

Legislative Council

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WASTE COLLECTION

The Hon. A. BRESSINGTON (15:06): Will the minister explain why a trial was necessary when, in fact, fortnightly waste collection has been trialled in Queensland, in Great Britain and in a number of other jurisdictions and failed, simply because of the health reasons that have been raised?

The Hon. G.E. GAGO (Minister for State/Local Government Relations, Minister for the Status of Women, Minister for Consumer Affairs, Minister for Government Enterprises, Minister Assisting the Minister for Transport, Infrastructure and Energy) (15:06): I can only emphasise that I am not the Minister for Environment and I no longer have—

Members interjecting:

The PRESIDENT: Order!

The Hon. G.E. GAGO:—responsibility for this policy area. I already answered this question when I said that there are other countries in the world that have developed their waste management to a much more sophisticated level than we have. This is about trying to improve the environment. That is the principle underpinning this. It is very important that, as a government, we continue to explore all possible ways of improving our environment. Millions and millions of tonnes of waste are going to landfill causing greenhouse gas emissions in the form of methane and CO₂. We have materials that we use only once—

Members interjecting:

The PRESIDENT: Order!

The Hon. G.E. GAGO: We have millions of tonnes of raw materials that we use only once and then dump into landfill. It is most important that, as a responsible government, we continue to explore all possible ways of improving our impact on the environment, by reducing our environmental footprint. I think that is a really good thing. Trials are, as a general premise, a good thing because they enable us to try things out and amend and accommodate accordingly. I think that is a positive thing. What are we so scared of? People have had a chance to raise their concerns, they have raised them, and my understanding is that the councils are considering feedback from local residents—and that is exactly how it should be. I commend them for that.

The Hon. D.G.E. HOOD (15:03): I have a supplementary question, Mr President. Does the minister acknowledge that fortnightly collection may, in fact, result in a substantially increased health risk to the population?

The Hon. G.E. GAGO (Minister for State/Local Government Relations, Minister for the Status of Women, Minister for Consumer Affairs, Minister for Government Enterprises, Minister Assisting the Minister for Transport, Infrastructure

and Energy) (15:03): That is not a matter for me. I am not a health expert. The health matters of garbage—the life of garbage, the detrimental effects on the community and whether there are risks in terms of disease or rodents—is completely outside my expertise. I point out, however, that these matters are for trial so, if the community is finding that there are issues of concern, they should be fed back into the trial and taken up.

The Hon. R.I. Lucas interjecting:

The PRESIDENT: Order! The Hon. Mr Lucas will come to order. Has the minister finished?

The Hon. G.E. GAGO: I can only emphasise that this is a trial and if the community are not happy with it or have issues of concern about the current collection rates then what they should do is raise those matters—which they have done. I think that is a good thing. The collection rates and the trial itself should then be amended accordingly. It is not for me to set policy for waste collection in an area that is clearly outside my portfolio responsibility. That is outrageous.

As I said, it is a trial, and if people have concerns in terms of health or odour—or any concerns—they have the right (which I encourage) to feed that back to their local council so that those matters can be considered, no doubt carefully by that council, and their concerns accommodated.