




Speech By
Shane King

MEMBER FOR KURWONGBAH

Record of Proceedings, 1 May 2024

TRANSPORT AND RESOURCES COMMITTEE

Report, Motion to Take Note

 **Mr KING** (Kurwongbah—ALP) (2.26 pm): I move—

That the House take note of the Transport and Resources Committee Report No. 45, 57th Parliament, *Inquiry into scrap metal theft*, tabled on 24 November 2023.

This report relates to an inquiry into scrap metal theft. The Transport and Resources Committee, as it then was, was asked to look into scrap metal theft following ongoing concerns about the impacts of copper and other metals being stolen from locations across Queensland. Generally, the copper wire was being stripped and it was believed that the stolen metal was either resold to the local scrap metal market or exported. Thieves have targeted critical infrastructure assets from electricity, water and telecommunications providers. Other targets for those types of thefts are private businesses, sporting and community organisations, road projects, major transport infrastructure and the agriculture and mining industries. In addition, certain vehicle parts have increasingly been targeted due to their valuable metal contents.

In my area of Moreton Bay, sporting grounds have had to install aluminium conductors for their lighting to negate this theft. An aluminium conductor has less scrap value but the bend radius is larger and the cross-sectional area is larger, so sporting fields need to replace all of their conduits as well the conductor, which is expensive and extremely disruptive to sporting. We heard from many submitters and learned not only of the disruptive nature but also of the electrical hazards that can be created by this theft. Other states have banned the sale of scrap for cash, but through the process we heard this is not the silver bullet that some submitters thought it would be.

The committee made seven recommendations, the first two of which relate to improving the legislative framework for the sale and purchase of scrap by updating several acts. We also recommended that an additional offence be created where scrap theft can endanger others when live electrical conductors are left exposed, which is, in effect, illegal electrical work. We heard stories of school kids walking along footpaths where street lighting had been targeted and live conductors were sticking out of the ground. It is a real hazard and a serious issue.

We recommended that police have real-time tracking and reporting of stolen scrap metal so it is more difficult to dispose of. We further recommended that the police minister discuss a national approach with interstate colleagues, as some of this scrap metal is sent overseas and attempts need to be made to curb this if possible. We recommended that the government urgently commit to investigating claims of unlicensed operators in the scrap metal and car-wrecking industries. Those illegal operators need to be charged and stopped. From what we saw, the legitimate businesses seem to be doing the right thing; it is the illegal and unlicensed operators that appear to be causing the harm. They appear to be purchasing stolen scrap and using other methods of payment. Getting rid of cash would not matter to them; they are using cryptocurrency and other payment methods. We recommend that be made illegal as well.

Our final recommendation was around educating Queenslanders about scrap metal theft, including strategies for how businesses, community groups and other potential targets can better protect their assets, and noting how individuals have a role to play in reporting suspicious activities that may be related to metal theft.

I would like to thank the members of the former Transport and Resources Committee for all of their work on this inquiry, as well as the fantastic secretariat staff who helped us with it—Jodhi, Margaret, Zac and Amanda. Their work was always appreciated. I really hope there can be changes made to curb this activity, as it is very costly to our communities. I commend the report to the House.