




Speech By
Lachlan Millar

MEMBER FOR GREGORY

Record of Proceedings, 14 February 2019

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

 **Mr MILLAR** (Gregory—LNP) (12.29 pm): In so many ways the Waste Reduction and Recycling (Waste Levy) and Other Legislation Amendment Bill provides a snapshot of how the Palaszczuk government treats the Queensland public. This bill imposes a new tax—a waste levy that was not flagged before the election. It is not a small tax. Queenslanders will stump up around \$1.3 billion over the next four years to pay their levy. This levy is being imposed despite the skyrocketing cost of living owing to the cost of essentials, such as electricity and bulk water, for townships. Part of the reason these costs are skyrocketing is that the government has a monopoly on supply and is imposing hidden taxes through those charges. We have another tax that was not flagged. While we struggle with record unemployment, record debt, the government is imposing cost-of-living increases. Labor does not expect people to view this levy as a tax.

When the government first floated the concept, it said that it was needed because waste dumping from New South Wales and Victoria had become an issue. In a typical piece of Labor arrogance, it is okay with a levy imposed across the state for a problem that effectively does not exist north of Ipswich. We could not see a clearer statement that the ALP thinks that Queensland exists only in a tiny little part of the south-east corner. For the problem to exist, there is a requirement for proximity to other states and interstate road networks that most Queenslanders just do not have.

In my electorate, I am already seeing Western Queenslanders excluded from Labor's other great waste initiative, the container exchange. There are only two depots for that exchange west of Emerald. People are driving in to return containers and then buying their supplies and provisions in that larger centre. This is yet another blow to rural towns and operators of small businesses like Bob Stubbs, the publican at Jericho. Even though every grocery item that comes in an eligible container has undergone a price increase of up to 15 cents to cover the cost of the scheme, effectively, people from Longreach west are unable to participate at all in that scheme. Western Queenslanders are paying the inflated price but cannot return the containers to obtain the refund.

Thankfully, schedule 2 of this bill will exempt remote council areas in my electorate from the levy, because distance and freight costs mean that they already have to be self-sufficient. However, my constituents in the Central Highlands and people right across regional and rural Queensland will suffer from this bill. They will pay a levy and receive no benefit. When anything in a town such as Springsure is built, the people of that area will have to pay for the construction waste to be trucked out of town to a commercial landfill. They will also pay this waste levy.

Faced with all of these objections and in danger of being unmasked as serial tax hikers, what did Labor do? It changed its story—another typical move. Now, the bill is not about Ipswich, or Labor's failure to enforce existing laws, or interstate waste dumpers. Suddenly, owing to China closing down its waste trade, Queensland will be buried beneath a mound of rubbish. According to the minister, it was urgent that Queensland develop its own recycling industry and a waste levy is needed to fund that. That is another typical con. Less than 10 per cent—or 10 cents in every dollar—of tax raised will go towards

funding the Queensland recycling industry. The rest of the staggering \$1.3 billion will go into consolidated revenue to fund Labor's Public Service wage bill, or other Labor fads. Now, at last, we see behind the mask and all the excuses. What do we see? Labor, once again having spent all of our taxes.

Labor assumes that the media and the general public are fools that can to be distracted by pretty shiny things and never notice what is really going on. I hope the members opposite are sure of that. Perhaps they should consider the wise words of Graham Richardson, a former federal environment minister and Labor's numbers man. Richo would tell them, 'Sooner or later the mob will work you out.' I would take some comfort from this except that, in the meantime, struggling Queenslanders will be slugged.

Not even the elderly will escape. There will be no exemption for aged-care homes or retirement villages. They will be hit with another tax. There will be no exemption for northern towns, including Townsville, which already has high unemployment and which has now been decimated by a natural disaster. Every home owner renting a temporary shelter in Townsville while trying to repair their home will be paying two household waste levies to the Palaszczuk government while they do it. It may take nine months to a year before their homes are livable again, but they will be paying the waste levy on both properties the whole time while they are waiting to go home.

Labor needs to rethink this legislation. Most Queenslanders would have learned by now that 'price signals' are weasel words for increased taxes. To paraphrase Winston Churchill, trying to tax your way to prosperity is like a man in a bucket trying to lift himself up by the handle. I cannot support this dishonest and disgraceful levy and I will not support this bill.