




Speech By
Hon. Meaghan Scanlon

MEMBER FOR GAVEN

Record of Proceedings, 10 March 2021

WASTE REDUCTION AND RECYCLING (PLASTIC ITEMS) AMENDMENT BILL

Second Reading

 **Hon. MAJ SCANLON** (Gaven—ALP) (Minister for the Environment and the Great Barrier Reef and Minister for Science and Youth Affairs) (6.07 pm), in reply: I would like to thank all members of this House for their participation in the debate on the Waste Reduction and Recycling (Plastic Items) Amendment Bill 2020. I want to take this opportunity to address some of the issues that have been raised during this debate.

On this important day we take another step forward in protecting Queensland's environment. I think it is important that we set the record straight on some of the opposition's claims when it comes to the environmental record here in Queensland. We know that when in government those opposite scrapped tree-clearing laws, cut funding for climate change programs and sacked staff. They have also been quite vocal throughout this debate about the Commonwealth's Recycling Modernisation Fund.

I think it is important to note that in Queensland we are already acting on recycling. In 2018 we committed to a three-year funding program to stimulate investment in priority recycling infrastructure, and in 2019 we released the Resource Recovery Industry Development Program. Through our Resource Recovery Industry Development Program 29 businesses and local governments have received \$34 million in funding to divert 1.3 million tonnes of waste per annum from landfill. These projects will deliver an additional \$193 million in capital investment and create 362 jobs across Queensland.

We are absolutely committed to reaching an agreement with the Commonwealth on the Recycling Modernisation Fund, and our officials are working on finalising a deal that will deliver the best possible outcome for Queensland.

When it comes to the implementation date of the single-use plastics bill, we have committed to implementing the ban on 1 September 2021, which gives business the time to adapt, source new alternatives and work through stock they already have. We will work proactively with stakeholder organisations, our stakeholder advisory group and businesses to communicate these changes and support them to ensure this change is as seamless as possible from the time the ban comes into effect.

In recognising the wishes of communities and members of this House to further enhance our plastics response and look at the impact of the current exemptions, I have also instructed my department to begin the review within 12 months—well within the two-year window prescribed in this bill—so we can see how these bans are being implemented, how successful it has been to date and to look at future measures.

I know there has also been considerable comment around schools as an exempt business. Schools have been identified as being an exempt business to ensure that teachers, students and other staff with a disability and healthcare needs have continued access to items that will otherwise be banned. Including schools as a business permitted to continue to provide these banned items does not

prevent schools from providing alternative sustainable items. I would like to acknowledge that many schools are already leading on the war on waste with the Straw No More and many other campaigns. I know that the Minister for Education has already commented on this.

We have also spoken and agreed on the importance of supporting their leadership whilst also providing single-use plastics for students with additional needs. As such, we will engage with schools in the coming weeks and inform them of the alternatives to single-use plastics to help more students in our communities transition to sustainable options. I know from talking to kids and teenagers that they are some of the most passionate about this issue and I know many schools will voluntarily adopt measures, spurred on by their students.

With regards to pre-packed items, this exemption is consistent with the approach taken in other jurisdictions. The recently released South Australian regulation includes exemptions for otherwise banned single-use items that form an integral part of a food or beverage product. The ACT government has also announced similar exemptions. As there is often no or limited suitable alternatives for these products, these items have been specified as an exempt item in the ban. This will be considered though as part of the review of the bill within one year of commencing. It is something I will also continue to discuss with my state and federal colleagues, and I will endeavour to keep the House updated on progress as we continue to work towards eliminating single-use plastic items. Of course we encourage businesses to make this transition as soon as possible.

I also note the member for Maiwar asked for clarity of definitions. We will continue to work with key stakeholders to ensure that there is clarity on what items are banned and what items are not banned. We will develop guidelines, Q&As and other materials through our ongoing engagement to provide certainty to retailers, consumers and individuals with a disability. The Queensland Disability Advisory Council has been heavily involved already in the design of provisions in relation to the disability sector. We will continue to work with the retail and disability sectors to develop and share information so people are aware of where and how they can still access single-use plastic items in their daily lives.

There has also been some comment on the ability of councils to be able to deal with compostable straws. Members have raised concerns today about their ability to recycle these plastics, and I acknowledge that the needs of South-East Queensland communities will differ from regional and remote communities. I can advise that we are proactively working with the LGAQ to build the capacity and capability of councils across Queensland and I look forward to sharing more about this in the future. We have committed to developing that organics plan as well, working with local councils across Queensland.

This bill builds on the good work the Queensland government has already delivered. Our commitment started with the introduction of the single-use lightweight plastic shopping bag ban on 1 July 2018 and the highly successful container refund scheme on 1 November 2018. In just over two years, the container refund scheme has had more than three billion containers returned for a refund and employs over 700 Queenslanders through over 300 container refund points across Queensland. That is a pretty impressive feat for a scheme that the Leader of the Opposition said 'wasn't working', the member for Moggill called 'a debacle' and the member for Maroochydore called 'botched'. The fact is that the LNP has not done anything but talk down this scheme and discourage uptake when we were rolling the scheme out.

Fortunately, the people of Queensland did not listen to their whingeing and instead got on board with the container refund scheme, just as they are now getting on board with the measures in this bill. That is probably why the LNP are now trying to take credit for the scheme. We know the member for Nanango and her colleagues like to rewrite history on this issue. While I may not have been in this House, I still have a long enough memory to know that investigating a container refund scheme was a commitment we on this side of the House brought to the 2015 election. In fact, I table a page of our 2015 progress report that shows the big tick—delivered.

Tabled paper: Extract, undated, from the Progress report on government election commitments, page 72 [297](#).

While they are focused on claiming credit for press conferences from five years ago—and not implementing the measures when they were actually in government—we on this side of the House are delivering. This bill will improve the economy of Queensland through the identification of innovative and sustainable alternative products and also through the creation of opportunities for local manufacturing and the supply of materials for those items. In addition, this ban will contribute to improving Queensland's beautiful environment and marine environments by eliminating these single-use plastic items that end up as litter and pollution.

Lastly, I would like to acknowledge the work of the Single-Use Plastic Items Stakeholder Advisory Group members for the advice and collaborative approach in working with the Department of Environment and Science in the design of the ban, and going forward the information and awareness

program for the implementation of it. I would also like to acknowledge and thank all the staff in the Office of Resource Recovery in the Department of Environment and Science for their work in progressing this bill as well as my own staff for their efforts.

Finally, I would like to acknowledge the work of the former minister and her staff who brought this bill to the House last year and who have been passionate advocates on this issue on behalf of all Queenslanders. I also acknowledge the former committee and the current committee that looked at both pieces of legislation. I feel very honoured to have been able to continue the work of the former minister on this important bill. I commend the bill to the House.

Question put—That the bill be now read a second time.

Motion agreed to.

Bill read a second time.

Consideration in Detail

Clauses 1 to 7—



Ms SCANLON (6.16 pm): I move the following amendment—

1 Clause 5 (Insertion of new ch 4, pt 3AA)

Page 6, after line 21—

insert—

- (vi) a takeaway food container made, in whole or part, of expanded polystyrene (EPS); or
- (vii) a cup made, in whole or part, of expanded polystyrene (EPS); or

I table the explanatory notes to my amendment and the statement of compatibility with human rights.

Tabled paper: Waste Reduction and Recycling (Plastic Items) Amendment Bill 2020, explanatory notes to Hon. Meaghan Scanlon's amendments [298](#).

Tabled paper: Waste Reduction and Recycling (Plastic Items) Amendment Bill 2020, statement of compatibility with human rights contained in Hon. Meaghan Scanlon's amendments [299](#).

Amendment agreed to.

Clauses 1 to 7, as amended, agreed to.

Third Reading



Hon. MAJ SCANLON (Gaven—ALP) (Minister for the Environment and the Great Barrier Reef and Minister for Science and Youth Affairs) (6.17 pm): I move—

That the bill, as amended, be now read a third time.

Question put—That the bill, as amended, be now read a third time.

Motion agreed to.

Bill read a third time.

Long Title



Hon. MAJ SCANLON (Gaven—ALP) (Minister for the Environment and the Great Barrier Reef and Minister for Science and Youth Affairs) (6.18 pm): I move—

That the long title of the bill be agreed to.

Question put—That the long title of the bill be agreed to.

Motion agreed to.