




Speech By
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MEMBER FOR MOGGILL

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

 **Dr ROWAN** (Moggill—LNP) (5.47 pm): I rise to contribute to the debate on the Waste Reduction and Recycling and Other Legislation Amendment Bill 2023. On 2 February 2023, the former minister for the environment and the Great Barrier Reef, now the Minister for Housing, introduced this legislation into the Queensland parliament, where it was subsequently referred to the Health and Environment Committee for its examination and consideration.

As outlined in the explanatory notes, this legislation seeks to amend the Waste Reduction and Recycling Act 2011 and the Environmental Protection Act 1994 in order to achieve a number of objectives including but not limited to the removal of the automatic levy exemption for clean earth and the subsequent removal of the definition of 'clean earth', which will take effect from 1 July 2023. This bill will also ban the outdoor release of lighter-than-air balloons, to take effect from 1 September 2023. The legislation seeks to change the review period for the state's waste management strategy from three to five years as well as make other technical amendments.

On the subject of the review period for the state's waste management strategy, I note that stakeholders were generally supportive of this change. However, I would like to take this opportunity to join with my colleagues and draw attention to the fact that the current Palaszczuk state Labor government has already breached the current legislation's requirements for the first review, which was due in mid-2022. Indeed, having seemingly kept its review hidden from the Queensland public, the draft review was only belatedly released for consultation by the state Labor government after detailed questioning from the Liberal National Party's shadow minister for the environment, the state member for Bonney.

We now know why the state Labor government tried to hide its report after it was released when it was revealed that Queensland is only on track to meet just two of its nine waste targets. It should also be noted that prior to this debate the state Labor government had failed to take the advice and recommendations of stakeholders, including the Local Government Association of Queensland and the Waste Management and Resource Recovery Association of Australia, and extend the local government time frame to be in line with the proposed changes for the state government. This was always a practical and sensible suggestion, hence the amendment that has been proposed by the Liberal National Party, and it is disappointing that the state Labor government had not acted on this measure sooner. I note that section 73DE of this legislation changes the previous definition of 'misinformation' to include—

the effect of the waste levy on the local government or households in the local government's local government area ...

The Palaszczuk state Labor government has failed to consult with local governments on this definition change, with concerns raised that such a change has the potential to, in effect, censor and limit the political expression of local government representatives. I note that representatives of the

Department of Environment and Science attempted to clarify the provision and its impacts on local government. However, there remains uncertainty as to how this will work into the future as annual payments decrease if there is not an observed reduction in waste produced by households.

I also wish to briefly address the proposed ban on the outdoor release of lighter-than-air balloons. The Liberal National Party is supportive of such a measure, recognising that such balloons, when released into the environment, pose risks to wildlife, marine ecosystems and our environment as a whole, and there is certainly ample evidence demonstrating just how long they stay in our local waterways and ecosystems. There have also been health concerns about microplastics, so I note these environmental concerns as well as concerns with human health. With respect to microplastics, there is some research implicating linkages to certain cancers, chronic inflammation and also rheumatological and immune disorders. Whilst this measure is supported, the Palaszczuk state Labor government must ensure that there is significant community education on the detail and commencement of this change.

Before concluding my contribution today, it is important to acknowledge the significance of Queensland's environment and how fortunate our state is to be home to the world's greatest natural waterways, ecosystems and marine environments. Queensland is rightly the envy of states and territories across Australia—in fact, even the envy of the world. To protect and enhance our environment, positive change starts at home and in our communities. It is therefore crucial that the dedication and work done by residents across Queensland and dedicated community and environmental groups is backed by genuine leadership and not undone by the actions or omissions of any state government. It is therefore problematic that on crucial environmental protection and waste management strategies our state has, in some respects, gone backwards under the Palaszczuk Labor government. We know that more household waste is going into landfill now than before the waste levy was introduced half a decade ago. Queensland's solid waste recycling rates have also gone backwards since 2018 from 31 per cent to 27 per cent despite a target of 50 per cent by 2025.

As I have said before in this House, I am a strong believer in the responsibility that we all have as elected representatives in the Queensland parliament to work with and support the genuine efforts of our local communities to conserve and enhance the environment, not just in our electorates but right across Queensland. It is a responsibility that I cherish and it certainly continues to be a pleasure and honour as the state member for Moggill to work with many wonderful and dedicated environmental groups and volunteers in my electorate who work around the year to enhance and conserve our local environment. These groups include the Cubberla-Witton Catchments Network, the Hut Environmental and Community Association, the Chapel Hill Community Garden, the Burns Parade Bushcare Group, the Sutling Street Bushcare Group, the Kholo Creek Catchment group, the Pullen Pullen Catchments Group, the Moggill Creek Catchment Group and the Karana Downs and Surrounds Community Garden Hub.

In concluding my contribution today, I want to thank all stakeholders who contributed to the Health and Environment Committee's consideration of this legislation and all committee members, including the deputy chair, the Liberal National Party's member for Southport, as well as the member for Bonney, who also serves with distinction as the current Liberal National Party's shadow minister for the environment.