




Speech By  
**Trevor Watts**

**MEMBER FOR TOOWOOMBA NORTH**

---

Record of Proceedings, 24 May 2023

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

 **Mr WATTS** (Toowoomba North—LNP) (12.26 pm): I wish to make a brief contribution to the Waste Reduction and Recycling and Other Legislation Amendment Bill 2023. Firstly, let's start with the turtles. I would recommend everybody in Queensland, everybody in Australia, if they get the chance to get up to Bagara and those places. I certainly used to camp up there and would take my kids up there and look at the turtles. It was a wonderful thing. I think sensible restrictions on balloon release to ensure that these species do not suffer anymore is something that we should be doing. I would add that it certainly needs to be publicised because I think some people may engage in that behaviour, not realising the consequences when quite innocently engaging in that. Clearly, if we are being told it is causing these kinds of problems in the marine environment, then it should be ceased. I certainly support that.

There are a couple of things I would like to look at. The circular economy is one. Recently I have been doing some landscaping. In Toowoomba we have an organisation called Zilch Waste. They take rubble. I broke up a bunch of concrete, put it in a skip, and they came and took it away. Unfortunately for me, I then needed some gravel back, so I then paid them to mulch up the concrete that I sent them and then paid them to bring it back as gravel for me. It seems to be quite a profitable business, I would suggest, but it was also good to know that this was not just going into landfill somewhere and that it was being used in a productive way because it had gone through that circular process: I needed gravel and the concrete I had broken up was of no use.

These are things that we can and should be supporting. Anything we can do to encourage a circular economy where all waste, or so-called waste, that we have presents an opportunity for us to recycle, repurpose and use that resource. That brings me to something that has concerned me greatly over the last few years. I do not think the opportunity has been fully embraced. As people are aware, we have been moving a lot to solar panels and wind turbines all across Queensland, but in particular we see a lot of this coming through Toowoomba as there are some massive opportunities for green energy production. The problem with that is the amount of packaging that comes, for example, with a solar panel and the reprocessing of that and how that is handled. This is material that comes in to Australia from China, and we then have to look at how we can recycle that as we do not want it going into landfill. One of the difficulties you have when you go into regional and remote Queensland with this kind of packaging, as well as other materials, is whether or not there are the facilities to reprocess.

That brings me to the solar panels themselves. My understanding is—and I would love someone to correct me; maybe the minister can—there is nowhere in Queensland to actually reprocess a solar panel. Solar panels comprise a collection of materials that have been put together that have a particular life span and the cost involved in reprocessing that panel is not considered when it is installed. Like I say, we can look at this as an opportunity for Queensland to become a hub for reprocessing these things. As they come to the end of their life, we are going to face the problem of where to put all the

solar panels and how we unlock the resources inside the solar panels. My understanding is that currently they need to be chipped up or chemically dissolved and shipped to Japan. That is the closest place where these things can be recycled.

We have some time to deal with this issue, but we need to get on with it because a lot of solar panels have been fitted and a lot of promises were made about how good they are for the environment. This is an environmental disaster coming Queensland's way if we do not work out how to deal with it. Let's see it as an opportunity for resource recovery. Let's work out how to build in the cost of that recycling at the beginning of the process, as is done for other products, and make sure we can deal with that.

It is the same situation with the wind turbines. Anybody who drives along the Warrego Highway late at night, which I do a fair bit as I travel backwards and forwards to Brisbane and other locations, occasionally comes across the transportation of massive wind turbines, all made of carbon fibre and imported from China. The roads are closed down so they can be taken out west and installed.

**Mr Power:** Why do you hate wind turbines?

**Mr WATTS:** I do not hate wind turbines.

**Mr Power:** You do.

**Mr WATTS:** I take the interjection from the member for Logan. I certainly do not hate wind turbines. I think they should be used in a responsible and sensible way. The questions for me are: at the end of the life of those massive blades, how are they recycled, what are we doing with them and where are we putting them? Three or four of them take up a football field. Again, I love to be corrected by the minister but I would love to know and understand Queensland's position on the end of life for what could be a resource if we had the ability to reprocess it.

At the moment it is going to be a waste. What are we doing with it? How are we storing it and how is that protecting our environment in the long term? I ask the minister to please give me the answer because I do not know. I have been trying to find out what we will do with these things at the end of their life, whether it be a solar panel or a wind turbine. I am ambivalent about what source of energy we have, but everything should be able to be managed in our environment. There are two opportunities for us here in resource recovery, but that is only going to happen if we take some action, scientifically and otherwise, to work out how to recover those resources in Queensland. There are a couple of areas that I am concerned about.

There is another area that I am concerned about. I will quote the LGAQ in making their strong argument about misinformation, which they say should not be used to 'cancel councils from making public any concerns about'—

**Mr Power:** That's why you're worried about it.

**Mr WATTS:** It is identical because it is their quote that they gave in a public submission. I cannot change their quote. They state—

The LGAQ rejects any attempts to cancel councils from making public any concerns about potential impacts as the sector and the State navigate the revised advance payment trajectory. This submission request that this amendment therefore does not proceed.

This is about making sure there is some openness and transparency. As people know, this government has been in crisis and chaos, so the last thing they want is some transparency and exposure about their failings.

In my remaining time I might go through some of the failings, and these are in relation to their own measures. We find they are not on track to reach the first milestone of 10 per cent reduction in household waste generated per capita. They are not on track to reach 55 per cent of household waste diverted from landfill. They are not on track to reach 65 per cent by 2025 of industrial commercial waste being diverted from landfill. They are not on track to reach 65 per cent of all headline waste diverted from landfill by 2025. They are not on track to reach household recycling targets of 50 per cent by 2025. That is the government's record, and I can understand why they would not want people to talk about that.

What we hear from this chaotic government, which has clearly been in crisis for a long time, is that they love announcements when they can go out there and tell everyone how wonderful it is going to be and how they are going to fix the world. One of the other things they are is incredibly cynical because they then want to hide the evidence that they have failed miserably in reaching their own targets. Either be more realistic and set better targets or do the job properly. What they cannot do or what they should not do as the executive that runs this state is hide the truth from the people of Queensland. If a report is required, publish the report, admit they have failed and either improve or stand aside.