



Speech By  
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**MEMBER FOR BONNEY**

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## **MATTERS OF PUBLIC INTEREST**

### **Organic Waste**

 **Mr O'CONNOR** (Bonney—LNP) (2.25 pm): I have spoken many times about organic waste, or FOGO, and that is because I believe how we manage it will be the biggest shift in our rubbish collection since yellow recycling bins. Food and organic waste make up around half of what Queensland households throw out. When it goes into landfill, it makes methane that is 30 times more potent as a greenhouse gas than carbon dioxide. By diverting organics, we can cut these emissions and create a market for products like fertiliser for agriculture and biogas for energy generation. It is a win-win.

The government quietly released their organics strategy last month. Given it was a few months late, I was hopeful that it would give us a clear pathway to catch up to every other state and meet the federal government's target of a 50 per cent diversion from landfill by 2030. Sadly, it does not. Calling it a plan would be generous—and I said 'quietly' before, because most stakeholders I have spoken to only heard about it when I reached out to ask their views on it. This 10-year strategy, covering our state's organic waste policy until 2032, was actually announced as a secondary item in a press release about small grants for primary schools to install composters and worm farms.

Queensland currently accounts for almost a quarter of Australia's food waste, yet we have the lowest rate of access to kerbside organic recycling of any state, with just 13 per cent of households currently having a green bin. That is why this strategy is so important, yet it contains very little detail on how to fix this. I urge the minister to clearly outline the next steps to roll out FOGO. We need a plan and policy certainty from the state government, not just further reviews and investigations into potential options. No-one will invest in organic waste processing in Queensland with the vague outline provided in the state government's strategy.

There are a few points I would like to raise specifically on the draft's action themes. In 'Infrastructure and services', it is one of the most important to ensure Queensland has the waste facilities we need to process an increase in organic waste. Under 2.03, multiple directions are given. It lists encouraging home composting, local composting hubs and working with local governments to understand the feasibility of kerbside organic services as action themes. By just listing these, it gives no-one the certainty about which direction the state government actually wants things to go in over the next decade. What will the government do to support a statewide rollout of an organic waste kerbside collection, as most other states have? What about even just for South-East Queensland? We should at least have a plan for where most of our residents live, because that is essential to reaching the diversion targets.

The first step to all of this is to get green wheelie bins to more households, and this strategy does not even talk about that. The lack of detail is leading to growing confusion in our waste industry, with businesses unwilling to take on the risk of building infrastructure that may never be used. The 2019 Arcadis infrastructure report demonstrates how limited our capacity is to process organic waste beyond the next few years. When you add to this the complete failure to spend anywhere near the \$100 million

allocated to the RRIDP before redirecting \$20 million of that to the RMF, despite over \$811 million in applications being received, it gives me absolutely no confidence that the industry and local government will get the support they need.

Further, while point 2.05 names the stakeholders necessary to find our infrastructure solutions, the industry bodies at a recent round table I held here with the waste resources industry of Queensland said they would like to see the roles and responsibilities for the state government, local governments and industry clearly defined in this plan.

On the market and product development theme, we need an analysis of the contamination risks that come with organic waste. This is the biggest concern that continues to be raised with me. We need to understand what the government is doing to plan for contamination and to minimise the risks of it, because this is what will drive investment in this sector.

The suggestion of a landfill disposal ban on organic waste streams seems to go against the advice set out by one of the expert bodies on this, AORA. They say that a ban should only be considered if a state cannot ramp up its collection systems in time to hit a target. Listing this as the first option does not seem to be the right way forward.

Overall, this strategy feels more like a discussion paper than a clear plan forward for the next decade. If it is not improved, it will be another long-term environmental strategy from Labor that delivers no outcomes, misses opportunities and puts us further behind other states.