




Speech By
Hon. Leanne Enoch

MEMBER FOR ALGESTER

Record of Proceedings, 20 August 2019

**WASTE REDUCTION AND RECYCLING (WASTE LEVY) AMENDMENT
REGULATION**

Disallowance of Statutory Instrument

 **Hon. LM ENOCH** (Algester—ALP) (Minister for Environment and the Great Barrier Reef, Minister for Science and Minister for the Arts) (6.38 pm): What an abysmal effort from the opposition in debating this disallowance motion! We had the member for Broadwater saying that this was a terrible levy, and then straight after him we had the member for Burnett saying ‘there is no denying that the levy will be important’. Then we had the member for Scenic Rim saying it is a terrible thing. Who knows where they stand? Tonight we have had confirmation of what we have long suspected—that is, the LNP would once again repeal Queensland’s waste levy, robbing industry of certainty and investment and welcoming trucks back over the border to dump interstate waste here in Queensland.

For months the member for Broadwater has tried to play both sides of the fence, trying to avoid admitting the LNP’s secret agenda, but now their motives have been laid bare. In 2012 the former LNP government including the members for Nanango, Everton and Broadwater, who all apparently proudly sat around the cabinet table, repealed Queensland’s waste levy and robbed our state of investment and job opportunities in resource recovery. They have done it once, and we know that they will do it again.

They are very proud of that. In fact, back in June the Leader of the Opposition posted on Facebook about how the LNP had moved a motion to try to stop the waste levy altogether. I am happy to table that post so that members of this House can see the member for Nanango and the member for Broadwater standing side by side, proudly threatening investment and long-term certainty for the waste and resource recovery industry.

Tabled paper: Extract, dated 25 June, from the Facebook page of the Leader of the Opposition, Ms Deb Frecklington MP, regarding waste levy [1289](#).

This motion demonstrates that the LNP does not understand the challenge we are facing in our state or the war on waste that Queenslanders are trying to fight. Queensland’s performance in relation to waste management and recycling is the second worst in the country. According to the latest recycling and waste report 2017-18, Queensland’s recovery rate sits at around 45 per cent. That means that less than half of our waste is being recycled. The national rate is 58 per cent. In the past five years our recovery rates have barely increased, but the amount of waste being generated and disposed of has skyrocketed. We are now generating waste faster than we are growing in population.

In 2017-18 the amount of interstate waste disposed of in Queensland was over one million tonnes—an increase of 198 per cent since 2013-14, after the LNP repealed the waste levy in this state. That means that when the LNP recklessly scrapped the previous waste levy, like they are trying to do here again tonight, they opened up our borders for trucks to dump cheap interstate waste. Until July this year, Queensland was the only mainland Australian state that did not have a waste levy. That made our state an attractive place to dump.

The levy is not just a disincentive for interstate waste; it is also a signal to the market to value the opportunities that exist in recycling and resource recovery and to create jobs. There are three times as many jobs created in recycling than in landfill. That is an economic opportunity for Queensland.

Mr Hart interjected.

Ms ENOCH: Of course, the member for Burleigh has just popped his head up. There is no support for this job creation in Queensland.

The industry recognises the importance of market signals. Recently I received a letter from the national peak body for the waste industry, the Waste Management and Resource Recovery Association of Australia. It is important for members to hear the sentiments of the business community as we consider this motion tonight. I table the letter for the benefit of the House.

Tabled paper: Letter, dated 30 June 2019, from the Chief Executive Officer, Waste Management and Resource Recovery Association Australia, Ms Gayle Sloane, to the Minister for Environment and the Great Barrier Reef, Minister for Science and Minister for the Arts, Hon. Leeanne Enoch, regarding Rescission motion in relation to Waste Reduction and Recycling (Waste Levy) Amendment Regulation 2019 [1290](#).

The letter states—

WMRR supported and continues to support the reintroduction of the Waste Levy by the Queensland Government in July 2019 ...

...

A landfill levy is a proven economic tool that supports diversion targets, and is a positive step for the resource recovery sector.

It continues—

The levy signals to the market that the Queensland Government recognises that there is a real and positive value to resource recovery, and it wishes to create jobs in Queensland to support and grow this industry. The ongoing certainty of the waste levy on the disposal of waste in Queensland, is integral to investment decisions currently being made by a number of WMRR members. The fact that the Queensland Parliament is about to consider a rescission motion of the levy is of concern to industry, and ignores not only the future possibilities in Queensland but dismisses the hard work and investment done by so many people to date, including local government and industry, in getting levy ready for 1 July 2019.

The message from the industry could not be clearer. The LNP is playing with the job opportunities and investment certainty of businesses right across Queensland.

Mr Hart interjected.

Madam DEPUTY SPEAKER (Ms McMillan): Order! Continue, Minister.

Ms ENOCH: The LNP is playing with the job opportunities—

Mr Hart interjected.

Madam DEPUTY SPEAKER: Order! Member for Burleigh, you are warned.

Ms ENOCH: Third time lucky. The LNP is playing with the job opportunities and investment certainty of businesses right across Queensland. We all know their track record when it comes to jobs in this state. It is a sack, cut and sell approach.

Tonight we are seeing in this disallowance motion once again the LNP putting jobs at risk, sending a signal to the market that job opportunities in this particular industry are not welcome in this state. To make matters worse, they are divided from their own federal colleagues. The LNP government in Canberra has recently made moves to encourage recycling and resource recovery, but here in Queensland they are still standing in the way of the growth of the industry. As I mentioned earlier this morning, at the recent COAG meeting in Cairns the Prime Minister was very supportive of state waste levies. In fact, at the press conference he said—

There is already various levies in place and funds that are held at state levels which are there to support the development of and capability of our waste management industries.

He then went on to say—

Mr Crisafulli interjected.

Ms ENOCH: Here we hear the member for Broadwater pop up again. Which side of the fence is he on this time? Is he for or against the waste levy? Is he supporting or against the Prime Minister? Is he supporting the Leader of the Opposition—

Mr Bennett interjected.

Madam DEPUTY SPEAKER: Order! Who was that? You are warned under the standing orders.

Ms ENOCH: Is he supporting the Leader of the Opposition or is he out there doing his numbers? From the contributions of his colleagues tonight, I can pretty much tell members that his leadership aspirations are going straight to landfill. Further, during that press conference the Prime Minister stated—

... it is about building that industry capability, but it is also about ensuring that we've got the pull through from the users of recycled and converted waste.

...

So there is the work on the science, but there's also the work on the economics ...

There you have it. The federal LNP get it. They appear to understand what is needed in order to grow jobs and expand this industry. Why is this so hard for the Queensland LNP to understand? Is their party so deeply divided that they cannot even have a conversation about recycling without trashing their own Prime Minister's ideas?

The fact is: the damage the LNP did to Queensland in 2012 by repealing the previous waste levy is still being undone, and we cannot afford to let them wreak havoc again. Queensland's previous levy, which started in December 2011, was beginning to deliver real results until it was repealed. Our state was starting to see significant investment in recycling infrastructure, and new jobs were being created to deal with the volumes of material being diverted from landfill disposal. The most significant improvements were starting to be seen in construction and demolition waste, with considerable reprocessing infrastructure being established; however, the announcement by the then LNP government to repeal the levy halted any further expansion in new equipment and technologies. This led to lost job and industry investment opportunities and loss of industry confidence in establishing facilities in Queensland.

These opportunities simply went elsewhere. They went to other states. This is demonstrated by the limited expansion of regional recycling and reprocessing capacity that has been developed in this state since, and Queensland fell further behind other states when it came to attracting new business investment and recovering valuable resources.

On 1 July 2019 the Palaszczuk government released a new Waste Management and Resource Recovery Strategy which provides a way forward to create jobs, protect the environment and create jobs in the emerging circular economy. The waste levy is a key tool that supports the implementation of that strategy. In the first year after its introduction, the levy is likely to generate 300 new jobs by generating more recycling and resource recovery. Within a decade, that number is expected to grow to a further 3,000 new jobs in the sector.

Levy revenue will restore business confidence and encourage industry investment in new and expanded infrastructure in Queensland. These outcomes will be further supported by the development of a Queensland waste and resource recovery infrastructure plan which is currently being prepared and will help identify where critical infrastructure is needed. Some \$100 million over three years has already been allocated to the Resource Recovery Industry Development Program administered by the department of state development to incentivise industry investment in new or expanded infrastructure that will help divert waste from landfill and increase recovery and recycling.

Importantly, the Palaszczuk government has committed to reducing the cost impact on households as a result of the introduction of the levy. In June this year, prior to the commencement of the levy, 43 local governments were provided with advanced payments totalling \$143.5 million to ensure that there is no reason for household rates to increase. A further \$2 million is allocated specifically to assist the construction and demolition industry to reduce the amount of waste that is sent to landfill. There have been claims made in the past and tonight by the LNP that the waste levy will add \$1,500 to \$2,100 to the price of a new house. For this to be true, every newly constructed house would have to produce more than 25 tonnes of waste and have all that waste go to landfill.

Ms Jones interjected.

Madam DEPUTY SPEAKER (Ms McMillan): Member for Cooper, if you are going to interject, I ask you to move to your seat please.

Ms ENOCH: In reality, a better estimate of waste generated during construction of a single-storey, three-bedroom house is less than eight tonnes. Much of this waste, including any clean earth excavated from the site, is recyclable.

The introduction of the levy has already helped improve waste management by local governments, with over \$5 million provided to help install weighbridges and improve landfill security for councils in and bordering the levy zone. We know that compliance is an important part of any new

regulatory approach and I can inform the House that as at 16 August this year 127 waste levy related compliance inspections have already been conducted across Queensland. Regional compliance staff have conducted two static vehicle intercepts to gather intelligence on waste transport operations and drone training is continuing across the state.

The government is aware that one of the potential perverse outcomes of a waste levy could be an increase in illegal dumping, so we have invested in a strengthened compliance program. Funding has been provided for an additional 16 compliance officers working across Queensland including North Queensland, Cairns and Townsville as well as officers supporting Central Queensland from Rockhampton and Maroochydore, the Gold Coast and Brisbane. There are also officers covering South-West Queensland in Ipswich and Toowoomba. These compliance officers have hit the ground running and have observed firsthand how some operators are looking for opportunities to re-use waste and reduce the amount going into landfill.

In a further effort to reduce illegal dumping, the government is also investing \$2 million over the next two years to enhance the compliance capability of local governments. Several weeks ago I announced that four agreements between local governments—Townsville, Fraser Coast, Bundaberg and the Gold Coast—and the department are in place for additional illegal dumping compliance officers funded by the state. An expression of interest is currently available for additional councils to participate in the scheme. We have a choice. Queensland can remain the second worst recycler in the country or, off the back of the levy supporting the implementation of a new waste strategy, we can encourage new investment, new industries and new jobs for Queensland.

Our government is already creating policy settings and implementing programs that are creating new jobs in waste management. The container refund scheme, which we introduced on 1 November last year, has demonstrated that a price signal, no matter how small, can have an enormous impact. In the first nine months of the scheme's operation, over 700 million containers have been returned through 307 refund points across Queensland and more than 600 jobs have so far been created as a result of that scheme. The success of the scheme demonstrates just how passionate Queenslanders are about what they can do to recycle more and reduce landfill.

We know that Queenslanders are passionate about recycling. We know that they want to see their government do better in this space to support good recycling and to reduce landfill. What we have seen from the LNP tonight is nothing more than scaremongering and of course a promise to repeal the levy in the future. It has no regard for the jobs that are being created and that will be created as a result of this levy. It has no regard for the certainty that industry requires to be able to invest in this state. The Palaszczuk government supports jobs in Queensland and it supports investment in Queensland. We want to see the resource and recycling industry grow in Queensland, and we want the jobs that come along with that. That is why the waste levy is an important part of being able to send the strongest possible signal that Queensland is valuing the resource recovery industry and the jobs that come with it.

What we have seen here tonight is the work of an opposition that does not understand how important and effective a market signal can be and it is so caught up in the politics of opposing everything that seems environmental that it risks the certainty that the waste management and resource recovery industry needs in order to grow. When it risks that industry certainty, it puts jobs at risk. When it is risking that kind of certainty, it is risking the jobs of Queenslanders. The Palaszczuk government will not stand for that. We will not allow the LNP to once again do to Queensland what it did in 2012 and make our state a cheap place to dump and where we do not see the economic value of recycling and we lose job opportunities. We will fight the war on waste and we will support industry, councils and Queenslanders as we do it. I strongly oppose the motion and I call on all members in this House to do the same.