

## PLAN FOR PLASTICS AND CONTAINERS FOR CHANGE

### *Motion*

**HON LORNA HARPER (East Metropolitan)** [11.32 am] — without notice: I move —

That the Legislative Council acknowledges the McGowan government's strong, consistent environmental protection stance and policies such as Western Australia's Plan for Plastics and the Containers for Change initiative.

**The PRESIDENT:** Order! Could members hold the movement around the chamber while the member moves her motion. Thank you.

**Hon LORNA HARPER:** I will pause for breath while people leave.

**The PRESIDENT:** Order! Could the member on her feet be treated with respect and allowed to continue her motion and could members move around the chamber as quietly as possible.

**Hon LORNA HARPER:** It has been an interesting morning. I am very happy and proud to stand and move this motion to talk about the McGowan government's strong and consistent environmental protection stance and policies and to talk about Plan for Plastics and Containers for Change. When I was researching and thinking about this topic, I was reading through all the plans and the papers and I thought about my childhood and the things we did when we were younger.

I am sure that Hon Dr Steve Thomas will remember the 1970s a lot better than I do, but I remember that when we went to the shops, my parents never ever brought back a plastic bag. I remember putting food in a trolley that we dragged up a hill. I swear that I got the same piece of wrapping paper for about 10 years in a row because when my grandmother unwrapped something, she would fold it and put it under the cushions on her couch. Back then I thought it was just because we were poor; I did not realise we were environmentally forward-thinking people. We grew our own vegetables and we did not have a tumble dryer. We did all sorts of things. Again, I thought it was because we were poor, which it probably was, but it was also partly a result of the times. People of that era would use and re-use items. Then the 80s came along, the years of Thatcher and Reagan, the years of greed is good and of disposables. From then on, as a nation—it is a cultural thing—we seem to use something once and then put it in the bin. As part of my research I also looked back over a few former governments, particularly the Barnett government, to see what proactive environmental policies it came up with. I am still looking.

**Hon Dr Steve Thomas:** It put a lot of reserves in place.

**Hon LORNA HARPER:** Having reserves is great. They are wonderful places. However, we are talking in particular about the use and re-use of objects from an environmental aspect and about Plans for Plastics and Containers for Change.

In the last few years, the McGowan government has put forward many proactive policies to ensure that we are re-using plastics et cetera when possible. I am referring to my notes that I have not printed out from my computer because since I am talking about the environment, I did not think it was a good idea to print my notes. I have written some of them on a notepad, but have not printed them all on paper. These are my notes, by the way. We all know that plastic is very useful. I will not deny it. I quite enjoy it. I am drinking out of a plastic bottle, but that is more because of COVID-19 and hygiene than anything else. I used to enjoy going to the fair and getting a helium balloon. I would walk with it thinking it was lovely, but then we realised over the years that plastic cups, straws, plates, and knives and forks get used once and then thrown out and put into landfill.

As of June 2021, the Labor government brought in stage 1 of the regulations to reduce the use of plastics. That means that we are now all getting used to having wooden, bamboo or some other biodegradable, compostable material as disposable cutlery. That has been really good. I have been in some areas of WA that still use plastic cutlery. I hope they are just using the old stock, but we will get there. With these actions, Western Australia is leading the whole of Australia when it comes to planning for the future with its Plans for Plastics initiative. It is quite extraordinary how far we have come and how far forward we have brought those actions. We fast-tracked this initiative by more than four years because it is so important to act now. Every child in high school will tell members that we need to be proactive now to protect the future. The Plan for Plastics initiative is one of those initiatives. It is very difficult to keep saying Plan for Plastics, by the way! We are trying to prioritise avoiding the use of single-use plastics such as straws and bags et cetera. People who require them for life needs can still get plastic straws. The government will replace single-use items with re-usable alternatives wherever possible and promote non-plastic single-use alternatives that can be recovered, recycled or composted. I have two dogs; we are responsible dog owners who pick up our dog poo, and we use compostable bags that can go into the compost. We try not to put them into landfill, which the people who pick up our bins are very happy about it. We also want to minimise the litter and contamination that goes across

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our land and into the sea. I am sure that many members worry about sharks when swimming in the ocean. We do not want to worry about the floating debris coming towards our faces because none of us have ever enjoyed that. I only swim in very shallow water because the sharks scare me every time.

Stage 2 of these regulations will be coming in next year and then we will start to look at the cotton balls with the plastic stems. I am sure some people use them to clean out their ears but some people do not because they have a problem with listening at times. I am always surprised when I get a parcel and the item is tiny but the box is huge because it is filled with moulded plastic and those bubble bags, and things like that. We need to stop using that; there is no need for it. There is no need to have parcels that big for items that small. If the item is that fragile, we can use other alternatives. There are all sorts of things: there are papers et cetera we can use.

**Hon Dr Steve Thomas:** What will people pop if they can't do all the little bubble popping all the way through?

**Hon LORNA HARPER:** Thank you for the interjection. I will point out that there are fidget things people can get to pop. They are made of plastic but they are re-usable. They are very good for that.

Takeaway coffee—I am not really a big fan of takeaway coffee. It is not an environmental stance; I generally do not like it. I prefer to make my own coffee. I am not a coffee connoisseur; I just prefer to make my own coffee the way I like it. Takeaway coffee is something that is a part of WA life. When my friend first came here 10 years ago, I took her to a drive-through coffee place and she was so loud she just about deafened the poor person behind the counter. She was screaming about how wonderful it is to drive through and get coffee. I said, “If you think that is good, wait until we get to the bottle shop.” It is a way of life here in WA that people drive through to pick up coffees. Many a person walks around with a coffee cup. The majority of these end up in landfill. Unless coffee cups, plastics and re-usables are washed, they cannot be recycled. There is no point putting a tin in the yellow-lidded bin for recycling unless it is clean because it contaminates it. That is part of the problem with re-using and recycling; people are not quite aware of some of the rules. That is part of the reason this WA government has invested lots of money in educating people in what they can and cannot do.

The government has not forgotten about the businesses. Although we are getting rid of single use or disposable cutlery and cups et cetera, we have to keep in mind that a lot of businesses require those implements to carry on. The WA Labor government has had lots of consultation to get input from businesses on the best way to bring out these re-usable, recyclable or compostable items for them to use. We see a lot of these now, wherever we go, but there is a lot more still to come with takeaway. Supermarkets have these little bags that nobody can open. We cannot lick our fingers to open them because of COVID. We still have things like that to go.

It is amazing to see how much time, effort and money this WA Labor government has put in to be proactive and to listen to the community of WA about how we can move forward on this plan for plastics, together with businesses and communities to implement this to ensure that WA continues to be the leader in Australia. We also have a waste avoidance resource recovery strategy for 2030. This sets out the vision and framework for addressing waste issues in Western Australia. It is not just setting WA up for the next couple of years; it is forward-thinking and plans for the future. It considers how we can get better each and every year to reduce the waste going to landfill, the use of single-use plastics and the reliance on throwaway items in our society to, hopefully, protect our environment, waterways and marine life, and move forward in the future.

With that, I would just like to again say that I am very honoured to be standing here with my colleagues, as part of the McGowan Labor government and part of its plan for the future and the environment, and its plan to protect our children and their children. We are listening to the younger people in WA about what they want to see, because we are doing it for them. Let us be honest: our generation has made a bit of a mess of the environment and we need to move forward. The Plan for Plastics is one of the ways we can do it.

**HON KLARA ANDRIC (South Metropolitan) [11.45 am]:** I thank Hon Lorna Harper for her motion that is before the house today. She is right in saying that. As she was talking about the future generations, I noticed a school group walk into the gallery of the house. It is very poignant; they are, in fact, who we need to do this for, and it is why the McGowan government has led the way for future generations and children like those in the gallery today.

I am pleased to have the opportunity to speak about some of the amazing work the McGowan Labor government has done to protect our environment. We are in fact very lucky to be living in Western Australia and to have such amazing native plants, wildlife and diversity. The diversity of our state is pretty remarkable. As such, it is our duty to protect the environment that we live in. It is quite simple. Without taking care of the environment, we risk making our home uninhabitable. Members before me have mentioned that our Plan for Plastics has been a massive step forward in our environmental policy. As we all know, plastic is terrible for the environment, from its creation out of oil to the way it pollutes our environment. Studies have shown that we eat about a credit card of microplastics a week. I am definitely not a medical expert but I do not think that can be good for our health. I am sure Hon Dr Brian Walker will nod his head—yes.

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Water is the largest source of plastic ingestion—something that we all know we cannot live without. Some of the other sources of plastic through which we consume the highest levels of plastic are shellfish, beer and salt, which are also things that are quite commonly consumed, pretty much every day. The McGowan government's Plan for Plastics is to eliminate the single-use plastics we previously used on an everyday basis. I am sure we all recall the times when we first introduced it and we would forget our bags in the boot when we got to the shops and have to go back but, over time, it has just become something of the norm. As mentioned by Hon Lorna Harper, the plan was fast-tracked by four years from the original time line. I am sure members will agree that this shows the priority of the McGowan government and the priority of environmental protection.

Stage 1 of the plan came into effect on 1 July and included a ban on single-use plastics such as plates, bowls, cutlery, drinking straws, cups and thick plastic bags. Stage 2 of the plan will commence on 1 January next year and will include the banning of produce bags, polystyrene packaging, microbeads and coffee cups. The ban will be enforceable by 1 July 2023. If I am being honest, a nice KeepCup is much more stylish than a plastic coffee cup. I also agree with Hon Lorna Harper: I am a coffee enthusiast. I like to have my Turkish coffee every morning at home, but I also enjoy a coffee out. Something I try to do in my everyday life is not do takeaway, because life is already so rushed, and take twenty minutes to sit at my coffee shop and enjoy my coffee. If people are not a fan of takeaway, I highly recommend them to stop and sit in their coffee shop and enjoy that cup of coffee.

The Containers for Change scheme started on 1 October 2020. Western Australians can now get a 10¢ refund on containers, which are then recycled into new containers. Since October, the scheme has generated more than 800 local jobs, with many of these positions being filled by people with disabilities, long-term unemployed people as well as Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people. By the end of June this year, 1.4 billion containers had been recycled and over \$4.6 million has been donated to 4 900 community groups and charities across our state. We can also be proud that WA is leading the country in ensuring that plastic and metal container lids are also being recycled. The program has made a real and positive impact on our community; for example, Beaconsfield Primary School used the funds raised through Containers for Change for some of its green initiatives, such as native seedlings, a nature play area and a food organics and garden organics pick-up to reduce the school's waste. The school has raised almost \$3 000, equating to nearly 30 000 containers being recycled. This is an amazing effort that will benefit the environment immensely.

I would also like to give a shout-out to 10-year-old Hudson in Baldivis who had saved 10 000 containers to collect money for his goal of buying a boat! When Containers for Change started back in 2020, Hudson reached out to his friends and family as well as local small businesses to see whether he could collect and return the containers on their behalf. Hudson is also passionate about sustainability, the environment and taking care of our marine life in particular. Even while on holiday, he always makes sure to pick up rubbish on the beach to ensure it does not end up in the ocean.

Many locations across the south metropolitan area are participating in the Containers for Change program, and I will mention a few. Containers for Change facilities are in Fremantle, Coogee, O'Connor, Shoalwater and Rottne Island. A number of Good Sammy stores in the South Metropolitan Region have partnered with Containers for Change, as has Ability WA in Bibra Lake, Scouts WA in Cockburn Central as well as many, many more.

I will take a brief opportunity to speak about something that is close to my heart. It is a little bit off-topic but still related to the environment and the multifaceted approach of the McGowan government, and that is the McGowan government's commitment to protecting the Beeliar wetlands. I am delighted and proud to be part of a government that saved those precious wetlands. As a local, I know that this means a lot to the community, not just in the South Metropolitan Region. These wetlands are important for so many reasons. It is empowering to have a government that cares about protecting our environment. As I said, and as noted in the honourable member's motion, we have a multifaceted approach to protecting the environment in which we live. I look forward to seeing the McGowan government's continued commitment to environmental protection. It is an area that many people in our community, including me, are very passionate about. Once again, I thank Hon Lorna Harper for bringing this motion to the house.

In closing, I would like to add that the new federal government is also committed to environmental protection, and I am very excited to see how our state and federal governments will work together so that we can reach our shared goal on this very important issue, which will have an immense impact on future generations.

**HON DR BRIAN WALKER (East Metropolitan)** [11.55 am]: I am delighted to stand to support the motion moved by Hon Lorna Harper, and I would support this motion from whichever part of the house it came. What we are looking at is man-made destruction of the environment. I was researching the North Pacific gyre, which has about 1.6 million square kilometres of rubbish, mostly plastic, which is circulating to the North and South Pacific. It is composed entirely of the rubbish—the plastic detritus—that we have thrown willy-nilly into rivers, which end up in seas, which end up in all parts of the world. If we were to sail a boat through that, we would find ourselves bumping against nautical mile after nautical mile of rubbish. This is in the middle of one of the most important oceans—they are all important—and one of the greatest oceans of our world. Microplastics are present in every single

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fish that we eat; therefore, we have microplastics in our system and not one single piece of microplastic belongs in our physical system, so we are in fact poisoning ourselves.

We have an attitude that needs to be defeated—not simply through the political activity of one government or another, but in every single individual in our world. The attitude that we need to get through our minds is that we are unwise to destroy nature. We can use nature, but destroying it is just not a good idea. The result of continuing to do what we are now doing so efficiently is that we will not have a place for our grandchildren to live. I would resent, to all eternity, being responsible for making that happen, as would every individual, sensible thinking person.

One of the major things that we need to combat is the desire to make things easy. Rather than washing up, people just get plastic plates, then throw them out. We have metal spoons that need to be washed, but if we are having a party, we will just get plastic spoons and use those instead. Using plastic bags to carry our shopping, which is of course no longer normal here, was a great way of misusing plastics.

Where do plastics come from? Plastics come from petroleum products, which is an abuse of our environment as well. Taking petroleum out of the ground, where it has been for millions of years, and using it to make disposables that end up in our environment serves no good purpose, apart from damaging our health.

What about the other activities that we do? If we are going to be active in managing our ability to pollute our environment, maybe we ought to look at everything that is happening. For example, if we were to go to a supermarket right now, we would see that most of the aisles are stocked with packets. I often recommend to my patients that if they want to get healthy, when they go shopping, they should go to the fresh meat, fish and vegetables, and, apart from the cleaning products, do not go to any of the aisles in between, because those products are usually processed foods. One of the things that we can say with absolute certainty is that the comfort that we seek—the easiness—is actually associated with death and destruction. Our processed foods are associated with magnificently worsened gut health, which is a source of most of our chronic disease. If we were to revert to cooking the way our great-grandparents cooked, we would have a lot less inflammatory disease and inflammatory bowel disease and the disorders associated with that, such as heart disease, strokes and probably autoimmune disease as well.

Once we take it to its conclusion, the motion that Hon Lorna Harper moved should be a method of changing our whole social attitude to one of recovering from what has been a destructive approach to our environment, to our lives, to our health and to our children. I support this motion to the utmost because we all need to play our part, whether in government or on the crossbench. We are here to help our nation and our state, avoiding the pitfalls of making things easy and comfortable, but to do what is right is certainly one step that we ought to be taking and looking at very seriously.

To put my point of view as the leader of the Legalise Cannabis Party, I say that one of the best sources for alternative plastics is hemp. We can get it. The hemp plastics that we can make are natural, they are able to be destroyed naturally so they will not accumulate in the environment and they will also encourage local businesses that produce these from natural grown hemp in our fields.

I support this motion and put the additional words there that we ought to look for alternatives that are sustainable and helpful for us and encourage business. Hon Lorna Harper, I thank you for that.

**HON ROSIE SAHANNA (Mining and Pastoral)** [12.01 pm]: I support the motion moved by my colleague Hon Lorna Harper. I want to talk about the Containers for Change program and an organisation that delivers that program as the refund point operator for the township of Broome. Nirrumbuk Environmental Health and Services delivers that program. For the 2021–22 financial year, eight million containers were processed through the depot. This resulted in \$800 000 being distributed back into Broome. The refund point is open six days a week and has benefited many schools, P&Cs, individuals, families, sporting organisations and many other community-based organisations, along with the unemployed and pensioners. These organisations and individuals target the litter spots in the town, of which there are quite a few in the township of Broome. They go out and take the time to pick up a lot of these cans. Government statistics indicate that 43 per cent of all litter is refundable containers.

Nirrumbuk Environmental Health and Services employs six to seven people in the program, including one full-time supervisor, two full-time employees who were promoted from being casual staff who were on long-term unemployment benefits, and four to five casual workers averaging between 14 to 20 hours a week. Eighty-five per cent of the workers are Aboriginal and most of these workers have come from long-term unemployment and face several challenges and barriers. They were recruited from Jobactive, now Workforce Australia, and Disability Employment Services. The staff really enjoy working for Nirrumbuk Environmental Health and Services, which has built its capacity, including customer interaction, around work ethics and skills, occupational health and safety and forklift training. This program has also enabled work experience placement opportunities through Broome High School. The employment provides a service that has been well accepted by the wider community of Broome. The important part of this program is that it has really provided a financial benefit for those who engage in Containers for Change, as well as the added benefit of keeping the community clean and impacting the environment.

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Over the past 12 months, I have seen families that have done a lot of work to collect the cans and plastics to help support their families. A young nine-year-old girl was happy to have made \$45, so she went to a shop and bought accessories for her hair, and books because she loves reading. This is a really good benefit. It is also educational; children get a lot of benefit from the program. It is a really good program and really well deserved for anywhere. I think Klara made reference to the same thing happening in the metropolitan area. The same program operates in the Kalumburu community in the north east Kimberley. Having said that, as a mother—I raised four kids—I never thought about the environment at that time. Then we have grandchildren and they teach you; they actually educate us on what is important for them and the environment in the future. That is a big thing that I have learnt since becoming a grandmother 17 years ago. I am really happy. I commend the government for this program and I thank my colleague Hon Lorna Harper for moving this motion.

**HON DAN CADDY (North Metropolitan)** [12.06 pm]: The environment and good environmental policy has always been a cornerstone of Labor and Labor governments, not just in this state but all over the country. The McGowan Labor government has made its priorities fairly clear; in fact, it has made it very clear that good environmental policy is incredibly important, whether that is through our policies on climate change, electric vehicles, electric vehicle networks or things as “simple”—I use that word advisedly—as bushland protection. On a personal level, the hydrogen industry is something that I have spoken about at length a couple of times in this chamber. I have also spoken about wind farms, but particularly hydrogen. I note that the outstanding minister, Minister MacTiernan, the Minister for Hydrogen Industry, is in the chamber.

**Hon Dr Steve Thomas:** I hope you bowed when you said that.

**Hon DAN CADDY:** She is an outstanding minister. The member has absolutely said in this chamber many times what a fantastic job she has done. I have the quotes in front of me if he wants me to read them, but I may run out of time. If we were to talk about how magnificent this minister is, we would be here all day.

Several members interjected.

**The ACTING PRESIDENT:** Members.

**Hon DAN CADDY:** Thank you, Acting President.

Where was I? This very good motion—brought to the house by my friend and colleague Hon Lorna Harper—that the Legislative Council acknowledge the McGowan government’s strong, consistent environmental protection stance. “Consistent” is a critical word in this motion because it underscores how importantly the McGowan government takes environmental protection and environmental policies. My colleagues have spoken previously about plastics and Containers for Change and how that program is a fantastic example of policy implemented by this government. I will try to go somewhere else so we do not repeat ourselves. I will probably talk about hydrogen because it is one of my favourite things to talk about.

**Hon Jackie Jarvis** interjected.

**Hon DAN CADDY:** Thank you. I also want to raise something that Hon Klara Andric touched on very briefly—that is, the protection of the Beeliar wetlands. In fact, the Metropolitan Region Scheme (Beeliar Wetlands) Act 2021, which has taken what was a flawed and very environmentally damaging and aggressive policy of the previous government, has, for want of a better term, sorted that out. The legislation that this government passed in 2021 will mean that that area of wetlands is permanently protected. This is a forever solution and a very good solution for that area. It rezones approximately 34 or 35 hectares of wetlands from primary regional road reserve to a parks and recreation reserve.

This goes to something else that is at the heart of the McGowan government, which is listening to the people of Western Australia. We listened to the community, we heard what the community wanted, and we looked at the opposition’s flawed plan. When the opposition was in government, it started its plan at the absolute eleventh hour—at five minutes to midnight—when it was a dying government. It sent in the bulldozers, and they started wrecking what was pristine wetland. We have listened. It is not what the community wanted, and it is certainly not what the community expected. We put through that act last year. I note that even when we were looking at putting that bill forward, and a lot of money was attached to it, the opposition leader—elect, Libby Mettam, was still saying that we needed the road network, we needed the jobs, and we needed the project to happen. The McGowan government has an unparalleled record of creating jobs in this state. I have spoken about that before, and in my inaugural speech. The number of jobs we have created in this state—despite the COVID pandemic that has wreaked havoc across the world—is unsurpassed, but Libby Mettam continued to fight. It is interesting, because this is an issue that saw every lower house seat in that area—admittedly, we already held some of them—come to Labor in that election. Roe 8 was one of the biggest issues for the people of that part of the southern metropolitan corridor. The one member of the Liberal Party who continued the fight—he still had his seat—was the federal member Ben Morton. He continued the fight for some time and was wholeheartedly opposed to the state government taking that action and

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enshrining in legislation the Beeliar wetlands as a park, but at the last federal election, he found himself out of a job, too.

The McGowan government has followed up on this, and just two months ago in May, we launched a new native vegetation policy for Western Australia. The policy aims for a net gain in native vegetation; an improvement in native vegetation is vital in combating climate change. Once again, there were more than 1 000 participants throughout the state. This government is a government that listens. It is a government that hears what the people of the state want, and it is a government that then acts on what it hears. This policy is the next step in the McGowan government's commitment to protecting and enhancing native vegetation in the state. We recognise that climate change poses a major risk to the health of our native vegetation, but we also recognise that native vegetation can help mitigate global climate change by sequestering carbon. For that reason, the new policy aims for a net gain in native vegetation. The policy sets out a road map and the actions that the Western Australia government will take over the next four years. Actions include regional planning for native vegetation and a new mapping and monitoring system to track changes in native vegetation cover around the state. To support a net gain, we are also identifying reform opportunities, including around the delivery of offsets. Again, consultation will play a key and ongoing role. Native vegetation will be managed and protected, and we will get enhanced biodiversity. To support and implement this policy, \$3.3 million has been allocated in the first two years. The progress, learning and achievements of those first two years will then inform where we go for the following two years.

In summing up, this is a great motion because the environment and good environmental policies are critically important to this government—whether it is the Beeliar wetlands, which I have spoken about; native vegetation; low-carbon transition; the clean energy future fund; electric vehicle strategies; or emissions reduction strategies. All the decisions that the state McGowan government is currently doing are provisions—whether through regulation, legislation or simple decisions—to ensure that Western Australia stays at the leading edge of good environmental policy.

**HON ALANNAH MacTIERNAN (South West — Minister for Regional Development)** [12.15 pm]: I very much thank the members for their contributions, and I want to acknowledge Hon Lorna Harper for bringing this motion forward, because I think this is something that will speak to members across the chamber. The need for us to manage our waste and to control plastic in the environment has massive community support across the board, and it is great to have an opportunity to highlight that in Parliament today.

Like Hon Lorna Harper, I can remember my first money-earning exercises as a kid were to roll up the newspapers and sell them at the greengrocer. We also used to collect all the beer bottles and go around to the bottle-o. Before I started my part-time job at Coles, that was my first source of income for a number of years. I think that sort of thing really helps to create a culture of recycling. In South Australia, which took the step of a container deposit scheme some 30 years ago, we really saw a very different culture—not only about the items that were subject to the container deposit scheme but also about a greater focus on waste minimisation and recycling. It was dramatically noticeable that the South Australian coast and inland on the Nullarbor Plain always had far less litter than the Western Australian side of the border.

I would like to pay tribute to my good friend and colleague Hon Stephen Dawson, who, as Minister for Environment, really drove our policies in our first term of government. I recall him explaining to us that, in fact, Western Australia was leading all the wrong lists. When we came into government, Western Australia had the highest rate of waste generation per capita in the nation, and we had the equal second lowest rate of resource recovery, which was 13 points below the national average. That was the context in which it became obvious that we really needed to take action, and the steps we have taken—such as the introduction of the container deposit scheme—have been incredibly positive. If we look at the results that have been created from that, the amount of avoided waste is really quite spectacular. There have also been the other opportunities that Hon Rosie Sahanna spoke about in her community up in Broome. There has been an important social benefit in the creation of a new type of job that many of the Aboriginal communities across the state have got involved in, and I note Hon Klara Andric talked about similar things. Looking at the return rate on the container deposit scheme, one of the really positive things is that we are getting a return rate of up to 70 per cent, and I think we can all see the difference that is creating in our environment.

Then there are the plans for plastics, starting off with plastic bags and then going to stage 1, with plastic plates and forks et cetera, and then the planned stage 2. All of these things have been a great success. I remember driving down Tonkin Highway past the airport and seeing plastic bags all over the gates. That is markedly reduced, so we are already seeing a pollution reduction in our environment.

I note Hon Dr Brian Walker and many other members spoke about the impact of plastics in our oceans. The impact of microplastics will be one of the new developments in stage 2 of our Plan for Plastics. There was the picture the other day of a turtle that had come into Sydney Harbour, and the baby turtle excreted plastic for five days. That is telling of the prevalence of this problem. We all remember seeing pictures of one of the most remote beaches on

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Christmas Island, Dolly Beach—a perfect place—absolutely littered with washed up thongs, bottles and syringes, not just locally but from around the world.

I am really proud of what we have been able to do as a government. It is really fantastic, and I am very pleased with the broad bipartisan support we have been able to build for these measures.

**HON TJORN SIBMA (North Metropolitan)** [12.22 pm]: I rise on behalf of the opposition to address the motion. I think it is probably unnecessary for me to congratulate the McGowan government, but I will concentrate on the substance of the motion and the issues that it raises. The motion makes the claim that the government has been strong and consistent in the area of environmental protection. That is a claim that I would disagree with for the following reason. I think it is true that the government in some areas is strong. It is strong in the sense that it has brought a unique focus to dealing with certain aspects of environmental protection, but there is an opportunity cost with that focus. That means that sometimes, often, invariably, the government does not direct effort to addressing other matters, matters which are equally as pressing or even more so. For that reason, with the greatest of respect I do not think that the McGowan government's environmental policies—or “protection stances”, as it is put—have been consistent.

To illustrate this inconsistency, I will use the case example cited by Hon Dan Caddy. The matter of Roe 8 and the Beeliar wetlands has been settled legislatively, but I would put it this way. If the government earnestly believes that the environmental threat that Roe 8 posed to the Beeliar wetlands was of such great consequence, why do I not see the same attention and focus being devoted to preserving the seabed grassland in Cockburn Sound? If the government is going to cherry-pick particular issues for the purposes of political campaigning, that is fine and necessary. That is part of the business that we are in, but no one side can claim a puritanical approach to environmental stewardship when there is a greater environmental cost, potentially, that needs to be mitigated. I know a lot of funding has been directed through the Western Australian Marine Science Institution, but the government cannot have it both ways. This invites someone like me to make very guarded claims to the degree that perhaps the government is being a little bit hypocritical when it pats itself on the back for its environmental management.

When environmental protection measures are introduced, particularly when they hit the individual, the family or the household, there can be an almost allergic reaction, as with anything new. To its credit, the government has brought in, very early, a ban on single-use plastic bags. There was a hue and cry from some parts of the community, saying, “That would be a terrible impost on us”, but people got over it; people adapted to the new situation. I think that is indicative of the fact that, at all levels—the individual, the household, the community, the state and the globe—there is an interest in doing the right thing, preserving the environment and handing to our children and grandchildren an environment that is in a better state than we inherited. I think there is a unanimity of focus there, and that is a constructive starting point.

There are aspects I will not address now, as they are best held over for the Conservation and Land Management Amendment Bill 2021, which will be debated later on in the day. That bill deals with, among other things, the joint vesting of the marine estate between the government and Aboriginal business corporations. In the course of that debate I will focus more generally on environmental management statewide.

It is very well and good for the government to establish policies or areas of action and focus, but it must follow the logic through. I will reflect on this very briefly because this has become more of a wideranging debate on environmental policy in general. The government's plan for parks is to effectively increase the overall state conservation estate by 20 per cent, or five million hectares—I think the extant estate is something like 20 million hectares already. It sounds like a laudable goal, and I think the government has added about one million of the five million to date, so 20 per cent or thereabouts. Following the logic through, if the government wants to claim the mantle of the superior environmental custodian, then, in addition to gazetting parks, marine reserves and the like, it also has to substantially increase the management capacity of those parks. There has not been a commensurate increase, in recent budgets or across the forward estimates, that would fund the appropriate service lines within the Department of Biodiversity, Conservation and Attractions to fulfil its responsibility. I have not seen a five, 10, 15 or 20 per cent uplift in recurrent funding to ensure that those parks and estates are appropriately managed. This is a problem area, and I put it to you thus: accountability for environmental management across the state and within the parks themselves—the areas vested within DBCA and other government instrumentalities—is very, very opaque. We do not know whether we are achieving any superior ecological outcomes within the existing estate that would otherwise not be addressed, and we therefore cannot be guaranteed that the mere inclusion or incorporation of more land and marine country within the auspices of government control is going to do anything to preserve or remediate the environment in a way that would seem to be indicated or alluded to by the policy intent.

I also make this observation: through the estimates period, we were advised that in the order of—I am going off memory—600 endangered species or threatened ecological communities in Western Australia have been identified. In the budget papers, the Department of Biodiversity, Conservation and Attractions threshold for achievement is to ensure that there are management plans for about 75 per cent of those species. Where we all encounter a problem—I think this is a problem for government because it has the responsibility at the moment—is working out whether

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any of the plans for the 75 per cent of those 600 species or communities are working, whether they are individually funded, what are the key performance indicators of those individual plans and who reviews them. Working out who is the single point of accountability for environmental stewardship is very difficult to determine. This is a rule of life: it is very easy to say wonderful things at the macro level, but when we drill down into the detail—I put it that environmental management detail does count—it is very difficult to determine who is responsible for doing what.

If there is an environmental challenge that the state needs to address, it is in biodiversity management—land management—which I do not think is being addressed in the way it should be. To be fair, much of what the government purports to be responsible for is burdened onto other landowners, be they pastoralists or mining companies. A lot of people take responsibility for land management in this state and they report and perform at a level that I think is superior to that at which the government is performing. That is not to detract from the government when it achieves results. It is achieving some results and it should be congratulated for it, but I caution it not to indulge in early congratulations, because, frankly, there is an enormous field of work that it is blind to. I will use this opportunity very briefly, because we have touched on recycling, circular economy issues and the like. Waste management infrastructure and the future of landfill on the Swan coastal plain are serious issues that are going unaddressed and, I am sorry to say, have been unaddressed in a substantial way by the three environment ministers who have held this portfolio in the last five years. If there is a small but important aspect that the government should address, it is the gaming of waste levy fees and the illegal and organised dumping of construction and demolition waste outside of the metropolitan area.

**HON LORNA HARPER (East Metropolitan)** [12.32 pm] — in reply: In the very short time I have left, I would like to thank my colleagues on this side of the house for their comments. I would add more, but we are quite short of time. It is very sad that Hon Tjorn Sibma was out of the chamber on urgent parliamentary business when I was speaking. I can tell him that nobody has ever used the word “puritanical” about anything I have ever said in my life! I am still trying to work out whether he heard the part when we talked about the Plan for Plastics and Containers for Change—two extremely important aspects of our environmental policy that have done amazing things so far. Yes, I am very proud to stand and talk about this motion.

Motion lapsed, pursuant to standing orders.