

Question on Notice

No. 1251

Asked on Friday, 4 December 2020

MR P WEIR ASKED THE MINISTER FOR THE ENVIRONMENT AND THE GREAT BARRIER REEF AND MINISTER FOR SCIENCE AND YOUTH AFFAIRS (HON M SCANLON)—

QUESTION:

With reference to increases to EPA licence fees and greater regulation for the storage of large numbers of used batteries, meaning that it is unviable for many recycling businesses to continue to purchase batteries from farmers, mechanics and other small businesses, and businesses advising customers they can no longer take their batteries—

Will the Minister advise how the department will address this issue to ensure batteries do not end up in landfill or are illegally dumped on roadsides or in waterways?

ANSWER:

I thank the Honourable Member for the question.

The Queensland Government has been actively supporting the Battery Stewardship Council in establishing and designing the product stewardship scheme and will continue this support to achieve successful implementation in Queensland.

The Battery Stewardship Council is a not-for-profit company established to develop and administer a voluntary Battery Stewardship Scheme under the National Waste Policy Action Plan 2019.

On 18 March 2020, the Battery Stewardship Council lodged an application with the Australian Consumer and Competition Commission seeking authorisation for a proposed Battery Stewardship Scheme. In September 2020, the Commission granted a five-year authorisation of the Scheme.

The Scheme is intended to operate nationally to enable the consistent and responsible management of all types of used batteries.

Scheme members will pay a levy on new batteries sold in Australia, with the levy funds to be used to offset recycling costs for recyclers, to encourage recycling of used batteries.

The Scheme includes all batteries, including energy storage and electric vehicle batteries, but excluding automotive lead acid batteries. These batteries are subject to their own recycling scheme and currently have high levels of recycling due to the value of their component materials.

From 1 July 2019, increased obligations apply to people in Queensland involved in the storage, recycling and disposing of used batteries. These changes recognised the environmental risk that used batteries pose if not managed appropriately, and provided incentives to recover and reuse the valuable resources in batteries.

Many local government landfills have an area where recyclables, including used lead acid batteries, can be left for collection for recycling. Where this is available, local farmers, mechanics and other small businesses would be able to use this to appropriately dispose of their used batteries.

Illegal dumping or unlicensed activities in relation to waste materials are routinely investigated by the Department of Environment and Science. The department is also currently coordinating a Local Government Illegal Dumping Partnerships Program to enhance regulatory responses to incidences of illegal dumping. Funding has been provided for the employment of 31 local government officers for 12 months across 27 participating local governments in Queensland. If people see dumped batteries or suspect unlicensed or illegal activities, they can contact the Pollution Hotline on 1300 130 372.