




Speech By
Hon. Mark Bailey

MEMBER FOR MILLER

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WASTE REDUCTION AND RECYCLING (PLASTIC ITEMS) AMENDMENT BILL

 **Hon. MC BAILEY** (Miller—ALP) (Minister for Transport and Main Roads) (12.41 pm): The Palaszczuk Labor government has a strong track record when it comes to protecting our environment. We went to the 2015 and the 2017 state elections with commitments to introduce strong native vegetation laws to better protect Queensland's environment, and that is what we have delivered. However, the LNP opposition voted against that and of course the so-called Greens party MP for Maiwar moved amendments to water down those tough tree-clearing laws, much to his shame. Under the previous government, the equivalent of a thousand football fields was being cleared every day. Despite the interference of other parties, including the so-called Greens party, it was the Palaszczuk Labor government that implemented these tough tree-clearing laws once a majority was possible in this House in 2018.

In addition to implementing strong tree-clearing laws, we took swift action to ban single-use plastic bags. Protecting our environment is one of the most fundamental things that we must do in all aspects of our everyday lives. We also implemented the container refund scheme. I have seen firsthand in my own electorate of Miller in Rocklea the huge popularity of the Containers for Change program. It is well used by my local community. This scheme allows people to collect and return the eligible containers to the recycling exchange for the refund payment. It supports our local community groups and charities by households donating the 10-cent refund from each container. I had the opportunity to visit the Salvos store in Sherwood as the program kicked off in 2018.

It is worth noting that approximately 300 million tonnes of plastic waste is produced every year and about half of that is designed to be used only once and then thrown away. Queenslanders use three billion drink containers every year—a staggering figure—so I still encourage everyone to get involved in this fantastic program. We have seen huge success from the program, but we are also taking the next step and that next step involves plastic straws, stirrers, cutlery and plates being consistently among the top 10 littered items found on beaches and in our marine environment. When littered, these plastic items break up into increasingly smaller pieces that persist in the environment and act like sponges, collecting pollutants from the environment. When mistaken for food, they pose a mortal threat to our wildlife, causing many deaths.

This legislation will ban single-use plastic items like straws, stirrers, cutlery and plates to protect our environment for future generations. We made an election commitment to consult on the inclusion of single-use expanded polystyrene takeaway food containers and cups in the first tranche of the single-use plastic items ban. From a recycling perspective, these single-use items are also difficult to recycle and can contaminate recyclable items collected through kerbside collection services, leading to the disposal of otherwise recyclable resources—an outcome we want to avoid. The ban introduced by this bill will element a substantial amount of single-use plastic items from use and avoid the environmental impacts that result from the waste items entering the environment. I look forward to the fact that at future Clean Up Australia Days we will see less and less of these sorts of pollutants in the environment because of these laws that we will pass here today. I will certainly be voting for the bill and commend the bill to the House.