



SEATH HOLSWICH MP STATE MEMBER FOR PINE RIVERS

SPEECH IN PARLIAMENT

5th March 2013

WASTE REDUCTION AND RECYCLING AND OTHER LEGISLATION AMENDMENT BILL

I rise to speak in support of the Waste Reduction and Recycling and Other Legislation Amendment Bill 2012. This bill amends the Waste Reduction and Recycling Act 2011 primarily in relation to the administration of the waste levy. What a relief it is for Pine Rivers businesses that this toxic levy will be removed. I still live in hope that the day may come when Labor realises that you do not have to tax people into submission to get positive environmental outcomes.

I regularly meet with local business operators and they continually say to me that what they really need is for government to get out of their way and let them get on with what they do best: running their businesses and creating jobs for our local economy. I applaud the minister for doing exactly that with the removal of the waste levy, while still ensuring we get the best possible environmental outcomes.

The removal of the levy also necessitated changes to some of the obligations that were previously linked to the administration of the levy. This is why amendments have also been proposed to provisions about installation of a weighbridge at a waste disposal site and for data collection and reporting, and it is these particular areas that I will concentrate on in my short contribution.

As the minister has already stated in his address, the changes in these areas streamline requirements and remove some of the more onerous obligations for waste disposal site operators, especially for smaller site operators. Most of these small sites are generally run by local councils in regional areas. The amendments remove the requirement for smaller sites—those sites disposing of more than 5,000 tonnes but less than 10,000 tonnes in a year—to install a weighbridge. Whilst these sites will still have to measure the waste that enters the facility in order to collect data, they may now do so through means other than using a weighbridge. This provides them some flexibility for those operators and allows a more appropriate mechanism to be applied for these sites.

The government has recognised that the installation of a weighbridge comes at a cost, and for smaller sites the cost may outweigh the potential benefit that could be gained in having a weighbridge. The true benefit of weighbridges is that they provide an accurate measure for the tonnes of waste received and removed from the site, and this information benefits the government in that the data received can be more easily validated. It also helps the operators to better plan their waste management operations. Also recognising the cost of installing a weighbridge, another amendment provides that if a waste disposal site is closing down within 12 months of the date that the weighbridge must be installed then the operator is not required to install that weighbridge. This is logical and it makes perfect sense. There is absolutely no need to install a weighbridge at a site that the operator knows will be closing. Whilst it might be a simple thing, this amendment once again demonstrates this government's commitment to reducing costs and the regulatory burden for businesses and is a common-sense approach to such issues.

Whilst the requirement for a waste disposal site over 10,000 tonnes to install a weighbridge is being retained, amendments will extend the time by which the weighbridge has to be installed. When this bill was introduced late last year, no-one could have foreseen the magnitude of the disaster events that have once again hit Queensland communities. This amendment now provides the flexibility the operators of those affected sites will need to enable facilities, first and foremost, to return to normal operating conditions and for them to then

think about additional infrastructure needs. Again, this is a practical, common-sense approach. Site operators will still be required to report data. However, to reduce the reporting burden, amendments will simplify the amount of information that is to be provided and change the reporting period for data from monthly to a time that will be prescribed in regulation.

Gathering waste data is essential to understanding how much waste we produce in Queensland, how much we recycle and dispose of and how much waste moves around the state and between states. I am sure most in this place are aware of the media reporting recently about truckloads of waste coming into Queensland from New South Wales. The facts are that it is known that waste comes into and goes out of Queensland every day. It has been going on for years and is a normal part of business practices and movement of goods. The transport of some wastes is tracked into and out of Queensland. These are regulated wastes such as tyres and oils and it is known where this waste comes from, how much there is and where it goes. What is not known is how much additional, everyday household and business waste might be coming into Queensland. In partnership with industry, the data gathered will help the government build a better picture of waste management activities in Queensland. This way we can implement a waste strategy that is informed by a solid evidence base that is obtained from the information that is reported to us by landfillers and recyclers.

These amendments introduce a leaner, more streamlined and flexible approach for smaller landfill operators and in relation to reporting requirements for waste facility operators generally.

I commend this bill to the House.