



Speech By
Cynthia Lui

MEMBER FOR COOK

Record of Proceedings, 9 May 2023

MATTERS OF PUBLIC INTEREST

Cook Electorate, Waste Management

 **Ms LUI** (Cook—ALP) (3.01 pm): I want to acknowledge the efforts of the Minister for the Environment and the Great Barrier Reef, Hon. Meaghan Scanlon, as the Palaszczuk government continues to respond to the challenge of managing waste in remote communities. Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander councils—so many of them located here in Far North Queensland—face unique challenges in dealing with waste. I come from one myself and represent so many more in the electorate of Cook. Some of these challenges include scarce resources, high costs for products, geographic isolation, long transport distances by land or water, and often harsh and unpredictable climates. Our government acknowledges that these communities need tailored solutions that are appropriate for their geography, account for their access to resources and, most importantly, honour their cultural and custodial relationships with the land and sea.

That is why we have been consulting with community and co-designing strategies in relation to remote waste management. We have been building capacity in this space for many years. In 2019, in partnership with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander councils and the Local Government Association of Queensland, we released the *Respecting country: A sustainable waste strategy for First Nation communities*. This strategy is all about empowering councils and communities to deliver targeted solutions that create economic opportunities for innovative new enterprises and provide jobs for local people. It is when we can create these win-wins—where environmental stewardship meets economic empowerment—that we yield terrific benefits.

I want to give a shout-out to one entrepreneur I know well from an island near my home in the Torres Strait. Edmund Tamwoy is involved in two important projects on Badu Island. One of these projects involves the management of waste from abandoned cars, old whitegoods and scrap metal that has accumulated on the outer islands of the Torres Strait. They are bringing this metal waste from the outer islands to Badu Island where it is recycled or removed from the islands. We allocated \$1.75 million to see this project come to fruition, and it is terrific to see it being delivered.

The other project, in partnership with Container Exchange, was the recent establishment of the Torres Strait's first ever Containers for Change refund point. This facility began operating at the end of last year and has already processed more than 100,000 empty drink containers. In the process it has returned more than \$10,000 in refunds to the local community of around 1,200 residents. This is another great win for the community, pulling useful products out of landfill while easing pressure on household budgets.

This work is not only happening on Badu. We already have 28 container refund points across the Cook electorate. Since our government commenced Queensland's containers refund scheme in 2018, nearly 90 million containers have been returned in the Cook electorate alone. We are also providing funding and new rubbish trucks for remote communities on Cape York. Our communities on Cape York want to be leaders in the transition to zero waste and the jobs that a circular economy can create.

Tomorrow the minister and I will meet with representatives from Northern Peninsula Area Regional Council and Kowanyama Aboriginal Shire Council to announce new rubbish trucks for their communities. The NPA will receive \$155,000 to fund a locally led litter and illegal dumping prevention and disruption program. This funding will help both councils to improve waste collection services, provide safer local jobs and deliver better environmental outcomes for their community. It is part of our \$1.1 billion Recycling and Jobs Fund that is driving Queensland's zero waste transition. Queenslanders know that the Palaszczuk government can be trusted to take action to protect our environment and provide opportunities for people in remote and regional Queensland.