




Speech By
Scott Stewart

MEMBER FOR TOWNSVILLE

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ADJOURNMENT

Great Barrier Reef, Water Quality

 **Mr STEWART** (Townsville—ALP) (10.52 pm): I would like to advise the House that I recently had the pleasure of conducting a tour with the Minister for Environment and Heritage Protection and Minister for National Parks and the Great Barrier Reef of the Australian Institute of Marine Science, or AIMS, which is about a 20-minute drive south of Townsville. While at that facility we were given a tour through the National Sea Simulator, or SeaSim, which was opened in 2013 at a cost of \$35 million. This facility is state-of-the-art, cutting-edge and one of a kind anywhere in the world. It is the only facility in the world to have the capacity to understand the cumulative effects of multiple pressures, including climate change, ocean acidification, declining water quality and marine pests on tropical marine ecosystems.

As we all know, UNESCO placed the Great Barrier Reef on notice to be listed as endangered unless there were significant improvements. Fortunately, just this Friday past UNESCO announced that the reef would not be placed on the endangered list due largely to the strategies introduced by the Palaszczuk government. The Palaszczuk government, through Minister Miles, has set ambitious targets to improve water quality by reducing nitrogen run-off by up to 80 per cent and suspended sediment run-off by up to 50 per cent from key catchment areas by 2025. To achieve these ambitious targets and to implement effective strategies to address this specific problem, the Palaszczuk government announced that it would attribute \$100 million over five years to help science and research continuously evolve to inform the development and adoption of best practices to bring benefits to the reef.

The Palaszczuk government has always said that it would listen to, and collaborate with, key stakeholders in the community. That will bring a balanced, fair and future-looking perspective to the table. It has introduced a task force of experts from science, business, agriculture and community sectors to advise the government on how best to achieve these ambitious water quality improvement targets. I can tell you, Mr Speaker, that they will meet for the first time tomorrow. Unlike the former Newman government, the Palaszczuk government understands and is committed to protection of the Great Barrier Reef and is willing to commit to: banning offshore dumping of capital dredge spoil within the Great Barrier Reef; implementing vegetation protection laws in consultation with landholders to minimise damage run-off to the reef; reinstate coastal planning laws axed by the LNP government; and repeal the LNP government's water laws, which would have had a detrimental effect on the Great Barrier Reef catchment areas. These are measures that every government should be doing to protect our reef. Unfortunately, this is not what was done under the former LNP government.