

**WASTE AVOIDANCE AND RESOURCE RECOVERY BILL 2007**  
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*Second Reading - Cognate Debate*

Resumed from 5 December.

**HON BRUCE DONALDSON (Agricultural)** [10.39 am]: When the debate was interrupted last night, I was talking about the challenges society faces in dealing with the rubbish stream. That challenge, and the pressure of people on the environment, will create a formidable task in the future, so we have to make every post a winner. The objective of the bill will go some way toward meeting that challenge. It is very important that a dysfunctional bureaucracy is not established. We need to ensure that local government, which is primarily responsible for handling the collection and recycling of waste, is given the opportunity to pursue world best practice. In considering that, we must bear in mind that this state already has an excellent resource recovery facility at Canning Vale. The prospect of similar resource recovery centres being established in this state is encouraging. It is important that that come to pass.

The average person in the community who wheels his bin onto the road verge for collection does not really consider what happens to the waste after it has been collected. He knows that the rubbish truck will empty his wheelie bin, but he does not visualise the quantity of waste that is collected each day in the metropolitan area. In his mind, he considers that his little wheelie bin of rubbish will not make a difference. However, when it is added to the few hundred thousand wheelie bins that are collected each day in the metropolitan area, it becomes a huge task to dispose of that waste. The more resource recovery that can be achieved, the less waste will go into landfill. Hopefully, at some time in the future that will become a thing of the past. It has already occurred in some parts of the world that do not have the significant landfill sites that Western Australia has.

Hon Barry House summed up the recycling problems confronting some of the larger regional councils. He referred to the cost of transporting the waste from A to B. I hope that the Waste Authority will seriously consider what is a major problem confronting this state; that is, how to accommodate the growth that is occurring in some major regional centres.

I recall the great Australian salute for which Australians were well known 25 years ago. At that time, people watching the newsreels would have wondered what the hell Western Australians were up to because they were continually waving. They probably thought we were a queer mob who spent our time waving to our family at home. Of course we were not doing that; we were shooing the flies away. Slowly but surely the advent of the wheelie bin has made a huge difference, and one of the benefits has been a sharp reduction in the number of flies. The fly problem experienced 25 years ago has almost been eradicated, and that has been one of the benefits of wheelie bins. Somebody will probably tell me that it is my imagination that the reduction in the number of flies is the result of the introduction of wheelie bins. In the old days, bins had lids that were always knocked off, and that allowed the dogs to get into the rubbish and flies were everywhere. As I said, we no longer have the fly problem that we had 25 years ago, and today members of Parliament can be interviewed under trees on a lawn without having to use the great Australian salute.

In considering world best practice, we must take into account the achievement of the South Metropolitan Regional Council in winning the federal 2007 Greenhouse Challenge Plus award. It won that award because between January 2006 and June 2007 it conducted programs that prevented an estimated 223 000 tonnes of carbon dioxide equivalents from entering the atmosphere. This equivalent is equal to the greenhouse gas emissions of 60 000 motor vehicles. Already that level of success has been achieved by a resource recovery centre in Western Australia.

I am aware that other members wish to contribute to this debate; therefore, I will not go into the objectives, because Hon Nigel Hallett referred to them and no doubt Hon Sally Talbot will, in summing up the debate, point out the expected benefits of this legislation. Waste avoidance and resource recovery are very important issues in our society. Western Australians are beginning to understand that this state is facing a big challenge and that their responsibility does not stop after they have wheeled their bin to the road verge for rubbish collection. People are slowly being educated and they are starting to think that although they do not put out much rubbish each week, over a year it adds up to a large amount. The collection of rubbish from the road verge is an enormous project and local governments do a tremendous job. I look forward to the end result and will watch the implementation of this legislation with great interest. The difference between the old environmental legislation and this legislation is that, in many ways, there has been some rebadging.

**Hon Paul Llewellyn:** Green badging.

**Hon BRUCE DONALDSON:** No, rebadging. We could use either rebadging or green badging. As the amount of landfill becomes less, I hope that future governments will not look at imposing a levy on the resource

recovery centres. It would be improper, and whatever government did that would be missing the point. Governments would have to think very seriously before imposing a levy on these centres.

I hope that the objectives of the bills are met. I congratulate local government for the way in which it has risen to the challenge in the metropolitan area. If it had not, the government would be faced with the serious problem of what to do with the rubbish collected in Western Australia.

**HON PAUL LLEWELLYN (South West) [10.47 am]:** In addressing the Waste Avoidance and Resource Recovery Bill 2007 and the Waste Avoidance and Resource Recovery Levy Bill 2007, I must say that muck is money.

**The PRESIDENT:** Order, Hon Paul Llewellyn. My records indicate that you spoke on 30 August 2007.

**HON SALLY TALBOT (South West - Parliamentary Secretary) [10.48 am]:** I will respond to some of the points made in the thoughtful contributions by Hon Nigel Hallett and Hon Bruce Donaldson on the Waste Avoidance and Resource Recovery Bill 2007 and the Waste Avoidance and Resource Recovery Levy Bill 2007. Before I do so, I will recap the general context of these two bills. Hon Nigel Hallett said that these bills are much awaited and much wanted. In fact, the genesis of these bills goes back further than members have referred to in this debate. I have been told by some of the advisers who have devoted at least half their working lives to formulating this legislation that the first draft bill was produced over 20 years ago. The first time a bill was devised for public comment was about 12 years ago. This legislation is certainly much awaited and, indeed, much wanted, as can be seen from the quality and quantity of the submissions that were received in response to the government's request for public comment. This is landmark legislation, and that has been confirmed by a number of comments, including those received from overseas and from public policy institutes that have looked closely at the direction we are proposing to take and have endorsed that direction as a truly innovative approach to waste management and resource recovery. I think I can say with a great deal of confidence that we are bringing waste management into the twenty-first century and setting a benchmark that other Australian states and, indeed, communities internationally will watch with interest.

Hon Nigel Hallett referred to the amount of community support for this legislation having been quite spectacular. In a moment, I will move to address the points made by Hon Bruce Donaldson about the involvement of local government. The community is right behind these kinds of moves. Hon Bruce Donaldson was absolutely right when he said that this is partly a matter of community education. As with a number of other elements of the whole debate about conservation, environmental responsibility and the sorts of moves we can make towards mitigating climate change, a significant proportion of the changes we can bring about are in the hearts and minds of ordinary community members.

Hon Nigel Hallett asked a couple of specific questions, including whether the landfill levy would apply to waste that goes into a resource recovery centre or recycling. Categorically, the answer is no. The landfill levy will be applied to waste that goes into landfill. The intention is to devise a price differential between inert waste and other forms of waste, such as the wonderfully titled "putrescible" waste, which, I am sure members know, is waste that rots into the ground and causes methane gas emissions. Therefore, the plan is to devise a price differential between different kinds of inert waste. However, the levy will apply only to waste that goes into landfill. Hon Nigel Hallett commended the Drum Muster initiative. The minister advises me that it is precisely this kind of innovative solution that the Waste Authority will look at very closely in the context of adopting a diverse range of initiatives to solve the state's waste problems. I appreciate the fact that Hon Nigel Hallett made specific mention of that.

Hon Nigel Hallett also referred to the approximately 400 unregistered sites. The minister has made a number of comments about these unregistered sites. I point out to Hon Nigel Hallett that the new Waste Authority will have the power, authority and resources to address precisely issues such as these. It will do that in two ways. Obviously, as members would probably know, the statewide waste strategy will become a public document. It will go out for consultation for approximately 12 weeks, so there will be plenty of opportunities for people who have already registered their intense interest in these matters to make comments. The strategy will be ratified by the minister and it can be changed when the minister deems it necessary to do so. Certainly, the Waste Authority would look very closely at problems, like the 400 unregistered sites, in terms of the statewide waste strategy and also, of course, in terms of the business plan, which, again, is an integral part of what the Waste Authority will be expected to produce.

Hon Bruce Donaldson spoke about the role of local government. I want to enjoin the government's response to the honourable member's comments in congratulating local government for the role it has played in bringing these bills to this point. Local government has been a valued and major contributor right from the start. Indeed, one of the driving pressures to get this type of groundbreaking legislation onto the statute books was the need, perceived by local government, to move the whole issue of waste management and resource recovery from last century's emphasis on public health into a context in which we can specifically address the sorts of problems

that are raised by the need to diminish landfill and deal with our waste in a more intelligent and sustainable way. Therefore, local government has been a valued and major contributor not only to these specific bills, but also to the entire process of generating these kinds of reforms. It has been foremost amongst the stakeholders supporting the bills and, indeed, has put considerable pressure on the government and, I am sure, others in this place to progress this legislation without further delay. I am informed that local government controls about one-third of the waste stream. Therefore, it is entirely appropriate that it should play this major role, and it is one that the government appreciates. We will continue to work closely with local government.

Hon Bruce Donaldson also talked about the “Towards Zero Waste” strategy, which, as members would know, is the overarching umbrella under which the government has formulated this new approach towards waste and resource recovery. It is not an empty concept; obviously, there is an aspirational aspect to a phrase such as “towards zero waste”. However, the government has said that by 2020, it expects, under the umbrella of this kind of legislation, to see a marked change in the direction of waste management in the state. Essentially, at the moment, we bury most of our waste in holes in the ground. Over the next 10 or so years, we need to move to waste avoidance; that is, reducing the amount of waste produced. Waste recovery regards waste not so much as waste but as another resource that can be recovered and used; hence the use of the word “resource” in the titles of these bills. Therefore, it is a question of moving towards avoidance and resource recovery. There is, in fact, no timetable for zero waste into landfill, and that, I suppose, is the aspirational aspect of using a phrase such as “towards zero waste”. Most emphatically, we expect to see very marked changes in real outcomes by about 2020.

I will not canvass the specific elements of these bills; they have already been very adequately summarised in the second reading speeches and have been elaborated on in the contributions received from members of the opposition in the second reading debate. However, in closing, I note that although a great deal of the substance of these bills will be filled out by regulation, there is a specific reason for doing so, which indicates exactly why this is landmark legislation. The government decided that in a field such as waste avoidance and resource recovery, we would do ourselves a grave disservice and limit our options in the next few years were we to spell out specific details in the legislation. I support the government in being quite sure that these are empowering bills that will enable the Waste Authority, local government and, indeed, private commercial interests to take us into a situation in which we can be both responsive and sensitive to changing practices in this field.

I understand that it is the will of this house not to proceed to committee.

**Hon Barry House:** You made a brave assumption!

**The PRESIDENT:** Has the parliamentary secretary concluded her remarks?

**Hon SALLY TALBOT:** The parliamentary secretary has, Mr President; thank you very much. I now know what is going on!

Questions put and passed.

Bills read a second time.