




Speech By
Dr Christian Rowan

MEMBER FOR MOGGILL

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WASTE REDUCTION AND RECYCLING (PLASTIC ITEMS) AMENDMENT BILL

 **Dr ROWAN** (Moggill—LNP) (2.00 pm): I rise to make a contribution to the Waste Reduction and Recycling (Plastic Items) Amendment Bill 2020. In July 2020, Labor's then minister for the environment and the Great Barrier Reef, minister for science and minister for the arts introduced the Waste Reduction and Recycling (Plastic Items) Amendment Bill 2020 to the Queensland parliament. It was subsequently referred to the former Natural Resources, Agricultural Industry Development and Environment Committee for further consideration. By the end of August 2020 the committee had tabled its report with five recommendations, most notably that the bill be passed.

As we know, with the dissolution of the 56th Parliament of Queensland the bill lapsed and this year was reintroduced into the 57th Parliament of Queensland, with no changes made to the draft legislation. The bill was sent for further consideration and consultation to the Health and Environment Committee. I note that the committee's sole recommendation was that the bill be passed. As per the bill's explanatory notes, the principal policy objective of the bill is 'to enable a ban on the supply of single-use plastic items, starting with straws, stirrers, plates and cutlery.' The explanatory notes further detail the objective of 'reducing plastic pollution resulting from single-use plastic by 20 per cent by the year 2023'.

Plastic pollution has both significant physical impacts, particularly with respect to marine life, and chemical impacts from persistent organic pollutants. There is also a significant body of research on the health impacts of plastics, including linkages to various cancers, diabetes, other endocrine disorders and immunological and rheumatological disease. Microplastics and nanoplastics entering the human body through ingestion or inhaling can have adverse impacts, including genotoxicity and tissue necrosis.

I take this opportunity to acknowledge all year 6 students at St Aidan's Anglican Girls' School, located in Corinda in the western suburbs of Brisbane, which is the school that my daughter Lucinda Rowan attends. Recently I had the opportunity to visit and discuss the role of elected representatives, the processes of our parliament as Queensland's pre-eminent institution and the importance of civics and citizen education as well as the mechanics for how draft legislation is introduced, scrutinised, debated and passed, particularly that which pertains to Queensland's environment. Certainly we discussed the legislation that we are now debating in the Queensland parliament. I thank and acknowledge year 6 teachers Josephine Mitchell, Krisztina Mesch, Jann Manser and other staff for the opportunity to visit the school and be a part of the year 6 student education program. We also had the opportunity to talk about the container refund scheme and a ban on single-use plastic bags, which I will turn to later on.

As with other practical environmental and waste-reduction schemes, this plastics ban will require time for both businesses and the community to be educated on and ultimately to understand and adopt this initiative. However, as we have seen from the experiences of more than 60 countries around the world as well as in other state jurisdictions in Australia, businesses and communities are willing to

embrace measures that ban or limit the utilisation of single-use plastic items. To that end it is worth drawing the attention of the House to concerns raised by industry and retailers about the proposed start date for the implementation of the ban.

Whilst the bill as presented in July 2020 proposed a start day of 1 July 2021, understandably that was postponed when the bill was reintroduced earlier this year with a date to be no earlier than 1 September 2021, in recognition of the ongoing economic impacts of the COVID-19 pandemic. I note that both the National Retail Association and the Australian Food and Grocery Council have stated that adequate notice needs to be provided to facilitate an orderly transition by industry away from single-use plastic items, particularly as it can take six to 18 months for businesses to make such a change given the contracts and orders that are in place.

It has been suggested that to impose a start date without a grace period for suppliers may in fact have adverse consequences, with businesses potentially forced to dump all current stock straight into landfill. Clearly that would not be in the best interests of our environment and conservation efforts more generally. Coupled with ongoing concerns with regards to the lack of specific definitions of certain single-use plastic items to which this bill will apply, it is imperative that such issues are addressed by the Palaszczuk state Labor government before the ban is enacted.

That being said, notwithstanding those concerns it is worth noting that this legislation and its intent to reduce the consumption of single-use plastics have been generally supported by all those who submitted to the committee, including environmental, local government and retail groups. Indeed, I take this opportunity to acknowledge and commend the many retailers, food outlets and businesses of all sizes that have already, in their own way, sought to proactively take positive steps to phase out single-use plastic items, limit packaging and promote greater recycling.

As the Liberal National Party's shadow minister for education, I would like to briefly raise another concern that was highlighted in both committee reports on this bill. Concerns have been raised by environmental groups about schools being exempt from the single-use plastics ban. That exclusion has been made in order to recognise that there may be students, teachers and staff who have healthcare and/or disability needs that could require the continued utilisation of single-use plastic items, including straws and cutlery.

Whilst I acknowledge that the exemption is to be reconsidered as part of the legislation's proposed two-year review, it would be appreciated if, as part of the debate, the Minister for the Environment and the Great Barrier Reef could provide the House with further detail and clarification on the rationale for the exemption of schools and whether that exemption was based on consultation with students, parents, teachers and staff. Having said that, I acknowledge the contribution of Labor's Minister for Education, the member for McConnel, the Hon. Grace Grace, before we adjourned for lunch today.

I wish to acknowledge and thank all Queenslanders who not only continue to recognise the importance of practical and sustainable environmental initiatives but also embrace such initiatives, even at a micro level, in order to effect real and positive change. There is perhaps no greater example of that than what happened last Sunday, Clean Up Australia Day, in my electorate of Moggill. It was terrific to join my fellow Liberal National Party colleagues—Councillor James Mackay, councillor for the Walter Taylor ward; Councillor Greg Adermann, councillor for the Pullenvale ward; and Julian Simmonds, the federal member for Ryan—for an early Clean Up Australia Day rubbish collection in Chapel Hill, at the Chapel Hill Community Garden and the Green Hill Reservoir. At that event it was also terrific to have the assistance of my son Angus Rowan and his good friend Joe Vandeleur, who are both students at Ambrose Treacy College.

Following that event I joined our outstanding local Cubberla-Witton Catchments Network volunteers for their annual Clean Up Australia Day event in Kenmore. In addition to the Cubberla-Witton Catchments Network volunteers, in the electorate of Moggill we are very fortunate to have a number of truly incredible and dedicated volunteers and creek catchment environment groups, including the Moggill Creek Catchment Group, the Pullen Pullen Catchments Group and The Hut Environmental and Community Association or THECA.

Those groups routinely go above and beyond not only to look after our environment and ensure that plastics are not within our waterways and other important green-space areas but also to further educate our community and, indeed, future generations on the need to preserve and protect our great natural and native fauna and flora. That is why I am always delighted to provide my support wherever possible to those outstanding local organisations in the electorate of Moggill. Importantly, those groups also work with other local Scout and Girl Guide groups. Last weekend it was a pleasure to attend the Kenmore district Girl Guides AGM, as well as the recent Kenmore Scouts wolf awards presentation.

As the LNP's shadow minister for environment and heritage protection and shadow minister for national parks and the Great Barrier Reef in the 57th Parliament, I provided bipartisan support for the implementation of important practical environmental and conservation initiatives that have delivered real benefits to my community and communities right across Queensland. This included the introduction of the container deposit refund scheme and a ban on single-use plastic bags. I table some relevant articles from that time.

Tabled paper: Bundle of media articles relating to container deposit plan and recycling [293](#).

In the electorate of Moggill, our local Kenmore Rotary Club continues to actively encourage and manage container refund locations. Recently, a new bag drop site has been established under the Containers for Change scheme at the Kenmore Bears Rugby Club.

Whilst recognising the broad support that this legislation has across multiple sectors, it is important that the Palaszczuk state Labor government ensures that Queenslanders and Queensland businesses are appropriately made aware of the forthcoming changes, with sufficient time allowed to adopt and adhere to the legislation. I take this opportunity to acknowledge the LNP shadow minister for the environment and member for Bonney, Sam O'Connor MP, for his commitment to achieving bipartisan support for this legislation.