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Dr Jacqui Dewar
Committee Secretary
Health and Environment Committee
Parliament House
George Street
BRISBANE QLD 4000

By email: hec@parliament.qld.gov.au

Dear Dr Dewar

Submission on the Environmental and other Legislation (Reversal of Great Barrier Reef Protection Measures) Amendment Bill 2021

I have been directed by the State Council of the Wildlife Preservation Society of Queensland (Wildlife Queensland) to provide a submission for consideration on the above Bill.

Wildlife Queensland is one of the longest established and most respected wildlife-focused conservation groups in Queensland. Our objects include,

- To preserve the flora and fauna of Australia by all lawful means
- To educate the community in an understanding of the principles of conservation and preservation of the natural environment
- To discourage by all legal means, the possible destruction, exploitation and unnecessary development of any part of the natural environment.
- To encourage rational land use and proper land planning of existing and future development, and the use of the natural environment and its management.

With over 6500 supporters Wildlife Queensland is a strong voice for our wildlife and its habitat. Wildlife Queensland is apolitical. Our aims reflect a strong interest in conserving our biodiversity, natural landscapes, seascapes and protection of our environment. Wildlife Queensland is not opposed to ecological sustainable development but there needs to be a balance among the needs of the environment, sustainable development and use and society's needs. It is indeed noteworthy that Wildlife Queensland was established in 1962 to fight to save and protect the Great Barrier Reef with celebrations in the late 1960s of success and now today the fight and struggle continues. Granted some battles have been won but the war is far from over and the world is watching and reviewing our efforts pondering the outcome.

Wildlife Queensland has taken this opportunity to provide comment on this legislation. Both the Commonwealth and Queensland Governments have invested considerable funds in efforts to reverse the declining trend in the health of the reef and its environs. Unfortunately, while progress has been made, the targets set have not been achieved in all situations. The Queensland Government is trying its best with significant funding being directed to

protecting wildlife · influencing choices · engaging communities

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addressing Climate Change but the Commonwealth Government with its reluctance to commit to what most nations are demanding, zero emissions by 2050, is failing to meet its obligations under various international treaties and protocols to which it is a signatory.

Wildlife Queensland shares one thought with Mr Nicholas Dametto M.P that underpins the Environment and other Legislation (Reversal of Great Barrier Reef Protection Measures) Amendment Bill 2021. Wildlife Queensland certainly agrees that the existing legislation needs amending. However, Wildlife Queensland is of the view the legislation needs to be strengthened, not weakened as proposed. Wildlife Queensland is opposed to the Bill.

Guidelines and standards are set as marine ecosystems require good quality water to remain healthy. Recent monitoring indicates that in some locations water quality condition is good as or even better than the guidelines. However, this is not the situation throughout the system. The results to date indicate the current guidelines, penalties and obligations are working effectively in some but not necessarily all places. Reducing penalties for infringements serves no purpose but only encourages people not to do the right thing. If someone does not comply with guidelines significant penalties should be imposed and simply not just a slap on the wrist. The current application of agricultural environmentally relevant activities appears to be contributing, at least in part, to an enhanced environmental health for the Reef so what is the logic in reverting to the former application that was a contributing factor to the problem. Such a recommendation has to be called into question. Why would you revert to a system that was obviously a contributing factor to the demise of the environmental health for the Great Barrier Reef environs. As for an independent regulator, the Palaszczuk Government has indicated the intention of appointing an independent Environmental Protection Agency. With regard to Environmental Relevant Activities (ERAs) Wildlife Queensland sees little to be gained in amending current procedures. ERAs are activities with the potential to release emissions which impact the environment and surrounding land uses. Current procedures are well established, have been operating effectively and while improvement is always possible it is not warranted currently.

The long term health and continued existence of the Great Barrier Reef will require the existing support from the Queensland and Commonwealth Governments to continue. In addition, an increased effort is required by land holders and the broader community whose activities impact the waters of the Great Barrier Reef to do the right thing and comply with existing regulations and guidelines. Weakening legislation is not the way forward.

Thank you for the opportunity to comment.

Yours sincerely



Des Boyland, Policies & Campaigns Manager

29th June 2021