

Hansard extracts 2 April 2003 and 28 May 2003

2 April 2003, House of Assembly

WASTE MANAGEMENT

Mr VENNING (Schubert): I move:

That this house calls on the Environment, Resources and Development Committee to examine and make recommendations on waste management in South Australia, particularly in regard to—

- (a) the environmental benefits and disadvantages of closing the Wingfield dump;
- (b) the benefits of alternative waste disposal methods;
- (c) the environmental impact of landfill methods of waste disposal; and
- (d) any other relevant matter.

I will outline the key issues surrounding waste management in South Australia with regard to a proposed investigation, again by the ERD Committee. In 1997, the committee was instructed to investigate and report on waste management practices in South Australia. As I said earlier, I was a member of that committee. It was an extremely interesting reference and, not being particularly a greeny or a recycler at that time, I found it personally educational. Now I can see the strong virtues—

Mr Koutsantonis: You're always learning.

Mr VENNING: As the member for West Torrens says, I am always learning. There is one thing about this place: it is highly unlikely that you will spend time here and not learn anything; if you do, you would be rather foolish. I found this reference very interesting as well as important and concerning. There is increasing concern in the community about waste disposal, and the impending closure of the Wingfield dump was a major issue then and still is today. The committee examined alternative waste disposal sites that operate in a more efficient manner than the Wingfield dump, perhaps in locations not so close to residences.

I have spoken at length to the previous owner of the Wingfield dump, Mr Paull, whom some might remember as a character with a rather strong point of view. In fact, I think there was a law case where the government took him to court, and I think Mr Paull actually won that case. He is now a constituent of mine living in the small community of Caloote (which is beautiful) near Mannum on the Murray. I have often talked to him about this issue and the early days of the Wingfield dump, its history, and the thousands of tonnes of waste that have gone into that landfill. I wonder what would have happened to all that waste if we did not have that dump.

The committee will be asked to examine alternative waste disposal sites that operate in a more efficient manner than this dump, particularly in locations not so close to residences. Of course, when the dump was put there, the residents were not there. People have chosen to build closer and closer to the dump and industry in the area. The recommendations in the committee's 24th report of 1997

highlighted the fact that the Wingfield dump has no place in the long-term direction of Adelaide. Recommendation 4 states:

The committee recommends that the siting criteria for landfill should include: no landfill to be sited within the metropolitan area; site selection should be undertaken with full community consultation; and the South Australian EPA should make the final decision regarding landfill siting if there is a dispute.

The first point of recommendation 4 clearly states the need to have no landfill sites in the metropolitan area, something which must be promoted in the long-term. These recommendations were handed down almost six years ago, but no further action has been taken. I find that rather surprising. I would have thought there would be a watchdog watching over the progress of the landfill at Wingfield.

I vividly recall the debate at that time. I voted against the then Liberal government on this issue, because there was an effort to close down the Wingfield dump early. That proposal was initiated mainly by the Port Adelaide-Enfield council, which wished to finish the dump off and cap it, whereas the Adelaide City Council wanted to continue the dump and cone it off. Having listened to the evidence and visited the dump, I came to the opinion that the Adelaide City Council's proposal was more to the point to a degree, because if it was properly coned it would be effective against weather infiltration and would also lend itself more to capping the gas filtration off it. Of course, there was a dispute. The then minister (Hon. Diana Laidlaw) did not agree with me, and I got a very strong lecture just outside this door which I will never forget. The minister won the day. I knew I could disagree with the government, because they would win anyway, but I got a lecture which I do not think she will ever forget either.

I have had a keen interest in this issue ever since. The dump must be getting to the point now of needing reassessment, because it would be getting into the cone shape and that would have to shorten its life. I also note the operation of landfills to the north of Adelaide. I often pass them and see the activity. The one at Bolivar is up and operational, and there is also one flagged for further north. As the landfills servicing Adelaide are rapidly nearing the end of their operational life, we need further investigation to concentrate on the problems of landfills (their location, design and operation).

We also need to study the alternatives, because we know that in the six years since we studied this there has been a big change in technology in relation to landfill. Some companies operate a full service: they recycle everything, which is a very expensive process, as we have seen, but, now that the cost of waste landfill is getting so high, all these other alternatives come into it from a financial point of view, because the higher the cost, the more efficient and economical some of these alternatives become.

Also, the impact of current landfills on neighbouring communities should be looked at. The member for Newland just walked into the chamber. She has been involved in landfill disputes for some years. We have to have landfill sites, but the common cry is 'not in my backyard', irrespective of where you want to put them. The landfill site at Windsor is on very degraded land. It is not so much degraded but of a lower value, some of the lowest valued land in our state, yet some of the locals conducted a strong campaign against it. If you drive past there today you will

still see the monuments and statues in the paddock with their slogans having a go at the then Olsen government about 'a little spaceship lost in waste' and 'a recycling guard post'. It has become almost a tourist attraction.

Mr Koutsantonis: What's the one about Olsen?

Mr VENNING: That's the one I just mentioned about 'Olsen lost in waste'. There are a lot of campaigns in relation to this issue. We all pollute and create waste, but we do not want to have landfill anywhere near where we live. I suppose this is similar to the nuclear waste problem. It is believed by some parties that landfill should be considered to be the last choice after the basic principles of waste minimisation have been followed; that is, reduce, reuse, or recycle. The committee should be charged with the duty of investigating ways of providing alternatives to landfill practices. It is believed by some that increasing the landfill levy would make the option of recycling a more attractive one, and I think that is probably correct.

A further step in the process of waste minimisation is the recycling of materials. There is significant debate about the cost-effectiveness of community driven recycling and whether it should be pursued. However, from the feedback I have received, the community is demanding this service. I know that at that time some of the councils admitted to us that they were recycling and it was being run at a loss: they could not recover the cost of recycling.

Other members, including a couple of Labor members, also referred to the cost of the energy required for recycling, and likewise the Hon. Michael Elliott said that some of our recycling processes have to be looked at again because it is costing more for the energy than getting rid of the waste, so you are best to bury the waste as is. The life of Wingfield was hotly debated in 1997-98, and we now have new modern methods of disposal and new management skills for landfill.

I think it is very relevant that we ask the ERD Committee to revisit its report of 1997 (its 24th report), and then look at the main landfills of Adelaide, particularly the Wingfield waste dump, and to report to this house because waste management is an ongoing and very important matter for this parliament.

I am very proud of the South Australian parliament for introducing the container recycling legislation (CDL)—and I think it was a previous Labor government. We are famous all over Australia for it. It gives me great delight, Madam Acting Speaker, as you would know, when we go to our national conferences on public works and ERD committees where, without fail, every state always asks us to comment on how our CDL legislation is progressing. As members know, we have just increased this; we have gone a step further. We have put the container deposits on cardboard containers, which I think will cause some problem. I do not know whether it will work as well as it does on aluminium cans and plastic bottles, because cardboard containers, particularly milk containers, are not nice to store, because unless you rinse them out—as we now do—they smell. I doubt whether they will be as successful, but probably because we have the will to make it work it probably will.

Without any further ado, I encourage the house to consider this motion this afternoon. I am sure that the ERD Committee would welcome this reference

because it did such a good job of the last one. I think it is relevant that we ask the committee to look at it again six years later.

Mr MEIER (Goyder): I support this motion, moved by the member for Schubert, which tackles a very controversial issue in our state, that is, examining and making recommendations on waste management in South Australia. I am sure all members of this house would be well aware that my electorate contains several dumps—

The Hon. M.J. Atkinson: Dublin.

Mr MEIER: Dublin being one of them. Either dumps or proposed dumps—

The Hon. M.J. Atkinson interjecting:

Mr MEIER: Inkerman being the other one. Yes, Dublin, as members would be aware, was established when Dublin was not in my electorate: it was in the member for Light's area. In that respect, I have inherited it, but I certainly had some discussion with people before I became their member. It is a great problem. The site chosen to be used for the disposal of waste will never please everyone, no matter where it is. Certainly, I understand the arguments put forward by the people of Dublin and Inkerman. In relation to the Inkerman dump, I was very much opposed to the location of the Inkerman dump. I feel it was far too close to Highway One—

The Hon. M.J. Atkinson: Did you say this when you were in office?

Mr MEIER: Yes. I said it consistently at public meetings, too. If it was to be located anywhere adjacent to the highway, it should have been at least away from visual site. My big fear in the case of Inkerman is that it will form a mountain and it will be visible. In recent times, I have noticed that many trees have been planted along the roadside. I guess that is to try to camouflage it. However, it is high time further investigations were done, and I particularly refer to paragraph (b) of the member for Schubert's motion regarding the benefits of alternative waste disposal methods. People from both Inkerman and Dublin put to me and the previous Liberal government—and I dare say the previous Labor opposition—alternative waste disposal methods—and they exist, in particular, in the United States.

The only negative is that it costs many hundreds of thousands of dollars to set up the appropriate machinery. Governments do not see that there are many votes in waste disposal, yet perhaps I would argue that there could well be votes in waste disposal. They can certainly lose votes by determining where waste will go, but I am not quite sure about cleaning up the problem, because they still have to find an alternative place. I certainly warmly endorse paragraph (b).

The whole issue of environmental benefits and disadvantages of closing the Wingfield dump should be looked at. If that closes, then certainly the Dublin dump and the proposed dump at Inkerman will be—

The Hon. W.A. Matthew: Very big dumps!

Mr MEIER: Very big dumps, as the member for Bright indicates, and therefore not only will greater environmental controls need to apply but also alternative dumping sites will have to be looked at. It is high time that this whole issue was properly looked at, and I hope that the Environment, Resources and Development

Committee will do so. I hope that it will obtain appropriate information from overseas.

When I look at the disposal of waste, I immediately think of the political issue that the current Premier is trying to make out of the disposal of nuclear waste. I get very upset over that, as I have mentioned in this house—

The Hon. M.J. Atkinson: You do, don't you?

Mr MEIER: Yes; I have mentioned in this house before today that currently that waste is in our sitting rooms, living rooms and hospitals. I do not know whether or not it is doing people harm, but it is there. In fact, I have two items of waste in the boot of my car in the Parliament House car park right now. They are smoke alarms that currently are not working. The company involved is in Sydney. They are supposed to be long-life alarms and, although I have not taken the trouble to contact the company, I will do that. These alarms travel around with me and they have been in my boot for some days—

The Hon. W.A. Matthew interjecting:

Mr MEIER: Nuclear waste in my boot. This issue has been blown out of all proportion. I believe that the Premier sees it as a vote winner—and he is probably right. It disappoints me that the people of South Australia are not better versed in and briefed on the whole issue of nuclear waste and its storage. I say that because, having done an examination on the disposal of nuclear waste on my visit to Sweden, I know that they look after all their own nuclear waste—and Sweden is a much smaller country than Australia. It has a smaller population than Australia, too, but it looks after all its nuclear waste. I believe many other European countries much smaller than Australia look after their own nuclear waste, and you do not see huge demonstrations or huge threats from their prime ministers saying, 'We will go to the people on that particular issue.'

They believe that it is their responsibility, and yet we here in South Australia do not seem to be able to come to grips with the fact that we have to store all this stuff that is in our homes, our hospitals, in universities and in other areas. The previous federal Labor government initiated this situation, and the previous state Labor government fully endorsed it. Certainly, the previous Liberal government sought to find a solution. The current federal Liberal government has put forward various proposals for nuclear waste, and yet the situation has not been resolved. It disappoints me greatly.

I do not know whether the member for Schubert's motion will go that far in respect of nuclear waste. I think that he is more concerned with waste management in South Australia, particularly with respect to these four items. I guess that any member opposite or one of our members could move an amendment to include nuclear waste, but that would probably take too long.

An honourable member interjecting:

Mr MEIER: Yes, and it would defeat the purpose. We have enough so-called experts who are not getting anything done on nuclear waste, so why bog it down? We are more interested in our ordinary day-to-day waste. I do not want to see my electorate become a dump for waste material.

It is already a dump for—

The Hon. M.J. Atkinson interjecting:

Mr MEIER: The Attorney-General mentions Yorke Peninsula. We do not have any large waste deposit dumps there, but we certainly have smaller ones for various councils. Again, they have created just as much controversy. I have certainly had approaches from ratepayers who say, 'We don't want the dump near us', and that is always the case. It continues to be an increasingly large problem.

I hope that the house will see the benefits of this motion, and that it will receive unanimous support. More importantly, I hope that it will lead to a reasoned and rational approach, and that we will get new technology into this state to handle the removal of waste, because it is long overdue. It has been in America for at least 10 or possibly 15 years now and probably in other countries. We are again behind the eight ball, and it is time we got ahead of things. I give this motion my full support.

Mr KOUTSANTONIS (West Torrens): I was stunned by and in shock and awe at the remarks the member for Goyder was about to make about one of the most beautiful places in South Australia, the Yorke Peninsula. I think that to merely categorise the Yorke Peninsula as a place that is already a dump is disgraceful. I think that the Labor Party owes it to the people of the Yorke Peninsula to get up in this place and say what a beautiful tourist attraction it is. To the farmers, to the fishers, to the people who inhabit the Yorke Peninsula—on behalf of all of them—I say that it is one of the most beautiful places in South Australia, despite what their local member of parliament has said.

Members interjecting:

Mr KOUTSANTONIS: For 21 years—

Mr MEIER: I rise on a point of order, Mr Speaker. I have been misrepresented by the member for West Torrens. I certainly did not mention Yorke Peninsula; I referred to it as the electorate of Goyder, and I wish the member would listen to my contributions in the future rather than misinterpret them.

The ACTING SPEAKER (Ms Thompson): There is no point of order. The member for Goyder can make a personal explanation at the end of the debate if he considers himself to have been misrepresented. I caution the member for West Torrens to use decorum in his contribution.

Mr KOUTSANTONIS: As always, Madam Acting Speaker, I will bring to this debate a level of integrity and ethics unseen from members opposite. Can I say that, from the coast to the farms to the mountains to the sea, the Yorke Peninsula is one of our greatest assets. Indeed, you might argue that it is the jewel in the crown of South Australia, despite what its local member says about it in this place.

Mr Hanna: It's probably the rim of the crown.

Mr KOUTSANTONIS: Yes, perhaps the rim. The western suburbs should be the jewel but, of course, that is debatable, and I am sure that members have their own opinions. I am a member of the ERD committee, and I also share membership of the Public Works Committee with the member for Schubert. I do not wish to reflect on other motions before the house or remarks made in grievance speeches by the member for Schubert, but it seems to me that there is a bit of envy associated with the member for Schubert. The once lion of the Barossa had the use of a government provided white limousine and chaired the great and all

powerful Environment, Resources and Development Committee. He once held a position of great influence and authority within the government, having kept his good friend John Wayne Olsen in the job after being promised God knows what.

An honourable member: Clearly nothing.

Mr KOUTSANTONIS: Given that I am actually sitting in the former member for Schubert's seat, I think that I have jinxed myself to a life on the backbench. But I am sure that the member for Schubert will prove me wrong when he is elevated to the frontbench of the shadow ministry very soon.

The Hon. M.J. Atkinson interjecting:

Mr KOUTSANTONIS: Yes, with Graham Gunn, the member for Stuart, and the other stalwarts of the Liberal Party who have given many years of loyal service. Indeed, many members opposite have given decades of loyal service to the Liberal Party.

The Hon. M.J. Atkinson interjecting:

Mr KOUTSANTONIS: I wouldn't say that. I think that he has given very good service to the Liberal Party. He has been open and honest, talking about what he believed to be the injustices within his own party. He has spoken out, pulling hamstrings to cross the road to speak to us when he has seen something go wrong. He is more than happy to tell the opponents of the Liberal Party what he believes is right or wrong with government. Many members opposite have given great service. Indeed, when the member for Goyder first entered this place in 1982, I think, he was touted as a future leader of the party, which was a great compliment to the people of Yorke Peninsula who brought him into this parliament.

Mr Meier interjecting:

Mr KOUTSANTONIS: By the *Advertiser*, I have the article in my office. The member was being touted as a future leader of the parliamentary Liberal Party. Of course, there is the member for Schubert, who is moving this motion. The reason I am speaking on this motion is that I felt there was a bit of envy in the member for Schubert's language. Given the remarks he made in the grievance debate about the lack of work before certain parliamentary standing committees of this house and the other house, I think that the member is inadvertently reflecting on the leadership of those committees. I take him as a man of his word; a man of honour and distinction; a man of great moral ethics; a man who has a lot to contribute to this house; a man who deserves elevation to high office; and a man who is considered to be the lion of the Barossa, because when he roars we listen. There is only one man this government fears, and that is the member for Schubert.

The member for Schubert moved this motion seeking that the house call on the ERD Committee to examine waste. The member for Schubert was chair of that committee for four years; indeed, he was a member of the government for eight years.

An honourable member interjecting:

Mr KOUTSANTONIS: A very influential one, too. He had the ear of the former premier. Have no doubt, there was no greater supporter of the former premier than the member for Schubert. In fact, former premier John Wayne Olsen was quite embarrassed when he called the member for Schubert the member for stupid. He got up and apologised for that Freudian slip, because he realised what a loyal

supporter the member for Schubert was. He was very embarrassed after having said that. I understand that it caused the former premier a great deal of grief in the party room, having crossed the lion of the Barossa.

In regard to the motion moved by the member, I am disappointed with him. This is like the member for Bright getting up and complaining about privatisation of our electricity assets. This is like the member for Mawson getting up and complaining about police numbers. This is like the member for Light getting up and complaining about education standards and the Education Department's capital works program. This is like the member for Stuart complaining about open and honest government. This is like members opposite complaining about capital works, tax increases, and government works that have been committed—

The Hon. W.A. MATTHEW: I rise on a point of order, Madam Acting Speaker. My point of order clearly relates to relevance. The honourable member is deviating a long way from the subject matter of this debate. He has spent far too much time with his hand in his pocket and not focusing on the issues at hand.

Members interjecting:

The ACTING SPEAKER: Order! There is no point of order. I think that the honourable member was making a point, but perhaps he could return to the substance of the motion more directly.

Mr KOUTSANTONIS: The member for Bright is an expert at using his hands—an expert. I use them—well, I will not go there because some of us in this house have a track record with respect to the use of our hands. I can pull out some past *Hansard* which will cast a greater light on what the member for Bright does in his office in the late hours. The jig is up. The honourable member is correct: let us get back to the motion.

In his grievance speech the member for Schubert claimed that we were not doing enough. I would say to the member for Schubert that this government has been in office for just under a year.

Mr Venning: Just over a year.

Mr KOUTSANTONIS: Just over a year, I am sorry; the honourable member is absolutely right. And in that year we have done a lot. The member for Schubert and others may disagree, and that is their right. It is a free parliament, it is a free country and they can have their different views but, in my opinion, we have done a lot. When the member for Schubert says that we should be investigating these things, I would like him to detail to the house why it is not sour grapes, why he is still not a member of that committee. If the honourable member believes so passionately in waste disposal, if he believes so passionately in other relevant matters, if he believes so passionately in the environmental impact of waste—

Mr Venning: I do.

Mr KOUTSANTONIS: Then why did the honourable member, when he was chair of that powerful committee, when he ran government policy on that committee, not investigate and reinvestigate these matters as technology changed? If he had been serious about these issues he would have done it. However, I take the honourable member at his word: he is serious about it, and I invite him to appear before the ERD Committee and speak to the members and give them his knowledge.

Time expired.

The Hon. W.A. MATTHEW (Bright): Unlike the member for West Torrens, I commend the member for Schubert for bringing this motion before the house, as it is a well thought out and very important motion in relation to the future of waste disposal in South Australia. It is deliberately, as authored by the member for Schubert, a wide-ranging motion, because the member for Schubert is well aware that this motion has relevance to all three levels of government (federal, state and local), and is particularly relevant to local government, which is charged with the very important responsibility of ensuring that waste disposal within our state is appropriate and safe.

The member for Schubert also recognises, through his motion, changing technologies, and that is why paragraph (b) of his motion makes some very important references, namely, the benefits of alternative waste disposal methods and, also, more importantly, the environmental impact of landfill methods of waste disposal.

I would like to address in my remarks particularly the benefits of alternative waste disposal methods because the member for Schubert's motion allows the committee to assess some very important alternatives that have benefits beyond waste disposal. Those benefits are the utilisation of alternative energies. During my time as energy minister, I had the opportunity to examine an innovative waste disposal scheme that is touted internationally by a company known as Bright Star. Bright Star has already established a waste disposal facility in New South Wales, the purpose of which is manyfold. Essentially, its facility significantly reduces the amount of waste going to landfill but, importantly, utilises waste to generate electricity.

Bright Star's particular scheme is extremely innovative. Essentially, the company does away with the very costly process to local government at the moment of separating out recyclable materials: rather, the separation is done after the collection of the waste. Under the Bright Star scheme, essentially, all waste is collected from the one rubbish bin. There is no longer any need to separate out newspaper, tin cans, plastic bottles and the like. All that waste is taken into a sealed compound, a roller door lifts up, the truck goes into the compound, and the roller goes down. The waste is then unloaded. The importance of the sealed compound is that no rubbish can blow around, as often happens at less controlled facilities. The large items, such as car batteries, are removed from the truckloads of waste by sorting through with something like a forklift, and then all waste is put onto a conveyor system.

The waste on the conveyor system is subjected to a series of processes, one of which is heating up the waste to a temperature that is sufficient to remove the labels from plastic bottles and cans; it pops the lids off plastic bottles and essentially cleans and purifies the waste. After that process you finish up with clean tin cans and bottles, a black pulp and items such as clothing and rags, which are not broken down. As the conveyor belt moves through a series of air blowers and magnetic processes, metal waste is removed for recycling, plastic waste is blown from the belt (again for recycling) and the items remaining on the conveyor

belt are a black pulp and the heavier non-magnetic items, such as rags. Those are then picked through until all that remains is the black pulp. That is then baked into pellets. The pellets can then be used to generate electricity on their burning. They are burnt in a low carbon emission burner, thereby generating electricity.

The advantage of this process is that it is cheaper for local councils to pick up the rubbish. There is a far greater amount of recyclable benefit because all the waste is sifted through for recycling rather than relying on that to be done at the community level where, regrettably, not all householders are as environmentally aware as some others.

It means that a lot of recyclable materials are presently put into landfill. The important benefit of this process is that, at present, even within those councils that have active recycling programs, I am not aware of any council within South Australia (or for that matter beyond) that can claim to recycle better than 20 per cent of their waste, and most are much less than that. To reverse those figures means that at least 80 per cent of waste is still going to landfill, and that is why dumps, such as Wingfield, have been around for so long and why dumps such as those mentioned in the electorate of my colleague the member for Goyder are necessary alternatives. However, surely it is better to look at other ways of utilising waste more productively so that there is less need for landfill. The Bright Star system claims to be able to reduce the landfill to about 15 per cent or less, and that is a significant achievement.

There are other schemes, apart from that company's, that likewise are able to utilise waste in this fashion, but I commend this scheme to the committee to which the honourable member's motion refers a reference, and indeed I commend it to the Bright Star scheme. I would be pleased to provide working papers that I have in my possession to the committee chair via the opposition representatives on the committee to ensure that this scheme and others like it are examined. I believe that it is the way of the future. Also, other issues can be examined through the terms of reference put forward by the member for Schubert.

Those sites that have been used for waste deposit but are no longer used—and I have one such site in my electorate at Marino—are also sites that have a significant amount of methane gas continually building in the area once used for waste disposal. Methods are available today that can economically tap these methane deposits and use the gas to generate energy. There are a number of such waste locations around our state, and I encourage the committee in its deliberations to examine those sites around the state to determine the extent of methane deposit and to determine the extent to which it is exploitable in commercial terms to be able to produce electricity and generate a benefit back to the community. In so doing and in extracting such methane gas, it is also a part of the process needed to remediate an area previously used for waste disposal so that that area can be used for other purposes. Again, the committee has an important role that it could provide for the people of this state.

It will also be very important for the committee to bring before it a number of witnesses. Notably, within local government a number of councils can provide good evidence, but again, in my role as shadow energy minister, looking at the opportunities of utilising waste for energy generation, I commend to the committee

the Salisbury council, which has done an enormous amount of research and work on this and from my experience is probably the leading council in the state on this issue. If the northern region of councils do not accelerate their endeavours to the extent Salisbury has, that council may have to go it alone with some innovative methods.

This committee may be able to assist that council hasten its endeavours and views. They have also looked at the Bright Star method and have been enthused by that, and I would like to see some positive results come out of the work of the committee. I commend the work of the member for Schubert in bringing forward this positive motion and, while I recognise that the member for West Torrens was a little tongue-in-cheek in his speech, I hope that he and his colleagues see the wisdom of this motion being referred to the committee so that it can deliberate on this very important issue. I ask the member for West Torrens, in a bipartisan manner, to put politics aside and join the member for Schubert and his colleagues in the Liberal Party in taking this reference to the committee and the member for West Torrens will be able to work on it, too.

Mrs GERAGHTY secured the adjournment of the debate.

28 May 2003, House of Assembly

WASTE MANAGEMENT

Adjourned debate on motion of Mr Venning:

That this house calls on the Environment, Resources and Development Committee to examine and make recommendations on waste management in South Australia, particularly in regard to:

- (a) the environmental benefits and disadvantages of closing the Wingfield dump;
- (b) the benefits of alternative waste disposal methods;
- (c) the environmental impact of landfill methods of waste disposal; and
- (d) any other relevant matter.

which Mrs Geraghty has moved to amend by deleting all words after 'recommendations on' and inserting the words:

- (a) landfill proposals for metropolitan Adelaide for the next 15 years;
- (b) the viability of alternatives to landfill;
- (c) recycling;
- (d) plastic bag use in South Australia; and
- (e) any other relevant matter.

(Continued from 14 May. Page 2994.)

Dr McFETRIDGE (Morphett): I rise to support this bill. Waste management in South Australia is becoming more of a problem not only for individual households and small businesses but also for large businesses. Finding suitable sites to store

waste that cannot be recycled is something that the parliament needs to consider very carefully, because we know now that the impact of acting rashly or in an uneducated manner when we decide where to store waste is something that we could live to regret.

I am confident and happy with the federal government's choice of site in the Far North of South Australia for storing nuclear waste. It is well known to be one of the most geologically stable sites in Australia and certainly is quite a suitable site at which to store low level nuclear waste.

Getting off that and referring to domestic waste, a lot of low level nuclear waste is domestic waste because it can include something as simple as the smoke detectors in people's homes. More to the point of this motion is the management of household and industrial waste, and we need to look at ways of recycling waste. Certainly, the Premier is on record as stating that one of his and his government's aims is to reduce the amount of landfill and recycle as much of the waste produced in South Australia, whether from homes or from industry.

I live at Glenelg, and one of the wonderful things that we have there now is the Patawalonga. For 30 years, the Patawalonga was the most polluted waterway in Australia, but it has now been cleaned up. The waste that accumulated in those years in the Patawalonga was absolutely disgusting—not only the heavy metals in the silt but also the detritus and rubbish that was coming down from the upper catchments. I am pleased to see that the catchment management boards have been working over time, and they have certainly reduced the amount of rubbish coming down into the Patawalonga and, certainly, the Barcoo Outlet does help in a major way with the larger pieces of debris and some of the sediment.

The tonnes of debris being collected by the booms floating across the upper reaches of the Patawalonga Lake by the Barcoo Weir is just amazing to see. When one drives along Sir Donald Bradman Drive and looks at the booms and the trash racks in the drains along there, one can see how much rubbish could potentially end up coming down into the Barcoo and then out to sea or, as used to be the case, into the Patawalonga. I forget the exact figures, but we are talking about not just tens or hundreds of tonnes; we are talking thousands of tonnes of rubbish that should not be there in the first place.

The whole community has a role to play in waste management in South Australia. Certainly, there are many clean-up campaigns. I was lucky enough to participate in the Clean Up Australia day with my Rotary club, Somerton Park Rotary Club, in a road watch campaign on Cement Hill at Seacliff. I was able to help out there. The whole of the community is getting on with cleaning up Australia—cleaning up their local environment—and it is something that we need to promote through this place.

The public campaign for recycling is certainly well under way, and I see that the latest thing that the media is grabbing onto is plastic shopping bags. I feel quite guilty when I come home from the supermarket, and the many shops down the Bay, with a handful of plastic bags. We try to reuse them and, certainly, we take them back and put them in the deposit bins in the Coles supermarket in Nile Street, and they are then recycled. If there are ways of overcoming the use of the

millions of plastic bags in Australia, I would be more than happy to participate in and support and promote any programs in that respect.

Mr Hanna: Vote for my bill, Duncan.

Dr McFETRIDGE: As the member for Mitchell indicated, he has a bill coming to this place, and I will support that bill if it is able to reduce the millions of tonnes of plastic waste by, in this case, reducing the number of plastic bags being handed out by shopkeepers. Certainly, it is a cheap way of packaging goods, but I think the good old cardboard boxes, which are made from recycled paper or recycled paper bags, may be the way to go. They are a bit more difficult to carry at times, but perhaps people can get the whole family organised; rather than going shopping by themselves, they can take the whole family along to do the shopping and help carry it home.

The benefits of alternative dumping and reprocessing methods is something that the ERD Committee needs to look at. Over the years I have taken a lot of rubbish to the recycling depot at the end of Morphett Road by the airport. My wife and I are restoring an old home, and I am more than happy to spend the extra time to take old building materials and other household refuse there to be sorted into various sections of the dump. If that reduces the amount of landfill, the amount of solid waste that is causing a problem throughout the whole community, I am happy to be involved with that and give some of my time. If green waste is able to be recycled, if paper is able to be recycled, if the many other things that we have taken for granted as just being part of the rubbish we stick out for the garbos is able to be recycled and reused, and we are able to reduce the amount of permanent waste that is building up in the landfills around the place, that is something that this parliament certainly should be helping to promote.

The ERD Committee is also looking at the old Wingfield dump. Closing the dump will cause quite a problem—because where will all that rubbish go? As a child I lived at Salisbury, and I remember my family taking our rubbish to the St Kilda dump. I would hate to think of the environmental impact of all the rubbish that was taken to that dump. When one looks at the volumes that have been taken to the Wingfield dump, it is amazing to see the mountain of rubbish there that will just have to be allowed to sit. Some of it will break down. I know that mini power stations are being established in some of these refuse places—the landfills. Methane gas is being recovered and it is being used to power mini power stations. That is one way of recovering some of the waste, even though that waste is the result of many tonnes of landfill being deposited and the by-products of the rotting process being collected. At least it is a useful reprocessing method. I encourage the ERD Committee to look very carefully at its brief here and, certainly, do the people of South Australia and future generations a big favour with respect to the handling of our waste of all sorts.

Mr HANNA (Mitchell): The member for Schubert, with his motion, requests the ERD Committee to look at Wingfield dump alternative waste disposal methods and the environmental impact of landfill methods of waste disposal. The member for Schubert clearly has a particular interest in the future of Wingfield dump. On this occasion, the government has sought to take the wind out of the member for

Schubert's sails by introducing a comprehensive amendment that, effectively, alters the thrust of the member's motion. I object in principle to amendments which do not change just one or two words but which comprehensively alter the thrust of the initiating member's proposal. That is what has happened here.

The government may be able to use its numbers to do this, but I think it is wrong in principle. If the government has such a different view on the subject matter, it should oppose the motion and, if it strongly feels that the subject matter referred to in its own amendment should be looked at by the ERD Committee, it should move a separate motion or take action within the ERD Committee to have those matters looked at.

There are, indeed, matters in the government's amendment about which I am passionately concerned. For example, it refers to plastic bag use in South Australia, and it refers to recycling. These are matters that need to be looked at, but the fact is that the member for Schubert's motion originally focused on the Wingfield dump as well as other alternative waste disposal methods, and I think the member has the right to bring that matter to the attention of the ERD Committee. I am inclined, unless persuaded otherwise, to vote against the amendment and for the motion, for the reasons that I have given.

Mr WILLIAMS (MacKillop): I am delighted to indicate my support for the member for Schubert's original motion on this matter. It is interesting that this has come back to the house. There was quite an interesting debate some years ago, as I recall, when this matter was raised in another place by the then planning minister (Hon. Di Laidlaw), I believe, who introduced a bill in the other place. I remember when the bill came to this house. At that time, I was sitting on the cross benches on the other side of the house, and I remember being lobbied very strongly by the then lord mayor of the City of Adelaide (the current member for Adelaide), who was adamant that there were huge advantages in keeping the Wingfield dump open.

The SPEAKER: Order! The Minister for Tourism should acknowledge the chair and join whomever it is she wishes to have a conversation with in the gallery, rather than do so from within the precincts of the house.

Mr WILLIAMS: I was lobbied very strongly by the then—

The SPEAKER: Order! The Minister for Tourism should acknowledge the chair and leave the precincts of the house and talk to the stranger in the gallery, if that is her wish, and not conduct a conversation across the benches. The member for MacKillop.

Mr WILLIAMS: Thank you, Mr Speaker. As I was saying, at that time the other Independents and I received strong lobbying from the then Lord Mayor of Adelaide, on behalf of the City of Adelaide, to try to have the measure introduced by the Hon. Diana Laidlaw in another place overturned. The lord mayor (as she was then) made the point that the City of Adelaide already had a significant plan to close the Wingfield dump in a staged manner (and I will return to that matter directly), and that the dump was providing a very good service not only to the City of Adelaide: indeed, most of the material deposited in that dump came from other corporations around the greater metropolitan area of Adelaide, and the dump

provided a great service at a realistic cost to those corporations that did not have their own dumping facilities. It also provided a very valuable revenue stream to the City of Adelaide.

It beggared my imagination at the time (and it still does) why the previous Liberal government moved to accelerate the closure process of the Wingfield dump. One of the downsides (and I hope the ERD Committee is able to revisit this matter) of the accelerated dump's closure (and I do not recall when it was due for final closure) was that it caused the final shape of the mountain of rubbish deposited there by the good citizens of Adelaide and surrounding suburbs to be different from what was originally planned by the City of Adelaide.

The City of Adelaide and its consultants had planned to keep the dump open over a period of years so that when the dump was closed the final shape would allow them to cap it with an impervious layer (which would probably include some geotechnic fabric and clay, which is a technology being used in other places around Adelaide for a similar purpose) so that any natural rainfall on the mountain of rubbish would naturally run off. The likelihood of that rainfall penetrating that layer and into the material dumped there over a long period was very small.

It was very important that that dump had that finish applied, because any rainfall penetrating the material dumped there during the lifetime of the dump would, of course, leach chemicals out of the material and create leachate. That would then pass on down through the material to the base land underlying the dumped material and into the underlying aquifers and watertables and probably eventually find its way into the North Arm of the Port River. So, the potential for pollution plumes being created by not closing that dump in a properly staged and managed manner is quite significant. I have not gone back and looked at the contribution I made to the house at the time, but I remember that I spoke against this and raised these same matters.

The Hon. W.A. Matthew interjecting:

Mr WILLIAMS: I am absolutely certain. I remember that the then Liberal government received bipartisan support for this measure. At the time, I could not understand why the then government sought to do this. Obviously, the member for Port Adelaide (the Deputy Premier) was in favour of this measure (and I do not blame him), because it was situated in his electorate, and he wanted to see the Wingfield dump closed. I remember his telling the house at the time that the dump was a blight on the Wingfield area (which is adjacent to Port Adelaide) and, as far as he and his constituents were concerned, the sooner it was closed the better.

The reality is that when one dump closes, the problem is shifted from one person's backyard into someone else's backyard. I understand that the good people up along Port Wakefield Road have been running a campaign for a number of years to stop a dump being established in their area. They do not want the Wingfield dump closed, because they know where it is proposed to build the next one: it will be situated in their area, and they do not want a dump there. They have mounted the same sort of arguments about the dump being a physical eyesore, as well involving the problem of rubbish trucks travelling up and down and rubbish spilling onto the roads (although I do not think that would be likely these days), and their area being known as the dumping ground for the City of Adelaide.

I sympathised with those people at the time, and I still do. I appreciate the contribution made by the member for Mitchell and what he said about a member introducing a motion for the house to consider, and an individual or group of people seeking to completely bastardise that motion. If the government does not want this matter put before the ERD Committee, it should defeat the motion. It should not change the motion completely, because that is unfair to any member in this place. I think a member has the right to put a motion before the house and have it considered in its own right and on its own merits. To have someone completely change the motion is disgraceful. I agree with the member for Mitchell's thoughts on that aspect.

I will not be supporting the amendment, because it has nothing to do with what the member for Schubert has asked the ERD Committee to examine. He wants the ERD Committee to see whether mistakes were made at the time (and I believe mistakes were made) and whether that could be redressed. If the ERD Committee is given the opportunity, I have faith that it will do it correctly and come up with the correct information and the right answers.

If the government does not trust the committee, it has the power do something about it. I do trust the ERD Committee, and I hope that the house will defeat the amendment and pass the original motion. I congratulate the member for Schubert on introducing the motion to the house.

Mr VENNING (Schubert): I want to thank all members who contributed to this debate, including the member for West Torrens, who introduced the amendment I am opposing. I also thank the members for Morphet, Mitchell, MacKillop and Goyder. I oppose the amendment, because, as mentioned by the member for MacKillop, it leaves out the issues relating to the Wingfield dump.

I do not know whether such an amendment would be ruled out of order by a chairman outside this place because it directly opposes the original amendment. Standing orders in this place are not specific in relation to what an amendment can and cannot do but, in the real world, amendments cannot directly oppose the original motion.

I specifically raised the issue of the Wingfield dump because it was the key issue that the ERD committee, of which I was then presiding member, addressed six or eight years ago in a very good report which, as the member for West Torrens knows, was quite controversial at the time. The Adelaide City Council was involved with the Wingfield dump, and the Port Adelaide Enfield council was involved with its own dump at Torrens Island and was opposed to the continuation of the Wingfield dump.

All sorts of accusations were made at the time. The Port Adelaide Enfield council said that it wanted the dump closed for environmental reasons but, of course, it wanted more business for its own dump on Torrens Island. The issue was hotly debated, and the committee met all the players. I always believed that the life of the Wingfield dump should not be decided by politics but should be decided when the site was full, when it should have been nicely capped off and finished with a roundly shaped hill. We did not want—

Mr Koutsantonis: Four years!

Mr VENNING: Seven years. I have no problem with this amendment but, because it deletes the first part of my original motion, I oppose it. If I had the time, I would be happy to amalgamate the two, but that would further complicate the issue. Whatever the result, I am happy for the member for West Torrens, or anybody else, to resubmit the amendment as a stand-alone motion. I have no problem with that course of action, and I am happy to support it.

The ERD committee should, for the sake of expediency and the parliament, look at its original report, the assessment that was made six years ago and what has happened now that the heat has gone out of the situation and it is nearing its last days. The committee should also look at the alternative for this dump.

I do not wish to cause any angst over this issue, and I did not move this motion with any trickiness or malice in mind. After all, I did not move the amendment. The former minister and I had words about this issue in the corridor, and I understand that there is some sensitivity about this amendment, although not just on the part of members opposite. This motion has been debated in good spirit. I urge members to oppose the amendment and support the original motion.

The house divided on the amendment:

AYES (23)

Atkinson, M. J.	Bedford, F. E.
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AYES (cont.)

Breuer, L. R.	Caica, P.
Ciccarello, V.	Conlon, P. F.
Foley, K. O.	Geraghty, R. K. (teller)
Hill, J. D.	Key, S. W.
Koutsantonis, T.	Lomax-Smith, J. D.
McEwen, R.J.	O'Brien, M. F.
Rankine, J. M.	Rann, M. D.
Rau, J. R.	Snelling, J. J.
Stevens, L.	Such, R. B.
Thompson, M. G.	Weatherill, J. N.
Wright, M. J.	

NOES (21)

Brindal, M. K.	Brokenshire, R. L.
Brown, D. C.	Buckby, M. R.
Chapman, V. A.	Evans, I. F.
Goldsworthy, R. M.	Gunn, G. M.
Hall, J. L.	Hamilton-Smith, M. L. J.
Hanna, K.	Kerin, R. G.
Matthew, W. A.	Maywald, K.A.
McFetridge, D.	Meier, E. J.
Penfold, E. M.	Redmond, I. M.
Scalzi, G.	Venning, I. H. (teller)
Williams, M. R.	

PAIR(S)

White, P. L.	Kotz, D. C.
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Majority of 2 for the ayes.

Amendment thus carried; motion as amended carried.

The Hon. I.F. EVANS: On a point of order, Mr Speaker, following the division that was just held, I believe that both the member for Mitchell and I were missed in the count. We were both in the chamber, sitting behind the member for Morialta. I seek the Speaker's ruling as to whether the division needs to be held again, because we were clearly in the chamber and we are not recorded on the voting list.

The SPEAKER: The member for Davenport draws attention to something that I was aware of. I saw him here, but I cannot help it if the member for Schubert does not tell the result the way it is. I appointed the member for Schubert as the teller. The house agreed to that proposition. In any case, standing order 178 states:

If there is confusion or error concerning the numbers recorded, the house proceeds to another division unless the confusion or error can be corrected otherwise.

Is it the will of the house to show the corrections in the division report?

Honourable members: Yes, sir.

The SPEAKER: Is there a proposition to that effect? The member for Davenport.

The Hon. I.F. EVANS: I move that proposition, sir.

The SPEAKER: Is there a seconder for that proposition?

Honourable members: Yes, sir.

The SPEAKER: Is there any debate on the proposition?

Mr HANNA: May I be informed as to whether the effect of this motion will be that I will be recorded as present, as indeed I was, for that division?

The SPEAKER: Yes, the honourable member will be. If this proposition passes, the division result will be amended to show that the member for Mitchell was present. I am able to order that under standing order 180. I had simply not remembered that at the time I made my remarks a minute ago, and I so order it now. The result of the division is therefore 23 ayes and 21 noes. The amendment still passes in the affirmative.