




Speech By
Jessica Pugh

MEMBER FOR MOUNT OMMANEY

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

 **Ms PUGH** (Mount Ommaney—ALP) (5.47 pm): I rise to support the Environmental Protection (Powers and Penalties) and Other Legislation Amendment Bill 2024 introduced into the Queensland parliament on 13 February 2024 and referred to the former Health and Environment Committee. The committee made just one recommendation that the bill be passed.

The objective of this bill is to ensure that powers and penalties in the Environmental Protection Act 1994, the EP Act, are contemporary and fit for purpose. It demonstrates our government's commitment to protect the community as well as Queensland's natural environment. It achieves this by ensuring the powers and penalties available to regulators are contemporary, effective and responsive and by removing impediments to their efficient use.

The bill will support regulators to be responsive and proactive to changes in industry practices and community expectations. The amendments in this bill will facilitate a different approach to environmental risk management to prevent the community from being exposed to harm. This bill removes existing barriers to timely and effective regulatory responses to manage and restore environmental harm that has occurred. It recognises that the goal of environmental protection is linked to safeguarding the health and wellbeing of our communities in Queensland.

The changing residential landscape is creating complexities for industries in seeking that balance between the coexistence of housing and industrial areas. Effective regulation is critical to minimise and prevent harm to the community and environment from the increased risks posed by dust, odour and noise. This bill will implement the government's response to the 2022 independent review undertaken by retired judge Richard Jones and barrister Susan Hedge.

The review, which looked into powers and penalties under the Environmental Protection Act, was initiated in part due to significant odour nuisance issues that have arisen in some Queensland communities, some of which are located very close to my electorate of Mount Ommaney. The review considered whether the tools available under the Environmental Protection Act—in particular, when there is an environmental nuisance complaint or event—are sufficient considering current and future demands. The review found that the EP Act is generally adequate in terms of the powers and penalties available to enforce environmental obligations and reduce the risk of environmental harm. However, the reviewers did identify opportunities where these powers could be enhanced.

This bill will improve existing tools and regulatory processes, allowing for firmer and faster action against polluters to ensure that we are better protecting both the environment and the community's health and wellbeing. This bill will promote proactive action to prevent environmental harm. It will introduce an offence for contravening the existing general environmental duty. The bill also introduces a new duty to restore where a person's actions can cause harm or environmental contamination. I have heard it said by previous speakers that this bill is largely somewhat administrative in nature; nonetheless, it is a great bill and I commend it to the House.