




Speech By  
**Aaron Harper**

**MEMBER FOR THURINGOWA**

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Record of Proceedings, 23 May 2023

**WASTE REDUCTION AND RECYCLING AND OTHER LEGISLATION  
AMENDMENT BILL**

 **Mr HARPER** (Thuringowa—ALP) (4.47 pm): I rise to make my contribution to the Waste Reduction and Recycling and Other Legislation Amendment Bill 2023. I will start by thanking the hardworking members of the committee: the member for Pumicestone; the member for Lytton; the member for Southport, the deputy chair; the member for Mirani; and now the member for Glass House. Talk about recycling: I find it ironic that the shadow minister for environment has left the Health and Environment Committee. We welcome the member for Glass House who may well improve the attendance records, member for Bonney. We look forward to his contribution. Talk about recycling.

With the indulgence of the House, I take a moment to commend and acknowledge the previous minister for the environment, the Hon. Meaghan Scanlon, for her dedication and commitment to doing a number of things in her previous role, including introducing this bill, to tackle the real and incredibly challenging issues of protecting our environment, protecting the Great Barrier Reef and tackling climate change and to making real and constructive changes in terms of how we all in this great state of Queensland continue to address these issues for the benefit of future generations of Queenslanders. These are Labor valued principles, each based on sound, fundamental scientific evidence to make sure we look after the very planet that gives each of us life. We will continue good, sensible policies with the core aim to address the real and current issues affecting our environment such as waste and recycling. Well done, Minister. I also welcome the opportunity to work with Minister Leanne Linard, now the Minister for the Environment, who I am sure will continue to do the right thing by Queenslanders by adopting that same sensible approach.

On 22 February 2023, the bill was referred to the Health and Environment Committee for examination, with a reporting date of 14 April 2023. The committee held a public briefing on the bill on 3 March 2023, followed by a public hearing and further public briefing on 27 March 2023. The committee called for submissions on the bill for its inquiry and received 16 submissions. Submitters were broadly supportive of the bill's aims, with divergent views about whether or not proposed reforms go far enough to secure best practice environmental outcomes. Submitters provided various suggestions for potential further reforms.

The committee has made one recommendation, that the bill be passed. The stated objectives of the Waste Reduction and Recycling and Other Legislation Amendment Bill 2023 are to amend the Waste Reduction and Recycling Act 2011 and the Environmental Protection Act 1994 to remove the automatic levy exemption for clean earth and subsequently remove the definition of 'clean earth', to take effect from 1 July 2023. Some from industry or the opposition may say that there was not enough time to plan for this change. May I remind members that on 11 December 2021 our government announced its intention to remove the clean earth exemption, coming into effect on 1 July 2023, following the first stage review of the efficacy of the waste levy.

The bill also seeks to ban the outdoor release of lighter-than-air balloons from 1 September 2023. There was a lot of support for this particular clause as well, as we heard directly from people working in the marine environment of the damage to marine animals and the environment due to this waste product that finds itself in our waterways and on the Great Barrier Reef. To clarify, the ban is not a ban on balloons but a ban on the outdoor release of any number of lighter-than-air—helium—balloons. To ensure there is a consistent message regarding this release ban, further work will be undertaken with environmental groups, local governments, balloon suppliers and retailers, and other affected organisations.

Importantly, the bill includes the circular economy principle as a principle under the Waste Reduction and Recycling Act. I will talk a little more about the circular economy principle as it essentially makes perfect sense to recycle as much as we can where we can. That can be achieved by understanding and following the waste and resource recovery hierarchy and various principles to support improved waste and resource recovery management. The proposed amendment provides for the inclusion of the circular economy principle to ensure that circular economy considerations form part of the decision-making processes.

The bill will also authorise the chief executive of the Department of Environment and Science to make a decision about amending or suspending a resource recovery area declaration. It will authorise the chief executive to make a decision about making a payment to a local government including to mitigate direct effects of the waste levy on households in a local government area.

I note that the bill will change, through the amendments, the review period for the state's waste management strategy from three to five years. Thank you to the minister for listening to the LGAQ, who raised concerns on this issue. Importantly, the bill will set an expiry date of 31 December 2025 for the exemption from the ban for a single-use plastic item that is an integral part of a shelf-ready product.

The other policy objective of the bill is to provide a head of power in the definition of 'waste' to prescribe through regulation that a thing is not a waste and move the definition of 'waste' from the Environmental Protection Act 1994 to the Waste Reduction and Recycling Act 2011. Consequential amendments are also required to other legislation as a result of moving the definition of 'waste' from the Environmental Protection Act to the waste act.

Providing a mechanism other than an end-of-waste code or approval to determine whether or not something is a waste arose out of consultation during the levy efficacy review in June 2022 and as part of the end-of-waste code review. Prescribing a thing to not be a waste through regulation provides the ability to consider several factors when deciding whether to recommend the making of the regulation without placing a reliance solely on whether a thing is suitable for the development of the end-of-waste code or approval to become an end-of-waste resource.

In conclusion, I want to give a shout-out to the Tidy Up Townsville team, who are doing a huge waste clean-up in our local government area. I congratulate them for their hard work. They are removing a lot of waste from our local waterways. I commend the bill to the House.