




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

 **Mr CRISAFULLI** (Broadwater—LNP) (3.25 pm): The LNP will be opposing the Waste Reduction and Recycling (Waste Levy) and Other Legislation Amendment Bill 2018. We will be opposing it because there is so much wrong with it. We will be opposing it because it is a broken promise. It was not even flagged as one of the four new taxes that were dumped on Queenslanders at a minute to midnight. We will be opposing it because the reason for its implementation is so very disingenuous. I will articulate the reasons given to try to justify a new tax on Queenslanders. We will be opposing it because Queensland families will bear the cost, despite the promise from the Premier and just now from the minister. This new tax will, in fact, hurt each and every Queenslanders each and every day. We will be opposing it because it is not a levy at all, it is a tax, it is a money grab, and even with the minister's concessions today still nearly 90 per cent of funds collected will return to government in some form or another.

I will start my contribution with why this is a tax and why the new taxes of this government are so very wrong. When those opposite came into this place during the budget and announced the four taxes I made the point that it would impact everyday Queenslanders. I want to draw a parallel between those and, indeed, this tax. Those opposite have sought to somehow say that these taxes, including this one, will not affect the everyday person, that somehow it is a tax that will only be borne by in this case business and in other cases investors. That is wrong.

In the case of the car stamp duty tax, if you do not believe it will impact the person who has put everything on the line and made themselves a business where they employ people and have a car dealership that happens to sell cars that are over \$100,000, think about the young apprentice, the young girl who just wants to turn up and push a spanner and make a contribution. If you are not willing to believe it will impact the person who has worked hard and wants to buy an expensive motor car to enjoy, think about the retiree who just wants to buy a motorhome and get on with their life and enjoy what they have worked so hard for.

Another two taxes that, like this one, will impact everyday people are land tax and property tax. If you are not willing to believe it will impact the developer who every day has to try to find a way to make it work, and those opposite somehow think that people in the development industry are scurrilous people and not worthy of any kind of status.

A government member: Who said that?

Mr CRISAFULLI: My goodness! If you do not think it will impact that person, think about how it will impact the tradesman who just wants to have a job on a building site. In the case of the wagering tax—the punters' tax—think not about the stable owner, but about the apprentice jockey.

This tax is the biggest of them all. It raises more than all four of those put together, but the government made no mention of it. It was not even included in that Thursday night dump after the blackout had commenced; it happened afterwards. This is \$1.3 billion and to somehow think that that

is magically going to appear without impacting Queenslanders—boy, oh boy—wait for July when the skip bins start arriving. Wait for July when the small business owner has to say, 'Sorry, my price has to rise.' Wait for July when the young couple looking to put a deposit on their first home are told it will cost them a little more. It is the biggest tax of them all, but there was not a single mention of it.

Mr Krause interjected.

Mr CRISAFULLI: I assure the member for Scenic Rim that I will get to that. The reason for the implementation has been a moving feast. It did not start with interstate waste dumping. That was the third excuse. The first excuse was because China stopped taking our rubbish. That was the reason given as to why we needed this to start, but that did not cut it with Queenslanders. Therefore, those in the back room spun the needle around and found another excuse, which was that the Ipswich City Council—and we will talk more about the Ipswich City Council later on, as I still have 24 minutes—said that it would stop recycling because costs had increased. My goodness, didn't we see the community blow up over that. That excuse did not wash.

Finally, in a stroke as if from a political master class, they came up with the idea about being parochial Queenslanders and stopping interstate waste coming across the border. It is interesting that we did not talk about better compliance or the fact that they are not surging across the border and going to the Gold Coast dumps, which are closer. We did not talk about the fact that there is not a whole heap of builders from Lismore driving to the Smithfield Transfer Station in Cairns to save a few bucks. That is not really happening, either.

Mr Krause: Or Beaudesert.

Mr CRISAFULLI: Not even Beaudesert. Somehow, because half a dozen dumps in Ipswich were approved with the consent of those opposite and promoted by a council that many of those opposite have political allegiances with, interstate dumping became that excuse, without any mention of why compliance should not be looked at. The argument that you are going to tell a builder in Cairns, Townsville, Mackay or Rockhampton that they are going to be asked to pay more because someone from Sydney might be looking to use the same facility that they use is an absolute absurdity.

I move on to the Premier's comment that families will not bear the cost. I will take that comment at face value and I will accept that the Premier was not in fact attempting to mislead, but that she believed that because of the kerbside offset that makes up a large portion of the revenue raised. However, if that is the case, the Premier's complete and utter lack of understanding of how business operates is very sad and very disappointing. Businesses cannot absorb the cost. That is not how business works.

I must briefly take the minister to task for saying that it was the opposition that talked about the impact on house prices. The opposition was responding to feedback from reputable organisations. The Master Builders said that the impact will be a four figure increase on the cost of building a new home. The Housing Industry Association said that it will add about \$1,500 to the cost of building a new home. Therefore, to say that other places have a waste tax and a strong building industry does not change the fact that that cost will be put on businesses that cannot afford to absorb it. I can tell the House that at the moment not many builders carry \$1,500 in fat and are able to absorb that added cost. Things are really tight. I can assure the House that if someone tells a builder, particularly in a regional city, that they can absorb \$1,500 with no problems and without increasing the cost of building a new home, that person would probably be given a lesson in economics.

The Local Government Association of Queensland has said that there will be impacts on rates because they cannot absorb the cost. We heard that feedback from the Noosa council, and the member for Noosa is here. We heard that feedback from councils that do not have a political axe to grind with the government. The Townsville City Council said inevitably there would be an impact on rates. They gave a figure of around \$15.

The council I feel most sorry for is that of Mount Isa. For some reason, Mount Isa has been included in this. I urge the minister to consider whether that is appropriate at the best of times; certainly it is not appropriate at the moment. The member for Traeger can tell us about how much pain his community is going through. The Mount Isa City Council believes that the cost will be in excess of \$300 per ratepayer. In fact, the figure that the Mount Isa City Council issued was \$320. That is a massive impost on a community at a time when they cannot afford it.

The minister praised the member for Scenic Rim, although I am not quite sure that the member for Scenic Rim was looking for that praise. The minister said that the member for Scenic Rim had campaigned to include the Goondiwindi Regional Council. I will let the good member speak for himself, but I believe he was drawing a comparison by saying that a council of a similar size to Mount Isa was not included. I am not quite sure whether or not he wants to accept that. Maybe the chairman of the

committee can take the credit, but I do not think the member for Scenic Rim will. We will let him determine that later on. However, the point remains that it seems absurd that Mount Isa would be included, despite its proximity to the Northern Territory border. Not a lot of interstate waste comes from the Northern Territory into Camooweal or the Isa. However, this will create a lot of pain at a time when that community can least afford it.

There will be a three-figure increase on the cost of hiring a skip bin. That is undeniable. A lot of people hire skip bins to clean out their homes and a lot of businesses use them, as well. That pain will be felt.

In all of this, the cruel irony is that the regional centres will bear most of the cost and most of the pain from this levy. They do not have problems with interstate dumping. In fact, only one city had problems with interstate dumping. In many cases they do not have the critical mass to make commercial opportunities out of recycling. They are less likely to be able to generate new industries on the back of it. In a cruel twist, they may in fact be subsidising others for a tax that will not benefit them in any way, shape or form.

If we add the \$75—the \$70 levy is \$75 before it starts—I would suggest to members that there will be regional centres of this state that will be charging close to \$250 a tonne. That puts it right up there in terms of the pain factor for small businesses. There will undeniably be regional centres that will very shortly be charging over \$200 a tonne. I would suggest that that will be closer to \$250 sooner rather than later.

Both the Waste, Recycling Industry Association and the Local Government Association—and I place on record that both those organisations put a lot of work into their submissions—have advocated for a separate rate for regional Queensland and the south-east. The minister did not touch on that in her opening remarks, but she may later. They pushed that case very strongly because of the discrepancy, because there are fewer opportunities for those industries and because of the cruel cross-subsidisation that I have spoken about.

It will be in those regions where the populations are less, where distances are more and where the opportunity for surveillance is less that there will be a greater challenge around illegal dumping. I commend what the minister said in her opening remarks about a fund for that. I assure the House that illegal dumping will be a massive issue as a result of this legislation. It makes so much sense that people will seek to flout the law. That is a challenge that needs to be addressed.

I said in my opening remarks that this is not a levy, it is a tax. I talked about the reason for this being interstate dumping. As part of the sell those opposite said that this would be a great opportunity to do good things for the environment. Even with the extra funding the minister has announced today, it is only about one in every 10 cents of the levy that will go towards the environment. Nearly 90 per cent—it was over 90 per cent—in some way, shape or form will go to government. That is not a levy; that is a tax.

The place where I entered public life was local government. If we called something a levy we had to put it to the purpose for which it was levied. A third of this goes to consolidated revenue. That is a tax grab.

Ms Enoch interjected.

Mr CRISAFULLI: I do not, Minister. I will take the interjection from the minister who said I have the numbers wrong. I am sorry, but I do not. Whether it is a council or the state government or whether it is money to administer the scheme, it is going to government. About nine cents in 10 will make its way to a government. That is not environmental programs. That is government money. That is a tax for government under the guise of a levy.

One of the shining lights to date has been the Resource Recovery Industry Development Program. It comprises the greatest percentage of the money that is not going to government—about eight per cent, hallelujah. Would it not be great if some good could come out of that? Would it not also be good if attached to that was a real focus on ensuring planning and policy settings to avoid the pain that has been inflicted on some communities through poor planning and also revenue opportunities facilitated.

In my remaining time, I want to talk about some of the amendments. First of all, I place on record my sincere thanks to the minister for briefing me ahead of today—as she has done on multiple occasions. I say thank you for that. Included in the amendments to the act is a recognition of a disaster event. Its omission in the first place was crazy. Can anyone imagine asking communities and councils to pay a tax that goes back to government during their hour of need? That would be absurd. That is a great change. The inclusion of naturally occurring acid sulphate soils is excellent.

Following representations from HQPlantations—and many of those opposite would know HQPlantations—illegal dumping in plantations administered under the Forestry Act will be exempt. The arguments put forward by HQPlantations involved a number of things. It included them saying that illegal dumping would be more prevalent because of this tax. They are right. The government's response says that the reason the plantations had been included is that they have to facilitate community access. That is true, but that does not take into account that HQPlantations believe that because they have large open sites spread across the state they would be subject to illegal dumping. I put it to the minister that there will be people like farmers who have blocks in close proximity to domestic scenarios who will experience similar pain and who may have to pay the levy themselves.

The things that are not included in the changes to the act the minister has flagged will be included in the changes to the regulation. There are many things that are not included that must be included. There should at least be a pointer that they will be subject to regulation. We might well trust the minister, but this parliament should be making sure that other ministers cannot, with a flick of a pen, change it.

Let me go through some of them. Municipal waste is one. This goes to the heart of my first issue with the Premier saying that it does not impact everyday Queenslanders. Waste generated from council facilities such as parks is not included in these changes. We hear that that will be included in the regulations. The minister said that road scrapings will be in the regulations for three years. What about long term and what about putting it in the act?

As I said at the committee hearing in Ipswich—the chair of the committee is in the chamber so I thank him for allowing me to appear—councils do not do roadwork on the day that people put their bins out so that they can throw their waste in their bins to save a few bob. That will be a cost that councils will bear. Beware that there is a three-year sunset on that. There are also things like fly-ash, contaminated water and biosolids. Now the big one. Those residents, everyday people, who have arrangements with private contractors for one reason or another are not included in this act we are voting on today. That is wrong.

I went to the Sunshine Coast with the member for Ninderry and the member for Nicklin. We went to a retirement home—a lifestyle village—where they have a private contractor come along and collect their waste. They are not included. Boarding houses are not included. Gated communities are not included. Unit complexes are not included.

Whilst the minister says it will be included in regulations, surely we can put it in the bill to make sure that we send the clearest of signals that this place believes that all Queenslanders, all residents, should be exempt from this tax when it comes to their front door because they are going to pay it in many, many other ways. Surely, as I said to the minister publicly and privately, there must be a way to include it in the bill to ensure that protection, in the same way that in section 73D the council payments are listed.

In conclusion, I again stress that the LNP will be opposing this bill. We will be opposing it because it is, in fact, a broken promise. We were told what the new taxes would be. I did not like them. I did not think there was sufficient time to debate them, but they were announced within 72 hours of an election—maybe less—but this one was not. That is a big breach of trust. Each and every time the big truck comes to pick up the big bin they will be reminded of that breach of trust—

Ms Boyd: Getting lectured about breaches of trust from you is a bit rich. I think there are 20,000 people who would like to talk to you about that.

Mr CRISAFULLI:—including in Pine Rivers and right across-the-board. They will be reminded of it all the time.

We will be opposing this bill because the reasons for implementation have been disingenuous. It started about China because they would not take our waste. That did not work. Then it moved on because one council—ironically the one council that has caused so much pain through bad planning and bad management—said that it would not recycle. That is when we said, 'Yes, this will be it.' That did not wash. In the end, the interstate dumping excuse came through with a little sweetener. The sweetener was, 'Don't worry. This will be a great thing for the environment.' I would argue that putting nearly nine out of every 10 cents back to government and only one out of every 10 cents back to the environment is not good for the environment. That looks like window-dressing on a big new tax.

I conclude by saying the opposition will not be supporting this bill because it is, in fact, nothing like a levy and everything like a tax.