




Speech By
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MEMBER FOR TRAEGER

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

Disallowance of Statutory Instrument

 **Mr KATTER** (Traeger—KAP) (6.30 pm): I rise to make a contribution to the debate and to support the disallowance motion against this waste levy. I refer to my colleagues, the members for Hill and Hinchinbrook, and note as well their support of this disallowance motion. What about the old adage that Queensland is too big a state for one set of laws to apply everywhere? There is no better example than Mount Isa in terms of this waste levy. I understand that this waste levy will be \$75 a tonne with the initial 105 per cent rebate downgraded to 85 per cent. When I initially saw that, I thought, 'That makes sense when it applies, because they are trying to stop rubbish going across the border.' I get that part of it, but then I saw that this applies to Mount Isa by virtue of the fact that its population exceeds 10,000 people.

What I do not understand is: who sat down and looked at the cost impost and the barriers to try and build industry in this remote part of Queensland when we apply the same levy to places on the coast? How can you transport material 1,000 kilometres when energy costs \$150 to \$200 a megawatt hour but is only \$60 a megawatt hour on the grid? How can they be expected to compete and make an industry out of this? Then we pay \$4 million to \$5 million profit in terms of water to the state government which comes from the general revenue of Mount Isa ratepayers. On top of that, it is 1,000 kilometres from the coast to the nearest metropolitan area or 20 hours drive to Brisbane. How on earth are we supposed to build an industry with those cost imposts? It is not comparing like with like. It is an unfair imposition and is throwing the Mount Isa City Council and its ratepayers under a bus. In terms of the lack of volume in such a remote area, there is no capacity to capture wider, vast amounts from another area or to do anything clever. You are very much constrained by your remoteness. That is an unassailable reality that we cannot get past.

We talk about alternative industries. I watch very closely the future of Alan Rowe's little enterprise in Charters Towers. I say this in all earnestness. I hope he is successful, but he will be outcompeted by companies from China. He makes bollard bases out of granulated rubber and is attempting to get some uptake in this area. I imagine that is a pretty good and sensible re-use of waste material. That is an example of something that could be successful in using some of this waste and trying to meet the government's objectives. I acknowledge that TMR is meeting with him to look at purchasing some of that product, but if that fails it is not a good look. Let us keep our fingers crossed. I hope Alan Rowe is successful, but it would be a pretty negative sign for a very successful businessman of many endeavours whose business is close to a large population base but who is caught out by this waste reduction levy. If he cannot make a business out of that and does not get support from the government—and let us support this bloke and buy his product because we know that we want to encourage that—I would put a very big question mark over this entire endeavour.

I have had representations to my office from people in the tyre industry who say that large stakeholders in the industry are spreading a lot of misleading information. They say that there is a lot of environmental concern about the granulated waste from tyres. There are a lot of challenges

associated with that style of waste management. I am no expert, but I believe there are some enormous challenges there. In relation to waste management and the ability to try to encourage it and build some industry around it, we all would agree that we would love to achieve that. It is the means by which we do that. We cannot forget how tough it already is out there for businesses with existing cost imposts. Certainly, I know that in Mount Isa even the really good businesses are struggling to make ends meet. Another levy with a rebate that phases out will end up being a levy imposed on these people. It will be a cost to them—something that they cannot bear.

There is a lot of talk about the environment. I am drawing a bit of a long bow, but everyone says that if we are not in favour of the waste levy we are not for the environment. I am sick and tired of hearing about the environment in this place. When I drive through my electorate, I go past millions of hectares of prickly acacia—an environmental scandal—and the worst woody weed in the country. We have just said that we will not match the federal government's \$5 million in terms of prickly acacia, but we get nothing in our area. I find it hard to say that we all care about the environment. It must not be the environment in my electorate, because up to 20 million hectares is infested with prickly acacia. That does not seem to be a problem for anyone because no money has been thrown at that. Excuse me if I think there is an element of insincerity in relation to trying to fix all aspects of the environment.

The other day I spoke to Katrina Gall, a proprietor of perhaps one of the best cafe/restaurants in the north-west. I reflect on that conversation, because it is a really good and very busy business. She does a great job but is struggling with all of the costs associated with running her business. It is very hard for her. As I understand, there will be a rebate for ratepayers through this initial period to get this levy up and running to try to induce some industry in Mount Isa, but it probably will never eventuate. I hope it does. I would love to be part of the solution, but I cannot see that happening in terms of all those cost pressures to which I alluded.

Builders and other commercial users who recycle their waste will still pass those costs back to businesses. It will still circulate back around Mount Isa as an impost. People like Katrina Gall and these cafes and businesses are already struggling. Even with the slightest bit of pressure, these very fragile businesses cannot withstand it. I am sure that everyone appreciates the attempt to recycle, manage waste and improve what we are doing. I am all for it. All I know is that we in Mount Isa cannot bear these sorts of costs and that we will not get an industry going. There must be some way we can, but we cannot do it in this manner and it will not just pop up overnight.

Again, we cannot have energy at \$150 to \$200 a megawatt hour when it costs \$60 a megawatt hour on the coast. We cannot be 1,000 kilometres from the largest metropolitan area or 2,000 kilometres from Brisbane, with water costs being gouged by the state to the tune of \$4 million or \$5 million, and expect to run a profitable business when at best those on the coast are lean businesses. That is just unrealistic and will end up being a very unfair impost. It is already a very difficult environment for businesses from those areas. That is why we will support this disallowance motion. I hope there are members on the other side of the House who see sense and reason in supporting this motion.