


Speech by
Jackie Trad

MEMBER FOR SOUTH BRISBANE

Hansard Tuesday, 19 June 2012

GREAT BARRIER REEF

 **Ms TRAD** (South Brisbane—ALP) (9.27 pm): The Great Barrier Reef is one of the great wonders of nature. The benefits that flow from the inheritance of such an important international natural asset are not only environmental but economic as well. Two million tourists visit each year, generating in excess of \$5 billion annually and around 50,000 Queensland jobs in tourism alone.

As members would know, the recently released UNESCO draft monitoring report raised serious concerns about the future of the reef. The report did, however, commend the previous Labor government's Reef Water Quality Protection Plan for making real progress towards reducing chemical run-off. UNESCO even went as far as to recommend that funding for the plan be maintained.

This call for action fell on deaf ears, with the Treasurer last week announcing that included in his \$186.5 million of spending cuts was an item within the Department of Premier and Cabinet titled 'Reef Water Quality'. These three simple words translate to a half a million dollar cut to the Reef Water Quality Protection Plan secretariat, which prepares the annual 'report card' on the reef's health and provides the coordination and leadership necessary to protect its World Heritage status.

Only two weeks ago, both the Premier and the environment minister stood up in this House and applauded the water quality plan as a success, assuring UNESCO and the people of Queensland that it would continue. All the while, behind the scenes, away from the cameras, they were slashing funding and cutting resources. The Premier has since defended his decision by claiming the cut was actually an underspend. Whatever way you spin it, the decision still means fewer resources are available to protect the Great Barrier Reef.

One would think that, with the massive expansion of development occurring in Far North Queensland and Central Queensland, those opposite would understand that the Great Barrier Reef needs more resources and protection, not less. Sadly, this LNP government has a habit of cutting funding without consideration and without looking at any of the necessary evidence, although ignoring scientific evidence is not a surprising move coming from a government with a climate change sceptic as an environment minister.

Queenslanders and the rest of the world are right to ask if this Newman government has any interest whatsoever in protecting the Great Barrier Reef. The truth is that those opposite talk up their commitment but their actions show that they cannot be trusted to safeguard the reef for Queenslanders today and into the future.