




Speech By
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MEMBER FOR NOOSA

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

 **Ms BOLTON** (Noosa—Ind) (5.59 pm): Residents and businesses in Noosa are proudly committed to maintaining and enhancing our electorate's natural beauty and ethos, in line with its UNESCO biosphere status, and innovating towards stability. The Noosa council, community groups, landholders, schools and individuals work closely on projects and initiatives that aim to reduce our impacts. While we are a community of recyclers, we are often stifled by legislative barriers when trying to ensure that less waste ends up in landfill.

The Waste Reduction and Recycling and Other Legislation Amendment Bill aims to make several improvements to waste management laws in Queensland as we need to move on from the traditional take, make and dispose approach to our economy. This bill inserts a legislative objective into the Waste Reduction and Recycling Act to promote and facilitate Queensland's transition to a circular economy and to promote activities across government, business, industry and the community that extend the lifecycle of products and materials. That is very broad, as was the support from submitters. The Waste and Recycling Industry of Queensland noted that an obstacle to progress is that there is still no clarity or single definition or understanding of the circular economy. However, we need only look to the past and compare the size of our home rubbish bins from 50 years ago to those now, and our habits define us. People of my age will remember the little bins that we used to have and now we have multiple big ones.

Firstly, the bill provides an expiry date of 31 December 2025 for the exemption from banned single-use plastic items that are integral to shelf-ready products—for example, plastic straws for juice boxes or plastic forks that come with pre-packaged salads. While this proposal was supported, the Boomerang Alliance, which does an incredible job in my community, called for it to occur earlier. However, the 2025 time frame is in line with the time frames of the national packaging targets. Importantly, we can make the change ourselves. Through the Plastic Free Noosa initiative, which the government funds, already many of our businesses have stopped using single-use plastic products.

Secondly, the bill provides for the removal of an automatic waste disposal levy exemption for clean earth delivered to a waste disposal site. The removal of the exemption will incentivise re-use over disposal and, of course, people can always bring clean earth to my house. Some waste disposal site contractors noted that this provision will materially affect them as they use clean earth as part of their operations for things such as covering waste. The department stated that the change is not intended to impact such operations and that the operators can apply for an operational purposes exemption.

In addition, the bill bans the release of helium balloons in an effort to see an end to our seabirds and marine life choking on plastic latex litter or becoming entangled in balloon strings and ribbons. I question why other balloons, which also end up in our rivers and oceans, are not included. I cannot understand why there is a differentiation. In the past few years, many in Noosa have utilised doves and other non-threatening replacements, including paper kites and balloons and giant bubble blowers, which are fabulous.

Overall, the bill makes several small and useful changes, but there is so much more we need to do, including through advocacy for recycling strategies for renewable energy products such as silicon solar panels and wind turbines at end of life. It is positive to see that the government is starting to address this with the draft E-Products Action Plan that proposes to manage utility scale PV by only providing state approval where fully funded end-of-life solutions are in place. However, this still leaves the question around what to do with used wind turbines. The USA Department of Energy has reported on companies that are commercialising technology to recycle fibreglass from decommissioned wind turbine blades, which should be an area to investigate. However, as always, the devil is in the detail.

In my community, the Containers for Change program has been a great success, demonstrated by minimal eligible items being picked up on Clean Up Australia Day. I have spoken with our Noosa Express Recycling team about how to encourage more recycling. One way is for all principals to get involved in the Battle of the Schools competition. The Containers for Change scheme is fabulous and it is good that it will be expanded to include beer and wine bottles. In the spirit of the circular economy, we should also focus beyond recycling, which can be problematic as shown by the collapse of the REDcycle soft plastic recycling scheme and recent reports of the export overseas of popper containers from Queensland recycling centres, which is concerning. We should not be sending our rubbish elsewhere. We need to deal with it right here.

Reducing our waste is vital. We have gone from global plastic production of a few tonnes in 1960 to 400 million tonnes now, which demonstrates how wasteful and non-sustainable we have become. Reducing includes reusing and repurposing. Once again, I ask members to remember all those years ago, when we were growing up, the tins that we stored our pens in and jars for jam. Anyone who has ever visited my home will know of my love for repurposing, from preloved building materials to furniture and clothes. Not only does it reduce waste; it provides for very interesting stories and, at times, injuries. Anyone who has de-nailed hundreds of lineal metres of timber will know what I mean.

Even though we have banned some single-use plastics, if you go to the supermarket you will see aisle after aisle of single-use plastics, from meat trays to chip bags. Yes, we have a way to go. This was highlighted in the government's draft review of the Waste Management and Resource Recovery Strategy that, as pointed out in a statement of reservation and tonight in this chamber, indicates that we are not keeping up with the recycling and waste diversion targets that have been set. Increased impetus is needed.

I thank the minister and the department, the committee and secretariat for their work, and all Queenslanders who participated in the inquiry. I give a very special shout-out to all of the fabulous youngsters in Noosa, including Millie from Good Shepherd Lutheran College and her Bin Buddy prototype; 12-year-old Jarrah, our Plastic Free Noosa Ambassador and Waste Warrior; and all of our organisations—there are so many that I do not have time to name them all—that do a brilliant job not only in cleaning up after us but also in helping us to reduce our very bad habits.