



Speech by

Hon. R. WELFORD

MEMBER FOR EVERTON

Hansard 1 December 1999

MINISTERIAL STATEMENT

Environmental Nuisance

Hon. R. J. WELFORD (Everton—ALP) (Minister for Environment and Heritage and Minister for Natural Resources) (10.08 a.m.), by leave: The Beattie Government places a strong emphasis on actions to improve the quality of life for all Queenslanders. It has tackled some of the bigger environmental challenges such as the regional forest agreement, and we are tackling vegetation management. We are now providing solutions to everyday issues that have a very strong impact on people's quality of life and their right to a peaceful existence in their own home.

From today, Queenslanders—no matter where they live—will not have to tolerate excess noise or other environmental nuisance. To give members a sense of this problem, each year the Environmental Protection Authority and local governments receive more than 13,000 complaints about disturbances from these activities.

Queenslanders will now have the benefit of new laws that cover a wide range of noise issues, such as power boats, jet skis, pool pumps, barking dogs and nuisance from dust, smoke, odour and light. This is a new and sensible approach to managing environmental nuisance, achieved by consolidating existing laws previously overseen by a combination of local governments and State agencies. In a victory for commonsense, this Government has brought these nuisance matters under one legislative umbrella—the Environmental Protection Regulation 1999—instead of being dispersed amongst different authorities. This change provides an avenue for people to seek redress if they feel aggrieved by persistent nuisance activities, no matter where they live in Queensland.

This is not about Government intervening in people's lives. These regulations will be driven only by complaint, and action cannot be taken unless a complaint is made. There is now certainty about where to seek redress. Local government has agreed to take responsibility for handling residential issues, while the Environmental Protection Agency will be responsible for non-residential or commercial matters.

These new laws specify acceptable hours of operation and noise levels for nuisance. They cover the unreasonable release of various emissions, including ash from burning, dust from construction and odour from rubbish or compost heaps. There is provision for warning notices, on-the-spot fines and abatement notices when the laws are breached. These new regulations will not apply to businesses already licensed under either the Environmental Protection Act or the Liquor Act, as those licenses already regulate environmental nuisance impacts.

While these new laws take effect today, there will be a two-month moratorium before any penalties apply, giving the community time to understand the new arrangements. During this period, the Environmental Protection Agency will be conducting a comprehensive education and awareness campaign for the public, industry and local governments. Information will be provided on the times when certain activities can be conducted and where people can go to make a complaint. From 1 February, on-the-spot fines or abatement notices will be able to be issued if regulations are breached.

This is an initiative developed with the support and involvement of the Local Government Association of Queensland. Through the EPA and local government working together, this new legislation will ensure long-overdue improvements in the quality of life for all Queenslanders, not just those in our cities.