



The Research Director
 Agriculture, Resources and Environment Committee
 Parliament House
 Brisbane, QLD 4000
By email only: AREC@parliament.qld.gov.au;

Dear Sir/Madam

Public Submission to the Agricultural, Resources and Environment Committee on the *Water Reform and Other Legislation Amendment Bill 2014*

Thank you for the opportunity to provide comment on the proposed regulatory changes introduced by the *Water Reform and Other Legislation Amendment Bill 2014* (the bill). In regards to the application of this bill, the key issues that should 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 impacts associated with these developments and the extraction of water resources on coastal ecosystems.

The Great Barrier Reef Marine Park Authority (GBRMPA) supports the intention of this bill to streamline the regulatory process in managing Queensland's water resources. However, the challenge is to implement policies and amend legislation to ensure that 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 aquatic ecosystem health (not just environmental flows but also water quality required to maintain the desired environmental values), as these values underpin the ecologically sustainable future for many of the economic and industry interests.

Specific comment

- **Deregulation of water use** (Clauses 53; 63; 68; new section 93(g), 94(c); 243, 248)
 It is not clear how independent scientific advice regarding the cumulative impacts associated with the deregulation of water use will be obtained and considered in the decision making process.
- **Assessment impacts associated with large scale water users** (Clauses 68; new section 51(2)(c), 52 Ch 2, Part 2, Division 7)
 The implementation of a *development option* for large scale water users which guarantees large water users to an allocation of water prior to a full environmental assessment may lead to the over allocation of the State's valuable water resources. Regional water planning needs to consider both the quality and quantity of water required to sustain ecologically viable and fully functional aquatic and coastal ecosystems. Allocation of water resources prior to the full and open assessment of the potential cumulative impacts on groundwater, surface waters and the Great Barrier Reef World Heritage Property may lead to unacceptable impacts to coastal waterways and Great Barrier Reef ecosystems. It is not clear how independent scientific advice regarding the cumulative impacts associated with

the implementation of a *development option* for large scale water users will be obtained and considered in the decision making process.

- Whilst supporting a reduction in regulatory requirements applying to River Improvement Trusts, the Great Barrier Reef Marine Park Authority would request that the Queensland Government ensure that proposed regulatory amendment do not result in a downgrading of the current protections afforded to wetlands and water quality in the Great Barrier Reef Region. Modification to these protections could lead to significant cumulative impacts on the outstanding universal value of the Great Barrier Reef World Heritage Area.
- It is not clear how recent amendments to the objection rights in the *Mineral and Energy Resources (Common Provisions) Bill 2014* will impact on the broader communities ability to participate fully in the decision making process as suggested by these Bill amendments.

If you would like to discuss this feedback further please contact [REDACTED] or by email [REDACTED]

Yours sincerely



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Great Barrier Reef Marine Park Authority

9 October 2014