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INDUSTRY | Chris Holmes

A FAR North Queensland foundry boss says the State Government needs to stop paying lip-service to regional businesses and fix spiralling electricity costs which threaten employment throughout Queensland.

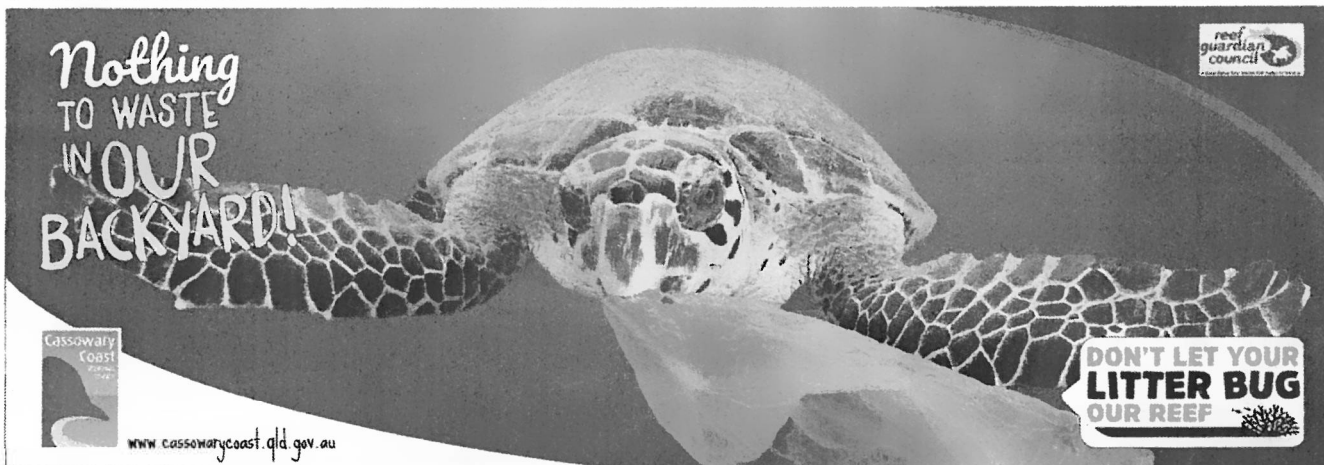
Australian Foundry Institute national secretary Joe Vecchio, pictured, who is operations manager at Wangan's Northern Iron and Brass Foundry, said the Pal-

aszczuk Government's introduction of a waste levy on July 1 could be the final nail in the coffin for many small industries in regional areas.

Mr Vecchio has written to Environment Minister Leeanne Enoch asking her to meet with him to discuss the levy which he says will increase the Wangan foundry's regulated waste bill from \$63,988 last year to \$144,500, an increase of \$80,512.

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Spiralling electricity costs a threat to employment warns foundry boss

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"SOME 750 tonnes of sand a year which is used in the casting process is regulated waste but we can't dispose of it locally, it has to go to Townsville," Mr Vecchio said.

"The charges before the levy were horrific but now they've just taken it to another level."

"They're just making it too hard for small business."

"It's just laughable that the government says it cares about regional jobs when it does this sort of thing to us."

"I'm prepared to travel anywhere to meet with the minister but so far I haven't heard from her."

Mr Vecchio said electricity prices in Queensland for a foundry specific tariff called Tariff 37 had risen by 160 per cent in the past 10 years.

"Ergon Energy has decided to remove Tariff 37 from July 1, 2020," he said. "This will force Queensland foundries onto higher cost tariffs, increasing prices a further 40 per cent to 349 per cent depending on the type of product."

He said submissions had

The charges before the levy were horrific but now they've just taken it to another level.

JOE VECCHIO, Australian Foundry Institute national secretary

been lodged with the government about the scraping of Tariff 37, along with the cost of electricity in general, through the Queensland Productivity Commission, but despite several government-financed energy audits at foundries in the past few years, no way to reduce electricity usage had been found.

"The main difference with the new tariffs is that they will charge on peak demand created," Mr Vecchio said.

"As an electric furnace in a foundry heats metal, it requires peak power."

"This is the process in which we manufacture products to supply our customers."

"It's that simple and there's no alternative."

Mr Vecchio said unless the current policy was updated in



Australian Foundry Institute national secretary Joe Vecchio says electricity prices in Queensland for a foundry specific tariff called Tariff 37 have risen by 160 per cent in the past 10 years. Picture: SUPPLIED

the near future, several hundred jobs in Queensland were at risk with the potential to devastate the whole industry.

"The Queensland Government has direct control over tariff charges and their decisions will have a direct impact on the economic viability of the industry," he said.

"The foundry industry is not seeking a special price, just

a fair and equitable price consistent with other electricity users."

Ms Enoch said her office received Mr Vecchio's correspondence on Wednesday.

"Queensland is fighting the war on waste, and the introduction of a waste levy in Queensland will help us improve waste management, increase investment in industry,

and create jobs," she said.

"Payment of the waste levy is avoidable. The waste levy applies only to waste disposed at landfill, and is an avoidable charge if people reduce waste, increase recycling and divert materials to alternative uses."

"Contaminated sand is a regulated waste, and must be carefully disposed of."

"Companies that generate,

transport or receive waste contaminants are required to comply with regulations to ensure the protection of the environment. This has always been the case."

"The Palaszczuk Government is supporting businesses, and councils, through various funding programs to assist with the introduction of the waste levy and encourage better waste management."

Ms Enoch said measures included:

* An extra \$1.8 million for the expansion of Chamber of Commerce & Industry Queensland's ecoBiz program which will specifically support small businesses reduce waste

* A \$6 million Regional Recycling Transport Assistance Program aimed at assisting regional councils and businesses overcome the higher costs associated with diverting waste from landfill in the regions

* \$100 million over three years to develop a high-value resource recovery industry in Queensland.

The *Innisfail Advocate* asked Ms Enoch if she planned to meet with Mr Vecchio but did not receive a response.

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