



State Development, Infrastructure and Industry Committee
Parliament House
BRISBANE QLD 4000

Dear Sir / Madam

Submission to the State Development, Infrastructure and Industry Committee on the Land and Other Legislation Amendment Bill 2014 (the Bill)

The Great Barrier Reef Marine Park Authority is supportive of simplifying regulatory processes while improving on ecological and water quality outcomes for the health and resilience of ecosystems in the Great Barrier Reef World Heritage Area and Great Barrier Reef Marine Park.

With respect to the Bill, I refer you to previous submissions provided by the Great Barrier Reef Marine Park Authority regarding:

- The Land, Water and Other Legislation Amendment Bill 2013 (dated 05 April 2013)
- The Vegetation Management Framework Amendment Bill 2013 (dated 10 April 2013)
- The Regional Planning Interest Bill (dated 16 January 2014)

The following comments relate to the proposed changes in the Bill for state land tenure term leases used for agriculture, grazing and pastoral purposes and declared offshore island tourism leases under the Land Act, and amendments in relation to taking of water, water licencing and decisions under the Water Act.

Comments for consideration

- The Great Barrier Reef Marine Park Authority administers the Great Barrier Reef Marine Park Act and Regulations which provide for the long-term protection and conservation of the environment, biodiversity and heritage values of the Great Barrier Reef Region. Outside the Great Barrier Reef Marine Park, the Great Barrier Reef Marine Park Authority performs this role through partnerships with key stakeholders. For example, the decline in water quality and the impacts on the health of the Great Barrier Reef's ecosystems are widely recognised. Since 2003, the Australian and Queensland Governments have worked in collaboration under the Great Barrier Reef Water Quality Protection Plan (Reef Plan) to improve the quality of water in the Great Barrier Reef through improved land management.
- The provision and management of water resources should recognise that catchment ecosystem connectivity, maintenance and improvement in water quality and biodiversity play a critical role in supporting the health of the Great Barrier Reef World Heritage Area. Changes in legislation need to assess any impacts these might have on coastal ecosystems, and functions that they provide to the Great Barrier Reef World Heritage Area and the Great Barrier Reef Marine Park.
- The Great Barrier Reef Marine Park Authority notes that there will be no requirement for rural leases to enter into a land management agreement and no consideration of the most appropriate use and tenure for the land:

- Holding the perpetual lease to a specific purpose is an important land use tool, as most agricultural practices are not assessed or covered by local government planning assessment.
- Best practice would require land management plans for basic land management requirements, such as maintenance of levels of ground cover, to protect the public asset covered by the leasehold. This is an important consideration for public land management, and a commitment by the Queensland Government under Reef Plan.
- The Great Barrier Reef Marine Park Authority reiterates the need to retain land management agreements and land conditions assessment. From the Great Barrier Reef Outlook Report 2009: "Sediment inflow into the Great Barrier Reef has increased as a result of extensive forest clearing, especially lowland rainforest and wetlands, for sugar cane and the clearing of dry land forest for grazing. The latter creates sheet erosion where the nutrient rich uppermost layer of soil is washed into rivers during heavy rain, a phenomenon exacerbated by the introduction of drought resistant breeds of cattle capable of heavily grazing of grassland during the dry season" (p. 107); and "Increased sediments cause damage to the ecosystem by reducing light penetration, smothering coral and other invertebrates and transporting nutrient and pesticides to the Great Barrie Reef" (p. 109). Land management plans are an important best practice tool for understanding, monitoring and managing catchment condition.
- The Bill and explanatory notes are not clear on how the Queensland Government will monitor and manage catchment condition for the long-term health of the Great Barrier Reef World Heritage Area without dedicated leasehold land management tools in place.

In proposing the changes outlined in this Bill, further discussion is required on sustainable use and management of land and water resources (surface and ground water), as these significant values underpin the sustainable future for a number of Australian and Queensland Government and community environmental, economic and industry interests.

If you would like to discuss this submission further, you can contact me on (07) 4750 0822, or alternatively you can contact Hugh Yorkston, Director of the Coastal Ecosystems and Water Quality group on (07) 4750 0723 or by email: hugh.yorkston@gbrmpa.gov.au.

Yours sincerely



Bruce Elliot
General Manager
Biodiversity Conservation and Sustainable Use

04 April 2014