



We are a community group dedicated to raising awareness about all threats to the Reef, including Climate Change. We build support for positive change to protect the Reef.

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Research Director
Agriculture and Environment Committee
Parliament House
BRISBANE QLD 4000

Sent via email to: aec@parliament.qld.gov.au

Submission on Environmental Protection (Chain of Responsibility) Bill 2016

Dear Mr Chair and Committee Members

Thank you for the opportunity to make this submission on the Environmental Protection Chain of Responsibility Bill.

As a grassroots community group based on Queensland's reef coast, we know that environmental damage done inland and on our coastline has extensive ramifications for our precious reef and marine environment from pollution that leaches into the soil and water, which then makes its way into the ocean.

We applaud Environment Minister Steven Miles introduced amendments to the Environmental Protection Act to "better protect the environment, the community, and taxpayers from the decisions and actions of businesses that fail to take the steps to meet their proper responsibilities".

We hope that the Committee supports the passing of the Chain of Responsibility Bill.

This Bill is essential to help ensure that those who profit from operating mines, refineries and associated business ventures which pose a risk of environmental damage are able to be held responsible for the financial implications of remediating their sites.

This issue has plagued Queensland for a long time, with 15,000 abandoned mines currently existing in the state. This is a totally unacceptable position to be in, and we must ensure that in the future companies that reap the profits of mining and related industries are forced to repatriate their sites appropriately.

The need for this Bill has increased recently because of the downturn in the mining sector which has seen a number of operators go into administration and abandoned their sites - leaving environmental damage and the taxpayer liable for cleanup costs.

The most recent example is Queensland Nickel Refinery in Townsville. This refinery sits adjacent to the Great Barrier Reef Marine Park and World Heritage Area, and went into voluntary administration in January 2016.



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There are well publicized concerns that tailings dams, reportedly containing potentially toxic matter, were left without sufficient staff to manage the environmental risk posed by these dams. No financial assurance was held by DEHP for the refinery.

Without the passage of this Bill, the Department of Environment and Heritage Protection would have limited power to ensure that those who profited from the refinery are held accountable for any environmental damage that their activities may have caused, and the state would therefore incur responsibility and costs associated with managing this potential harm.

This Bill provides vital powers to DEHP to help ensure that companies such as those involved in the Queensland Nickel Refinery, including those people who have profited from or held control of these companies, cannot avoid liability for the environmental damage posed by their activities.

Our environment, both marine and onshore, deserves legislation which empowers DEHP to make sure that those who profit from and are responsible for exploiting our environment are the ones who remain responsible for remediating environmental harm caused by these operations. Taxpayers must be protected from the cost burden of cleaning up any company's contaminating mess.

We recommend the Committee supports all of the amendments provided for in the Bill.

Yours sincerely



Sandra Williams
Director
WRAD