



**Australian Government**  
**Great Barrier Reef**  
**Marine Park Authority**

Agriculture, Resources and Environment Committee  
 Parliament House  
 BRISBANE QLD 4000

Dear Sir / Madam

**Public Submission to the Agriculture, Resources and Environment Committee on the *Land, Water and Other Legislation Amendment Bill 2013***

With reference to the *Land, Water and Other Legislation Amendment Bill 2013* (Amendment Bill), key issues that need to be considered for the Great Barrier Reef World Heritage Area are the effects of climate change and declining water quality, coastal development and the potential impact on coastal ecosystems.

As one of the key objectives of the Amendment Bill, the Great Barrier Reef Marine Park Authority is supportive of any improvements in the streamlining of regulatory processes. However, the challenge is to implement policies and amend legislation to ensure the cumulative effects of decisions for the provision and management of water resources does not lead to the further decline in water quality and increased loads of sediment and nutrients, loss of ecosystem services and a long-term decline in the environmental quality of the Great Barrier Reef World Heritage Area.

The provision and management of water resources should ensure ecosystem connectivity, maintenance or improvement in water quality and maintenance of biodiversity for the health of the Great Barrier Reef World Heritage Area. Greater emphasis needs to be placed on sustainable use and management of water resources and stream ecosystems, as these significant values underpin the sustainable future for many of the economic and industry State interests.

**Specific comment**

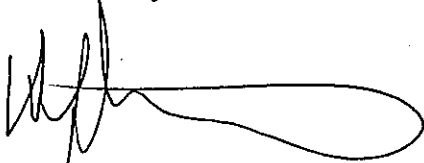
- That the Future Conservation Area provision (which allows the reservation of rural leasehold land and its acquisition in the future for the protected area estate at the time the lease is renewed) be retained as a tool to assist the Queensland Government to protect ecosystem functions that may be critical for the health of the Great Barrier Reef.
- Retain the property size thresholds relating to rural leasehold land affected by the State Rural Leasehold Strategy (Delbessie Agreement). The proposed changes will potentially affect a number of existing properties in the Great Barrier Reef catchment; the proposed change will mean that these properties will no longer have land management agreements or be assessed for land condition, potentially impacting on the Great Barrier Reef through reduced water quality.
- Amendments to the *Water Act 2000* and the *Vegetation Management Act 1999* possibly relax or remove checks on localised river works. Allowing greater self-governance of River Improvement Trusts, such as approval of their own annual work program, may lead to Australian and Queensland Government interests not being reflected in local planning (especially State interest in protecting wetlands and water quality in the Great Barrier Reef catchment). This may lead to potential impacts on water quality and fish habitat important to the health of the Great Barrier Reef.
- Proposed amendments to extend the life of current water licences from 10 years to 100 years means that the strategic review process will be lost, possibly leading to over allocation and a loss of environmental flows (particularly under El Nino conditions). The

shorter licence period was originally in place to enable review of the wider water management implications of the licence.

- The Great Barrier Reef Marine Park Authority requests that the Queensland Government reconsider the proposed removal of the requirement for water title holders proposing to undertake irrigation to prepare land and water management plans. The Queensland Government noted that the current framework is not achieving its intended objectives – the Great Barrier Reef Marine Park Authority notes that the Queensland Government has yet to implement many of the tools and water quality targets required to ensure that these plans are effective and managed in an integrated and strategic manner.

If you would like to discuss this feedback further, you can contact me on (07) 4750 0723 or by email: [hugh.yorkston@gbrmpa.gov.au](mailto:hugh.yorkston@gbrmpa.gov.au) or Jason Vains on (07) 4750 0608 or by email: [jason.vains@gbrmpa.gov.au](mailto:jason.vains@gbrmpa.gov.au).

Yours sincerely

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'H. Yorkston', followed by a long, horizontal, looping flourish.

Hugh Yorkston  
Director – Coastal Ecosystems and Water Quality  
Great Barrier Reef Marine Park Authority

05 April 2013