



Media Release

\$252 Million Waste Tax for Queensland?

'Queensland remains a state without a waste tax'. On July 1 the NSW Government extends its waste tax collection area to the Tweed Heads border. Regional areas of NSW will then commence charging a \$10 tonne waste tax that rises annually to \$80 tonne plus CPI for all waste sent to landfill by 2014.

The Waste Contractors and Recycler's Association of Queensland' is calling on both the ALP and LNP to commit within the first 12 months of either forming government, to a fundamental overhaul of waste planning laws, that currently allows for illegal waste and recycling operations to establish themselves without approvals, and to escape prosecution for these activities.

According to WCRAQ's Executive Director Mr Rick Ralph, 'This urgent review is imperative if South East Queensland is to avoid becoming a dumping ground for wastes, including tyres and asbestos, and to ensure wastes that do come into this state are legally disposed of'.

Without a fundamental overhaul of our planning laws and a commitment to prosecute rogue operators that are establishing themselves, Queenslanders can expect an influx of illegal activity to commence on July 1. The NSW Government has legislated, that by 2014 its waste tax, in the Sydney area will rise from \$46.70 to \$128 tonne. It has now extended this tax to include the regional areas of the state, and that includes the Northern Rivers regions, with Council's in the region already reviewing waste charges, to stop attracting waste from one Council area to another.

According to WCRAQ unless the future Queensland Government takes waste policy seriously and closes our planning law loopholes that allow these illegal operators to establish and not be prosecuted, the continued development of our industry in this state is at risk. It is critical that the operating environment for non compliant operators is shut down, thereby encouraging continued investment from our members, as only then can the Queensland environment and industry jobs be protected.

All previous Queensland governments have promised to deliver waste reform, talked about introducing new waste taxes and of using these funds to promote green policies. Consideration of introducing a tax in Queensland is widely reported and was under consideration by the previous state government as part of its future waste discussion paper.

Both the ALP and LNP need to clearly state their future positions to Queenslanders, as to whether or not they intend introducing a waste tax or other form of economic instrument if elected, and if so where these funds would be spent, or would they just disappear to consolidated revenue.

Our calculations are that if a waste tax of \$20 a tonne was applied on all waste currently land filled in the state, as was under consideration, using the EPA's own figures, and all stakeholders including the EPA accept these numbers are under reported, such a tax could raise more than \$252 million across a 3 year parliamentary term" said Mr Ralph.

If that initial figure of \$20 was increased by just \$10 a year, as is the case in NSW, and the tonnes land filled adjusted to what they might actually be, the amount raised by government could go as high as \$540 million over the same three year parliamentary term. This amount excludes any income from taxes of up to \$450 tonne that were being canvassed for hazardous waste disposal.

WCRAQ seeks assurances that if such a tax was being proposed or was to be introduced by either party, that all monies raised, be ring fenced from consolidated revenue and that 100% of all monies generated are directed to initiatives such as resourcing and funding the EPA properly to enforce regulation and compliance, that an independent waste board is established to oversee the use of these funds, and that the future government places waste reform high into its policy priorities.

Waste policy has been ignored by all previous governments for years, and Queenslanders need to know before we go to an election what the future intent by both parties is on this critical issue.

Transparent policy direction combined with strong mandated regulations and their enforcement must come first. Only then would we accept considering various funding mechanisms to deliver such objectives. Queenslanders must be afforded the respect now, before any new government is elected, whereby both parties disclose their future waste tax position and commit to addressing a policy void that has been totally ignored by all governments for many years.

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