

HANSARD 3 NOVEMBER 2011
QUESTION WITHOUT NOTICE
LITTER ACT — PENALTIES

746. Dr M.D. NAHAN to the Minister for Environment:

I was delighted to see the minister's announcement last weekend that the Liberal–National government was taking action to increase penalties for littering. Can the minister please update the house on amendments he is proposing to the Litter Act?

Mr W.R. MARMION replied:

I thank the member for Riverton for the question. I know he has a strong interest in waste in general, and litter in particular.

Several members interjected.

The SPEAKER: Thank you members!

Mr W.R. MARMION: I was pleased to visit Scarborough Beach with the member for Scarborough some weekends ago to announce significant increases in penalties for littering. But it was disappointing that in the time I was there, less than 30 minutes, one junior surf-lifesaver managed to fill a whole bucket of rubbish with litter collected on the beach at Scarborough. The amount of litter on our beaches, our public open spaces, our road verges and our waterways is unacceptable.

Mr W.J. Johnston interjected.

The SPEAKER: Member for Cannington!

Mr W.R. MARMION: It is estimated that the cost of cleaning up our rubbish or litter in Western Australia is about \$20 million a year, and that is a cost that falls on both local governments and state governments. Although in the last three years there has been a slight improvement in the amount of litter in Western Australia, as per the national litter index. It actually has two measures: the number of items per 1 000 square metres and the volume per 1 000 square metres. It is disappointing that we are the second-worst state in Australia after New South Wales for the volume of litter per 1 000 square metres, and we are third-worst state for the number of items of litter. It is very pleasing that this government has endorsed major changes to existing penalties. These changes are as follows. For general littering, breaking glass and bill posting, individual penalties are currently \$1 000 and they will increase to \$5 000, and for corporations, that will increase from \$5 000 to \$10 000. Infringement notices are currently \$200 for an individual and \$200 for a corporation. There is an anomaly in that the infringement notice for cigarette butts is only \$75; that will go up to \$200.

Ms M.M. Quirk interjected.

The SPEAKER: Member of the Girrawheen!

Mr W.R. MARMION: Another important aspect of this bill is that an infringement notice will go from \$200 to \$500 if the litter is of a public risk nature. If someone throws a syringe, a burning cigarette butt or waste on the ground, the on-the-spot penalty will be \$500. The Fire and Emergency Services Authority estimates that 12 per cent of fires are caused by burning cigarette butts, and that is just unacceptable. These new penalties will deliver a strong message that this government does not tolerate littering and those caught will face very heavy financial penalties.