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ENVIRONMENT PROTECTION (MISCELLANEOUS) AMENDMENT BILL

Mr GRIFFITHS (Goyder) (15:47): I indicate that I will be the lead speaker for the opposition on this bill, which has been debated at length after its introduction in the Legislative Council. The opposition supports the bill in its current form.

I do not want to take up a lot of time, but I would like to put some issues on the record. The effort of South Australia in 1977 to introduce progressive legislation such as the 5¢ deposit in the container deposit legislation for non-refillable containers was a very good move. Originally entitled the Beverage Container Act, it is now incorporated into the Environment Protection Act. South Australia holds the title of being the only state in Australia, regrettably, that has adopted this legislation.

In reading some of the documents included in the file, I note that some of the other states are looking at introducing similar legislation, and I think Western Australia now has a 20¢ deposit. Minister Gago, when holding the environment portfolio, campaigned quite extensively in this area. It is a progressive step, and South Australia has certainly benefited from it over the last 31 years.

Not only has it improved enormously our recycling rate of these items but it has also allowed South Australia to be a much cleaner state and to lead by example, compared with many other states of Australia, in what we are prepared to do. While it might be said that this is an expensive effort to bring in now, due to the infrastructure that may be associated with it, there is no doubt that the state has benefited from it.

The scheme was amended in 2003 to cover a wider range of beverages, including plain milk, wine and fruit juice. Containers of over one litre were exempt, but others were included. I think something like 7,000 different products are included in the scheme, and around 1,600 are being added each year.

Mr Goldsworthy interjecting:

Mr GRIFFITHS: I have just been warned by the member for Kavel not to talk about too many things—but too bad.

Mr Pederick interjecting:

Mr GRIFFITHS: We are sharing information, and that is important. In reading some of the comments made by the Hon. Michelle Lensink, in her research on the bill as the shadow environment spokesperson, there was a lot of concern expressed by some of the recycling centres about hoarding because of the timing, that is, from 1 September the deposit refund will automatically increase from 5¢ per item to 10¢ per item.

There was a fear that a lot of people would hoard items and deposit the money after 1 September so they could receive a far greater remuneration. Based on figures that I have seen, in this state, about 470 million items per year have been recycled. Because of hoarding and delays in actually processing these refundable items—which could take some weeks to get them through the initial return depots and then to the larger super collection facilities; it might take at least a month in some cases, and up to three months—there was some fear that, with the additional cost being imposed upon the higher level of refund compared to the amount paid prior to 1 September, it could cost between about \$3 million and \$5.8 million.

When change such as this is implemented, it is hard to do it in such a way that it does not affect the industry. There is no doubt that currently, when the items are being sold, the scheduled amount is being paid. The doubling of the refund to 10¢ from 1 September creates some complications, but I have read some correspondence from the Department for Environment and Heritage stating that it has considered all

these issues and it has determined that swift implementation from 1 September is the best option. Let us hope that that works out.

There has been considerable concern also about large amounts of refundable items being brought in from interstate. I think that would predominantly affect the South-East community of South Australia, where items have been brought in from Victoria. In our shadow cabinet discussions, we have heard about truckloads of materials coming over. I note that this bill introduces fines for that and, where more than 3,000 containers are returned within a 48-hour period, there is an option, I think, to refuse it or to pay a lesser amount to ensure that the opportunity is not rorted. It is a concern.

It is recognised that, over the years, the 5¢ deposit has been a great fund-raising opportunity for a lot of small community groups. Scout groups have been known to do it for many years. I know of sporting clubs and communities where I have lived have done it. There is no doubt that young children have used it as an opportunity to supplement their allowance from their parents. Kids have ridden their bikes over enormous distances to collect cans. I note that some older people in the community also do it regularly.

Mr Goldsworthy interjecting:

Mr GRIFFITHS: There is some malicious gossip going on behind me. It has been a great initiative by South Australia. I recognise that the debate on this bill in the Legislative Council offered some varying opinions. The shadow minister informed me that she had considered introducing amendments, but decided to withdraw them. The industry has been quite strong in its representations to our shadow minister that they wanted the bill to pass through both houses of parliament during this session to allow the legislation to be implemented before 1 September. So, it is a positive step. With those few words, I confirm my personal support for the bill and that of the opposition, and we look forward to contributions from other members about issues that I have not yet canvassed.