




Speech By
Hon. Leanne Enoch

MEMBER FOR ALGESTER

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WASTE REDUCTION AND RECYCLING (PLASTIC ITEMS) AMENDMENT BILL

 **Hon. LM ENOCH** (Algester—ALP) (Minister for Communities and Housing, Minister for Digital Economy and Minister for the Arts) (6.49 pm): I rise to speak in support of the Waste Reduction and Recycling (Plastic Items) Amendment Bill. It was my great privilege to serve as the minister for environment and the Great Barrier Reef during the last term of government and to introduce this bill, which Minister Scanlon is now bringing forward for debate. She is already a fantastic environment minister for bringing forward some amendments to this bill that will make all the difference.

Queensland's Plastic Pollution Reduction Plan set out a path forward for reducing single-use plastics, including banning items such as straws, cutlery, plates and stirrers. Of the 20,000 submissions received when we undertook public consultation on this plan, an overwhelming majority—some 94 per cent—supported the introduction of a plastics ban. In fact, many Queenslanders wanted the ban to go further to include other products like polystyrene takeaway food containers and cups. Like everybody else in the House, I am absolutely delighted to see that amendments will be moved to include polystyrene in the items banned under this legislation.

Research has also shown that seven in 10 Queenslanders are already taking steps to reduce their consumption of single-use plastics when away from home. We know that Queenslanders care about the environment and want to ensure our beautiful state is protected for future generations. Plastic has an enormous impact on our environment. About 300 million tonnes of plastic waste is produced every year, and half of all plastic produced is designed to be used only once and then thrown away. Our wildlife feel the direct impacts of plastic waste. Disturbingly, around 90 per cent of all seabirds have ingested some kind of plastic debris, as have about 30 per cent of sea turtles.

It is these drastic impacts on our environment that got the attention of two remarkable young girls—Molly Steer from Cairns and Emily Walker from Townsville—who are Straw No More ambassadors and have been calling for action for several years. I first met Molly in 2017. She has done a remarkable job in raising awareness of the impact of single-use plastic straws on the environment and in particular the Great Barrier Reef. Her movement has had international reach, asking everyone to simply say no to plastic straws.

In 2019 I met another young ambassador for Straw No More, Emily Walker from Townsville, who had an incredibly enthusiastic approach to this issue and for seeing real change around single-use plastics. She told me she wanted to see a legislative solution to the impacts of single-use plastic in our environment. I was delighted when she was named by the Premier as Queensland Young Citizen of the Year in Townsville earlier this year.

It is because of Emily and Molly and other very passionate campaigners like them who want to protect the environment that we are at this point today debating this vital piece of legislation. It is also thanks to wonderful programs across Queensland—like the Plastic Free Places initiative in Noosa, Cairns and Townsville, which have modelled a single-use-plastic-free society and shown us that it can be done and that a small change can have a huge impact.

The Palaszczuk government recognises that action is needed to tackle single-use plastics, and this bill adds to the work we have been doing for years as we tackle the war on waste. In 2018 we introduced the ban on single-use lightweight plastic shopping bags—a move which Queenslanders have embraced. We also implemented the Container Refund Scheme, in which billions of containers have been recycled, millions of dollars have gone back to Queenslanders and hundreds of jobs have been created. I note the enthusiasm now of those opposite for the scheme. There was certainly a lot of not-so-enthusiastic support for the scheme previously, but it is great to hear it now—including the expansion of the scheme into other locations across Queensland. More and more Queenslanders are getting on board to reduce waste and protect the environment, and this legislation will ensure Queensland remains a leader in combatting the war on waste.

We have set the policy settings to support the reduction of single-use plastics in our state and promoted a circular economy along with the jobs it creates. The investments in a circular economy innovation lab as well as the various policies that members on this side of the House have mentioned in their contributions to the debate on this bill are all playing their part in ensuring that we are reducing waste in our environment, in particular the impact of single-use plastics. I commend the bill to the House.