Speech by

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ENVIRONMENTAL PROTECTION LEGISLATION AMENDMENT BILL [No. 2]

Dr KINGSTON (Maryborough—Ind) (9.28 p.m.): I rise to make a short contribution to the debate on the Environmental Protection Legislation Amendment Bill (No. 2) 2001. I am constantly disappointed that we, as a civilised state, as the Smart State, continue to have an accumulating problem with the disposal of biological waste, be it municipal waste, sewerage effluent or intensive industry animal by-products. For example, we continue to look at landfill as a satisfactory disposal method when, increasingly, landfill has proven to be a more costly and a more inefficient technology. The disappointing fact is that better technologies exist and in general are not being utilised. The reason why such technologies, such as the Bedminster system, are not being established is the high initial capital cost.

To explain a little: the Bedminster system is a totally enclosed system—in fact a very large shed—into which normal council biological waste, not glass and not steel, is placed. It is then inoculated, using sewerage sludge, which is often an embarrassment to a lot of councillors, and left for biological degradation to take place, finally producing a product saleable as potting mix—incidentally, not producing odours like other community-annoying products. I strongly suggest that the Smart State should assist councils to set up such systems. If councils can meet the high initial capital cost, once established such systems are cheaper to run, cheaper to maintain and can be income earning.

By so doing, there will be no need to talk about megadumps. Currently, the Cooloola shire and neighbouring shires are looking at a megadump—and have been for some years. Currently, the potential site is not far from Tinana Creek. Maryborough draws its water supply from Tinana Creek. The soils through which the effluent from that megadump may drain are not impervious, and it would be very difficult to protect Tinana Creek and thus very difficult to protect Maryborough's water supply.

I was very happy to hear the member for Kawana mention the rivers of the north coast. Recently, we almost completed a study on the Mary River. Currently, the Mary River supports a population of almost 2,000 people, but QUT predicts that in 20 years it will have to support a population of 600,000 people, and the majority of that increase will occur on the north coast. That means that the communities of Kawana, Caloundra and others will be reliant on the Mary River for water. It has already been calculated that that increased demand of 600,000 people is far too much for the capacity of the Mary River, and the Mary River is the most stable and reliable river system within the state of Queensland.

Another fertile area for increased funding and research is aquaculture effluent research. Traditionally, effluent from aquaculture has been treated by sedimentation ponds. Sedimentation ponds always contain some risk that, first, they do not work; and, secondly, that they overflow. There are already defined better biological methods, and some have been installed in Queensland. For instance, near Townsville an aquaculture industry uses an algal filtration system. Another uses an oyster bed filtration system, and in other parts of the world beche-de-mer are used as a system of cleaning up detritus from aquaculture ponds. Thus, there is a facility which has several organisms growing in it, and all of the organisms are saleable.

In conclusion, the use of productive biological processes is limited only by our imagination and by our research funding. I encourage the Smart State to adopt the investigation of the implementation of biological waste systems as a formal developmental strategy.