




Speech By
Dale Last

MEMBER FOR BURDEKIN

Record of Proceedings, 13 February 2019

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

 **Mr LAST** (Burdekin—LNP) (6.10 pm): I rise to contribute to the debate on the Waste Reduction and Recycling (Waste Levy) and Other Legislation Amendment Bill 2018. I say at the outset that I oppose this bill. Once again members on this side of the House are sticking up for Queenslanders while this government continues to peddle illusions. The waste reduction and recycling legislation is just that—an illusion. I cannot in all good conscience stand by while families, businesses and even the elderly are punished because this government cannot work out where a truck is coming from.

Let's be clear and call this for what it is. It is a \$1.3 billion tax grab. It is confirmation that this government in its desperation to find funds has resorted to implementing a tax under the guise of protecting the environment when it is clear it is nothing short of a blatant money grab from Queensland residents and businesses. It is yet another occasion when Queenslanders have been sold out in the name of Greens preferences and it is proof that this government does not understand that Queensland actually extends beyond the south-east corner of the state.

We know what the legislation is, but it is important to understand what it is not. It is not about protecting our environment and it is not about creating a new industry for Queensland. This legislation is nothing but an excuse, an ill-thought-out attempt to address a problem that exists in the south-east corner of the state.

Let's go back just over one year. The minister announced the strategy, a strategy to increase recycling. There is nothing wrong with that. The minister announced a strategy to increase resource recovery. There is nothing wrong with that either. According to the minister, this strategy would also create a new industry and create jobs. Then we had the Premier assure Queenslanders that they would not be burdened with the cost. It sounded like magic. In reality, it was nothing but a fantasy—a fairytale and nothing less.

Queensland has become the dumping ground for New South Wales. That is right: we have an endless stream of trucks coming across the border dumping their rubbish in Queensland dumps—dumps located in the south-east corner of the state, predominantly around the Ipswich area. No doubt it sounded like a good idea at the time but, as they say, chooks always come home to roost, because the volume of rubbish continued to rise and the groundswell of opposition to this practice started to grow.

I oppose this bill for the fundamental reason that residents living in the Burdekin electorate—living in North and Far North Queensland—should not have to pay for a problem which originated in the south-east corner of the state. It is not a problem of our making and it is not a problem for which North Queensland residents should foot the bill in order to rectify this disaster.

Let's focus on the reality, not the fantasy world that those opposite want us to believe we live in. The reality is this: this legislation is about punishing all Queenslanders for a problem that started in Ipswich. This legislation confirms that this government would rather burden every Queenslander with this tax than admit that their Labor mates in Ipswich got it wrong. They would rather introduce a new tax than identify and fix a simple problem.

The Burdekin electorate is over 1,300 kilometres from Ipswich. The dumping of rubbish from New South Wales in that locality and in other places in the south-east corner is not the fault of the people of the Burdekin electorate. We did not create the problem, but this government wants us to pay for it. Families building a new home or renovating a home in Townsville or Cairns did not create the problem; small business operators in Bowen did not create the problem; the elderly in homes for the aged in Ayr and Home Hill did not create the problem, yet this minister wants them to pay for a supposed solution. By burdening families, small businesses and the elderly the minister is not fixing the problem; she is shifting the blame.

This is not a levy; it is a tax. This minister expects us to sit here tonight and believe it will not cost us anything, that the fee paid by all the people throughout Queensland will create jobs and industries. Wait, there is more magic! Ninety per cent of the fee—and do not call it a tax, remember—will vanish. It will not go to those new industries; it will not go to creating jobs; it will vanish; it will go straight into the big bucket held by the Treasurer. Guess what will not vanish? What will not vanish is the unemployment queues. What will not vanish is the inept economic mismanagement that this government has shown. What will not vanish is the increases in the cost of living. This problem can be fixed without punishing every Queenslander. This problem can be fixed by enforcing current laws to prevent waste from New South Wales being dumped in Queensland.

If this government were serious about recycling and resource recovery we would not be expected to support legislation where less than 10 per cent of the levy collected goes towards that purpose. The only thing this government is serious about is burdening the people of Queensland with a new tax—\$1.3 billion of burden, \$1.3 billion ripped out of the Queensland economy. What do we get for that? We get less than 10 per cent spent on developing industries and actually improving our environment.

If the minister and this government want this legislation, they should explain to young families why the cost of building their new home will increase. The minister should speak to the operators of aged care facilities and tell them what programs to cut in order to pay this levy. Of course, the minister should also explain to small businesses how they can recoup the extra expense without passing it on to customers, because remember Queenslanders were promised they would not bear the cost.

For the minister to stand in this place today and attempt to sell this legislation as a saviour for the environment is misleading. It has become simply too convenient to hide legislation like this under the environment umbrella, and Queenslanders will not be hoodwinked into believing this spin. It is not just the members on this side of the House who have not fallen for the fairytale; local governments throughout Queensland know someone has to pay. The building industry and the housing industry know that this levy will increase the cost of new homes. Even the waste industry knows the claims do not stack up.

This legislation is not about the environment. If it were, we would not see 90 per cent of the levy collected vanishing into the government's coffers. If this legislation was about the environment, the minister would enforce the existing laws. Unless honourable members believe in fairytales, they cannot support this legislation. Those on this side of the House will not support this legislation. It is bad legislation disguised as an environmental initiative. I call on the minister and the Premier to stop the introduction of this new tax.