




Speech By  
**Shane King**

**MEMBER FOR KURWONGBAH**

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

 **Mr KING** (Kurwongbah—ALP) (6.06 pm): I rise to contribute to the debate on the Waste Reduction and Recycling and Other Legislation Amendment Bill 2023. The objectives of the bill include: removing the automatic levy exemption for clean earth from the new financial year to bring us in line with other jurisdictions; banning the outdoor release of any lighter-than-air balloons; setting an expiry date of 31 December 2025 for exemptions on shelf-ready products such as plastic straws on popper boxes from our single-use plastic item ban; enabling the chief executive to make decisions about resource recovery area declarations and payments to local government to help households manage the impacts of the waste levy costs that are passed on to them; changing the review date for the state's waste strategy from three to five years; and enabling something to be prescribed by regulation to not be a waste.

In conjunction with the last point, this bill moves the definition of 'waste' from the Environmental Protection Act 1994 to the Waste Reduction and Recycling Act 2011, the waste act. We stand proudly on our environmental protection record in Queensland, but we know there is more we can do together. That is why the bill formalises our commitment to supporting a circular economy by including it as a principle under the waste act. We want to make sure that we do not miss any opportunities to re-use, recycle and remake things here in Queensland and providing certainty of our commitment to the commercial sector is part of the plan. By prescribing a thing as not a waste we open up and minimise risk to some degree in the commercial market for recycling or repurposing that thing.

It was great to hear, in the former minister's introductory speech, that the recycling and resource recovery industry is already supporting 12,000 jobs and putting \$1½ billion annually into our Queensland economy. Work is underway to expand the list of items that can be recycled through the popular Containers for Change program—and I know that the member for Callide will be particularly happy about that—meaning more jobs and more recycling outcomes. I give a shout-out to the residents of my electorate. As I have mentioned a few times, my office hands out recycling bags and my thanks go to the Containers for Change team for our latest supply. We have many regular customers who are recycling and earning a bit of extra spending money.

I know that there are a lot of families who deposit that money into holiday accounts or accounts for the kids. They get the kids to help recycle the bottles and cans, which sets a really good example. I also give a quick shout-out to the digital Recycling—Let's Get It Sorted campaign, one of the great projects funded by our \$1.1 billion Recycling and Jobs Fund. There are some great resources online to increase awareness about what we can put in our yellow household recycling bins.

We have set ambitious targets for recycling in Queensland, to divert 80 per cent of all waste streams away from landfill by 2030. Removing the clean earth waste levy exemption will encourage other uses for clean earth, defined as natural material such as clay, gravel, sand, soil and rock that is not contaminated by waste or hazardous contaminants. I know that anyone with a little bit of land would do their own recycling on their properties with these types of materials. I certainly do.

Sadly, we know the harm that can be done to our ecosystem, especially the deaths of animal species, by single-use plastics such as straws and balloons. To aid retailers to transition to the ban on single-use plastics—another way of reducing landfill—some exemptions were granted for plastics on shelf-ready products such as the straws on poppers or the little forks in pre-packaged salad bowls or some noodle containers. This bill signals the end of those exemptions, with an expiry date of 31 December 2025, consistent with the agreed national packaging targets time frames. I have noticed that some of these products have already transitioned to environmentally friendly options in preparation. I thank those businesses for being proactive.

I note with a little bit of remorse that future generations might not have balloons at their birthday parties, but it is right thing for us to ban their release, especially lighter-than-air or helium balloons that can travel so far from where they are released. Quite honestly, I do not know anyone who would choose a balloon over a sea turtle's life. How appropriate that today is the International Day of the Turtle and we are talking about this! If the choice was between the turtle and the balloon, I know what most of us would choose. I am supportive of this ban, which reinforces our existing message that balloons are litter if not disposed of correctly. It is certainly a challenge to innovators out there to see if they can come up with an eco-friendly balloon in the future.

I conclude with a thankyou to the individuals, businesses, community groups and charities that have already implemented their own waste reduction strategies. This bill continues our creation and support of circular economies, returning as many forms of waste as possible to the economy, thus reducing reliance on new resources across Queensland. This keeps our commitment to mitigate the costs of the waste levy on Queensland households and increases the review period so that we can get more done with more momentum. I also congratulate the new environment minister and her predecessor for their great work on this legislation. I commend the bill to the House.