



Speech by

CHRIS CUMMINS

MEMBER FOR KAWANA

Hansard 30 May 2001

ENVIRONMENTAL PROTECTION LEGISLATION AMENDMENT BILL

Mr CUMMINS (Kawana—ALP) (8.32 p.m.): I am happy to rise tonight to speak to the Environmental Protection Legislation Amendment Bill. I applaud the Environment Minister for ensuring that these issues will be addressed and realising that various local governments through Queensland, via the Queensland Local Government Association, are in favour of the extension, as the previous speaker, the member for Keppel, has stated.

I believe that the vast majority of Australians, especially Queenslanders, are more environmentally conscious than ever before. I will take this opportunity to bring to the attention of the House an issue of major importance and significance to my electorate of Kawana and the local community. It does deal with a matter of waste but it is actually the somewhat distasteful subject of treatment of effluent—sewage and its disposal.

The Caloundra City Council has a licence to discharge under its commercial water and sewage provider, Calacqua. This licence to discharge is via an ocean outfall located off Warana, Bokarina and Kawana Waters. I believe that the community now demands that the effluent treated is at least treated to a higher standard before being discharged into our ocean. Along with improvements to our environmental standards, a long-term alternative strategy should be investigated instead of pumping millions of litres of treated effluent daily into the ocean. Yes, I am aware of the investigations being carried out into the Brisbane-Lockyer effluent pipeline.

There also exists, as part of the discharge licence held by Calacqua, an ability to pump sewage into the Mooloolah River under emergency conditions. I support an immediate investigation, and this licence to discharge into the Mooloolah River should be revoked, as the people of Kawana—in fact, the majority of the Sunshine Coast—believe that this is an archaic way of disposing of effluent. There are alternatives to pumping this sewage into the Mooloolah River. It is done only in emergency situations. I believe that Calacqua, the commercial body of Caloundra City Council, has the land and the ability to build an emergency holding tank or tanks that will ensure that, instead of pumping sewage effluent into the river, they could pump it into the holding tanks to discharge it into the ocean at a later time. Realising that the Mooloolah River still has a quality control problem that also urgently needs to be addressed, I believe a 10 megalitre holding tank or pond should be sufficient to address the problem. I hope the Caloundra City Council, the state government and the federal government can work to achieve a better long-term solution to see no ocean effluent discharge within the next five to 10 years.

I will mention the amounts of sewage discharge into the Mooloolah River going back to February 1999. Up to four days at a time, treated sewage is continuously pumped into the Mooloolah River. The details are as follows: on 19 May 1999, 2.2 megalitres estimated outfall was pumped into the Mooloolah River. It was opened at 7.45 p.m. on 19 May 1999—Wednesday night—and it closed at 7 a.m. on 20 May 1999—Thursday. For approximately 12 hours overnight, in excess of two million litres was pumped. On 1 March 1999, 7.5 megalitres estimated outfall was pumped into the Mooloolah River. It was opened at 12.30 a.m. on 1 March 1999—Monday—and closed at 10.30 a.m. on 4 March 1999—Thursday. Over four days, approximately 7.5 million litres of treated sewage effluent was pumped. On 9 February 1999, two megalitres estimated outfall was pumped into the river. It was opened at 8 p.m. on 9 February 1999—a Tuesday evening—and closed at 5 a.m. the following Wednesday, 10 February 1999. Nine hours overnight and two million litres!

I have heard the Leader of the Opposition and his side of politics support continued investigations into better alternatives than pumping sewage effluent into our water bodies. I have spoken to the Environmental Protection Agency, and I hope that further investigations continue.

I seek leave of the House to table three relevant documents, including the sewage discharge going back to February 1993 and schedule C of the water discharge licence.

Leave granted.

Mr CUMMINS: I therefore support this amendment, which will see the Local Government Act given a longer time to comply with landfill and the issues that surround that.
