

Question on Notice

No. 761

Asked on Tuesday, 15 June 2021

MR S KNUTH 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 the closing of a new business specialising in recycling abandoned vehicles from regional properties because of the Waste Reduction Legislation introduced in 2020, despite working closely with department officials in Cairns and leaving a young family destitute—

Will the Minister (a) advise if the Minister is aware of this matter and (b) commit to instructing the department to allow the business to continue to operate to the original extension date granted by the department's office in Cairns on 1 August 2021 to secure their EA?

ANSWER:

I thank the Member for the question.

I am advised by the Department of Environment and Science that the matter to which the Member refers to likely relates to a business operating without the required approvals under both the *Environmental Protection Act 1994* and planning legislation. There is no provision under the Environmental Protection Act for the responsible Minister to participate in decision-making regarding compliance and enforcement in response to contraventions of the legislation. This is a matter for the department.

For the business to operate lawfully at the premises, both a development approval issued by the relevant local government; and an environmental authority issued by the department, is required. This is not a consequence of recent legislative reform. Requirements to hold both a development approval and an environmental authority to operate a scrap yard activity are longstanding requirements under Queensland laws.

I am also advised that the business in question applied for the environmental authority from the department in June 2020; and the development approval from the relevant local government in September 2020; however, the applicant has not progressed either application. Furthermore, I am advised that the applicant withdrew its development approval application from the relevant local government on 7 April 2021. Obtaining relevant approvals are matters for the business to address.

The department takes unlicensed waste offences very seriously. It is committed to addressing unlawful waste activities in Queensland, to ensure a level playing field for legitimate industry operators. This is critical to protect the public and landholders from activities that have the potential to cause environmental harm and land contamination from being undertaken outside of the appropriate regulatory safeguards.