

PLAN FOR PLASTICS

Statement by Minister for Environment

MR R.R. WHITBY (Baldivis — Minister for Environment) [9.10 am]: I would like to inform the house of the Cook government's next step in its nation-leading Plan for Plastics. So far, we have overseen the end of single-use plastic bags and coffee cups in Western Australia. Now we are preparing draft regulations that will end the use of the dreaded single-use election bunting throughout our state. No more election bunting, members! Everyone in the house is familiar with these items. What they may not be familiar with is how they have the potential to cause harm to our state's precious environment. Made of single-use plastic promotional film, bunting is often used outdoors and attached to fencing. They are lightweight and often, particularly election bunting, used only once. If they do not end up in landfill, they can fly away and fragment, releasing microplastics, chemicals and pollutants into our environment. Madam Speaker, I think I speak for everyone in the house when I say, "Let's punt the bunting!"

We expect that the regulations will be gazetted in June. Soon it will be an offence to purchase or use single-use plastic promotional film for short-term outdoor use. This will apply to a wide range of businesses, including manufacturers, importers, suppliers, retailers and advertisers who use promotional film outdoor for very short periods. Although this is a big move for WA, it is supported by thorough consultation with stakeholders. There will be exceptions, including long-term signage, such as heavy-duty canvas signs and fence mesh used around construction and building sites or signage used indoors on shop windows and sales bins. WA has already set a great example for the rest of Australia when it comes to reducing plastic waste. Banning single-use plastic bags and straws—part of the first stage of our Plan for Plastics—has already led to 430 million fewer single-use plastics going to landfill every year.

As part of the plan's second stage, which will ban single-use cups and plates, it is anticipated that an additional 700 million single-use items, including election bunting, will avoid landfill in our state every year. We know that Western Australians have embraced our government's Plan for Plastics. They have given up single-use plastic bags. Now we are changing our behaviour and giving up single-use bunting. This shows that the Cook government is not only doing what is right for the environment, but also ensuring that all politicians will do what is right for our state's environment.