




Speech By  
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**MEMBER FOR MAROOCHYDORE**

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**WASTE REDUCTION AND RECYCLING AND OTHER LEGISLATION  
AMENDMENT BILL**

 **Ms SIMPSON** (Maroochydore—LNP) (12.40 pm): I am pleased to speak in the debate of the Waste Reduction and Recycling and Other Legislation Amendment Bill 2023. Achieving better outcomes requires leadership, strategies that can be implemented and targets that are clearly transparent and not changed simply because the government has no strategy and no competency to achieve those outcomes. If we are truly to see better environmental outcomes, there has to be a better way than we have seen, which is this government changing the targets, hiding reports and massaging the truth. That basically means it is less than honest about the outcomes.

**An opposition member** interjected.

**Ms SIMPSON:** I take that interjection; they are recycling ministers and not necessarily seeing better outcomes. From what we have seen this morning, it is the same talking points in the hands of a different minister—the same excuses and the same lack of care for the outcomes of their actions. I do not think they intend to do harm, but the ethics of not intending to do harm and still doing harm are the same. This government is out of touch in terms of how to drive good outcomes—it just has very nice talking points about its intentions.

I refer to a matter referenced by my colleague the shadow minister for environment, the member for Bonney—that is, the target this government set for the diversion of waste of 55 per cent by 2025. That was in its 2019 strategy, yet in 2023 it has gone backwards. We want to put this under the spotlight, because the government has nice talking points—everything is hearts and flowers, warm fuzzies and puppy dogs—but it is failing in the key areas of target delivery. We have to call it out, because there is a need to drive strategy and be held accountable for good outcomes.

As my colleagues have mentioned, achieving good outcomes requires consultation with those who have the ability to deliver them and effective scrutiny of the best ways to achieve them. Government must work with industry and with local government. The amendment proposed by the government sounds an awful lot like muzzling and gagging local government by seeking to 'tighten up on misinformation'. It sounds like a government that is quite precious about how it allows people to speak. We have seen how the government has mishandled complaints against local government and how local governments have been tied up in the red tape of complaints against them. This government is now providing another mechanism to bind the hands of local government with vague and disingenuous attempts to 'address misinformation'. It is more about gagging them from speaking out.

Good information does need to go into the public arena, but this government is certainly not the gold standard. In fact, it is the lead standard with regard to information. It tends to hide things, then change definitions and not consult with those who are most impacted. The facts that this amendment did not go through a consultation process and that it has been not been able to be adequately explained are red flags. It is, in fact, a warning sign of the government's real intentions. There will be consequences that are adverse to good discussion and debate in the public arena.

I want to address a measure which I know is due to be implemented with a deadline of September of this year. That relates to microbeads or microplastics. I accept that in the plan the ban on microbeads is due to come into effect in September of this year, and I welcome that. I want to highlight one issue. People may still have cupboards of products containing microplastics. They may not have an awareness of what microplastics are and may not know that they have been in cosmetics and cleaning products for some time. I understand that New South Wales has already banned microbeads or microplastics, and a similar ban is due to come into effect in Queensland in a few months time. It really is quite insidious how many plastics are within so many products. People may have a cosmetic or a cleaning product and not be aware of what it contains. You have to strain your eyesight to read the ingredient list for these products, let alone to understand what they are. That is a positive step forward, but we need more education about the whole-of-life impact of not just these products but also many other products—the detrimental impact not only on our environment but also potentially on human wellbeing.

Studies certainly have demonstrated that microplastics—and other types of plastics that are not micro—have resulted in tragic consequences within the marine system. There are growing bodies of evidence about microplastics being ingested by human beings. We still do not know the full impact of some of these microplastics on human wellbeing. There is research that has alluded to endocrine disrupters. There is research that has alluded to the impact of almost a type of oestrogen on human health. Let that research be presented.

The main thing I want to highlight today is that education is key so that people have awareness about the choices we can make. There is a need for legislation to drive change. Sometimes personal choice is not enough to drive outcomes, particularly in supply chains, when people may not know what is in the product and may not have a way to avoid it because of the types of products being produced.

There is a need to start looking more intently at whole-of-life systems for some increasingly popular products. Solar panels have been mentioned. They have been part of our lives for some time. It is not only the packaging but also the lack of recycling that is available in this country for solar panels. Most of us would have had solar panels on our roofs or in our communities for decades, but there is no ability to have them recycled. You only need a hailstorm in a community to see an awful lot of these panels being damaged before their so-called end of life. This is an issue we need to address. There needs to be more systems in place, and that requires leadership from government, working with industry in consultation, to drive the best outcomes.

Wind turbines have also been mentioned. Their effect might be quite a few years down the track. Parts of Queensland have seen that when approvals for major solar farms have been granted a whole-of-life approach has not been taken—it is different from the process that you would expect to apply to, say, a mine—in terms of rehabilitation and dealing with products when they reach the end of their life. I believe that is something that does need the leadership and attention of government so that it is not kicked down the road, becoming a bigger problem to deal with.

I certainly support moves with regard to the circular economy, but sometimes we have to give credit to earlier generations that did not have a lot of money and had different consumption patterns and, consequently, they wasted very little. There are generations of older Australians who did not waste energy—and it is a lot more expensive today—and who did not waste their consumables because they did not have a lot of them. They certainly did not have the wrapping that was around food that we have today.

Maybe we have to learn from some of these previous generations about what it is to think about avoiding the extraneous wrapping that there is around household products and to look for ways that we can better address household waste in our own homes. Food waste may not be part of this bill, but they certainly knew how to drive economic values and we need to give them credit in that a circular economy has been done perhaps in different ways by previous generations and we can learn from them.