



Speech by


**Mark Ryan**

**MEMBER FOR MORAYFIELD**

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## **WASTE REDUCTION AND RECYCLING BILL**

 **Mr RYAN** (Morayfield—ALP) (10.10 pm): I rise to contribute to the debate on the Waste Reduction and Recycling Bill 2011. This bill is an important part of the government's plan to reform waste management in Queensland and cut the amount of waste going into landfill in half by 2020. This bill is about stopping Queensland from becoming the dumping ground for Australia.

Among other important reforms, this bill introduces a levy on the disposal of waste to landfill. This reform will pull Queensland into line with other mainland states which have been discouraging landfill disposal and funding popular waste minimisation programs for many years through just such a levy.

The levy is scheduled to commence on 1 December 2011 and will apply to commercial, industrial and construction waste within a levy zone covering most of the state's populous areas. I want to make it very clear that no levy applies to household waste, kerbside collections, municipal solid waste and self-haul residential waste—no levy. So to some extent I am quite shocked and appalled by the obsessional opposition to this bill by the opposition.

I am particularly concerned by some comments that I read in an article on the *Brisbane Times* website that was published today. The article is titled 'Newman subject of political trash talk'. It is by the journalist Daniel Hurst. In that article the journalist refers to some statements that the parliamentary leader of the LNP has made. The article states—

But LNP parliamentary leader Jeff Seeney said tonight the claims were 'just the normal baseless garbage that Labor backbenchers always claim in parliament'.

Mr Seeney told [brisbanetimes.com.au](http://brisbanetimes.com.au) the state LNP had opposed the waste levy from the beginning and no one in the party room had ever voiced support for the measure.

The trash talk of the parliamentary opposition leader continues, the tactical untruths continue, the misleading and the hypocrisy of the opposition leader continue when he pontificates about his high standards in representing the integrity of arguments. That shocks me to a large extent, because I note that during the member for Noosa's budget reply speech he said—

Let us look at the \$35 per tonne landfill levy on industry wastes.

...

Queensland is the last state in Australia to introduce such a levy.

And he continues—

... we now have a levy on which to expand an industry. This certainly is a win for the recycling industry, with a promised 7,000 jobs and an expanded industry, and it is a win for the environment if it reduces landfill by a third as projected. But it is also a win, if the government can be believed, for environmental funding particularly at the local and regional council levels.

That is very far from the statement of the member for Callide that 'no-one in the party room had ever voiced support for the measure'. But during the 2010 estimates hearing the member for Noosa also said—

How will this levy stop other states dumping waste in Queensland if it will still be cheaper to dump in Queensland, unless the government also intends to keep increasing this revenue-raising scheme to match?

By implication, the member for Noosa is saying that the levy is too low. Again, that is very far from the statement of the member for Callide in the *Brisbane Times* that 'no-one in the party room had ever voiced support for the measure'—very far indeed.

Right through the waste reform process the government has been consulting with local government and the business community. To a great extent, this bill has been shaped by the suggestions and issues that have been raised by stakeholders from local government and business. Because of this, I note with some surprise that the Moreton Bay Regional Council has taken to campaigning against this levy. The council has been encouraging businesses to write in and phone in protesting about the levy. There is nothing wrong with this. Councils have a very important role to play in informing businesses of the upcoming levy, as do businesses and industry associations.

I understand that the government has been working very closely with all these groups—for example, by funding industry associations to hold forums for businesses to get the word out about the levy and how to avoid the impact of the levy by minimising waste generation and disposal. So there is nothing wrong with informing businesses about the levy—quite the opposite. But it is important to get the facts right. Let us be clear: this is not a levy on all waste; it is only a levy on waste that is disposed to landfill.

I understand that the minister's office recently had a telephone call from a landscape business concerned about information from the Moreton Bay Regional Council. That business was worried that the levy would apply to green waste such as lawn clippings from his business. The levy will not apply to segregated green waste at council tips because this is waste that is put aside for recycling. Landfill operators will also receive a levy rebate for other types of waste they separate and recycle. So the levy is not a levy on all waste; it is only a levy on landfill disposal. In this sense the levy is an avoidable tax as it does not apply to waste that is diverted from landfill to recycling or to waste that is not generated in the first place.

Make no mistake about it: the bill establishes a levy as a price signal to drive down landfill disposal and encourage waste reduction and recycling practices. Businesses that continue to generate landfill waste in the same way can expect to pay more to do so post 1 December 2011. But certainly those businesses that are lean and minimise their waste disposal will have a competitive advantage under the levy scheme. Having said that, the government is aware of the many pressures facing businesses. Business associations have represented the difficulty that many businesses face in even assessing the cost of waste to their business and in beginning to cut waste. The government has received loud and clear the messages that in order to cut waste business needs information and support, needs assistance to identify and act on waste generation and needs real alternatives to disposal for the waste they do generate. In recognition of this, the government will reinvest a considerable amount of the funds raised from the levy into assisting businesses to cut their waste.

The bill establishes a Waste and Environment Fund to channel funds raised by the levy into waste management and environmental initiatives. In the first four years of the levy's implementation, an estimated \$338 million will be raised. From this money, \$159 million over four years will be distributed to assist businesses, industry and local governments to cut waste.

I am also aware that the Moreton Bay Regional Council is concerned about the cost implications to council as a result of the introduction of the levy. Internal Department of Environment and Resource Management estimates are that \$36,000 per year will be required by the Moreton Bay Regional Council for additional administration tasks for the levy. This includes submitting monthly reports from the three landfill sites in an online summary return, adjusting any mistakes in weighbridge data, ensuring the monthly levy payment is processed and conducting an annual volumetric survey of each site. Like most councils in the levy zone, the Moreton Bay Regional Council has received grant funding from the government under stage 2 of the local government weighbridge and ancillary equipment program.

This has been a very interesting debate. To some extent, the grouchiness displayed by members of the opposition is epitomised in a very famous character from *Sesame Street*, Oscar the Grouch. The description of Oscar the Grouch is very similar to some of the behaviour we have seen recently from Mr Newman. I have read that Oscar the Grouch is a Muppet character from the television show *Sesame Street* who has a green body but in the first season was orange. To a large extent, he changes positions like the Leader of the Opposition. This bill is a good bill.

*(Time expired)*