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Research Director
Agriculture and Environment Committee
Parliament House
BRISBANE QLD 4000
Sent via email only: aec@parliament.qld.gov.au

Dear Research Director,

**Submission on Environmental Protection (Underground Water Management) and other
Legislative Amendment Bill 2016**

We congratulate the government for recognising the importance of fair and stringent water regulations across all industries and communities in Queensland. We appreciate the opportunity to make this submission on this important legislation.

The GBR Divers are a group of dive professionals who work on the Great Barrier Reef, from Lady Elliot Island in the south to Cape Tribulation in the north. Our concern is the declining health of the reef. Much of the Reef's declining health can be attributed to poor land practices in the Great Barrier Reef catchment, including the use of water.

Given the predicted impacts of global warming on our water resources, it is critical that all water use, particularly industrial water use, be fairly and strongly regulated with consideration given to the community and the environment.

The previous government introduced the *Water Reform and Other Legislation Amendment Act 2014* (WROLAA). WROLAA intended to provide mining companies with a statutory right to take, or interfere with associated groundwater. That is, free groundwater without any licensing process as required under the law today. This would have been a serious step backwards for both communities and environment.

We would oppose any proposal that would create a 'statutory right to take groundwater' for mining companies is opposed. A licence should always be required prior to water being taken or interfered with, with public submission and appeal rights to a Court with powers of final determination.

We support the improvements proposed in the Bill to the groundwater impact assessment for projects at the environmental authority stage. Functional, clean groundwater resources are essential to many farmers, businesses and ecosystems in Queensland.

We support the proposal that mines obtain an 'associated water licence' if they have not gone through the improved groundwater impact assessment introduced by the Bill. This would apply to coal mines like Adani Carmichael and Alpha.

Unfortunately, the Bill does not require the 'associated water licence' to be assessed against principles of ecologically sustainable development (ESD), such as the precautionary principle. There is too much uncertainty around how impacts affect our groundwater basins to not assess impacts posed against the

principles of ESD. We feel quite strongly that the Bill needs to be amended so that the 'associated water licence' is assessed against ESD principles.

As our state's leaders, we ask you to stand by the strongest possible water legislation to ensure fair and equitable use of our most valuable resource.

Yours sincerely,

Tony Fontes
Spokesperson
GBR Divers