



Speech by
Desley Scott

MEMBER FOR WOODRIDGE

Hansard Wednesday, 11 July 2012

**WASTE REDUCTION AND RECYCLING AMENDMENT REGULATION
(NO. 1): DISALLOWANCE**

 **Mrs SCOTT** (Woodridge—ALP) (8.20 pm): Madam Speaker—

Mr Johnson: Fight the losing argument, Des.

Mrs SCOTT: I also have a document from a small business in support of the levy, which is very interesting. I rise to speak in support of the disallowance motion moved in relation to the Waste Reduction and Recycling Amendment Regulation. The industry waste—

Government members interjected.

Mrs SCOTT: I am sorry but government members are now making fools of themselves. The industry waste levy was established by the previous government with the aim of creating a low-waste state that looked for creative ways of reducing waste production in the first place and by treating waste that cannot be avoided as a resource rather than a problem.

Mr POWELL: Madam Speaker, I rise to a point of order. The member for Woodridge made reference to a document. We are wondering if the member for Woodridge would please table that document so we can consider the positive feedback that was provided to her from a member of the waste business industry.

Mr Stevens interjected.

Madam SPEAKER: Order! Manager of Government Business. Member for Woodridge, do you have the document here in the House?

Mrs SCOTT: I am planning to quote from it, Madam Speaker.

Madam SPEAKER: There has been a point of order with respect to the tabling of a document in the House. I will take advice.

Mrs Miller interjected.

Madam SPEAKER: Order! Member for Bundamba, you are not in your correct seat. Minister, you have raised a point of order. You would have to seek leave to move a motion for that document to be tabled.

Mr POWELL: I seek leave to move that the document that the member for Woodridge is referring to be tabled.

Division: Question put—That leave be granted.

In division—

Madam SPEAKER: Order! Honourable members, the minister sought leave and I provided the wrong advice. He did not need to seek leave in that regard. So the motion to seek leave as such is not required. The question that has to be put is that the minister is seeking to move a motion under the

standing orders regarding the issue that he referred to before. I apologise for the lack of clarity. Is the minister seeking to do so?

Mr POWELL: Yes, Madam Speaker. I am seeking for the document to be tabled pursuant to a motion moved without notice, amendment or debate by me. So under standing order 30, I move—

That the document referred to by the member for Woodridge be tabled.

Question put—That the motion be agreed to.

Motion agreed to.

Mrs SCOTT: Madam Speaker, I am only too happy to table this. If you would like to read it, I would like to incorporate it into *Hansard*.

Tabled paper: Document, dated 10 July 2012, titled 'The Rubbish Removers current position' [\[516\]](#).

Madam SPEAKER: The member has agreed to table it. I have not seen the document so it cannot be incorporated.

Mrs SCOTT: This document comes from a business called The Rubbish Removers. The document is titled 'The Rubbish Removers current position', dated 10 July 2010. It states—

The previous government changed the entire waste industry by adding a levy to businesses dumping into landfill. The reasons given were

1. Prevent the transfer of waste from NSW to QLD. (NSW already having a waste levy in place and dumping in QLD represented a significant saving in dumping costs)
2. Promote recycling and change the attitude towards landfill.

The waste levy was introduced with a sweetener that the levy funds would provide infrastructure grants to those in the waste industry who changed business practice from land fill to recycling.

Over the years we had seen tonnes of 'good' recyclable product being dumped from our skip bins and saw this as an opportunity we could take to start recycling with two huge viability factors.

- Our competitors would need to raise the cost of their skip bins to cover the waste levy fee, we therefore could put our prices up in line with them but use the extra margins to help cover the daily overheads of recycling.
- The promised grants would help towards the massive start up infrastructure cost.

So The Rubbish Removers changed practice. Landfill to Recycling. From a tidy small cheap office with good hours and comfortable life style to an expensive 1500sq m shed, long hard hours, and a life style that no one would be jealous of. All bins were hauled into the depot and hand decanted by us. Long hours and long weeks as we could not afford full time staff. Green waste, cardboard, metals, re-saleables, charity donations and residual waste was waste streamed. Saturdays became a working day as we ran a 'garage sale/tip shop' to sell the resaleables to cover the cost of the rent. We kept going because we believe that Australia does not deserve her soil filled with our discarded resources and that the government believed the same way, and were supporting us with finances for infrastructure.

The grant applications closed 5th April 2012 and we had aligned the 'next steps' of our business plan to coincide with funding. This was to purchase mechanised sorting & recycling equipment and to get serious in our discussions with 'Social Ventures' as we were aiming on utilising marginalised employment—giving employment training and skills to disengaged and unemployed people.

Several weeks later—after us calling DERM/EPA for time line estimates of the grants we were told they had been cancelled. Leaving us high and bone dry.

We have been ringing Andrew Powell's Office since (chief of staff Troy Collings) for the current Governments waste policy—however this has not been forthcoming. *As an aside it is very hard to run a small business with the comings and goings of governments. We had believed that ordinances made through parliament could be relied on—but apparently not.*

So we have come too far to turn back. And despite the Government's lack of support for recovering resources from product destined to landfill we believe that what we are doing is right for our land and resources.

Our chances of survival have slimmed down to poor odds. The cost of dumping in Brisbane varies across the locations—but we can dump C & D for \$33+gst tonne.

The cost of recovery—particularly in leasing premises and employing staff makes recycling non viable long term. Our own personal (and our families) money has been used to provide some of the infrastructure we needed. Our chance of employing more people has been cut to the barest staff requirements.

Dot point Overhead costs are higher to recycle. To make it clear to the 'non business' people our skip bins competitors can now slash their prices for rubbish removal. Their overheads are running an office/trucks and dump fees. Whereas our overheads include the cost of leasing, staff and equipment for recycling the product. There is some income from the salvage of re-saleables and metals, but much of the product is non profit. (Green waste, cardboard, charity, clothing etc) It is therefore harder to remain competitive in the market place.

The bottom line, it is easier and cheaper to LAND FILL—so why shouldn't we follow the governments lead and fill our landfill pits with recoverable resources?

Minister, I think it is a disgrace that you are not taking this seriously.

An opposition member: Just like his staff.

Mrs SCOTT: Yes. The industry waste levy was established by the previous government with the aim of creating a low-waste state that looked for creative ways of reducing waste production in the first place and by treating waste that cannot be avoided as a resource rather than a problem. This is because the current rates of waste generation, resource wastage and disposal in Queensland are unsustainable.

Moving towards a more resource efficient society will reduce the environmental, social and economic impact of waste and place a higher value on recovering resources previously considered waste.

Effective waste management is not only an environmental issue; it also has economic consequences and it creates job opportunities for Queenslanders. The waste levy was one of a raft of environmental policies that the LNP pledged to cut before the last election. These cuts included the Queensland Climate Change Fund, Queensland Renewable Energy Fund, Queensland Smart Energy Savings Fund, Queensland Future Growth Fund, Solar Initiatives Package, Solar Flagships Program, Waste Avoidance and Resource Efficiency Fund and Local Government Sustainable Future Fund.

Soon after the election stakeholders were told in a letter from Tony Roberts, the Assistant Director-General, Natural Resources and Environment, Department of Environment and Heritage Protection, 'This levy will not be replaced and programs that may have been funded by this levy have been suspended.' In response to a letter that warned that discontinuation of the levy will make it economically attractive to send waste from Sydney and the Hunter regions to South-East Queensland, Mr Roberts responded—

Your concerns in relation to the interstate waste coming into Queensland are noted. Although the levy will be repealed, provisions of the Act relating to waste disposal and recycling reporting at landfills will be retained. Information that waste disposal sites will still be required to provide an annual report that includes the amount and type of waste and where it came from. This gives the department the ability to monitor interstate waste movements.

When the waste levy was repealed, the provisions of the Waste Reduction and Recycling Act remained operational. Minister Andrew Powell has said that the levy could be returned if there was support for it at a general election. Nonetheless, pursuant to sections 152 and 153 of the act, reporting entities such as landfills and recycling centres must provide an annual report on waste types, amount collected and the origin of the waste. Without the levy, there will be no incentive for industry to reduce waste disposal to landfill. I therefore support the disallowance motion.