## E-WASTE

*Grievance*

**MS C.M. ROWE (Belmont)** [9.46 am]: My grievance today is to the Minister for Environment and it relates to e-waste. According to the World Bank, it is estimated that over two billion tonnes of solid waste is generated annually around the globe. High income countries, including Australia, account for 16 per cent of the world's population; however, they generate around 34 per cent, or 683 million tonnes of the world's waste. It is predicted that global waste will grow to 3.4 billion tonnes each year by 2050, more than double the rate of population growth over the same period. This is not a small problem by any stretch and e-waste is a significant contributor to our waste footprint.

E-waste is electronic and electrical waste—old, unused or broken electronic appliances, items with a circuit, a battery or a cord. Electronic appliances and equipment such as phones and computers have become a critical fixture of our everyday lives; however, it is patently clear that, globally, the way in which we produce, consume, and dispose of e-waste is thoroughly unsustainable. Each year around the globe, the amount of electronic and electrical equipment consumed increases by 2.5 million metric tonnes. According to a report, *The global e-waste monitor 2020 —*

**In 2019, the world generated a striking 53.6 Mt of e-waste, an average of 7.3 kg per capita.**

With high levels of consumption of electronic products, in conjunction with their short life cycle and very few repair options available, they are too often disposed of, generating a waste stream that contains not only hazardous, but also valuable materials that can end up in our landfill. By weight, however, around 95 per cent of e-waste can be recycled. E-waste can contain valuable materials such as precious metals, rare-earth elements and other resources that are essential for manufacturing new electronic devices. By properly managing and recycling e-waste, we can recover these valuable resources and reduce the need for mining and extraction, which clearly have their own environmental impacts.

The United Nations reported in 2019 that each year the world produces 50 million tonnes of e-waste worth over $62.5 billion. Only 20 per cent is formally recycled. The United Nations forecast that, globally, waste production will reach 120 million tonnes by 2050. E-waste is improperly disposed of and can lead to environmental hazards. That is why it is important to raise awareness about proper e-waste disposal methods and encourage the recycling of electronic waste. Proper e-waste management ensures that these harmful materials are safely removed and treated, preventing their negative impacts on the environment.

I was really delighted to join the minister earlier this month in my electorate for a tour of Total Green Recycling's Welshpool facility. It is doing some incredible work, and we saw that firsthand on the factory floor. The work it is doing is really important from an environmental point of view, and I am really happy that our government continues to support the initiatives that it is undertaking at the facility in Welshpool. Total Green Recycling reports on its website that Australians are throwing away 32 000 electronic devices every day and highlights the challenges of collecting those devices in order to recycle them. A big challenge is clearing the devices of all the personal data, and that is something that we talked about at length. Given how technology-driven society has become and how advanced it will be in the future, I believe that a significant campaign around proper e-waste disposal can have an immense impact on sustainability. It is important to invest in companies like Total Green Recycling that seek to meet the increasing demand for responsible e-waste management.

As we continue to address the growing concerns of the impacts of climate change, it is essential to explore every avenue that can contribute to our collective efforts towards a more sustainable future. I thank the minister for taking my grievance and ask how our Cook Labor government aims to tackle the growing challenge of e-waste to promote sensible disposal methods across Western Australia.

**MR R.R. WHITBY (Baldivis — Minister for Environment)** [9.52 am]: I thank the member for Belmont for her passionate advocacy for all things environmental. Fabrics, clothing and textiles were included in the past and, now, e-waste has been included. We seem to make a habit of traipsing around recycling sheds, getting our hands dirty and seeing big television screens come in and people getting the valuable material out of them.

As the member rightly pointed out, the Cook Labor government is again leading the country in its approach to dealing with waste issues. This time, it is about e-waste. We know that our lives are filled with computers, mobile phones and all sorts of electronic gadgets. Who does not have a cupboard, drawer or box at home filled with things that we are not quite sure what to do with? We do not quite want to get rid of that phone or laptop because it is valuable, but we do not use it, so what do we do with it? E-waste is a growing problem. In 2019, as a nation, Australia generated 521 000 tonnes, or about 20 kilograms per capita, of e-waste. That is 20 kilograms of e-waste for each person. By 2030, that is expected to increase to 23 kilograms for each person a year. It is increasing. It is getting worse.

E-waste that we no longer have a use for can contain—this is the kicker—valuable ingredients. It can contain precious metals such as gold, copper and nickel, and rare materials with strategic value such as indium and palladium. These materials that we have spent a lot of time digging out of the ground are used in these gadgets and things that we want to throw out. It is a valuable resource that is going to waste. E-waste can also contain hazardous materials

that should be collected and recycled correctly to prevent harm to human health. In 2019, it was estimated that only about one-quarter of the e-waste generated in Western Australia was recycled. This can and must be increased. Western Australia's existing e-waste recycling industry has the potential to manage much more e-waste than it does currently. Because of that, the Cook Labor government has committed to banning e-waste disposal to landfill from next year. The scope of items to be included in the initial ban includes those that are covered under national product stewardship and have a market for collection or recycling and may contain materials of value such as precious metals.

When designing the implementation options, it was a key factor to consider the learnings from other jurisdictions to ensure that we work to national harmonisations to limit the risk of perverse outcomes. Consultation on the implementation of the ban was opened to industry and the community from January to March this year. Three options were provided for feedback and submissions. The preferred option for implementation included new regulations to underpin the ban, with support provided to industry through grants funding for infrastructure to collect and process e-waste. In response to the consultation, 27 submissions were received with comments between January and March. Overwhelmingly, the responses were in support of the ban. The Department of Water and Environmental Regulation has responded to issues raised around the scope of items to be included in the ban and the impacts to regions, local governments and charities. It is important to note that the implementation options are not prescriptive in how e-waste is to be collected; rather, local governments may tailor collections and choose options that work best for them. The Cook Labor government will continue to advocate for improvements to national product stewardship schemes, particularly when the full costs of collection and management are not adequately accounted for currently.

As the need for e-waste management collection and processing systems increases, the Cook Labor government is providing funding of more than $10 million through the infrastructure grants program for infrastructure projects that will help support the creation of recycling industry opportunities for local governments and regions. The recipients of round 1 grants were announced in July and 21 projects will share in more than $6.5 million to develop Western Australia's recycling capacity. Earlier this month, I had the great opportunity, along with the member for Belmont, to meet representatives of one of the recipients of these grants, Total Green Recycling in Welshpool. We got involved and looked at the amazing work being done there. The facility was awarded over $2 million in the first round, which will see it increase its capacity to process e-waste to 5 000 tonnes a year.

The Department of Water and Environmental Regulation is also working with other state agencies to support and encourage innovation in e-waste recycling. An e-waste technical advisory group was formed in June 2023 and is targeting consultation with industry to provide support with the drafting of regulations to underpin the implementation of the ban.

Regulatory obligations of the ban are proposed to be placed on e-waste service providers, including those collecting, processing and managing items. The obligation will focus on responsible source separation, storage, treatment, processing, management, record keeping and reporting of e-waste. E-waste materials not included in the initial ban include photovoltaics and solar panels. There is national action to implement regulatory product stewardship of those materials. This will help drive change and create pathways for this category of e-waste, which, as I said, includes solar panels.

Work has begun on a communications and education campaign for the ban, and future consultation with the collection networks is anticipated. Future incentives and financial assistance programs for re-use and refurbishment, which are also very important, will be considered and informed by monitoring and information data collected during the stages of the ban.

Addressing the rapidly growing stream of e-waste is a crucial component of the Cook Labor government's plan to reduce waste generally. I am proud to be part of a government that is taking this important step towards our goal of a circular economy. The banning of e-waste disposal to landfill will mean that we are not only recovering valuable materials that would otherwise be lost, but also protecting the environment, creating sustainable jobs and building sustainable industries. As I said before, if there are valuable parts in componentry and circuit boards, why on earth would we bury it when we are also digging it out of the ground somewhere else?

I thank the member for Belmont for her commitment to and engagement with her local community and for her passionate support for the environment and managing our waste.