

SINGLE-USE PLASTICS

137. Mr D.J. KELLY to the Minister for Environment:

I refer to the Cook Labor government's nation-leading Plan for Plastics to end the use of single-use plastics in Western Australia.

- (1) Can the minister outline to the house how the Plan for Plastics has reduced the amount of waste going to landfill?
- (2) Can the minister advise the house how the transition to compostable coffee cups will further protect our environment?

Mr R.R. WHITBY replied:

- (1)–(2) I thank the member for Bassendean for the question. His passion for the environment is well known and his involvement in the community to make sure it is part of the solution is also well known.

It is true that Western Australia leads the nation when it comes to transitioning away from single-use plastics. It is a recognised fact that we are far ahead of the rest of Australia in this regard. Plastic waste harms wildlife. It frequently causes litter, it contaminates recycling efforts and it can be consumed and become part of the food chain. In fact, I dare say that members in this chamber have microplastics in their systems, in their bodies, so this is a public health issue as well. This is a global challenge and Western Australia is leading the rest of Australia in transitioning away from single-use plastics.

As members know, a number of years ago as part of our plan we ditched single-use shopping bags—those cheap grey horrible things that littered the countryside—and that was well received by the community. As part of the second stage of our transition away from single-use plastics, we are now focusing on the ubiquitous coffee cup. We all love a coffee. Unfortunately, far too many coffee cups, at least in the past, have had a plastic lining inside them. They might look like they are cardboard, but in fact, if we tore away the lining and outer shell we would see that they have plastic in them. Again, this is an issue we are addressing. I would say that the first option for people who love a morning cuppa is to take a keep cup when they go to their cafe—keep their own cup in the car—or use an exchange cup in the cafe. If they do use a single-use cup, the solution is a compostable cup that breaks down in the environment and can be more easily sent through a recycling facility.

Recently, I was at the General Public Food Co cafe in Inglewood, sort of near the hoods of the members for Bassendean, Maylands and Mount Lawley—well inside their hoods. It makes a great cuppa. For four years, ever since the business has been open, it has been selling compostable cups and lids—ahead of this requirement. Some people who have tried these lids might discern a different sensation on the lips.

Mr D.J. Kelly: Too much information!

Several members interjected.

Mr R.R. WHITBY: But they get used to it, which is what I am trying to say! They get well and truly used to it. Look, folks, these lids do the job. They maintain a firm grip on the cup, they keep people safe from accidents with the coffee cup—I am trying to keep this as clean as possible!—and they are a wonderful addition. They will make our state stay cleaner.

Turning to the introduction of these changes, the Boomerang Alliance and the National Retail Association are working with us and retailers. Our approach has always been education first. We will not bring out the big stick. We want to encourage people along this journey, and it is working very well. The acceptance of retailers and customers has been excellent.

The end result of this is that the first stage of our Plan for Plastics has diverted 430 million single-use items from landfill. In its second stage that will increase to 700 million items removed from landfill. Over a 20-year period we will see 10 billion fewer single-use plastic items litter and impact our environment. This is a great outcome for Western Australia. It is nation leading, and it is just another of the good, progressive things that this government is doing for Western Australia.

The SPEAKER: Before I give the member the question, I remind people of the no-photography policy. If a photo has been taken with a mobile phone, I ask that it be deleted.