




Speech By
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MEMBER FOR HILL

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WASTE REDUCTION AND RECYCLING AND OTHER LEGISLATION AMENDMENT BILL

 **Mr KNUTH** (Hill—KAP) (11.28 am): I rise to give my contribution to the Waste Reduction and Recycling and Other Legislation Amendment Bill 2023. I am always careful to consider how legislation presented to this House will impact regional and rural Queensland. Often what might sound logical to those living in Brisbane is the exact opposite to those who live in rural and regional Queensland because of how it will affect them. I, and indeed the majority of Queenslanders, certainly support initiatives to better manage waste and encourage recycling but that has to be sensible and achievable. I know that many Queenslanders actively visit their local recycling outlets and are very aware of and conscious about protecting the environment where possible while getting 10 cents returned on various cans, glasses and plastic bottles. I believe that recycling is one of the best things that has ever happened to the country.

I had the privilege of growing up in the small mining town of Collinsville. Our pocket money basically came from recycling items. For example, a milk bottle would fetch five cents. You could get 10 lollies with five cents! Three one-litre Coke bottles would get you into the picture theatre. A bottle of Schweppes would get you a jelly tipped iceblock. They were the good old days. We had golden opportunities to make a bit of pocket money. I remember that a car battery would get you \$2, which could buy a lot of things back then. We no longer have those opportunities, but it is great to see that we still have a recycling program and there is a return.

Although I agree with most of what this bill proposes, I note the objections to the clean energy amendment from Cleanaway and the Local Government Association of Queensland, representing councils throughout the state. Any changes which have not been communicated properly to councils could result in increases to waste management costs being passed on to the wider community. For example, the Waste Reduction and Recycling (Waste Levy) Amendment Bill 2019 caused significant disruptions to businesses throughout the state after it came into effect in 2019. The waste levy was described at the time as underpinning the new waste management strategy being developed for Queensland and would act as a price signal that would encourage waste avoidance and resource-recovering behaviours and discourage disposals to landfill as the first option. It was unaffordable and people were just dumping their rubbish. In reality, it was purely another tax and revenue-raising exercise by the state under the guise of being environmentally responsible and friendly.

At the time, the KAP warned of the levy's impact on councils and regional businesses. One business in my electorate that was hit hard is the Northern Iron and Brass Foundry in Innisfail. It was established in 1934 and employs 74 people. Being based in a small regional centre, the foundry did not have easy access to waste disposal facilities—like many other facilities—and infrastructure required by the new regulation. Its waste costs increased over 200 per cent overnight. This meant the business was placed in a precarious financial position and was in real danger of closing down, taking with it regional jobs and creating a domino effect on associated local businesses. We had to fight very hard for this foundry. This is an example of ignorance towards regional communities, which often do not have the infrastructure that the majority of centres have to manage waste.

There are some very good aspects of this bill, but we must be mindful of the impacts it will have on rural and regional areas, particularly when they do not have the waste infrastructure available in many city areas. I support recycling 100 per cent. I just wish that we were in those good old days where we had those opportunities.