



Speech by


**Liz Cunningham**

**MEMBER FOR GLADSTONE**

Hansard Wednesday, 15 February 2012

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## **WASTE REDUCTION AND RECYCLING REGULATION: DISALLOWANCE OF STATUTORY INSTRUMENT**

 **Mrs CUNNINGHAM** (Gladstone—Ind) (8.36 pm): I rise to speak to the disallowance motion. During the time that I was in local government, before and after, councils overwhelmingly managed waste. They funded it, they managed, they looked after it. In Queensland there were a couple of marked exceptions. There was the toxic waste dump at Willawong, which has been sealed, and there was one at Dalby that I believe also has been sealed. Those very specific toxic waste dumps were managed by the state government. We are talking about industry waste. I acknowledge that we are not talking about domestic waste or municipal waste.

Not-for-profit organisations are affected by this regulation and, without exception, they are affected negatively. I heard the earlier debate about ratepayers and taxpayers having to fund the tips. It is the ratepayers who pay the tax and in great measure it will be the ratepayers who are affected by this tax. I could be more sympathetic to the tax to which this regulation and this legislation applies if local government, the entity that looks after waste, actually received the money—the money to procure more waste sites, the money to manage waste and the money to implement reduction, re-use and recycling programs.

In Queensland, in the main people are endeavouring to improve their record in terms of the reduction of waste, the re-use of waste and the recycling of waste. At the time of the debate on this legislation I posed a question about the quantification of the impact of the legislation on industries in my electorate that were going to generate a lot of waste that would, in the main, go to the tips. I reiterate that the Gladstone Regional Council is not getting the money from this tax. They are managing the waste from industry, because it will go to their landfill, but they are not getting any funding from this tax to actually address those waste issues. What forewarning did those major industries have in terms of the additional cost to their construction program that this new tax would require?

I speak now of an organisation which is not in my electorate; however, it is a scenario that I think is important to put on the record. This highlights the fact that these fees impact not only the major industries and not only big business; they also impact those businesses on which we as parliamentarians and communities rely, and that is the not-for-profit sector. I speak of organisations like the auxiliaries that support Blue Care and the Endeavour Foundation, which receive a lot of goods that people dump on them. We have been hearing about that recently in the media. People are dumping illegally because they are trying to avoid the municipal waste fees. When they were introduced in my electorate, illegal dumping of domestic waste increased. People do try to avoid fees and more so when that cost is exponential, as this legislation introduced.

The group I speak of is a senior citizens welfare association. It is not in my electorate but the information was provided to me to bring to this House tonight. They provide a senior citizens centre, day respite care, social support, in-home respite, community access carers and home maintenance services. This tax will specifically affect the home maintenance service. The services include mowing lawns and grass cutting—up to a quarter-acre block only—cleaning yards and rubbish removal, and other domestic

assistance. Bear in mind that this and previous governments have worked very hard in departments administered by the minister for communities to keep people in their homes rather than have them institutionalised or put into care facilities. The organisation states that it is a not-for-profit organisation and part of their service is funded through government funding. It states—

The bulk of our Home Maintenance service ... is lawn mowing or grass cutting, for which we charge a subsidised fee of \$30.00 per ¼ acre block. The 'going rate' for a professional contractor is in the vicinity of \$65.00.

... in the past the Council's fee, which we opposed and absorbed, was about \$4.00. The new fee is \$20.75 per cubic metre, which relates to an increase of 400%. Our service makes about 15 trips to the tip per week. This would cost \$311.00—

**An honourable member** interjected.

**Mrs CUNNINGHAM:** We will get to that. It goes on—

in lieu of \$60.00.

So on average, the cost to dispose of grass cuttings has increased from \$1.33 per client to \$6.92. They cannot cover and absorb that increase in cost, and it is directly related to this legislation. Each client will face an increase of \$8, from \$30 to \$38. In summary, they say that they are a not-for-profit community organisation. They give support to disadvantaged people in the community—that is frail, aged and younger people with a disability—and they assist their clients to stay in their own homes. In their own right their clients are ratepayers, and if they had the capacity they could dispose of their grass cuttings free of charge. However, they cannot because the people disposing of them are part of an organisation, not individual ratepayers. That is where they would be caught by that tax. They are reluctant to increase their fees to meet additional client costs and their clients would be financially disadvantaged if they had to meet the extra fees.

The point of bringing this scenario to the parliament is to demonstrate that, firstly, it is not just the big end of town that is impacted by this tax. The second point is that the government that is collecting this tax is not managing the disposal facilities at all. Overwhelmingly, it is the local councils that are managing the disposal. If the government were serious about encouraging waste to be reduced, to be recycled or to be reused, they would return the funds raised from this tax to the local government so that each local authority area could properly implement incentives, properly implement programs with, particularly in my electorate, the major companies in order to reduce that waste.

I support the disallowance motion because the people who are affected by this are not only the big end of town but also people who are doing a wonderful job—like Endeavour and those other organisations that are supplying services to people in need. I believe that this new tax will not do what it was designed to do—that is, reduce waste. It will encourage clandestine dumping but, more importantly, it has the potential to hurt those who support our community in need.