

## **Submission to the Environmental Protection (Great Barrier Reef Protection Measures) and Other Legislation Amendment Bill 2019**

Organisation: Central Highlands Regional Resources Use Planning Cooperative (CHRRUP)

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CHRRUP is an independent community-owned organisation dedicated to increasing the sustainability of natural resources through improving practices of use and management. The Central Highlands region encompasses the southernmost area of the Burdekin and westernmost area of the Fitzroy catchments.

Membership of the CHRRUP Board, led by an Independent Chair, comprises nominees from the following sectors: grazing, irrigation, cropping, landcare, integrated catchment management, economic development, human services, indigenous people, environment, local government, higher education, resources.

Formed in 1997, CHRRUP's framework and structure was developed to allow identified stakeholders, to respond on behalf of the whole community, considering all impacts including economic, environmental and social, to changes in use of the natural resources of the Central Highlands. The region is one of the state's key agricultural producers, generating over \$740 million per annum in economic value and having the largest beef herd size in Australia by Local Government area. (Central Highlands Agribusiness Capability Statement, Central Highlands Development Corporation, 2018)

The proposed regulations outlined in the Environmental Protection (Great Barrier Reef Protection Measures) and Other Legislation Amendment Bill 2019 have the potential to impact on several the sectors which CHRRUP represents and we provide this submission in response.

### **Response to minimum standards**

Without detailed information about the minimum standards, we are unable to comment on their suitability or application however, in general terms CHRRUP supports reforms that improve water quality flowing to the Reef. Introduction of minimum standards has the potential to significantly impact producers in our region and CHRRUP would like to be consulted in the development of these standards and their application.

Our view is that there needs to be a variety of mechanisms to achieve water quality improvement. Regulations on their own, will not secure a healthy, climate resilient Reef.

### **Response to use of industry BMP programs**

Attainment and demonstration of the minimum standards will require support to producers using various mechanisms. No one approach will be successful and allowing producers to access extension services that suit their needs will be important to ensure the best outcome.

In our experience, practices like forage budgeting take time and support to adopt and participation in current BMP programs will not guarantee improvement in specific practices.

### **Future producer engagement and support**

CHRRUP has strong existing networks and engagement mechanisms in the region and would welcome future involvement in assisting agricultural producers to meet and demonstrate achievement against Reef water quality outcomes.

Regardless of the outcomes of this Bill or future changes to legislation, there must be ongoing extension, training and support for landholders to implement improved practices. In our experience, there are very few landholders who do not wish to be excellent custodians of the land on which they operate but there must also be an acknowledgement that the changed practices to support this take time, and in many cases some form of ongoing extension to implement.

Ongoing and broad consultation will ensure that all relevant parties, including landholders and those supporting their efforts to achieve Reef water quality outcomes are kept informed and able to provide input.