




Speech By
Samuel O'Connor

MEMBER FOR BONNEY

Record of Proceedings, 11 May 2023

ADJOURNMENT

Containers for Change

 **Mr O'CONNOR** (Bonney—LNP) (4.52 pm): Queensland has the lowest recycling rate of any state in the nation and Queenslanders are doing what they can to fix that. They are stepping up and taking part in Containers for Change, a bipartisan scheme to try to improve our recycling rates. We have especially seen school kids step up by returning millions of popper boxes and the state government has encouraged them to do that. The environment minister was, in fact, very happy to be part of a half a million dollar advertising campaign with the Popper Patrol alongside Dolly Carton, Bruce Juice and Harry Popper.

The problem is that the state government forgot to figure out how to recycle poppers in Queensland. Over 126 million liquid paperboard containers have been collected since 2018, but not a single one of those containers has been recycled in our state. In the almost five years since Containers for Change was set up, a recycling facility has not been established. It is now revealed that, without that, millions of those containers have been sent overseas. We are told that they are being recycled, but given that the minister can barely regulate what is happening in Queensland how would she have any idea that that is actually happening? Apparently there has been an audit but, again, that relies on the environmental regulations overseas being worth anything.

We need to transition to a circular economy. Our recycling policy should not rely on sending our waste to other countries and hoping for the best. They have not released it anyway so there is no evidence that any of those containers, collected by Queenslanders, are actually being recycled. A facility has finally been announced, coincidentally just as the media started making inquiries about why millions of items collected by Containers for Change are not being recycled here, but time is running out. From the middle of next year it will be illegal for these items to be sent overseas. Talk about leaving your assignment till the night before it is due.

We do not want this to be another REDcycle disaster. The waste levy brings in \$300 million a year. Funding is not the issue. The minister constantly talks about the government's billion dollar fund but that means nothing if it is not actually spent. We were the last state to sign up to the Recycling Modernisation Fund. The Resource Recovery Industry Development Program was massively oversubscribed but most of the money went unspent. When it comes to recycling we are falling behind. We need a government that cares more about environmental outcomes than environmental announcements.