



Speech By
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MEMBER FOR CURRUMBIN

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WASTE REDUCTION AND RECYCLING AMENDMENT BILL

 **Mrs STUCKEY** (Currumbin—LNP) (5.10 pm): In joining the debate on the Waste Reduction and Recycling Amendment Bill 2017, I commend the committee for its deliberations and thank the many thousands of people who had input into the discussion paper, which I am pleased to say I circulated through my electorate with a note of encouragement to residents to have their say. This bill was introduced into the Queensland parliament by the Minister for Environment and Heritage Protection on 14 June 2017, with the Agriculture and Environment Committee reporting to the House on 11 August.

In simple terms the bill aims to provide a head of power for the introduction of a lightweight plastic shopping bag ban and container refund scheme for Queensland. In addition, the bill's provisions in relation to end-of-waste codes will be amended to allow for greater control on the use of end-of-waste resources and protection of the environment.

I commend the Agriculture and Environment Committee for their deliberations and the secretariat and departmental staff for their work on this bill. Four recommendations were made including that the bill be passed. I understand that the government is accepting two of the other three and amending the board composition of the Product Responsibility Organisation.

There has been much discussion in the community and at a political level about safely disposing of, and also reducing the amount of, plastic in our everyday lives for a number of years now. Other countries and Australian states have introduced the abovementioned schemes successfully and the LNP is fully supportive of the intent of the bill before us. Keeping Queensland clean and livable with a healthy natural environment and waterways is a topic close to many honourable members' hearts.

On 25 November 2016, a discussion paper titled *Implementing a lightweight plastic shopping bag ban in Queensland* was released for public consultation and closed on 20 February 2017. Impressively over 26,000 submissions were received, with more than 96 per cent of them supporting the introduction of the ban. This ban was to commence on 1 July 2018.

The committee chair's foreword makes comment of our reliance on plastic in today's world and the need to rethink our relationship with plastic and the way we use it. It is also noted that significant changes to our everyday practices will need to be made as the provisions become the law. We are informed there is flexibility in the container refund scheme that will allow for community organisations to increase the volume of recycling without impact on the current recyclers.

Having grown up in South Australia where a cash-for-container scheme was in place, I have seen firsthand the benefits of having one—whether it is a lack of litter or valuable revenue raised from the scheme for community projects. Visiting Adelaide only a few weeks ago I saw how well people had adapted to plastic bag bans. I realise they had eight years to get used to it, but people do conform. Like many people, I do re-use my plastic bags mainly as bin liners in the home and I can understand the early inconvenience this may cause as people adjust to the new laws, but the benefits will far outweigh this inconvenience.

The committee received 63 submissions from a range of groups and individuals including the beverage and retail sector, community and environment groups, local government and resource sector. The Boomerang Alliance submission, under the heading 'Container Refund Scheme (CRS)', stated—

The main objects of the Act reflect the outcomes we can expect from a CRS, that is, it will reduce container litter, increase recycling, ensure manufacturer product stewardship responsibilities, provide opportunities for social enterprise and community organisation benefit and complement existing kerbside collection services.

We note that many local government areas in Qld do not have kerbside services so the introduction of the CRS will effectively provide many communities with the opportunity to access recycling services.

As indicated by the response to the discussion paper and submissions, there is overwhelming public support for the introduction of a container refund scheme. I am a long-time advocate of waste reduction and have had compost bins and rainwater tanks before they were ever fashionable. Last year I was delighted to take part in a Boomerang Alliance project to promote a cash-for-containers initiative right on Currumbin Beach. Local Scouts groups were involved in the construction of a giant surfboard made from plastic bottles filled with sand. The end result was very effective, but all good things come to an end and the Scouts were not quite as enthusiastic about emptying the sand from every plastic bottle afterwards.

Public awareness and education is vital to any changes made to legislation. I was pleased to be informed that the Boomerang Alliance has been commissioned by the Queensland Department of Environment and Heritage Protection to deliver awareness programs on both the container recycling scheme and the plastic bag ban in Queensland. The alliance has made contact with my office to discuss the programs for the electorate of Currumbin. I look forward to working with them to host a community meeting in the Currumbin electorate. Apart from the one-off awareness programs being coordinated by the Boomerang Alliance, I ask the minister: what else is being done to educate residents?

Details of the bill such as what beverage type of containers and size will be eligible under the container scheme—most containers between 150 millilitres and three litres—will need to be made clear to the public through further awareness mechanisms or programs. For example, a carbonated soft drink plastic or glass bottle three litres or less is eligible but a 150 millilitres or less plastic or glass bottle is not.

I note the minister's observations in his introductory speech that Queensland is '... top of the leaderboard for littering' and has '... one of the lowest recycling rates in Australia'. This is a shameful title to be awarded. The Keep Australia Beautiful National Litter Index for the period of 2015-16 shows our state's litter rate is 41 per cent higher than the national average—the highest state with 72 items of litter per 1,000 square metres—and we should be doing everything we can to clean up Queensland. The survey conducted by Keep Australia Beautiful informing the index outlines that 16.6 per cent less litter as a whole was counted across rural road sites in Queensland in 2015-16 in comparison to 2014-15, with beverage containers the only category where there was an increase in litter.

However, I am really proud to say that my beloved electorate of Currumbin does not fit that moniker at all. Currumbin is a popular place to visit, as we are blessed with having some of the state's most beautiful surfing and swimming beaches and lush green valleys. In fact, Currumbin won the Keep Queensland Beautiful cleanest beach award in 2013 and went on to win the national Keep Australia Beautiful cleanest beach award that same year. Rainbow Bay, not to be outdone, further south in the electorate, also won the Keep Queensland Beautiful cleanest beach award in 2014.

The benefits of winning the title are pretty obvious. There are the bragging rights for starters and more visitors, but winning an award like this tells you more about the people who live there. I have often said in this House that Currumbin residents are very connected to their community, and they are—but they are also proud of the place they live and call home and they can sniff out an imposter a mile away. Claims by my ALP opponent that she is a local are untrue as she does not live in the electorate at all. I had to wait many years to claim 'local' status and it shows just how deceitful Labor are when it comes to telling the truth.

Communities that take pride in their surroundings and are clean are perceived to be safer and have less crime. Currumbin also has an environmental conscience, and I congratulate the individuals and organisations who put in countless hours to take care of our beautiful natural landscapes. Currumbin Wildlife Hospital recently held an open day—'Hospital Heroes'—to raise much needed funds and awareness of the significant damage that waste creates in our waterways—in particular, the terrible toll it takes on our wildlife.

Residents along Tallebudgera Creek have been complaining for a couple of years now about debris in their creek. They are frustrated that neither council nor the state government will accept any responsibility to clean up the mess and have started a petition calling for agencies to respond to this issue. I am happy to support them in their efforts to get some answers and, more importantly, some action on an issue that really does affect us all in one way or another.