



Speech by
Jackie Trad

MEMBER FOR SOUTH BRISBANE

Hansard Wednesday, 11 July 2012

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

 **Ms TRAD** (South Brisbane—ALP) (7.30 pm): I move—

That the Waste Reduction and Recycling Amendment Regulation (No. 1) 2012, Subordinate Legislation No. 77 of 2012, tabled in the House on 10 July 2012, be disallowed.

The repealing of the Queensland waste levy is belligerent and an unthinking decision. It is entirely consistent with this LNP government, although it is not surprising coming from a government that wants to take Queensland back—back to the good old days, back to a time when you could call your LNP mate and send them down to the government printers to measure up before moving in, back to a time when there was no accountability, no answers, no FOI, no RTI, and certainly back to a time when there was no future thought about the environment and how to protect it for future generations.

It is even more inconceivable that a government in the 21st century would seek to repeal a waste levy and bring the state out of step with the rest of Australia when you look at the outcome that effective waste management strategies have had on modern civilisation—from proper sewerage systems that have led to improved public health and better urban environments and that are the cornerstone of modern society, to council rates levied to ensure the proper processing of domestic waste and ensure our streets are clean, and then to air quality which is cleaner because making polluters pay and making pollutants more expensive means changes in behaviour.

I know the minister has heard this before. He was present at the Landcare state conference when Australian of the Year, Tim Flannery, articulated just this. Either he just does not get it or he just does not care. If we want a cleaner environment, we have to use the levers available to government to change behaviour. Today I rise to oppose the repeal of the waste levy because Queensland cannot go back now.

The introduction of a waste levy was a move designed to bring Queensland into the 21st century. This fact was acknowledged by the member for Noosa and then opposition spokesperson, Glen Elmes, in parliament on 11 June 2010. He stood in this House and said—

Queensland is the last state in Australia to introduce such a levy. On World Environment Day, the Premier, the Treasurer and the then acting minister jointly confessed that Queensland's waste management industry would finally be dragged into the 21st century ... 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.

These were the words from the member for Noosa. I table a copy of the member's speech for the benefit of the House.

Tabled paper: Extract from the Record of Proceedings, dated 11 June 2012, pages 2184-7, regarding the Appropriation Bills and Revenue Legislation Amendment Bill [\[513\]](#).

With such a well-researched and considered opinion, I look forward to the member for Noosa supporting this disallowance motion in the House here tonight.

As members would know, the previous Labor government unveiled plans to introduce a waste levy as part of the Waste Reduction and Recycling Strategy 2010-20. The Waste Reduction and Recycling Act 2011 outlines the waste levy charges which were introduced in December 2011. This levy adds \$35 per

tonne to general waste, \$50 per tonne for low hazard waste and \$150 per tonne for high hazard waste. Despite what those opposite claim, the levy does not apply to domestic or household waste. It is a charge on industry and it is avoidable if businesses act to reduce their landfill disposal. The introduction of the waste levy is good Labor policy. It was built from years of careful consideration—

Government members interjected.

Mr DEPUTY SPEAKER (Dr Robinson): Order! Those on my right will cease interjecting. The member has the call.

Ms TRAD: Thank you, Mr Deputy Speaker, for your control of the chamber. It was built from years of careful consideration and consultation. In the process of developing the legislation, Labor sought to bring people together—councils, businesses, environmentalists and academics. The waste levy is an example of what Labor does best: it delivers for future generations. Indeed, Labor continues to have our eyes firmly set on the future—a future where sustainable business practices are rewarded and our dependence on landfill is reduced, a future where Queensland is the No. 1 state in the country for recycling and reusing.

The waste levy was a major step forward towards achieving this future. The revenue raised from the levy goes directly back into protecting our environment. Over the next four years, the \$380 million raised from the levy would have helped councils—and government members claim to be the friends of councils—introduce and maintain sustainable waste practices as well as provide much needed funding for environmental initiatives. These initiatives included: a \$120 million local government sustainability fund for council funded environmental projects aimed at improving waste management facilities and practices; a \$150 million waste avoidance and resource efficiency fund to assist businesses and industry reduce the amount of waste they generate and to increase industry investment in new technologies, particularly in regional Queensland; and any surplus funds to be dedicated to environmental initiatives, including the Koala Response Strategy, the Cape York World Heritage nomination and acquisition of national parks. Without the revenue from the waste levy, these programs will be slashed, ripping funding out of local councils and vital environmental programs.

Mr Powell: That is not true.

Honourable members interjected.

Mr DEPUTY SPEAKER: Order! There is too much crossfire across the chamber. The member has the right to be heard.

Ms TRAD: Mr Deputy Speaker, it is clear from the comments made by the Minister for Environment and Heritage Protection that they do not intend to slash these environmental initiatives so I then ask this question: how will they seek to fund them? How many public servants will be sacked to pay for these funds? How many? The fact is that these funds and projects are not simply an investment in our environment but they are also an investment in Queensland jobs. As the member for Noosa stated in 2010, the revenue raised from the levy and the projects it funds were set to create an estimated 7,000 new green jobs in Queensland. Do you need me to go slower?

Waste management is an industry where Queensland has previously missed out on new job opportunities. In Victoria, there are more than 13,000 green jobs associated with waste management. Queensland only has 5,000 equivalent jobs, but those opposite have no regard for long-term secure jobs for Queenslanders. They have shown that recently, haven't they? They fail to show any ability to think that far ahead. Instead, the LNP are today pushing a short-sighted decision through the parliament without consideration and based on politics not policy.

Queensland faces a significant challenge when it comes to dealing with our waste. These challenges require long-term solutions. Queensland generates more than 32 million tonnes of waste every year. That is enough to fill 16 Suncorp Stadiums to the roof.

Mr Cripps: That is visionary. Tax them.

Ms TRAD: I will take the interjection from the honourable member.

Mr Cripps interjected.

Mr DEPUTY SPEAKER: The member for Hinchinbrook!

Mr Cripps interjected.

Mr DEPUTY SPEAKER: The member for Hinchinbrook!

Mr Cripps interjected.

Mr DEPUTY SPEAKER: The member for Hinchinbrook! Order! Member for Hinchinbrook, I called your name and your seat three times. I would like to hear what the member for South Brisbane has to say on this matter.

Ms TRAD: The obvious conclusion of what the honourable member is asserting is that we should not have had a flood levy, that the federal government should not have applied a flood levy after the worst natural disasters in Queensland's recorded history. Shame on him!

On top of that, Queensland recycles only a third of its waste, making us one of the worst states for recycling. This is not only embarrassing; it is also unsustainable. As our population continues to expand, so does our landfill and it is costing Queenslanders money. The fact is that as landfills increase so do rates. Councils are reporting that waste management is becoming an ever-growing burden on their local budgets. In 2010 Local Government Association of Queensland spokesman Greg Hoffman highlighted the need for urgent action, saying—

Costs are growing, landfill is getting harder to find, business and industry need to recycle more, so to do nothing is not financially or environmentally sustainable.

Mr DEPUTY SPEAKER (Dr Robinson): Order! There is too much noise in the House. I call the member for South Brisbane.

Ms TRAD: Thank you, Mr Deputy Speaker, for your protection. While Labor's waste levy would have cut landfill by 33 per cent, the LNP is choosing to do nothing. Queensland is the only mainland state without a waste levy—the only one. Every other state recognises that landfill should not be the first and easiest option. Even conservative state governments with a higher general IQ than those sitting opposite understand that we must provide an incentive to recycle not only for our environment but for our budgets, too. Indeed, not only are Liberal-National governments retaining their states' waste levy; many of them are actually increasing the levy rate. For example, the New South Wales waste levy of \$31.20 a tonne is set to rise to more than \$40 a tonne in the new financial year. As the only state without a waste levy, the Newman government is sending an open invitation to interstate businesses to dump their waste in our backyard.

This was an issue raised by the Gold Coast City Council—and the member for Mermaid Beach should be well versed in this good piece of journalism—at the public hearing on the Waste Reduction and Recycling Bill 2011 in September last year. When then shadow minister for the environment Andrew Powell asked if the Gold Coast City Council was concerned about cross-border waste, the spokesman responded by saying—

It is, yes, of course. While the disposal rates are higher somewhere else there is always going to be a tendency for people wanting to transport waste to a cheaper location. Obviously, transport costs are significant so there is a limit to how far people will go, but obviously DERM is considering people are coming as far as Tasmania. We obviously need to have systems in place to try and minimise that.

So what is the LNP's plan to minimise the amount of interstate waste being dumped in Queensland? There is no plan. Without a plan, the issue of interstate dumping is not going to go away. It was again raised in the *Gold Coast Bulletin* last week, and I table an article for the benefit of the House.

Tabled paper: Article, dated 14 June 2012, titled 'Cheaper to dump rubbish on the Coast' [\[514\]](#).

The concept of a waste levy is nothing new. South Australia introduced its levy over a decade ago, and since that time it has had an incredible impact on the state's environment. South Australia's recycling rate is over 70 per cent and is among the world's best. In fact, South Australia continues to innovate and invest in sustainable practices with the goal of creating a zero-waste state.

The concept of a waste levy is not even a controversial or overtly partisan one. On top of the Liberal-National governments I mentioned earlier, there have been other notable conservative supporters of a waste levy. Indeed, when the Premier was Brisbane City Council mayor he praised the government's initiatives, stating that reducing landfill was the biggest piece of unfinished business left for councils—or was he not briefed well enough on the matter? Then Lord Mayor Newman went as far as to praise the work of former environment minister Kate Jones, saying—

I must say how impressed I am with Minister Jones's approach.

I table the City Hall transcript for the benefit of the House.

Tabled paper: Extract from Brisbane City Council (Ordinary) Meeting, dated 11 May 2010, pages 18-19 [\[515\]](#).

What a monumental backflip from the Premier—but not the first one we have seen to date. The Premier has gone from a practical and considered approach to one of slashing and burning—an approach that leaves Queensland decades behind the other states, an approach that will cut funding to local councils and leave them struggling with the rampant spread of landfills and with the ballooning costs associated with waste disposal, an approach that shows no regard for Queensland's environment by ripping funding out of important environmental projects and inviting interstate businesses to use Queensland as their dumping ground.

This is an unthinking approach. It is a belligerent approach and it only serves to take Queensland back to the dark old days of environmental destruction, where this LNP government wants it to be! The

ALP—the people on this side of the House—care about the environment, which is why we are moving this disallowance motion. I urge all members opposite to support this motion. I urge all members who have children and who have a sense of responsibility to their children and their grandchildren to support this motion to deal with this escalating problem now and not leave it to our children and their children to deal with.