



Speech By
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MEMBER FOR OODGEROO

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WASTE REDUCTION AND RECYCLING (PLASTIC ITEMS) AMENDMENT BILL

 **Dr ROBINSON** (Oodgeroo—LNP) (11.32 am): As a member of the Health and Environment Committee, I rise to make a contribution to the Waste Reduction and Recycling (Plastic Items) Amendment Bill 2020. I support the bill as it is compatible with LNP values broadly with regard to protecting our environment and living sustainably. In particular, for me, our oceans, bays, rivers, reefs and broad marine ecology have always been of important value. It fuelled my interest to study marine science at James Cook University many years ago. What flows into Moreton Bay Marine Park through our river systems can be good for the marine environment, like fresh water and certain levels of nutrients; it can be neutral; or it can be destructive, like all forms of non-biodegradable material.

As the member for Cleveland, now Oodgeroo, I have attempted to lend support to good environmental programs and outcomes in my electorate, whether to do with single-use plastics, container recycling schemes, marine research or koala protection, among other areas. With regard to this bill and the marine environment, protecting turtles, dugongs and other marine life in our Moreton Bay Marine Park is critical. Sustainable fishing practices in the bay are also important so that commercial, recreational and charter fishing can occur at sustainable levels. Protecting and growing the reefs in Moreton Bay is also important. According to some scientific reports the reef material is growing, and that is good news.

I wish to put on record my thanks to the committee secretariat and my fellow committee members for their work, though the bulk of the work was already done in the last term by the previous committee. The policy objectives of the bill are to enable a ban on the supply of single-use plastic items by amending the Waste Reduction and Recycling Act 2011 to ban the supply of particular single-use plastic items, starting with straws, stirrers, plates and cutlery. In terms of plastic use, we know that a total of 3½ million tonnes of plastics were used in Australia in 2018-19. Some 84 per cent of plastic used is sent to landfill and approximately 13 per cent is recycled. Australia uses around 70 billion pieces of soft plastic, such as food wrappers, each year.

The problem is not going away easily. We are using more and more plastic, and that is expected to double worldwide by 2040. One million tonnes of Australia's annual plastic consumption is made up of single-use plastics. Too many of these and other plastics end up in our oceans each year, with an oft quoted 2016 study reporting that by 2050 there will be more plastic than fish by weight in the ocean. Some 99 per cent of seabirds worldwide are expected to have ingested some amount of plastic by 2025. In Australia alone, around 130,000 tonnes of plastics leak into our marine environment each year. These are considerable concerns.

In terms of Moreton Bay, more particularly locally in terms of my electorate of Oodgeroo, the health of Moreton Bay is critical to the bay's marine ecology and our coastal way of life. I want to thank the various marine care groups across Moreton Bay and the Redlands Coast area for the work they do. I have had the pleasure over the years of working with some of these groups to help clean up waterways of plastic debris and other rubbish. The reefs and river systems of Moreton Bay are important to the

marine ecology of the bay and, together with water quality nutrient flows and reducing plastics and other pollutants, we can make things better for current and future generations of Queenslanders and our interstate and international visitors.

As I have often in this House, I also acknowledge the work of the University of Queensland marine station at Dunwich on North Stradbroke Island. A lot of both Australian and international students go through that station. The university does great work there. The students study a whole range of species including manta rays, turtles and sharks. One of the areas of research that to me is fascinating is the impact of plastics on turtles. This research is absolutely critical. To those who conduct research into the impact of plastics on turtles and other marine life, I say well done. It is important to identify which plastics have the greatest impact so we can zero in on the worst affected areas. Some plastics mimic jellyfish in the water column. Of course, jellyfish are one of the food sources for turtles. Some plastics sit in the water column in a particular way which entices turtles to eat them. We need more funding into marine research in partnership with facilities like the UQ marine station at Dunwich and others who do a wonderful job in that regard.

Specifically in terms of the islands of the bay, a healthy Moreton Bay is critical to the ecology around and on the bay islands, including pristine North Stradbroke Island. On North Stradbroke Island, Minjerribah, the container scheme is important, as it is across all of the Redlands Coast region. I supported the container scheme when it was announced firstly by the LNP in 2016, and I continue to support it as the government took up our idea. We in the LNP then provided bipartisan support when the legislation was introduced.

I have to say that I was not so excited at the rollout of the container scheme program on Straddie. One would have thought that if the environment on North Stradbroke Island and Moreton Bay was as important to the government as they say, they would have had some sort of program that would have included a container collection centre on North Stradbroke Island as part of the original plan. Sadly, they did not. The government did not think that highly of pristine North Stradbroke Island, nor Moreton Bay. If the residents of Straddie, again overlooked and excluded by this government, wanted to be involved and included in the recycling scheme they needed to go through quite a painful process. They had to drag their recyclables across the island, then onto the ferry terminals, hopefully keeping all of them in bags, then onto the ferries, then across the bay, then onto another ferry terminal at Cleveland, then onto a bus or a car—it would have been interesting if you had big bags to go onto a bus—and then find the single container return centre in the Cleveland district. The residents had to hope that they did not lose any items along the way, on North Stradbroke Island or in our pristine Moreton Bay.

We do not need more plastics polluting the bay and our waterways. I call on the government to take more care of the environment when it comes to North Stradbroke Island and Moreton Bay. The government can go beyond this bill and support other things in terms of the environment like the rolling out of more artificial reefs in Moreton Bay—at Wellington Point, for example—to take pressure off the natural occurring reefs. On North Stradbroke Island we do not want to see plastic rubbish, especially in environmentally sensitive areas. Educating tourists and visitors to dispose of rubbish and recycle is important.

People go to the North Stradbroke Island headland area—Point Lookout, for example—to see the natural beauty of the point. They want to experience the beautiful wilderness scene of native bushland, kangaroos, koalas and look out to the ocean to see dolphins, turtles and whales frolicking around. They of course need to find a camping ground that is open, and it is tough if they want to use a tent when it comes to the new camping restrictions imposed. What they do not want to see is litter or plastics blowing across beautiful pristine areas, nor do they want to see other ugly forms of pollution in beautiful areas like the visual pollution of the unwanted development on the pristine Point Lookout headland. Sadly, the government is not dealing with this visual pollution despite Quandamooka objections. I support the bill.