

WASTE MANAGEMENT — REDUCE, RE-USE, REPAIR AND RECYCLE

Grievance

MS C.M. TONKIN (Churchlands) [9.23 am]: Thank you for taking my grievance. Managing our burgeoning piles of waste is a matter of great concern in my community and it requires action by all of us. It includes finding ways to reduce, re-use, repair and recycle. It involves finding innovative ways to deal with intractable and emerging waste streams. It needs longer term thinking and number crunching to ensure that we take into account the emissions and the life cycle costs of what we buy as individuals, businesses and governments. What we buy ultimately has to be disposed of.

It requires education. Dealing with waste is of great concern to our children and grandchildren who voice outrage at the poor environmental stewardship of people of my generation. Children and young people do not only complain, they are enthusiastic change makers. They play their part in creating a sustainable future. Churchlands Primary School, in my community, has a proud history of developing environmentally aware students through its renowned sustainability program. It includes an outdoor learning area focused on recycling and sustainability, with vegetable gardens, worm farms, composting, bush tucker and a frog habitat. We have other young people, like Jake Bamford of Dapper Cranium Studios who invented a card game, *Bin Off*, that makes learning about sorting rubbish fun for all ages. The minister may recall launching *Bin Off* with me in early 2022 at the Herdsman Discovery Centre. We cut a ribbon made of plastic bags that were tied together.

Every household in my electorate faces the daily challenge of rubbish sorting and disposal. I get a furrowed brow at times, trying to figure out what is recyclable, and I get annoyed that so much of what could be recycled goes into general waste and into landfill. We do not have the food organics and garden organics, or FOGO, option in the Town of Cambridge, but I understand that it may be on the way for the City of Stirling. Those councils are both within the Churchlands electorate. A high proportion of household waste is food and organics and it is going to landfill rather than into making soil-enriching compost. It makes me weep to see this precious resource literally wasted.

Let us hope that some of the candidates for the forthcoming council elections embrace FOGO so we in the Churchlands electorate can share in the good life with residents of neighbouring council areas, who are already experiencing the joy of FOGO. What irritates me and many other householders is the loss of options for soft plastics recycling. Yes, our WA Plan for Plastics is reducing the use of some soft plastics, like single-use plastic bags, but there is too much soft plastic in packaging. Mountains of it goes into landfill.

Local company Circular Seed Pty Ltd is focused on doing something useful with soft plastics. It uses a technique called distributed pyrolysis, through which soft plastics are heated and reduced to component polymers, oil or char. Those products can be re-used. Circular Seed also processes medical waste at site, avoiding the transportation of waste over thousands of kilometres to centralised processing facilities. I look forward to the day when soft plastics will no longer go to landfill, when we can be confident that they are responsibly broken down into re-usable components.

Another local company, Adarsh Pty Ltd, is setting up a factory to process thousands of tonnes of waste paper into egg cartons and maceratable medical products. WA egg producers produce an estimated 50.8 million dozen eggs a year, with the associated egg carton market worth about \$15 million. The only Australian egg carton producer is Melbourne based. If we can produce paper pulp products here in Perth, we will not only use local waste paper, but also reduce the cost of emissions in transporting products across Australia and, in the case of maceratable medical products, around the world.

Emerging waste streams are arising from solar panels and lithium batteries that present new waste management challenges and circular economy opportunities. We now have a problem with dealing with the end-of-life of photovoltaic solar cells. We have problems with waste decommissioning and recycling. There are some barriers to the decommissioning and recycling of those panels in this state that we need to learn to overcome. A masters student at Curtin University is currently working on a project researching these issues.

This evening I will attend the launch of a new venture, Magellan Power 4R. This innovative venture is committed to a sustainable and circular lithium economy that will involve new ways of dealing with whole-of-life management of lithium batteries in order to minimise their environmental impact. We have so many challenges in dealing with waste and so many opportunities in the circular economy. I would appreciate the minister's insights into how these challenges and opportunities can be met.

MR R.R. WHITBY (Baldivis — Minister for Environment) [9.40 am]: I thank the member for Churchlands— what an amazing member she is. It seems I am constantly in her electorate attending a function that is related to the environment or to waste and sustainability. She has a passion that is reflected in her community and a hope that it is heading towards food organics and garden organics waste collection, as the member pointed out. Let us hope some councillors at the Town of Cambridge are keen for FOGO and can progress FOGO in that council area.

The government's waste strategy strives for Western Australia to become a sustainable low-waste circular economy, as the member said. A circular economy is all about sharing, re-using and recycling existing materials for as long as possible, extending the life cycle of products. It supports investment and employment. A circular economy is crucial for our state. Our geography means that we need to be less reliant on distant processes and markets to manage our waste. More than any other state, that makes sense for Western Australia. There are export bans on waste, glass, paper, plastic and tyres. That shows that we need to develop local solutions; we simply cannot export our waste to another place. As a state, we are aiming to increase material recovery to 75 per cent by 2030 and organics, together with construction and demolition waste, make up almost three quarters of all the waste volume generated in Western Australia. This presents an opportunity to better link our waste and recycling actions with climate change commitments.

Our construction and demolition sectors are leading the charge, with their recovery rates having doubled in six years. The so-called C&D waste story has been really good—we are already meeting our 2030 target—but it is a different story for commercial, industry and household waste. This is a continuing challenge. We need every Western Australian to take personal responsibility. We know that small changes at an individual level can combine to make a huge difference. As the member said, our government is committed to rolling out food organics and garden organics collection, or FOGO, across Perth and Peel by 2025. Many local governments have already embraced the three-bin service, though not yet the Town of Cambridge or the City of Stirling. Hopefully, both of them will soon. We have committed \$20 million to support councils in the rollout.

As of right now, 18 Western Australian councils have rolled out the FOGO service. There is some interest from some of Perth's biggest councils, which could effectively see the current figure of 200 000 households involved with the FOGO approach reach half a million within a very short time. Eleven more councils are committed to implementing FOGO by 2025 and this includes some of the very large councils in Perth and the northern suburbs. A further five councils are likely to sign up, including, again, some very large councils, bringing a total of 34 Western Australian councils indicating they will or are likely to adopt FOGO. FOGO recovery has increased from 11 000 tonnes in 2017 to more than 65 000 tonnes currently. That is a 500 per cent increase since this government came to power in 2017. Western Australians increasingly see that sorting their waste makes a real difference. They are embracing the FOGO service. They love those caddies in the kitchen, sorting out the scraps and putting them in the green bin.

We also have Containers for Change, another initiative and election commitment delivered by this state Labor government. Since Containers for Change was introduced, 2.39 billion—almost 2.4 billion—containers have been recovered. Imagine that! More than \$8.8 million has gone to 6 200 registered charities and community organisations. They include a lot of parents and citizens associations and sporting clubs in my electorate, and probably in the member's too. WA continues to work closely with commonwealth and state governments regarding the Australian Packaging Covenant Organisation, managing packaging through improved product stewardship. This is important stuff. We want to stop plastics being produced in the first place. When we go to supermarkets, we see that some packaging of products is over the top. There is too much plastic and the wrong materials being used for packaging. Avoiding plastic use at the start is still the best way to tackle its harming effects on our environment.

Earlier this week, I announced a multibillion-dollar boost for WA's waste and recycling infrastructure. The second round of the Western Australian recycling modernisation fund will provide successful recipients with a share of \$30.75 million to build, expand or upgrade waste processing infrastructure. This will support the phase-out of exporting certain types of waste from Western Australia like plastics, tyres, mixed paper and cardboard, dealing with the issue here, creating jobs and re-usable products. This is a significant investment to transform WA's waste and recycling industry.

Members may recall that I mentioned in this place not so long ago our e-waste initiative, another election commitment delivered to handle the burgeoning amount of e-waste we see in our homes. This will see \$6.5 million available to support the Western Australian electrical and electronic waste collection recycling network. It will interest the member that nearly \$2.4 million will go to two photovoltaic recycling facilities to reduce the disposal of solar panels to landfill. We know that solar panels are good, we know that there are a lot of them and we know that there is a waste issue looming at the end of life for those panels. At a certain point, it will be 20 years since they started to be introduced at a large scale.

Member, I could go on. There is so much more to talk to and time is running out. I want to say that the Cook Labor government is doing everything it can to achieve a vision for a sustainable, low waste and circular economy. Again, I would like to thank the member for Churchlands for being a sustainability hero in her electorate and in this place.