




Speech By  
**Hon. Dr Steven Miles**  
**MEMBER FOR MOUNT COOT-THA**

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Record of Proceedings, 3 June 2015

**MOTION: WATER REFORM AND OTHER LEGISLATION AMENDMENT ACT  
2014**

 **Hon. SJ MILES** (Mount Coot-tha—ALP) (Minister for Environment and Heritage Protection and Minister for National Parks and the Great Barrier Reef) (6.16 pm): I rise to oppose the motion. My reason for opposing this motion is very simple. This motion and the laws that it would see come into effect are bad for the Great Barrier Reef. The LNP would have us believe they want to save the Great Barrier Reef. In fact, if we took their word for it they already have. Just five days after the release of the draft World Heritage Committee decision they pull this stunt. Five days after the member for Southern Downs took to Twitter calling the LNP ‘the natural guardians of the Great Barrier Reef’—

**Ms Trad:** He does have a sense of humour.

**Dr MILES:** It was on Twitter. It probably was not him. Just one day after the member for Glass House tried to claim the Labor Party’s policies for himself, the LNP asks us to proclaim a set of laws that would have disastrous consequences for the reef. Just a few weeks before UNESCO formally meets to consider whether or not to accept the draft decision, the LNP puts all that at risk with an irresponsible political ploy.

A key plank of our election policy was to not proceed with the LNP’s poorly conceived water laws. In fact, blocking the proclamation of provisions that have not commenced was one of our first acts in government. It was the first Governor in Council meeting I attended. I was proud to have played a part in preventing the environmental destruction that this act would have wreaked. In fact, I really want to thank the member for Hinchinbrook—

**Mr Cripps:** No, you don’t.

**Dr MILES:** No. I really, really do—for the chance to participate in this debate.

**Opposition members** interjected.

**Mr SPEAKER:** Order, members! Pause the clock. I call the minister.

**Dr MILES:** Obviously I did not get the chance to contribute when the bill was first debated in this place, but I am very glad to have the chance now to put on the record my opposition to this outrageous piece of environmental vandalism

**Mr Cripps:** Why is it outrageous?

**Dr MILES:** I will tell you. The LNP water laws would have led to the overallocation of water from reef catchments. It will ultimately decrease the volume of water flowing into the reef catchments and, at the same time, increase the nutrient loads flowing into the reef—

**Mr Cripps:** How?

**Dr MILES:** I will come to that—the same nutrient loads that we have pledged in the Reef 2050 Long-Term Sustainability Plan—the one you think is yours—to reduce by 80 per cent by 2025.

The LNP's law introduced up-front water development options for major water infrastructure projects. A WDO was intended to provide large developers with in-principle access to water without completing any environmental assessments. The LNP did not include any criteria in their laws for the issue of these water development options.

**Opposition members** interjected.

**Mr SPEAKER:** Order! I call the minister.

**Dr MILES:** They prioritised the water needs of large proponents over smaller users—the supposed constituency of those opposite. There was no modelling to show that this approach could be sustainable. But then of course ecologically sustainable development was one of the things they removed. Even the Great Barrier Reef Marine Park Authority warned the LNP about the consequences of these laws. They said—

Allocation of water resources prior to the full and open assessment of the potential cumulative impacts on groundwater, surface waters and the Great Barrier Reef World Heritage Property may lead to unacceptable impacts to coastal waterways and Great Barrier Reef ecosystems.

How we manage water must be based on solid science, rigorous analysis and transparent processes. We must have an eye on the future—the future impacts of what we do now and our likely future demands on watercourses and riparian areas.

In just a few weeks the international community will pass judgement on our custodianship of the reef—one of the world's living wonders. Thanks to the election of a Labor government, UNESCO is now unlikely to list the reef as in danger. This stunt by the LNP puts all that at risk—at the same time as they claim Labor's policies for their own and claim credit for the draft decision. It just shows the utter disregard they have for our environment and the Great Barrier Reef.

*(Time expired)*