




Speech By
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MEMBER FOR COOK

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**WASTE REDUCTION AND RECYCLING (WASTE LEVY) AND OTHER
LEGISLATION AMENDMENT BILL**

 **Ms LUI** (Cook—ALP) (4.23 pm): I rise to speak in support of the Waste Reduction and Recycling (Waste Levy) and Other Legislation Amendment Bill 2018 and amendments to the Waste Reduction and Recycling Act 2011 to fulfil this government's commitment to modernise waste management in Queensland through the introduction of a waste disposal levy.

The bill was introduced to parliament on 6 September and was then referred to the Innovation, Tourism Development and Environment Committee of which I was privileged to be a member. In saying that, I would like to acknowledge the Minister for Environment, Minister Enoch, for all her hard work; the committee secretary and the assistant committee secretary; and committee members: the member for Stretton, member for Scenic Rim, member for Jordan and member for Noosa.

To put this bill into perspective, Queensland is the only state in Australia that does not have a waste levy in place. When the former LNP government repealed the waste levy in 2012 they did not stop to consider how this decision would impact Queensland. As a consequence of this reckless decision, the former LNP government made Queensland a cheap place to dump interstate waste. Since 2012 over 3.5 million tonnes of waste have been trucked across the border into Queensland, including 1.2 million tonnes in 2017-18 alone.

Landfill is a common means of disposing of solid waste, as we all know, which is either buried or left to pile in heaps. It is just appalling to think how the former LNP government repealed the waste levy in 2012 and supported tonnes and tonnes of rubbish being trucked from interstate to landfills in Queensland to be either buried or left to pile. Without the waste levy, it is obvious that Queensland had no way of controlling the amount of rubbish crossing the Queensland border. Having a build-up of waste in our landfills has serious implications for the environment, particularly in the breakdown of different waste matter into toxins and gases that are highly damaging to the land, biodiversity and water quality of our natural environment. I am passionate about this issue because of the need to protect our environment for future generations.

During my first year as the member for Cook I made an extra effort to visit some of the landfill sites in different communities throughout the Torres Strait and Cape York. Although Cape York and the Torres Strait islands sit in the non-levy zone and there are no issues of waste being transported to these communities, I want to share my personal observations of crowded landfills in some of my communities. This is only a small reflection of the bigger issue that we are dealing with when discussing the issue of waste management on a state level. The waste levy is critical in addressing the issue of overcrowding landfills for Queensland moving forward.

Queensland is ready for a change, and the Palaszczuk government is behind Queensland every step of the way. Since the bill was introduced, the committee has received 37 submissions from stakeholders and the inquiry included a public briefing and two public hearings in Ipswich and Rockhampton. There has been an outpouring of community support for alternatives to landfills. This means there will be a greater scope for better waste management practices in the state.

Since the introduction of the bill and tabling of the associated draft amendment regulation in September 2018, local governments, industry and community members have had an opportunity to scrutinise the details of the waste levy proposal. The government listened to their advice and 55 changes to the bill are proposed to facilitate smooth implementation of the levy. The Palaszczuk government fully understands that we must take the necessary steps to support the smooth transition to a waste levy in order to achieve sustainable outcomes. Moving the commencement date of the levy to 1 July 2019 to better align with council budgeting gives a strong indication of this government's willingness to work in collaboration with local governments in the levy zone. The decision to move the commencement date of this waste levy will allow local government more time to get levy ready.

The Palaszczuk government made a commitment that there will be no direct impact on households associated with the introduction of this levy and, as such, will provide financial assistance through annual payments to council to offset the cost of the levy on municipal solid waste. At the same time it is allowing a number of levy exemptions to be available on application. It is important to note that if council reduces the amount of household waste that it disposes to landfill such as by providing new recycling options, any difference between the annual payment and the actual levy cost would be retained by the council for further investment.

Additionally, in the 2018 budget the state government allocated \$5 million in funding for the 2018-19 Local Government Levy Ready Grants Program to assist local governments prepare themselves in terms of waste disposal infrastructure upgrades. To date, 34 councils applied for funding and all 34 council were successful in their application with grants ranging from \$6,000 to \$570,000. I am pleased that the Douglas shire in my electorate qualified for the Local Government Levy Ready Grant to assist with infrastructure upgrades to their Killaloe site, the largest waste facility in the region. The upgrade to the Killaloe site will include the installation of security lighting, a CCTV camera, barrier at the landfill access, upgrading traffic control, additional signage and software upgrades.

The bill provides for the levy to be paid on waste delivered to landfills in a levy zone, which includes 39 out of 77 local government areas. In the Cook electorate there are two local government areas with landfill sites that fall within a levy zone: Mareeba Shire Council and Douglas Shire Council. It is reassuring to know there is strong support from the Palaszczuk government to ensure that appropriate strategies are in place to support the two local government areas in my electorate—and all of the other local government areas in the levy zone—to become levy ready.

It is expected that councils will be positively impacted by the levy if they seize the opportunities provided by the new strategy and the levy and take a forward-looking approach to waste management. The Queensland government will work closely with governments in the levy zone to assist with its implementation. Further funding from the levy will likely be made available in future years to assist councils with activities, including waste disposal infrastructure upgrades and recycling and resource recovery efforts. Diversion of waste from landfills by the levy will also reduce councils' operating costs and extend the life of their landfill assets.

Changing how we manage waste in Queensland will create jobs and drive significant economic growth as we make better use of resources and develop new industries. As it stands now, every 10,000 tonnes of landfill waste supports fewer than three jobs, but if the same amount was recycled it would support more than nine jobs. The levy will create a funding source for programs to establish better resource recovery practices, improve overall waste management performance and sustain Queensland's natural environment. I am proud to represent a government that not only stands up against interstate dumping but also prioritises protecting our natural environment for future generations. I commend the bill to the House.