




Speech By
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MEMBER FOR HILL

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WASTE REDUCTION AND RECYCLING (PLASTIC ITEMS) AMENDMENT BILL

 **Mr KNUTH** (Hill—KAP) (2.41 pm): I rise to contribute to the debate on the Waste Reduction and Recycling (Plastic Items) Amendment Bill 2020. The objective of the bill is to enable a ban on the supply of single-use plastic items, starting with straws, stirrers, plates and cutlery. This is a great cause. I am sure that every member in the House today would have schools and businesses in their electorates which are undertaking some sort of initiative or program to help reduce plastics in their schools.

For those who live in North Queensland it is vital that we preserve the beauty of our natural environment by introducing legislation to drastically reduce plastic waste, and this bill is a step towards that. During the briefing on the bill I was informed that, of the over 20,000 people surveyed, over 90 per cent agreed with the ban. The main reason given by the small percentage of those against the bill was that it did not go far enough. As stated in the bill's explanatory notes—

Local, state and national governments in Australia and around the world have identified that there are significant environmental, community and economic impacts associated with plastic in the environment with over 60 countries now having some form of ban or intervention for single-use plastic items.

Litter surveys indicate that a major source of plastic entering the environment is generated from single-use plastic items, including plastic straws and cutlery.

We know the impact plastic has had on dugong and turtle populations. As the member for Hinchinbrook said, going back nearly three years ago we led the charge to try and have plastic straws banned because of their impact on turtle and dugong populations in North Queensland. I know many members would remember that growing up as kids we used to use cardboard straws, plates and cups, and some of the really old members here would probably remember the cardboard cups in the *Sunlander* and at railway stations—but only very old members.

In 2018 we saw McDonald's restaurants start a campaign to phase out plastic straws by the end 2020. More recently they have started to phase out plastic cutlery in their Australian restaurants, saving as much as 585,000 tonnes of plastic waste every year. Other restaurants and major retail businesses have also undertaken similar programs. It was not long ago that major supermarkets banned and phased out the use of plastic bags in shopping centres, and we all remember the uproar, anger and frustration that caused. Right now many car boots are filled with re-usable bags, so it has been accepted and well received. I do note that certain exemptions have been granted for schools, nursing homes, medical facilities and people with disability.

In Australia alone over 10 million plastic bags are used each day. Plastic bags cause huge problems in the ocean, and 85 per cent of the soft plastics from bags and packaging ends up in landfill. Last Sunday was Clean Up Australia Day, which involves hundreds of thousands of Australians each year. This program was first started over 30 years ago. Last year was its 30th anniversary, and I know that many members of this House participate in this important event each year. Australia also pioneered a recycling program in the 1960s and continues to initiate legislation and programs to reduce our plastic waste. We simply have to continue to do better. This legislation is a big step forward. I commend the bill to the House.