




Speech By
Stephen Andrew

MEMBER FOR MIRANI

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

 **Mr ANDREW** (Mirani—PHON) (12.35 pm): I rise to speak of my deep concerns about the Waste Reduction and Recycling (Waste Levy) and Other Legislation Amendment Bill. Although the basic intent of this bill has some merit, I strongly believe that its implementation guidelines are badly targeted and will present an added financial burden to many who are already experiencing hard times, especially those living in regional Queensland.

The initial pretence of the measures within this bill was that they were a remedy for many years of interstate waste being transported across the New South Wales-Queensland state border. The figures for 2017-18 indicate that 1.2 million tonnes of rubbish was imported from interstate—an increase of 37 per cent. Virtually all of that waste is being disposed in waste facilities operated by a couple of for-profit corporate operators in South-East Queensland. What is being achieved by imposing a price signal, starting at \$75 per tonne, on honest Queensland ratepayers and small businesses, of whom many live in excess of 1,000 kilometres north of the New South Wales border?

Personally, I am all for promoting waste and recycling where there are economic gains that can be financially justified, and that is well reflected in an 82 per cent recovery rate under the existing arrangements. I represent a regional and mostly rural electorate of 32,000 electors spread across 63,000 square kilometres and four local government areas. For the benefit of those members who may not understand the extent of this area, I point out that regional Queensland is a big place and for many of my constituents within the electorate of Mirani, doing the right thing can mean loading up and making a 30- to 150-kilometre round trip to access the nearest council transfer station or landfill. In effect, nothing less than an hour or two from already busy lives will be consumed undertaking a single trip to a waste disposal facility, not to mention the fuel cost incurred. This is assuming that the vehicle has been carefully stacked to allow the recyclables to be off-loaded first whilst maximising what can be transported safely that distance and arrive intact.

How can the Queensland government justify lumping a new waste levy on top of this sort of unavoidable, existing expense relating to living or operating a small business in rural areas that fall within boundaries of the leviable zone? In Queensland, and especially in my electorate, many people have no disposable income and no disposable time. Often people have to stay back at work. That results in little kids getting left on the bus and having to go back to schools to be looked after.

To play devil's advocate, the waste levy is sure to trigger more than a few loads of waste being dropped off in a creek or in our pristine mangroves under the cover of darkness, or more unwanted and worthless junk being off-loaded on to the good folk who manage various charity bins. We see that all the time. People are not going to dumps. They are just throwing their rubbish at St Vinnie's, or wherever. It is happening right now.

Ultimately, no amount of beefing up the financial penalty is going to solve these problems. It will very likely leave an even larger and costly mess for local councils and private landholders. It must be recognised that local councils within my electorate already shoulder a heavy burden in managing

existing waste and recycling measures and do so with slim budgets while keeping commercial charges at close to cost to avoid dampening much needed economic activity. The side effects of the waste levy bill mean that councils will be impacted with the burden of having to install additional weighbridges and CCTV monitoring systems, costing upwards of \$250,000, for a mere few thousand vehicles per annum to accept a small percentage of Queensland's total waste stream.

To put things in context, Brisbane, Logan, Ipswich, Redlands and Moreton operate under a similar number of waste facilities combined but have the population many magnitudes larger to share the regulatory and infrastructure cost burdens. On the other hand, large South-East Queensland landfills and waste transfers would likely see that sort of traffic in a single business day. Ultimately, I see this bill presenting many small regional council owned waste facilities with unwanted administrative burdens and having to pass on the costly impost to their dwindling ratepayer bases or, worse still, close waste facilities making travel distances even further for many ratepayers.

In returning to my opening comments, the initial problem was with New South Wales waste being dumped on the cheap in Queensland. Why on earth are honest regional Queenslanders being slugged with additional costs for their waste disposal? As it stands, in all good conscious I will be voting against the Waste Reduction and Recycling (Waste Levy) and Other Legislation Amendment Bill 2018.