

~~that is indeed what is happening at Rockhampton that the care is being maintained and people are able to access services at the appropriate time.~~

~~(Time expired)~~

~~Mr SPEAKER: The time for question time has ended.~~

~~Mr DEPUTY SPEAKER (Mr O'Brien): Order! I acknowledge the presence in the public gallery of Councillor Shane Sutton. Welcome to Parliament House.~~

ENVIRONMENTAL PROTECTION (GREENTAPE REDUCTION) AND OTHER LEGISLATION AMENDMENT BILL

Introduction and Referral to the Environment, Agriculture, Resources and Energy Committee

Hon. VE DARLING (Sandgate—ALP) (Minister for Environment) (3.32 pm): I present a bill for an act to amend the Aboriginal Cultural Heritage Act 2003, the Coastal Protection and Management Act 1995, the Environmental Protection Act 1994, the Environmental Protection and Other Legislation Amendment Act 2011, the Geothermal Energy Act 2010, the Greenhouse Gas Storage Act 2009, the Mineral Resources Act 1989, the North Stradbroke Island Protection and Sustainability Act 2011, the Petroleum Act 1923, the Petroleum and Gas (Production and Safety) Act 2004, the State Development and Public Works Organisation Act 1971, the Sustainable Planning Act 2009, the Torres Strait Islander Cultural Heritage Act 2003, the Transport Infrastructure Act 1994, the Waste Reduction and Recycling Act 2011, the Water Act 2000 and the Water Supply (Safety and Reliability) Act 2008 for particular purposes. I table the bill and the explanatory notes. I nominate the Environment, Agriculture, Resources and Energy Committee to consider the bill.

Tabled paper: Environmental Protection (Greentape Reduction) and Other Legislation Amendment Bill 2011.

Tabled paper: Environmental Protection (Greentape Reduction) and Other Legislation Amendment Bill 2011, explanatory notes.

I present a bill for an act to reform licensing and assessment processes under the Environmental Protection Act 1994. Specifically, the Environmental Protection (Greentape Reduction) and Other Legislation Amendment Bill 2011 will make it easier and cheaper for Queensland businesses to obtain certain environmental approvals. The amendments will significantly reduce costs for industry and government while upholding the environmental standards the community expects.

The bill is the result of the green-tape reduction project, a two-year project involving comprehensive consultation with industry, government and community. Through the Queensland government's Smart Regulation Reform Agenda the government is committed to reducing the regulatory burden of business and the administrative burden of the government by \$150 million each year by the end of 2013. The changes made under this bill will contribute to this target by making estimated savings of at least \$12.5 million per year for Queensland businesses and the government. These savings will be achieved without reducing the rigorous environmental standards that business is required to meet.

Queensland's unique environment is an asset worth protecting. This government has a strong record of protecting the environment by maintaining strict environmental standards for industry. Some examples of this commitment to environmental protection include the restriction of the use of potentially harmful BTEX chemicals in the coal seam gas industry and limitations on the use of evaporation dams by effectively banning them in all but exceptional circumstances. None of the reforms in this bill undermine these important environmental standards or the close consideration our officers give to high-risk activities. The changes introduced through this bill are essential to modernising the environmental approvals process and bring Queensland into line with best practice, both within Australia and internationally.

Since the Environmental Protection Act was introduced in 1994, environmental regulation has grown significantly. While this was out of necessity to protect our environment, reflecting increased public awareness and scientific developments, we now have an opportunity to consolidate the system and make it more efficient. Green-tape reduction is about cutting unnecessary cost to industry and government by streamlining regulation where it has become complex and difficult to navigate over time.

This bill is the largest reform to the environmental approvals system for 15 years. It will maintain environmental standards but increase efficiency of the system and cut green tape for Queensland businesses, particularly small businesses. The bill implements four key policy objectives: one, a licensing model proportionate to environmental risk; two, flexible operational approvals; three, streamlined approvals processes for mining and petroleum activities; and, four, streamlined and clear information requirements for environmental approvals to increase transparency and ensure a level playing field for business and industry. To bring about these important reforms, the bill redrafts the

provisions of the act relating to licensing for environmentally relevant activities with a focus on streamlining and clarifying assessment and approvals processes.

Major features of the bill include delivering a single legislative process with five clear stages for all environmentally relevant activities including resources activities. This new licensing model will be proportionate to environmental risks so that assessment and compliance efforts can be directed towards those activities and industries where they are needed most. Other key changes include a new standard application process, streamlined transfers and the ability to amalgamate a number of authorities into a single corporate authority. Through the new standard applications process, an environmental authority will be issued automatically for low-risk activities that meet stringent eligibility criteria.

For instance, a small motor vehicle workshop on land zoned for light industry currently must apply to the local council for a development approval which includes assessment of the environmental impacts because the workshop is an environmentally relevant activity under the act. This involves providing extra information such as noise studies and air emissions modelling. Despite this, the approval includes a standardised set of conditions as the impacts of motor vehicle workshops in such locations are well known as are the ways to manage the impacts. Green-tape reduction changes will save the workshop both time and money as it will be a standard application subject to standard conditions. Instead of going through an assessment process, the workshop operator will find these standard conditions on the DERM website, sign a statutory declaration that they can comply with them and submit an application which will register them as operating this environmentally relevant activity. By not having to do a detailed application with environmental studies, the operator will save around \$20,000. Also, their approval is an automatic saving of an average of 68 days statutory processing time, meaning the business can start sooner. This is an estimated saving in delay costs of \$3,700. Following full rollout of the changes, it is expected that more than half of the 2,500 applications that the Department of Environment and Resource Management receives annually and most local government applications will be standard, saving approval time for both industry and government.

The bill will remove the current transfer process for an environmental authority for resources activities. Environmental authorities will automatically transfer with the transfer of the tenure. This removes the need for an average of 530 transfer applications a year. The bill also introduces amalgamated corporate authorities. A corporate authority enables the company holding environmental authorities at different sites to apply to amalgamate its licences into a single authority.

011 That means under the new system a large mining operation with three major coalmines will be able to amalgamate all their environmental authorities into a single document as an amalgamated corporate authority. This will enable all administrative conditions to be merged into a single set of conditions, allowing for a single annual reporting date and consistent requirements across sites. Additionally, if one of those mines has an adjoining power station the overlapping conditions for the mine and the power station will be rationalised so that there is a single set of conditions that apply to the project. During consultation, other companies with multiple sites such as waste and extractive industries noted that this would significantly streamline their administrative and reporting requirements.

Extensive consultation with industry, government and community organisations has occurred at all stages of the green-tape reduction project and during the development of this bill. My department has worked closely with local government to ensure increased efficiencies and provide for options that will allow local governments to maintain the revenue's use for monitoring and compliance activities. In fact, most of the reforms presented in this bill are the result of discussion with these stakeholders during early engagement and consultation. There is significant support for these reforms, especially from business and industry. The department will continue to work with stakeholders to ensure that the benefits of these reforms are fully realised.

To support the legislative changes, guidance materials for industry and government will be rewritten to clarify and prioritise information that is relevant to making a decision on an application. This will reduce the time an applicant spends preparing an application and facilitate robust and timely decisions by government departments. Changes to information systems will be staged to deliver modern business services for clients and the community, including online public registers, application, annual return and fee payment options.

The bill amends a number of other acts to allow a broad range of activities to be seamlessly brought under the new approvals process. These include the Sustainable Planning Act, the Mineral Resources Act, the Petroleum and Gas (Production and Safety) Act, the Greenhouse Gas Storage Act, the Geothermal Energy Act and the Waste Reduction and Recycling Act. This bill represents a major overhaul of the way activities that may impact on the environment are managed in Queensland. The changes are firmly aligned with the objective of the Environmental Protection Act of protecting Queensland's environment while allowing for development that improves the total quality of life both now and in the future in a way that maintains the ecological processes on which life depends. The reforms represent a win-win for government, business, community and the environment. I commend the bill to the House.

First Reading



Hon. VE DARLING (Sandgate—ALP) (Minister for Environment) (3.42 pm): I move—

That the bill be now read a first time.

Question put—That the bill be now read a first time.

Motion agreed to.

Bill read a first time.

Mr DEPUTY SPEAKER (Mr O'Brien): In accordance with standing order 131, the bill is now referred to the Environment, Agriculture, Resources and Energy Committee.

~~FAMILY RESPONSIBILITIES COMMISSION AND OTHER ACTS AMENDMENT BILL~~

~~Second Reading~~

~~Resumed from 25 October (see p. 3384), on motion of Mr Pitt~~

~~That the bill be now read a second time.~~



~~**Hon. PG REEVES** (Mansfield—ALP) (Minister for Child Safety and Minister for Sport) (3.42 pm): I am pleased to be part of a government that is delivering new and innovative opportunities and initiatives to improve and enhance Queensland's child protection sector. As Minister for Child Safety, I am aware that every day thousands of Queenslanders dedicate their lives to ensuring that all children and young people can reach their full potential. Since 2004, this Labor government has systematically rebuilt Queensland's child protection system. It has come a long way since the CMC handed down its *Protecting children: an inquiry into abuse of children in foster care* report, which had 110 recommendations. The Queensland government established the Commission of Inquiry into Abuse of Children in Queensland Institutions, also known as the Forde inquiry, in 1998 and modernised Queensland's child protection legislation with the commencement of the Child Protection Act 1999. Since 2004, the Queensland government has quadrupled the budget and doubled the staff to better meet the needs of children and young people who come into care. The Queensland government will continue to work with families to keep them together and keep children in their homes where it is safe. However, this cannot be at the expense of providing quality care to meet the needs of children and young people who cannot remain at home. We need a balanced approach.~~

~~There are challenges ahead, such as the increasing demand for child protection services and the increase in Indigenous children and young people in care. However, each stage of our reforms has helped build a child protection system better able to meet the needs of children and young people who require protection. Last year I was pleased to introduce to the House the Child Protection and Other Acts Amendment Bill, which laid down the legislative foundations that enabled the Helping Out Families initiative. We are now one year on from the commencement of the Helping Out Families initiative in Logan, Beenleigh and the Gold Coast. What disappoints me the most is that when given the opportunity to speak in favour of the legislation enabling the Helping Out Families initiative to come into force, this is what the member for Aspley said—~~

~~The LNP will not be supporting this bill.~~

~~I note that yesterday members opposite said that I was hiding behind privacy provisions of the act. I remind those members of my statement earlier in the year as follows—~~

~~I have written to the Commissioner for Children and Young People and Child Guardian asking for the Child Death Case Review Committee to consider ways in which it can publicly release a summary of all cases it investigates, including publishing its recommendations.~~

~~Additionally, as Child Safety minister I will release summaries and recommendations from the department's systems and practice reviews each year.~~

~~The LNP has had three child safety shadow ministers in 12 months and not one single policy idea. The last child safety policy was in the form of a discussion paper released on 28 June last year. We have heard nothing since. I take this opportunity to challenge the member for Aspley— if she is still the shadow spokesperson next week, if not I ask her to pass it on to her successor— to release or table her party's current policy on child safety, if it has one. But we know it has not. The LNP is content to sit on the sidelines and criticise without one decent or original policy idea. The LNP has tried to dupe Queenslanders by releasing a flimsy three-page discussion paper, released on 28 June last year, but there are still no clear policies or ideas on child safety. The LNP cannot even get its facts and figures right. This discussion paper released on 28 June last year, which has since been taken off its website, was a slap in the face to Queensland families and Child Safety staff. It further highlights the LNP's disinterest in helping to keep Queensland's children safe. We are still waiting for anything of substance on child safety from the LNP, because a discussion paper is not a policy. That discussion paper was released on 28 June last year and there has been no comment since.~~