




Speech By  
**Jennifer Howard**

**MEMBER FOR IPSWICH**

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**ENVIRONMENTAL PROTECTION (POWERS AND PENALTIES) AND OTHER  
LEGISLATION AMENDMENT BILL**

 **Ms HOWARD** (Ipswich—ALP) (11.57 am): I am very pleased to rise and speak in support of the Environmental Protection (Powers and Penalties) and Other Legislation Amendment Bill 2024. I would like to firstly thank Minister Leanne Linard and the Department of Environment, Science and Innovation. Their work has helped get these substantial reforms into parliament. I am really grateful for Minister Linard's support and her personal appearances in Ipswich and for listening to residents. I would also like to thank retired judge Richard Jones and barrister Susan Hedge for their independent review into environmental penalties and powers in Queensland. That review was initiated in part by the significant odour issues in the Swanbank industrial area—those issues that have affected Ipswich for decades.

I would also like to thank those advocates in the Ipswich community who have devoted a lot of their own personal time and energy into putting this issue in the spotlight. Their lived experience of the odours and the toll taken on their daily lives and their health and wellbeing is the reason this legislation is so desperately needed. Those advocates and many other residents of Ipswich have been calling for stronger action and we have listened. They have demanded tougher penalties for noncompliant waste companies and they have demanded those companies step up their efforts to reduce waste and composting odours. If a company operates close to a residential area, they have a corporate responsibility to not do harm to nearby residents. If they cannot adapt to community expectations then they should move on. I have been advocating strongly on this issue since 2015. I have lobbied the current and former environment ministers to ask what more we can do to take tougher action on waste companies flouting environmental laws.

The odours in Ipswich have been around long before 2015, but they have become a much more significant problem since increasing numbers of people have moved into the new greenfield suburbs surrounding the Swanbank industrial area like Ripley Valley and Redbank Plains. People who live further away in suburbs like Flinders View, Raceview, Silkstone and Booval also experience these odours. As we heard from the member for Jordan, sometimes the odours have even extended as far as Springfield. In response to residents' complaints and concerns, in 2018 the Queensland government set up the Odour Abatement Taskforce, and I thank Minister Leeanne Enoch who listened and was responsible for that. The Odour Abatement Taskforce operated exclusively in the Ipswich area and investigated odours reported by residents. That taskforce's investigations led to numerous penalties, statutory notices and legal proceedings against noncompliant operators. In 2019 we reinstated the waste levy after the former Newman LNP government dumped it in 2012—this led to a tsunami of interstate waste being dumped into Ipswich landfill facilities—but it was obvious that we still needed to do more.

Some residents have informed me that they are getting ill and that they are suffering respiratory and skin problems or that they cannot sit outside or have people over for a barbeque. They have to close up their house and have their air conditioner running all day, which has resulted in higher electricity bills. The Ripley Valley is one of the fastest growing areas in Queensland and home to a large number

of first home owners and young families. Some of them are very concerned about the odour's impacts on their children's short-term and long-term health, and this is a fear that they should not have to live with.

Our government has taken those concerns seriously. Queensland Health has been engaged to work with the Department of Environment, Science and Innovation to help advise on the results of air monitoring that is taking place. As part of our odour response, DESI has expanded the use of air-monitoring canisters across Ipswich and, to date, no air sample has exceeded health guidelines. Queensland Health has also established referral pathways for residents to access health advice if they have concerns. Local GPs have been alerted that patients may present with symptoms associated with odours, and the Chief Health Officer has encouraged local GPs to utilise referral pathways for residents experiencing health issues related to the odours. I am very pleased to see that this legislation will place a greater emphasis on human health, wellbeing and safety and that it will emphasise proactive prevention rather than reactively responding to environmental breaches after they occur.

The Department of Environment, Science and Innovation has gone above and beyond in responding to Ipswich's odour problem, and I want to acknowledge the work it has done to try to resolve this issue. It has substantially increased its compliance activities in assessing waste facilities in the Swanbank and New Chum areas which have resulted in multiple fines, enforcement notices and legal proceedings. In December last year DESI filed a restraint order application against composting company NuGrow in the Planning and Environment Court to try to stop NuGrow receiving highly odorous waste. DESI has applied for final orders to have an in-vessel system constructed on NuGrow's site to enclose its composting operations. An in-vessel system—one which is built to best practice guidelines—would greatly reduce odour emissions impacting nearby communities. Some 70 local residents provided witness statements to the department's restraint order application, and I want to thank those community members for taking the time to make that contribution to the process. I also want to point out that the Queensland government recently announced a \$9 million package for the Ipswich City Council to fully rollout food organics and garden organics waste collection, otherwise known as FOGO waste. Part of that funding will help council collect organic waste and send it to a facility that meets best practice guidelines for composting which means that, given there are currently no Ipswich operators that meet those standards, it will have to be sent outside of Ipswich.

This bill is a chance to finally stop the odours in Ipswich. We know that only the Miles Labor government can be trusted to do this. The opposition neglected this issue when it was last in government. It got rid of the waste levy and ignored odour complaints by Ipswich residents. In fact, the LNP's track record on the environment is marked by a contempt for the environment. Do not forget that this is the party that has tried to recommence uranium mining in Queensland. Not only did the LNP scrap the waste levy in 2012; it ruled out a ban on plastic shopping bags—something our government successfully introduced in 2018. The LNP weakened environmental regulations for a number of industries under the guise of cutting green tape, but it was really just a free pass to pollute. The LNP Newman government did not spend a single cent on trying to stop the waste odours in Ipswich. However, it somehow found \$40,000 to give to KFC to install recycling bins at its 43 stores across Queensland, and this is where its priorities lie. The point I am trying to make is that it is more about money for big business while local communities suffer. This bill will build on the numerous initiatives the Queensland Labor government has invested in since 2015 to try and stop waste odours in Ipswich. I commend the bill to the House.