

## **PLASTIC BAGS — BAN**

### *Grievance*

**MRS J.M.C. STOJKOVSKI (Kingsley)** [9.33 am]: Mr Speaker, I seek leave to read my grievance from the table.

**The SPEAKER:** Leave granted.

**Mrs J.M.C. STOJKOVSKI:** My grievance today is to the Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister for Environment. In my community of Kingsley, the single-use plastic bag ban was overwhelmingly welcomed. There was a feeling and a narrative of, “It’s about time.” For many, even though the ban meant a couple of days or weeks juggling their groceries from the check-out to the car because they had forgotten their reusable bags, most people acknowledge that the ban has been a catalyst for behaviour change—bringing their own reusable bags and, therefore, reducing the number of single-use plastic bags going into landfill.

Even the smallest members of my community are thinking about plastic and its impact on our environment. Miss Zoe Chew is 10 years old. She attends the Montessori School in Kingsley and when I visited the school earlier this year, she read to me a letter she had composed. It was titled “Why the Australian Government Should Put a Ban on Plastic”. I will read it in part from my notes —

I believe that the rules should be changed so that Australian citizens will not be allowed to use single use plastic, especially plastic bags.

First of all, plastic is made from a non-renewable resource oil. Oil is made from dead plants and animals that fermented over millions of years. Humans are using oil for cars, mining and plastic. It is ridiculous that we are using it for plastic so much and polluting the air as we make plastic just to throw it in the bin ...

In conclusion I believe that plastic should be banned in Australia because plastic is a non-renewable resource, makes water unsafe, is bad for the environment and most other countries in the world have got plastic bag bans and also the fact that plastic is one of the leading pollutants we find over a million pieces of it in our oceans every year and that is not including the micro plastics.

Members can hear that Zoe is very passionate about the environmental harm caused by single-use plastic bags and is thinking about her future, our future and what we can do to reduce our detrimental impact on the environment. I commend the minister and the McGowan government for introducing the single-use plastic ban on 1 July this year. Many people in my community are asking what else they can do. We are fortunate in the Kingsley electorate that we have some amazing businesses that are already stepping into this space and providing opportunities to reduce our plastic waste. We have Weigh ‘n Pay in Woodvale and will soon have the Wasteless Pantry in Greenwood. These businesses allow consumers to bring their own containers for all manner of products, including flour, nuts, sugar and over 1 000 other bulk dry goods. Customers can bring their own containers for Western Australian olive oil, Western Australian honey, rice malt syrup, tahini, apple cider vinegar and maple syrup, and lots of cleaning products such as dishwashing liquid. All can be purchased in bulk by customers decanting them into their own containers. These shops also sell reusable products such as produce bags and bamboo straws, which I am told have been very popular. Their newest edition is shampoo and conditioner bars, which effectively cuts out plastic waste from shampoo and conditioner bottles.

Schools in my electorate are also actively promoting plastic reduction, with waste-free Mondays, waste audits and the implementation of initiatives that feed into a more general sustainability focus. These include closed-loop organic recycling systems that integrate compost and food scrap collection with raised garden beds for growing vegetables on site, which the children then sell back to the parents. My local community and businesses have jumped on board with the effort to reduce plastic and the associated negative impacts on our environment, and they ask me, “What is the government going to do now and what are the next steps?”

Finally, what else can members of my community do to reduce our plastic waste and the impact on our environment?

**MR R.R. WHITBY (Baldivis — Parliamentary Secretary)** [9.37 am]: I thank the member for Kingsley for her grievance. I note that she mentioned the Greenwood shopping centre. I grew up in that part of the world and as a boy I can remember going to the Greenwood Village Shopping Centre when it still had Charlie Carters. There were big paper bags in those days and no plastic to be seen. Single-use plastic bags are a significant concern to Western Australians. Both the Premier and the Minister for Environment believe that more needs to be done. I am glad to hear that the member too is expressing a need to do more to reduce the effects of single-use plastics on our environment in Western Australia. I am happy to say that the McGowan government is doing more. Let me outline the range of actions that the government is taking to reduce single-use plastics in this state.

The McGowan government has implemented a ban on the supply of lightweight single-use plastic bags, which, as the member said, started on 1 July this year. Every year billions of lightweight plastic shopping bags are supplied nationally. This recent action by our government will help to prevent the littering of around seven million plastic

bags in this state alone. Our beaches and oceans hold a very special place in the hearts of Western Australians, and we have all seen the graphic images showing the damage that plastic products such as lightweight bags have caused in these environments. It is no surprise that more than 90 per cent of the 4 843 submissions received during the public consultation on this issue supported our bag ban. Although some members of the public have taken time to adjust, including me, trying to remember to get the bags out of the boot before I go into the supermarket, the overwhelming majority of Western Australians have supported this ban.

There will be more progress when the McGowan government introduces a container deposit scheme in early 2020. The 10c refund that all members of the Western Australian community will receive for their drink containers will not only reduce the volume of litter in Western Australia each year, but also improve our capacity to recycle and re-use by creating a supply of clean, source-separated beverage containers. The container deposit scheme will also have the added benefit of encouraging investment in the recycling industry, and will create jobs for Western Australians. As with the plastic bag ban, the container deposit scheme has an extremely high level of public support; 97 per cent of the Western Australian community who responded to an online survey embraced the need for such a scheme in Western Australia.

Plastics are also a key focus of the Western Australian Waste Taskforce, which was established in March this year to provide advice to the minister on how Western Australia can best respond to China's recent decision to impose tough restrictions on the importation of recyclables. I chair the task force on behalf of the minister, and I can assure members that we are motivated and working to improve Western Australia's waste performance, in part by reducing, recycling and re-using our plastic waste. We are looking at a range of initiatives, including improving the performance of our existing recycling kerbside collection program, and how we might stimulate increased processing and the use of recycled materials, particularly plastics, within Western Australia. Members will hear more from this task force very soon.

Of course, reducing plastics in the community is not just a Western Australian issue. The Western Australian Minister for Environment, Hon Stephen Dawson, has been at the table during national discussions with other commonwealth, state and territory environment ministers. At their most recent meeting in April this year, environment ministers focused on product packaging. Ministers endorsed a target of 100 per cent of Australian packaging being recyclable, compostable or re-usable by 2025 or earlier. Environment ministers also agreed to improve consumer awareness and education.

The member for Kingsley asked the very important question: what can individuals do? Probably many of us have watched *War on Waste* on ABC TV for some inspiration. We know that there is strong community support. In that spirit, the member has asked: what can we do to reduce our plastic waste? Plastics are ubiquitous, and all the initiatives being undertaken by the McGowan government to reduce plastics will require an element of behavioural change in the community. There are many things that people can do right now. I note that the member for Kingsley mentioned initiatives that are already in place such as the single-use plastic bag ban and Weigh 'n Pay in Woodvale. However, there is another group driving positive change for the environment—our state's children. The under 18s have rallied behind the government's Waste Wise Schools program.

I was at Mother Teresa Catholic College in Baldivis the other day. It has received a grant to help its recycling. I met some of the students involved in that, as well as Darth Vader the chook, who is fed on veggies grown from using recyclable food scraps at the school. Students also campaign to reduce waste sent to landfill by implementing the three Rs—reduce, re-use and recycle. The member mentioned 10-year-old Zoe Chew, who attends the Montessori School in Kingsley. She is too young to vote, but she is already voting with her feet on this issue. Zoe wants to see more done to tackle single-use plastics, and I certainly agree with her.

I once again thank the member for Kingsley for bringing her concerns to Parliament, and I look forward to working with her and her constituents on the challenges and changes ahead.