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SUBMISSION

Environmental and Other Legislation (Reversal of Great Barrier Reef Protection Measures) Amendment Bill 2021

The intention of the original Bill passed by the Labor Government in 2019 was to :

“... amend the *Environmental Protection Act 1994* to strengthen Great Barrier Reef protection measures to improve the quality of the water entering the Great Barrier Reef.”

Based on the 2017 Scientific Consensus Statement which places the blame for poor water quality squarely onto the shoulders of the Agricultural industry, the Queensland Government has then spent \$330 million in misleading campaigns denigrating the \$19 billion industry that puts fresh food and fibre on the plates of Australians. Even the damage caused to the image of the Great Barrier Reef as being degraded, and the subsequent costs to the \$6 Billion Tourism industry has not been considered with the implementation of this Bill. International spokespeople with no idea are now assisting the Chinese led UNESCO push to have our great natural asset deemed as “in danger”. The Queensland Government has created this problem, and only the reversal of this damaging Bill can solve it.

There is overwhelming evidence that the Great Barrier Reef is in good health. Scientific findings show that there is almost zero land derived sediment on the Great Barrier Reef and that the Pacific Ocean flushes the reef, purifying the water every minute of every day. (Reference 3.19, 3.20, 3.47, 3.51, 3.52: [Senate Inquiry](#))

The tests that are being used for water quality are taken at the mouths of rivers. Scientific studies show that land-based sediment settles at river mouths and impacts less than 1% of GBR. This must be why the Qld Government has just introduced a new directive for storm run-off that excludes many potential large-scale polluters – except Agriculture. [New reef discharge standards for industrial activities commenced 1 June 2021](#) – the standards do not apply to diffuse runoff such as storm water. Uncontrolled releases in emergency situations are exempt. But not Agriculture.

The findings in the Australian Senate Inquiry are being ignored by the Queensland State Government. This inquiry found that the GBRMPA only studied 3% of the Great Barrier Reef, and that even the findings in that tiny proportion of the Reef were at “low to negligible risk”. At the outer reef, there was no measures of sediment, nitrogen or pesticides. Other important findings were that there had been no studies measuring the coral growth or lack of in the last 15 years.

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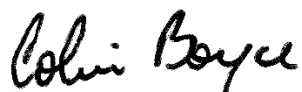
Our farmers and graziers have no interest in destroying or degrading either their land or the Great Barrier Reef. Many programs have been implemented to prevent run-off and overuse of chemicals. Changes to farming practices that support zero-till ground preparation are all driven by the growers themselves. No one wants to see the Great Barrier Reef decimated and this is certainly the case without the need for added regulation and administration restraints by the Queensland Government. None of these improvement measures have been recognised by the Government who continues to fund areas of this Bill such as compliance officers. In a further display of misspent funds, the Department of Environment sent staff to deliver the Reef Regulation information sessions who demonstrated their wilful ignorance of basic knowledge. One example - asking about sugar cane and banana growers when in Emerald, Central Queensland. Surely, they would know what produce is grown in the regions that they were visiting, as subject experts?

The rules are continuing to change on the run, with no actual standards to be applied for cropping, and those that will be set will again be government regulations that do not consider the evidence provided from producers. A classic example reached my desk yesterday, 28 June 2021 from the Office of the Great Barrier Reef with a new checklist that applies from 1 June 2021. And again, this information is not widely shared - I only received it as I had attended the Bundaberg session, whilst other growers who had registered to be kept informed have not been sent this checklist that was applicable 27 days earlier.

With the cuts to the budget for Agriculture again, and staff reductions as well as the closure of front offices in favour of online technology, how is the industry supposed to comply? If this is simply another way that the Queensland Government thinks that it can double-dip Agriculture with permits and fines, then this industry will continue to suffer from the red-tape that is choking our farmers.

I commend the Katter Party for presenting this opportunity to reverse this damaging Bill that the Labor Government has forced on our State.

Yours sincerely



Colin Boyce MP

Member for Callide