

PLASTIC WASTE — MANAGEMENT

Motion

HON DR SALLY TALBOT (South West) [11.27 am]: I move —

That the Legislative Council commends the Cook Labor government's ongoing commitment to innovation and leadership in the management of plastics, including the strategic reduction, re-use and management of plastic waste in Western Australia.

It is nice to see Thursday morning living up to its reputation! I thank Hon Dr Brian Walker for giving me the thumbs up. I am sure that we can maintain the intensity and enthusiasm. I particularly thank my colleagues on this side of the house for their very enthusiastic support for me to bring this motion to the house this morning.

This is a very important matter. Nowhere can we see a better demonstration of the commitment of the McGowan and Cook Labor governments to make Western Australia a better place than what we have done in completing that circle of reducing waste and encouraging recycling and re-use. I know that many members want to speak on this motion simply because they will be able to talk about the real material difference that the things we have done since 2017 have made to their communities.

I was trying to get my head around exactly what this plastics ban will mean, which is particularly what I want to talk about this morning. It is always nice to bring things home with a nice solid, concrete picture of exactly what we are doing, but it is a little hard when we talk about megatons and all that sort of thing because nobody really knows what that means.

I came across a figure amongst the copious pieces of documentation. Honestly, if we had any question about what this government does for consultation, one only has to look at this area and see the wealth of consultation that has gone on since we threw the other side out and took government in 2017. I found that in 2018–19, a total of 3.4 million tonnes of plastic was consumed in Australia, generating about three million tonnes of plastic waste. That translates to 120 kilograms a year per person. I have always had this secret ambition—it is so secret, I will now share it with the Legislative Council—that one day I would put my activism into practical action by standing at the check-out in the supermarket, unwrapping everything that I have bought, leaving everything that constitutes packaging on the side of the conveyor belt and taking home just the food. One of the worst culprits in my book is Imperial Leather soap. If members have anyone in their family who uses Imperial Leather soap, they will know that it comes in three separate layers of packaging. I have never taken that action, not because of failure of courage, but because I live in the small community of Denmark and I would soon get a reputation—everybody working in the shop would be extremely unhappy with what I was doing—and also because of my experience in this area as a member for 18-and-a-bit years and a one-time shadow Minister for the Environment. It is not actually the fault of the people who run the stores. Hon Martin Aldridge would agree with me here.

Hon Martin Pritchard: He would and I would as well.

Hon Dr SALLY TALBOT: Exactly. It is not the fault of the person on the check-out or the manager of the store. Governments have to step up and take responsibility. What did I do? Rather than engage in my act of civil disobedience, I became a member of Parliament so that I could help to change those laws. I am very proud that after 18 years of trying to do that, we are finally getting somewhere. I am not one to blow my own trumpet, but I played a part in that when we were in opposition. Those members whose memory goes back far enough will remember that I led the charge for the plastic bag ban. At the time, the only ally that the Labor opposition had was the City of Fremantle, and I wish Hon Dr Brad Pettitt were here to share the glory today because I think he had a lot to do with the City of Fremantle's plastic bag ban. We were told at the time that the sky would fall down—*Chicken Little*, you know. What would happen? We would have nothing into which to put the dog poo.

Several members interjected.

Hon Dr SALLY TALBOT: I have been accused of all sorts of things in my time in this place, and that was nowhere near the worst of them—all the dog poo that was going to remain on the pavements because of me! Somebody rang me and said, "This is a nonsense because anybody who has a garage full of stuff stored in plastic bags knows that when you go to get it all out a couple of years later, the plastic bags have disintegrated." That was their explanation for how plastic bags are biodegradable or something. Of course, it is absolutely rubbish. What is actually left where there used to be a plastic bag is a pile of dust that contains the very things we now know have played such a major part in contaminating our oceans and waterways.

To cut to the point, I went looking for what 120 kilograms of plastic waste a year per individual in Australia looks like. I would add at this moment that that is exactly half the waste produced by the average American—just get your head around that! I am no mathematician. I can do words but not numbers, as many of my colleagues will attest

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to, but by my best calculations, 120 kilograms a year translates to about 30 plastic bottles a day. Members can imagine that 30 plastic bottles, even if they have been crushed, is a fair amount by volume, and we are creating that amount of waste every single day of every single year. Until very recently, only a minute part of that was going anywhere other than into landfill. That is, of course, a very bad thing and anybody who has talked at any length to their local authority or council will know what a terrible headache landfill is for local government. That is what we are trying to stop. We cannot do it just by recycling, because there is, in fact, a highly detrimental aspect to plastic manufacturing that we want to get rid of, and I will go into that in a little more detail later. We actually have to reduce, and that is why I am very proud of what we have done as a Labor government since 2017 to bring about change in this area. We are not only recycling, but also limiting the manufacturing of this stuff.

I will outline a brief time line to show that I am not just using empty words to fill up space when I talk about my pride in what we have done. In July 2018 we started the plastic bag ban. As I said, people thought the sky would fall down. Guess what? It did not. On 1 October 2020, we started the container deposit scheme. Again, I take a small amount of credit for that. In opposition, we brought a private member's bill into the Legislative Assembly to introduce a container deposit scheme. It was very carefully crafted; I know that because I crafted it and I know how much time and energy it took us. Drafting legislation is a very specialised thing. I am no expert in it but I had a bit of help.

What we do is quite different from that done in South Australia. First, people would say, "But we already recycle containers, don't we? Don't I take mine down to the local whatever it is?" Of course, we did not have a containing recycling scheme. People were collecting cans for scrap metal and things like that, but we had no statewide container deposit scheme. When I first raised this matter, people said, "They have it in South Australia. Let's do what they do there." I looked very carefully at the South Australian scheme and it turns out that it is run by industry. That seemed to be a little bit of a problem. I will not say that I was the major influence on the way the act ended up being written, but certainly the act that we now work with in Western Australia provides for a state-run system, which I think is serving us all very well. That started in October 2020. In late 2021, we started stage 1 of the phase out of single-use plastics. About half of that plastic production that I talked about—the 120 kilograms a year or 30 plastic things a day—is made up of single-use plastics, and that is what we are going to stop manufacturing. It started in late 2021 and we are well into the implementation of stage 2. In fact, we are going to start enforcing both those stages in the very near future. That is indeed a record to be proud of—plastic bags, a container deposit scheme and now, single-use plastics.

As I said earlier, I will talk a little more about the wider benefit of reducing single-use plastics—that is, its effect on climate change. It is about the production of greenhouse gases. Most of plastic production in Australia comes from oil and gas products. Again, I do not want to blind people with figures that are, in a sense, too big to really absorb. For example, with our container deposit scheme we have cut greenhouse gas emissions by about 86 000 tonnes a year, the equivalent of taking 43 000 cars off the road every year. These things are of major significance as we move towards a carbon-free future. The same thing goes for the production of single-use plastics and why it is so significant that we will take this step in WA. We are world leaders in this area. The World Wildlife Fund Australia recently found that we are second in the world—there is only one other jurisdiction ahead of us—in terms of our record on these matters, and I am very proud of that.

I want to talk about how quickly we have had to do these things because we had that long fallow period when we went backwards under the Liberal–National government last time. We must never see that happen again. I was pleased the other day when I saw Hon Louise Kingston walk into this place as the new member for South West Region. I was pleased to see that the Liberal–National opposition had effectively doubled the number of women on the opposition benches. This was a great thing and I thought: this is a really good sign. Perhaps the Liberal–National opposition is coming into the twenty-first century. Unfortunately, I then heard what Hon Louise Kingston stands for and I thought: not only are we not in the twenty-first century—we have only really just made it out of the twentieth century—we are really back in the nineteenth century. As we have heard today, it turns out that the new shadow spokesperson for climate action, which is a very important position and role that Hon Louise Kingston has been given, favours the continuation of commercial logging of native forests in the south west. Member for South West, go and talk to people in Mandurah, Albany, Margaret River and my hometown of Denmark and tell them that you want to continue the commercial logging of native forests! This is not just last-year thinking; this is well and truly back into last-century thinking. It turns out that she is also critical of what we have done stopping logging old-growth forest over 20 years ago. She wants to log old-growth as well. This is not a good look for the new shadow Minister for Climate Action.

Then we come to whaling. This is very important because I know that it hurts the Liberal Party's and Nationals WA's feelings when they are accused of not having any policies. That is no longer true. They are no longer a policy vacuum. They now have policies, and those policies seem to be saying: we are going to reintroduce whaling; we are going to reintroduce logging of old-growth forest; and we are certainly going to keep the commercial logging

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of native forests going. That is a 300 per cent increase in their policy output just in the last few days. All I can say is that I am really glad that most houses in Western Australia do not have chimneys; otherwise, we might see them cut youth unemployment by sending children up chimneys as chimney sweeps! This is not the nineteenth century! Conservatism was supposed to be a proud tradition, but that conservatism represents something like going back to whaling. People in the south west love the whales. They go and watch the whales. They make millions of dollars a year from tourists who come to watch the whales, and now we have one of the shadow ministers supporting the whaling industry. Western Australia is very proud of its tradition with whale tourism. We do not want to return to the bad old days.

In conclusion, I am very proud to be on this side of the house. I hope that we have Labor governments for many, many decades to come that keep up the record that we have established so far for actually making material change in Western Australia.

HON KLARA ANDRIC (South Metropolitan) [11.43 am]: I would like to begin by thanking Hon Dr Sally Talbot for this fantastic motion that she has brought to the house today. I want to take the opportunity to speak on an issue that I believe is very important to all of us. I am very well-prepared with the products that I will be talking about today, but before I do that I might mention a few things.

As most of us in this house know, plastic waste is probably one of the purest and ugliest forms of waste there is, essentially because once it is discarded, it sits in landfill for hundreds of years, completely useless to any of us. The damage it does to our environment is very evident. I want to take this opportunity to commend the government on its approach to reducing plastics here in Western Australia.

Hon Dr Sally Talbot talked about Western Australia's Plan for Plastics, so I will not go into the details of those two stages. It was pleasing that, in 2021, the government implemented its plan and the various things that our two-stage plan promotes. I will list a few of those items. The plan promotes actions that prioritise avoiding the use of single-use plastic, replaces single-use plastic items with various alternatives and promotes non-plastic single-use alternatives that can be recovered, recycled or composted when it is not possible to re-use.

We are currently at stage 2 of the Plan for Plastics approach. Stage 1 of the plan included a number of single-use items that we would ban, including plates, cutlery and drinking straws. I am sure many members already know that list. Plastic shopping bags were also on the list. I want to thank the Western Australian community for taking the ban on very well. It has almost become second nature now. Most of us are now not forgetting our bags; although, I occasionally do rock up and forget to get them out of my car. Hon Dr Sally Talbot mentioned that visual image of plastic packaging, which I see in the grocery store and to this day find hard to grapple with. I look at some plastic packaging and think it already has its own natural case and I am not quite sure why we need to have three plastic covers around fresh produce. It still baffles me, and I really look forward to seeing businesses take that on board and be smart in the way they manufacture their products and market them to the public because the elimination of unnecessary plastics is a basic start. I am very pleased to see that stage 1 is complete. Stage 2 is very much on its way, and I also look forward to that stage being completed.

Something that I feel very strongly and passionately about—I was immensely pleased to see—was the Cook Labor government seeing fit to ban single-use plastic promotional film, otherwise known as the dreadful bunting, at stage 2. The plan will come into effect in 2024.

Hon Neil Thomson: We're looking forward to that.

Hon KLARA ANDRIC: We are all looking forward to that. We can agree on that—absolutely.

I am proud that Western Australia will be, from my understanding, the first to ban bunting, and in my response to that I say: good riddance! Under our two-stage plan, we will phase out approximately 18 single-use items and save over 1.1 million single-use plastics from landfill each year.

I move on to talk about an organisation that I have met with a few times. Its people work innovatively and closely with businesses to promote sustainability and recycling. It is a business in the South Metropolitan area called Natraplas, and I believe it is a high achiever and is leading the way when it comes to sustainability. With the Cook Labor government's leap forward in banning single-use plastics, it is worth highlighting the work of this South Metro business that shares the same goals as the government. Natraplas was first conceptualised in 2019 by business founders Renzo Petersen and Ian Smith. Their business model is to provide businesses with compostable packaging solutions. In 2022, I am pleased to hear that Natraplas welcomed three Indigenous business leaders into the organisation. As at today, Natraplas is proudly owned by WA Indigenous businesses. It supplies a number of mine sites across Western Australia with its products. Recent figures from Natraplas state that over 2 000 tonnes of single-use plastics have been diverted from landfill. I first visited Natraplas in 2022 with Minister Whitby and federal MP Sam Lim. During that visit, Natraplas was presented with the Switched On Business Award, which recognises small businesses for sustainability practices, and I saw firsthand its mobile waste treatment system that

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converts organic waste into renewable energy. My second visit was in September last year to discuss its business products and the growth of the business across various new sustainability projects. I understand that even Tanya Plibersek, a federal minister, went there earlier this year and visited Natraplas.

I have some Natraplas products. For the purposes of *Hansard*, I will note the products I have. Essentially, Natraplas has developed a way to turn organic food waste into a biopolymer for its products. Single-stream waste from farmers such as carrots and apples—the waste from carrots, apples and vegetables—can be turned into products such as plastic bottles. For the purposes of *Hansard*, I am holding up a clear plastic bottle made from that waste. It can also be turned into medical products such as the little containers I have. They are made from food waste. It is incredible what Natraplas is able to produce from recycling this matter. Leftover mixed-food waste can also be turned into products such as bin liners. Waste from mixed foods can be turned into high-quality bin liners that would normally be —

Hon Neil Thomson: Is that happening in Western Australia?

Hon KLARA ANDRIC: Yes, it is. I have the certificates that qualify Natraplas. Its products are made from compostable materials for all the products that I have today. Natraplas is located in the south metro suburb of Canning Vale, I believe, off the top of my head. It is a fantastic WA organisation showing real initiative for how we can become more sustainable.

Hon Neil Thomson: Thank you.

Hon KLARA ANDRIC: No problem.

Natraplas is currently developing biodegradable pallet wrapping. We use 65 000 tonnes of single-use pallet wrapping a year. Natraplas has developed a biodegradable system of pallet wrapping that can withstand even the harshest temperatures in the Pilbara. I know that I have to conclude, but I want to take this opportunity to congratulate Natraplas on its innovative ways of working towards a more sustainable future and also the government for its ban of single-use plastics, which is steadfast. I look forward to more and more products being banned and better alternatives provided that can achieve better results for our environment.

HON SHELLEY PAYNE (Agricultural) [11.53 am]: I want to thank Hon Dr Sally Talbot for moving this motion today to give us an opportunity to talk about the amazing things we are doing in the plastics space and about reducing the use of plastic. Before I start, I want to reassure anyone who is worried about dog poo. I will read from our fact sheet —

Can I still use dog poo bags?

Bags made from degradable plastics will be banned.

That is because we are banning degradable plastics that are not compostable. It continues —

Dog poo bags made from certified compostable plastics can continue to be used and can be placed in a Food Organics and Garden Organics bin.

Ordinary plastics can be used and put in the red bins, but compostable bags are much better. I am sure that lots of local governments are looking at replacing their dog poo bags with bins made of compostable plastics.

Hon Dr Sally Talbot talked about whales and how we do not want to kill them anymore, which is really great, but the plastics we are using are contributing to killing a lot of marine life and especially the whales that consume food in our oceans and all the microplastics that are around. We are banning microplastics. I think the enforcement to ban microplastics came in at the beginning of September. There are a lot of great initiatives.

I want to mention the Container for Change program because that is taking a lot of plastics out of the waste stream as well as giving communities an opportunity to raise funds. Last month, we acknowledged the third anniversary since we first began the Container for Change program. We have hundreds of refund points across the state. Over 800 jobs have been created and over 2.5 billion containers have been collected. That is a really fantastic outcome. Over \$250 million is going back into the community and over \$9.3 million has been donated to charities, schools and community groups.

I want to give a shout-out to a group in Katanning, the Katanning Environmental Container Cash In. It attended the Change Maker Awards that were held the other week. It did not win, but I think it is very well worthy of an award. It has collected over 8.5 million containers. It has collected over three million this year alone. It also does outreach. It goes to Gnowangerup and Kojonup to collect the cans. It also has a lot of container collection bins. I was at the opening of the Bloom Festival recently and Katanning Environmental Container Cash In was there with the container collection bins, making it easy for everyone to recycle. I give a shout-out to Matt Collis, a councillor, and the team at Katanning Environmental Container Cash In who did that.

A lot of organisations around the regions are doing a lot of great work. I give a shout-out to Bremer Bay Primary School and its parents and citizens association. The number of people who visit Bremer Bay increases during summer. A lot of Container for Change collection bags have been set up around Bremer Bay during the summer to collect cans and raise money for the community. That is great initiative. At the Change Maker awards last year, Bremer Bay Primary School was awarded community group/charity of the year. The Bremer Bay Community Men's Shed has taken over running the Container for Change depot. I give a shout-out to all the men's sheds that are doing that work around to state to help raise money in towns with men's sheds, like Hopetoun.

I want to also give a shout-out to another winner from last year, Newdegate Container Exchange, for the work it did. The son of one of the ladies, Natalie, who started that is autistic. This has been great for him to be involved in. Last year, Newdegate Container Exchange won the award for volunteer refund point of the year. The Newdegate show was very popular this year. Its theme was sustainability and recycling. Newdegate Container Exchange is doing great work coordinating its community to get Container for Change bins shipped to Newdegate. I have been talking about how we can help and encourage local governments to get more Container for Change bins in the community so that they can be at sporting and other community events that local governments run. In July this year, Optus Stadium rolled out Container for Change bins, which is a really great initiative.

Some members talked about Plan for Plastics. The World Wide Fund for Nature Australia ranked Western Australia first and Australia is ranked about ninth globally for how we are managing our plastics.

Another issue is whether all the plastic we collect is recycled. I was really pleased about the federal and state money that has gone into this. The second round of the \$30 million recycling modernisation fund is now open. That will help build, expand and upgrade a lot of our waste-processing infrastructure. Western Australia does not have a big population. A lot of our Container for Change waste is going to interstate facilities. As technology improves, we will be able to bring these smaller scale things into Western Australia.

A couple of members mentioned packaging. I thank Hon Klara Andric for telling us about Natraplas and the fantastic work it is doing. We need to work on this area with a lot of packaging manufacturers to get them to make things that are a lot more consistent and easier to recycle. A couple of months ago I was in Esperance and I saw the little cherry tomatoes that I buy in a compostable container, so I want to give a shout-out to Profile Packaging, which is doing a lot of recyclable packaging, and all the other companies that are working to create more easily recyclable packaging. Good on them.

I also want to mention the farming industry. Over the last few years there has really been an increase in the amount of plastic packaging, such as for hay bales, which always seem to be wrapped in plastic. I was driving back from Narrogin through Wandering last weekend and I saw that all the hay bales were no longer wrapped in plastic. That made me really happy; at least not everyone is wrapping hay in plastic for storage. That was good. The same applies to the grain bags that are more popular now. Some work has been done; CBH has done a trial and the South Australian government has put some money into that, but it is something that we really need to look at.

I would like to note some of the things that have been done overseas. Some big projects are happening in Nebraska in the US, creating plastic lumber with a hub-and-spoke model through which they collect grain bags from the farmers and provide free freight; that is one option. Canada is also doing quite a bit of work in setting up programs for the collection of grain bags and recycling them. Just recently, at the beginning of October, a regulation was implemented in the Quebec agricultural sector that requires suppliers of some products to put money into funding the development and implementation of a system for collection, recovery and recycling. This new program came into effect at the beginning of October for agricultural products in Quebec. An eco-fee is applied to agricultural products when they are sold, including tarpaulins, food bags and grain bags. That is really helping to accelerate progress towards zero waste and reducing landfill, and helping the agricultural industry move towards zero plastic. I just wanted to quickly mention that.

I turn now to some of the work that the government and CBH have been involved with, including projects for CBH's tarps. Water Corporation has its smart dam programs to re-use tarps to line dams, which has been a really great initiative. I want to also give a shout-out to Enel Green Power in Kojonup for the re-use of tarps covering windmill blades for the new windmill projects. They are going out to the community to ask people if they want their tarps so they can re-use them.

Finally, I want to thank the Shire of Esperance for all the work it does, and all the other really isolated places in the regions for the work they have been doing in collecting a range of different products to package and send back to Perth for recycling. They are doing a good job. I again thank Hon Dr Sally Talbot for bringing this motion today.

HON SUE ELLERY (South Metropolitan — Leader of the House) [12.03 pm]: I will not take my full 10 minutes because I know that other members want to speak and I am happy to accommodate that. I rise to give the government's response, and I thank Hon Dr Sally Talbot for moving this motion today.

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This government is leading the nation with its action on plastic waste through our Plan for Plastics. Hon Dr Sally Talbot has, indeed, played an important part in that through the work she did when we were in opposition. I remember doing a mail-out about reducing single-use plastic bags when we were in opposition, and I got the biggest response I ever had from a mail-out. People were looking for practical ways to reduce their use of plastic and they were excited about the prospect of initiatives in that space. I also remember the shock, horror, world-will-end, sun-will-not-rise-again response we got from former member Hon Peter Katsambanis, who was horrified at the prospect of doing something about addressing the issue of plastic. Nevertheless, we took it on and this government has delivered on it. Through the actions we have taken to date, we have prevented hundreds of millions of plastic bags, cups, plates, cutlery, straws and containers from going into litter and landfill. There has been huge community support for this and wide-scale, unprecedented behavioural change across WA. It is important that we back that up by looking at what we can do to change our own practices for reducing the unnecessary usage of single-use plastic.

It was very exciting in my household when it was announced that the government would ban bunting. My husband has had 20-plus years of having no choice about working on election campaigns, and he had reached the point where he had invented a bunting cutting and rolling machine, made up of broomsticks and other things that roll! The bunting could be pulled out, measured and sliced. The Peter Schuttpelz bunting machines are now a thing of the past, and I do not think there is any Western Australian more excited than him that bunting is no more!

Hon Neil Thomson: No, come on! We're really excited about that!

Hon SUE ELLERY: Yes! That is the worst use of plastic; use of plastic at election time is a classic example. It is typically used for very short periods, makes a mess everywhere and ultimately ends up in landfill.

Over time, Western Australians have looked to, and called upon, governments to make decisions that reflect the sorts of changes we want to make to our environment and in our communities. Hon Dr Sally Talbot referred to comments made in the inaugural speech of our newest member, Hon Louise Kingston, about the whaling industry. I am old enough to have visited, during school holidays, the Albany whaling station when it was still operating. Over time we have made, and will continue to make, decisions and changes in public policy based on science. Although Hon Louise Kingston is entitled to her point of view, I was disturbed by comments she made on 12 October, according to *Hansard* —

When the whaling station closed in 1978, it was a very sad day for Albany and for the 102 workers who were given just six weeks to come to terms with a decision forced upon them without consideration. What happened seemed so unfair, and it was the beginning of decisions made by those without a true understanding of actual circumstances—selling a lie—and a shift in conscientiousness based on feelings, not facts.

That part is just not true. The member can have a point of view about whether whaling should have continued, but it is not true that the decision to close the whaling station was based on “selling a lie”. That is not true. To me it is disturbing for a member for South West Region to hold that point of view given that, as Hon Dr Sally Talbot pointed out, whale watching is such a successful industry. It is a classic example of how we can shift, change and create new jobs. Whale watching is a fabulous industry in the south west and, in fact, all the way along the WA coast. It is just not true and not a fact that the decision to close the Albany whaling station was based on selling a lie. That is just not true.

I will quickly return to plastics. As I said, I do not want to take up my whole time.

Stage 2 of the Plan for Plastics commenced on 27 February. This will phase out the second set of single-use or disposable plastic items and materials between 1 September 2023 and 1 July 2025. We have provided assistance to businesses to adapt. We have provided considered time frames for businesses to adapt. We do not expect the community or business to adapt to these changes alone but we do know the community expects us to make these changes.

HON NEIL THOMSON (Mining and Pastoral) [12.09 pm]: I would like to rise to put a somewhat more scientific perspective on some of this. We had the Leader of the Government in this place talk about science so I will be outlining a few points with some data. Like the Leader of the House, I am absolutely looking forward to not seeing those massive head shots of Roger Cook strung along the fence line when I have to go to vote next time. During the last election, it was completely out of control. I remember at Cable Beach Primary School—I could not believe it when I got down there. There is the friendly rivalry of getting down there first thing in the morning but maybe the government could look at restricting the amount of signage that goes up at polling places in the future because I think people feel a little bit overwhelmed. No-one more in this place, certainly from my perspective, will be more pleased we will have a bit of moderation, which we did not see from the Labor Party at the last election. I am very excited about that.

The single-use plastic reforms and containers for change program are fantastic and I commend the government. I am not going to knock the government on everything; I commend the government. The containers for change

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program has been an overwhelming success for the small volunteer sector, as they operate it. However, I have a fundamental problem with the Minister for Environment and the Cook Labor government because it is big on distraction and not very big on delivery, considering the overwhelming scientific data that needs to be looked at, data which is provided by the Cook Labor government's own agency. Waste management is a very complex issue. The plastics waste stream is one of the most difficult ones, although it is a small component of the overall amount of waste management. I had the good fortune to go through the Visy PET extrusion plant in May last year. At the time, I was told it was the only commercial-scale plant for food-grade plastic recycling. I was pleased to hear Hon Klara Andric's point about the extension of that project. I will be following up on that because that is going to be our solution. We heard the comments by Hon Dr Sally Talbot about unpacking all her plastic at the shopping centre. The fact is that there is a place for plastic in the future. Plastic is a very important part of the supply chain and maintaining quality. Some packaging is required to be ongoing. I know work is being done in innovation and looking at how we can reduce the effects of microplastics, for example, getting into our oceans, which is a major factor for our health and the health of our marine environment.

Yes, we can do certain things and we are. We are doing a lot to remove certain plastic from the waste stream but we need to do more. These are the facts. The Australian Bureau of Statistics publishes our waste export data. Currently, we have a pretty good track record of exporting our waste. In July 2022, we sent 329 tonnes of plastic to Malaysia. In July, we sent another 32 tonnes of plastic to Indonesia. In August 2022, we sent 44 tonnes to Malaysia. In September 2022, we sent another 44 tonnes to Malaysia. In October 2022, we sent 87 tonnes to Malaysia. Those data are from the ABS. We are still exporting our problems around the world. Despite the glowing distractions that go on in this place, we have to look at the data. I would like to see a little bit of acknowledgement about the data and about the science that goes on. Let me look at the waste streams in the Waste Authority WA *Annual report 2021–22*. The big issue is the municipal solid waste stream. We had the headline about the overall waste that was recovered—the total was 60 per cent—but where did that improvement happen? It was under the watch of both governments, from 2014–15 through to the annual report in 2020–21. It has gone from 42 per cent to 60 per cent, so there has been an improvement but where did all that improvement come from? It came from the construction and demolition sector where the waste levy has had a huge impact. There was a market response to that levy. We went from 44 per cent to 84 per cent for waste recovery. However, if we look at that important municipal solid waste under the watch of this government, the recovery in the metro has gone from 39 per cent down to 32 per cent in that intervening period. It is getting worse. I have talked to local government. They are left in the lurch. We have a minister who is all about the headline, standing there with a couple of little announcements but not doing the real work. Where is the real science? Get down to the science. Read your own reports!

Hon Dan Caddy interjected.

Hon NEIL THOMSON: I always get interjections when I start to bring in facts. The fact is that the major regional centres were 30 per cent down to 27 per cent in the last annual report of the government's own waste management authority. It is the same problem in the commercial and industrial sectors. The waste management side of things is in absolute disarray. This minister is useless. I could get up and support this motion if it was about the mismanagement of waste because this minister is completely useless. He just talks about a few headlines. Hon Dr Sally Talbot went on about the reduction in the number of tonnes of CO₂ emissions. We know what the situation is statewide. We heard the minister come up with his policy on that the other day. He did not even have the heart to put out a press release on it. He slipped it out into the ether, hoping nobody would notice the fact that no target was set. The government cannot achieve the targets because that minister has no ability. He has no ability to get to the bottom of the problem because he has to get to the issues that are really driving this and make sure he has accountability and science. It is 80 million tonnes of CO₂ that we emit in the state per annum. We see that significantly increasing over time. I do not have any confidence that this government has the capacity to deliver on these things. In the few minutes I have left, because I will keep my contribution as short as I can, I will talk about the challenges we have in local government.

This government loves to beat up on local government. It is a constant sport, beating up on local government all the time. The state government, which is hopeless at doing anything in relation to the environment, is always blaming local government for its failures. It is always beating up regional sources of domestic waste. I know from my region the massive challenges in local government of dealing with the waste stream. Local governments in the Perth and Peel regions collect 73 per cent of domestic waste. That is from *Waste and recycling in Western Australia* from the government's own Waste Authority; I think the government should read it. Recovery of waste per capita was similar across the regions but the disposal to landfill per capita was 87 per cent higher outside the Perth and Peel regions. These are the challenges of isolation and managing the issues of the waste stream. Get down to the facts and stop doing the art of distraction. That is what this government is all about, the art of distraction. As I said, I am very excited that I do not have to face the big mug of Premier Cook when I walk into the polling booth in 2025 when we throw out this useless Cook government. The people of Western Australia will do what they did last weekend in overwhelming support of the Liberal Party in putting out their point in relation to the Voice.

Hon Dr Sally Talbot; Hon Klara Andric; Hon Shelley Payne; Hon Sue Ellery; Hon Neil Thomson; Hon Peter Foster

Several members interjected.

Hon NEIL THOMSON: It was 83 per cent at the polling booth I was at and I had Hon Kyle McGinn handing out how-to-vote cards. We saw the level of support he got—17 per cent!

Several members interjected.

Hon NEIL THOMSON: Government members must be really troubled about that. We have seen the reaction on a whole range of fronts. The government is not capable. As I said to Hon Dr Sally Talbot, with all due respect, and to the Leader of the House: follow the science, look at the data, look at the Australian Bureau of Statistics, and look at the report from the Waste Authority. Follow the science and get on with the real job. This is the process that needs to be delivered.

HON PETER FOSTER (Mining and Pastoral) [12.19 pm]: Wow—what an act to follow! As someone who was a local government councillor in the Shire of Ashburton for nine and a half years, I have a bit more experience than Hon Neil Thomson on how local governments in the north west manage their waste. That is the first point. The second point is that I support the Cook Labor government's efforts to reduce plastic because you know what—plastic goes in the ground or into the ocean and, as we have heard today, it is killing our wildlife. We have talked about the effect on whales and I will not rehash that argument, but it was really disturbing to read a report in *Kids News*—my son alerted me to the website—that a sperm whale washed up off the coast of Spain with 30 kilograms-worth of plastic in its intestines. Some of the things found were plastic bags, ropes, nets, a drumline, a plastic water container and sacks of straws—not just one single straw, but sacks of straws.

I want to start my contribution in honour of my son, Roman. We had a chat about this motion last night on the phone. It took me back to a night in Tom Price when we were at the Mountain View Sporting Club, or “The Golfie” as we call it. On Friday nights it holds the members’ draw, so a lot of families head to the club and have a meal and a drink and, hopefully, their number is drawn out for a prize. We walked into the club and over to the bar and my son looked at the bar and was shocked. I asked Roman, “What’s wrong?” He said, “Papa, they’ve got plastic straws on the bar.” I said, “Oh, yeah, they do.” He goes, “Papa, you need to tell the management here that they need to have paper straws. Plastic straws kill turtles.” That is very true.

I refer again to *Kids News*. As I know from my son, children are very concerned about our environment and about plastic. In a YouGov survey in 2019 of 546 children, 82 per cent felt hopeless about plastic waste; 97 per cent said they felt anger or sadness when they saw plastic waste out in the community; and 25 per cent blamed us, the adults in the room, for that problem. That is why it is so important that we have this motion today to talk about our government’s actions to reduce plastic because that is what our kids are asking us to do.

I live in a beautiful region in the north west. We have Carnarvon, Onslow, Coral Bay, Shark Bay and the beautiful Ningaloo coast. We do not want that plastic waste on our beaches. We do not want that plastic waste killing our wildlife. The humpback whales in particular spend a bit of time at Exmouth each year. They pass for mating and they return when they are calving. I do not want those whales to choke on plastics in our oceans. I know my son certainly does not want the whales to choke on plastics in those oceans either. It is so important that we do everything we can to reduce the amount of plastic in our oceans and also on land. I have seen birds that have bits of plastic in their beak. I have seen birds that have choked to death on plastic. Turtles confuse plastic bags as seaweed and they eat that plastic. The plastic obviously gets caught inside their intestines and the turtles feel full and then they do not eat anymore and, unfortunately, they starve to death. That is a really sad way that our wildlife is affected by our use of plastics.

I give a shout-out to the Care for Hedland group. Hon Stephen Dawson, Kevin Michel, the member for Pilbara, and I attended an event a few months back to celebrate 20 years of Care for Hedland. Care for Hedland undertakes a number of activities, such as Containers for Change and recycling education, and also runs a turtle monitoring program. I acknowledge the great work it is doing in Port Hedland. It is supported by the Town of Port Hedland and a number of resource industries so that we know how many turtles are there, but also that the actions that we humans are taking are not compromising them.

I am not sure whether any of my colleagues talked about the WasteSorted Schools program today. It is a program that enables high schools and primary schools to apply for a grant. Funding was announced recently and one of the schools in my electorate, Kalbarri District High School, which I have visited a number of times, received a grant for \$4 850 for its Think Outside the Trash program. We are talking today about plastics and that program is all about plastics. The grant enabled the school to buy a commercial dishwasher and also re-usable bowls, plates and utensils. The school no longer uses single-use plastics but items that can be washed in its dishwasher and re-used the next day, so fewer plastics are going in the bin and into landfill. I acknowledge that Karratha Primary School and St Paul’s Primary School in Karratha also received WasteSorted grants—not in this round, but a previous round—for their efforts with paper and cardboard recycling.

Hon Dr Sally Talbot; Hon Klara Andric; Hon Shelley Payne; Hon Sue Ellery; Hon Neil Thomson; Hon Peter Foster

Hon Shelley Payne talked about the WasteSorted Schools awards that were held recently at Crown Perth. I passed Carlen Woods, the operations manager of Ashburton Aboriginal Corporation at the event that morning and she let me know that Ashburton Aboriginal Corporation, based in Tom Price, was nominated for awards. Of course, I wished her the best because Ashburton Aboriginal Corporation does great work. When the media release came out the next morning, I was really pleased to see that it was a winner. For those who do not know, Ashburton Aboriginal Corporation has been around in Tom Price for a number of years. It was established in 2000. It represents members of the First Nations community in the Ashburton shire and it looks for opportunities for employment for a number of our community members. It received the Closing the Loop award for collecting and recycling containers for bottled water while providing employment pathways for jobseekers. Carlen told me that a number of jobseekers, long-term unemployed people who have re-entered the workforce, are now working with Ashburton Aboriginal Corporation, helping to reduce the amount of plastic in the ground. It also runs a number of projects including Ashoil Pty Ltd. It collects cooking oil that is re-used to make biofuel. It also runs the Containers for Change program. I understand through talking to Carlen that over 20 people now work for its Containers for Change program in Tom Price. It was pleasing to hear in the latest announcement of the regional economic development grants that Ashburton Aboriginal Corporation was awarded about \$86 000 to expand its Containers for Change operation. That illustrates how successful it is.

Noting that I have only a short time left, I commend Hon Dr Sally Talbot for moving this very important motion. It has given me an opportunity to talk about some great initiatives in my electorate but also reinforce the need for tackling plastics in our community.

Motion lapsed, pursuant to standing orders.