




Speech By
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MEMBER FOR MIRANI

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WASTE REDUCTION AND RECYCLING (PLASTIC ITEMS) AMENDMENT BILL

 **Mr ANDREW** (Mirani—PHON) (6.30 pm): I rise today in support of the Waste Reduction and Recycling (Plastic Items) Amendment Bill 2020 and commend the government for this important step towards achieving an overall reduction in plastic pollution of 20 per cent by 2023. Plastic is now in every aspect of our marine food chain. Putting the health of our oceans first, with this bill's strong commitment to the goal of eradicating plastic waste in Queensland, will reap enormous benefits for all Queenslanders now and in the future.

According to the bill's explanatory notes, the principal policy objective of the bill is to amend the Waste Reduction and Recycling Act 2011 to ban the supply of single-use plastic items, starting with straws, stirrers, plates and cutlery. Here in Queensland we produce over 11 million tonnes of waste each year, with Queensland councils primarily responsible for managing and operating more than 450 waste and resource recovery facilities.

Einstein said that matter can neither be created nor destroyed. What he meant was that we are governed by the laws of energy and mass which say that matter cannot be made to disappear—only change its form. Following this rule, we must change the form of our waste to create reusable components of its various parts. Plastic can become plastic again and steel can return to steel. Burying things should be the last option. Queensland urgently needs to develop the end-use technology to recycle and change the initial component parts into a product that can be re-used.

Waste is an increasing threat to Queensland's environment and none more so than the waste generated by our renewable energy industry. Research shows that materials used in the manufacture of solar panels and plastics poses one of the largest future environmental threats to the state's ecosystem and the Great Barrier Reef. Solar waste disposal, in particular, leaches all sorts of hazardous materials, such as lithium and lead, into the environment and soils. This is creating an environmental disaster that is affecting our marine ecosystems, and it will only get worse as solar and battery waste is also expected to become a major contributor to national waste volumes in the decades to come. Lead has already been outlawed in California, and we should address this and understand how what we do with our waste affects our ecosystems.

Renewable energy companies, industries and advocates are notorious for hiding and minimising their environmental and human health impacts. They demand and receive exemptions from health and endangered species laws that apply to other industries. That has to change. Everyone should be equal in that space. Government must take action to make it mandatory for all companies to clean up their waste, particularly the waste being generated from our renewable energy industry and from batteries.

In 2019, Queensland companies exported more than 265,000 tonnes of waste to overseas companies because it was more profitable than recycling it here. Full bans on Australian exports of waste plastic, paper, cardboard and tyres will be in place by July 2024, triggered by a range of countries, including China, announcing they intend on progressively banning imports of the world's waste. The new law will hopefully provide an incentive to local manufacturers and facilitate the growth of a

jobs-generating recycling industry within the state. It may also lead to an upswing in local demand to re-use these recovered materials in infrastructure, packaging and products as we move towards creating a 'circular economy' here in Queensland.

The waste dilemma is one that must be effectively, efficiently and sustainably dealt with by the state that creates it. No-one is going to put up with our garbage anymore, and shipping it off to other countries to deal with is no solution for a state that wishes to be seen as clever. Many submissions to the committee also identified a need for the government to undertake education activities to ensure that the ban is properly implemented. I agree with this. There needs to be state investment in education and communication on the bill, not just with the key stakeholders and businesses but also with the public, particularly our younger generation. This legislation is a positive step forward in reducing Queensland's waste and litter problem and will go a long way towards the ultimate goal of protecting the state's unique marine environment.

We have a twinning arrangement with Vanuatu, which is where my family is from, and also with Papua New Guinea. If the minister would indulge me, it would be great if we can take this legislation to those islands or push it through our twinning arrangement so that those island nations adopt this legislation and adapt their practices to save their marine environments and also their ecosystems going forward. It is a good place to be.

In Vanuatu they always drink cava from coconut shells and they also use them to eat out of. In the past they never did; they used different things. There is an opportunity here. I have seen some businesses in Queensland coming up with some novel ideas of making knives and forks out of coconut shells. They are re-useable. They do not absorb the bacteria that other items do. I think it is a great place to be. I think we need to share this through our twinning arrangements with Pacific nations. I commend the bill to the House.