




Speech by
Grace Grace

MEMBER FOR BRISBANE CENTRAL

Hansard Tuesday, 11 October 2011

WASTE REDUCTION AND RECYCLING BILL

 **Ms GRACE** (Brisbane Central—ALP) (8.10 pm): I rise to speak in support of the Waste Reduction and Recycling Bill 2011. Queensland's existing waste management laws are outdated and do not reflect modern waste management practices and issues—an issue that has been ignored by those opposite. The current waste management legislation mainly deals with managing the impacts of pollution caused by waste, not reducing waste generation in the first place, which is what this bill aims to do. Each year the amount of waste generated in Queensland grows faster than our population, and clearly this is unsustainable. Queensland cannot afford to continue producing waste at such unsustainable levels. We cannot continue to behave in a business-as-usual manner.

The bill introduces an industry waste disposal levy starting from 1 December this year, and I think that that is a step in the right direction. We currently have some of the cheapest waste disposal charges in Australia and the introduction of the levy will help to stop Queensland becoming the dumping ground for waste from other states. Unlike the members for Mudgeeraba, Mermaid Beach and Currumbin who hold Gold Coast seats, we are not going to stand by and allow the continual waste dumping by the southern states into Queensland. This has to stop. Those members may want to come into the House and support the continuation of the southern states bringing their rubbish and dumping it in Queensland, but we will make sure that that does not continue.

The levy is just one of a suite of waste reform initiatives that will bring Queensland into line with other mainland states and drive Queensland into a low-waste future. In fact, despite the Chicken Littles opposite running around saying that it is all doom and gloom with this bill, I was quite shocked to learn that we are the only mainland state that does not have a levy in relation to waste. The introduction of the industry waste levy is designed to send a price signal to business and industry to encourage greater waste reduction and recycling. Those who choose to continue with a business-as-usual attitude will pay more to send their waste to landfill. It is important to remember that the waste levy is an avoidable cost. I repeat that for those opposite: this is an avoidable cost. If waste generators from businesses and the government sector reduce the amount of waste that they send to landfill by improving their waste management practices, they avoid paying the levy. That is a significant issue that is being ignored by those opposite. The levy will apply to the disposal of commercial and industrial waste, construction and demolition waste, contaminated and acid sulfate soils, and regulated or hazardous waste. No-one can come into this House and honestly admit that in those sectors those businesses cannot do a better job of reducing the waste that goes into landfill. This levy will drive them to do that.

The levy ranges from \$35 a tonne for commercial and industrial waste up to \$150 a tonne for high-hazard regulated waste. I have been on many job sites and I am sure that the construction industry as one industry could do a lot better in minimising the amount of waste that goes into landfill. The levy will not be charged on municipal solid waste or, as we know it, domestic waste. Householders already pay a flat waste disposal fee in their council rates and do not have the same opportunity as businesses will have under this bill to avoid paying the levy by reducing their waste or recycling. The levy zone covers 34 local government areas, including South-East Queensland and major regional local governments. Landfill operators will be required to calculate and pay the levy amount and report monthly through a new web

based database. The levy will apply to the disposal of waste generated within the levy zone regardless of whether the waste is disposed of inside or outside the levy zone. These measures are designed to prevent people trying to avoid the levy by, for example, transporting waste outside the levy zone. The levy zone also applies to waste generated outside of the levy zone but disposed of inside the levy zone, which will discourage waste from interstate being dumped in Queensland. As I have said, others may be happy to continue to accept the waste from interstate. This side of the parliament is going to put a stop to it.

It is important to note that the bill also allows for certain waste to be exempt from the levy. I think that makes eminent sense. That waste includes things like disaster waste, clean-up waste from illegal dumping or litter and waste dumped on charities, and that is a most beneficial part of the bill. There has been a substantial amount of consultation to ensure that all stakeholders have had ample opportunity to have input into the levy development. The industry waste levy will deliver an estimated \$338 million over four years, with the revenue raised from the levy being used to deliver a wide range of programs to Queensland businesses, local governments and communities—another issue which has been largely ignored by those opposite. This revenue will be used to fund targeted programs that will encourage industry investment, advance research and development, and encourage local solutions to reduce waste generation and increase recycling opportunities for materials that were previously sent to landfill. That is what this bill is trying to generate, and I believe this bill will certainly deliver that outcome.

In an Australian first—I repeat, in an Australian first—the Queensland government has also created a generous infrastructure assistance program to enable local government landfills to become levy ready. Local government will be able to access grants to upgrade their site facilities and install infrastructure such as weighbridges. The Queensland government's waste reform agenda is not just about creating a sustainable and resource-efficient Queensland; it is also about growing green jobs for the future. In fact, commercial operators have already expressed to the government substantial interest in introducing new organics recovery technologies to Queensland, and that has to be a much better future for Queensland than what is available under the current laws.

This bill provides a comprehensive range of innovative measures to cut waste and grow the resource recovery industry in Queensland. It is a step in the right direction. It has safeguards. What I do not understand is why those opposite continue to want to support polluters in this country. They continue to want to support the big polluters. When it comes to the carbon tax, they want to support the biggest polluters in this country. When it comes to waste in landfill, they want to support the biggest polluters of waste in landfills. We are about stopping the polluters, not about compensating them. I commend the bill to the House.