




Speech by

Deb Frecklington

MEMBER FOR NANANGO

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ENVIRONMENTAL PROTECTION (GREENTAPE REDUCTION) AND OTHER LEGISLATION AMENDMENT BILL

 **Mrs FRECKLINGTON** (Nanango—LNP) (5.45 pm): I rise to support the Environmental Protection (Greentape Reduction) and Other Legislation Amendment Bill. As Assistant Minister for Regulatory Reform I am pleased to support this bill. I congratulate the Minister for Environment and Heritage Protection, the member for Glass House, Mr Andrew Powell, for his contribution to our government's task of reducing red tape and regulatory burden to assist industry and business throughout our great state. As with red tape, the introduction of this bill will carry through with our election promises.

This bill is the most significant reform to the licensing processes under the Environmental Protection Act 1994 since its commencement. Over time we have seen the dramatic increase in regulation in an effort to allay community environmental fears without real consideration of the effect the regulation will have on the economy. This bill introduces a licensing model that is proportionate to the environmental risk of the activity being carried out.

The major change in this bill is the replacement of chapters 4, 5, 5A and 6 with the new chapter 5, which will create a single approval process for environmental authorities. This allows some 90 pages to be cut. Finally, Queensland industries will have an environmental regulatory framework that recognises that each industry has different regulatory requirements that correspond with varying degrees of environmental risk. Looking at relevant examples in this respect, a wooden product manufacturing plant, for instance, is of much lower environmental risk than a power plant, and the new regulatory framework takes this into account.

Rather than a one-size-fits-all system, this bill introduces different tracks to apply to activities with varying risk. For lower risk businesses with lower environmental impacts, a standard application process has been introduced. This means that eligible low-risk businesses can be automatically approved to operate under a set of standard conditions. The savings in both time and money to businesses that result from the new standard application process are quantifiable but also very welcomed by business and industry alike.

The honourable Minister for Environment and Heritage Protection mentioned in his introductory speech—and I think it is worth stating again—that each low-risk business will save around \$20,000 on average in preparation costs, 150 pages in avoided application materials and up to 68 days in processing times. This is a real time advantage for small and medium business in particular, as approximately half of all businesses will be eligible for a standard application process. For example, under the present regulations, tyre storage requires both a development approval under the Sustainable Planning Act and a registration certificate. This means that these business owners are subject to two sets of application fees, additional annual fees and costs associated with delays in the application process which could amount to as much as \$10,000 per business. The bill removes the requirement for a development application in relation to the EPA requirements and a registration certificate for low-risk environmental activities such as tyre storage.

Eligible low-risk businesses instead will be able to obtain automatic environmental approval with standard conditions which are published and developed in a transparent way on an assessment of the risks associated with the activity. Businesses will no longer be required to apply. All they will need to do is add their names to an industry register. The new regulatory framework will mean significant administrative cost savings for low-risk businesses and it is hoped that savings made by businesses can be passed on to clients.

There will be also savings for both state and local governments. Currently, we are heading towards a state deficit of \$2.8 billion and an \$85 billion debt left by Labor. Therefore, we need to work with industry and business and, in particular, small business within our regions to revise our economy. This bill provides that the mining and petroleum approval processes can be streamlined, reducing time and more red tape. Time frames for the assessment can be reduced by around three months. Local government will also benefit from this bill as the savings and streamlining of approvals will, amongst other things, reduce unnecessary planning referrals to local governments, reduce administration of low-risk activities, remove the need for registration certificates and the maintenance of single approval documents.

Most importantly, these savings do not come at an environmental cost. Environmental standards will be maintained. Whether environmental activities are low risk or high risk, still they will be required to meet conditions set by the department and the environmental outcomes will not be affected. I congratulate the Hon. Minister for Environment and Heritage Protection and Mr Ian Rickuss who chaired the committee that considered this bill. I am pleased to support a bill that provides an innovative and commonsense approach to regulation. I commend the bill to the House.