




Speech By
Ali King

MEMBER FOR PUMICESTONE

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WASTE REDUCTION AND RECYCLING AND OTHER LEGISLATION AMENDMENT BILL

 **Ms KING** (Pumicestone—ALP) (5.18 pm): The Waste Reduction and Recycling and Other Legislation Amendment Bill is a big picture bill. It is about taking real action on waste which is essential: for our economy, because for every job in the landfill sector there are three times as many jobs in recycling; for our environment, to stop pollution going into our waterways and protected areas and to reduce greenhouse gas emissions; and for communities across the state. Our government places a high value on this sector, which contributes \$1.5 billion to the Queensland economy each year and supports 12,000 jobs.

Our Palaszczuk government's 2030 targets to halve food waste, reduce material going to landfill by 80 per cent and recycle 65 per cent of rubbish are tough but achievable with the real actions contained in this bill. While traditional take-make-dispose life cycles are contributing to a waste tsunami that puts Queensland's environmental wellbeing at risk, this bill takes action to significantly shift the current policy settings. As amended, it embeds circular economy principles into our Waste Reduction and Recycling Act, seeking to ensure that all aspects of the products we design, manufacture and use contribute to improved resource recovery and a reduction in the long-term environmental impacts of our products. Importantly, it also delivers on our government's 2021 commitment to remove the automatic levy exemption for clean earth delivered to a leviable waste disposal site, recognising clean earth as a valuable product, the re-use of which should be incentivised.

We announced the removal of the clean earth levy exemption in December 2021, allowing considerable time for the industry to respond before the removal of the levy commences on 1 July this year. Removal of the levy exemption brings Queensland into line with New South Wales, South Australia and Victoria. Project or landfill operators can continue to use clean earth as an alternative to disposal at a waste facility, and landfill operators can also apply for an operational purpose exemption where clean earth delivered to a leviable waste disposal site is used for good operation and maintenance of the site.

Suzanne Toumbourou from the Australian Council of Recycling noted that council members specifically support the removal of the automatic clean earth exemption from the waste levy. Ms Toumbourou stated, 'Let's not kid ourselves, recycling is an expensive exercise and it needs to be supported by legislative structures like the waste levy that drive materials away from landfill.'

This bill also meets Labor's 2022 commitment to ban the release of lighter-than-air balloons as part of our five-year action plan on single-use plastics, with that ban on release commencing on 1 September this year. While releasing balloons currently meets the definition of 'littering' under the Waste Reduction and Recycling Act, taking steps to specifically ban their release provides clarity and will help prevent littering before it occurs. As the Department of Environment and Science noted in their submission, balloons have a significant impact on our waterways, they risk choking birds and snaring

mammals while strings or ribbons attached can tangle and starve turtles, birds and other animal life. Let's be clear, it will remain legal to decorate your child's party, or the member for Bonney's bedroom, with helium balloons. What will be prohibited is releasing those balloons.

This bill was supported right across the list of stakeholders who gave evidence. The head of corporate affairs at Cleanaway congratulated the Queensland government for legislating Queensland's transition to a genuine domestic circular economy. Submitters were supportive of the proposal to extend review time frames from three to five years to maintain consistency across jurisdictions, and I note the amendments foreshadowed for circulation by the minister.

Waste is not glamorous, but managing it well is essential to protecting Queensland's environment. Who can forget the dire consequences of the LNP's ill-thought-out decision to cancel the waste levy that turned Queensland into the dumping ground of the east coast?

I thank my fellow committee members, the previous minister and our incoming minister, the member for Nudgee, and I know that she will make important contributions in this space. This bill represents an important set of next steps in our transition to a circular economy for Queensland, and I commend it to the House.