms of plastic, including modern bioplastics and compostable plastics, it is not clear to the average person what is allowed plastic and what is prohibited. Clarity of communication is really going to be the key to get this going.

The bill particularly targets straws, stirrers, plates and cutlery. In order to demonstrate which of these are banned, the department's website should indicate practical alternatives to the banned items. Many of our restaurants and hotels in the seat of Gregory have managed to survive the coronavirus restrictions by selling takeaways as an alternative when limited seating capacity was imposed. This change in business model has been warmly received and some would say it was a godsend. Many of these small businesses, which have never done takeaways before, are suddenly thinking that it is a good business model to continue those takeaways and they would like to retain the takeaway sideline well after the pandemic restrictions are lifted. However, these small business people do not have the time or resources to research what is banned and what are safe alternatives in terms of user safety from burns and spills and 'safe' as in meeting the requirements for food safety and COVID safety requirements as well as 'safe' as in permitted under this new legislation. The laws are also likely to have some impact on community groups such as tuckshops, cake stalls, food charities, junior sports groups, youth groups and church groups.

In recognition of the wideranging impact of the laws not only must the publicity and education campaign be well executed but it must also be timely. As I said, those larger stakeholders who have been in consultation with the department will be well aware of the new laws, but the situation is different for everyone else, including small businesses, community groups and the general public. Without knowing well in advance exactly what will be banned it will be impossible for businesses and community groups to prepare. They need time to run down their existing stocks and replace them with permitted items.

With regard to waste, I do want to raise with the House an understanding of the size of Gregory. We are 460,000 square kilometres in size. We go from Duinga all the way to Birdsville. In Western Queensland many small towns are excluded from the container exchange program altogether—even Birdsville, where around 15,000 visitors attend just two events in a good winter season. Of course I am talking about the Big Red Bash and the Birdsville Races. I am sure you have seen the pictures of them all hanging out at the pub with cans sitting around the Birdsville pub. Do they have a beverage container exchange? No, they do not. It goes off to landfill somewhere in the pristine Simpson Desert. I would like to see some sort of opportunity for these big events.

We also have the Way Out West Fest, which is a big attraction for many people in our tourism industry during the season. I would like to see the minister and the department work with Diamantina Shire, Winton Shire and all those RAPAD shires that are going to experience one hell of a tourism season—and thank God because they need it. I see the member for Cairns there. Hopefully Cairns gets to pick up some of those tourism dollars too because they desperately need it. We are going to have a decent tourism season.

When it comes to recyclables, the environment and what we are trying to achieve, this is good legislation but we have to try to adapt that legislation to these isolated communities that do not have container exchange programs. We also have to make sure the education process gets out there. I ask the minister, the department and the government to work with those shires because they are more than willing to work with you. I certainly commend this bill to the House.