




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

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MINISTERIAL STATEMENT

Great Barrier Reef, Water Quality

 **Hon. SJ MILES** (Mount Coot-tha—ALP) (Minister for Environment and Heritage Protection and Minister for National Parks and the Great Barrier Reef) (10.12 am): The Queensland government was elected with a mandate to respond to reef related threats and is committed to programs that encourage more effective reef protection. This includes re-enlivening legislation that aims to reduce the loss of fertilisers, pesticides and sediment from cane and grazing properties in key reef catchments. The previous LNP government decided not to enforce the legislated minimum standards that are in place to help protect the reef from damaging run-off. They abolished the reef protection team, which worked to ensure the minimum standards were observed. They abolished Labor's tree-clearing laws, delivering a massive increase in deforestation.

Mr Cripps interjected.

Mr SPEAKER: Thank you, member for Hinchinbrook. You will have a chance to put some questions or speak shortly. I call the minister.

Dr MILES: Recently, I released the reef report card for 2014. In that reef report card we saw the consequences of the previous LNP government's decisions. Progress on reducing pollutants entering reef catchments flatlined under the previous government. The reef report card makes it abundantly clear that we must do more if we are to have any chance of meeting the water quality targets embedded in the Reef 2050 Long-Term Sustainability Plan presented to UNESCO and agreed to by the Commonwealth and Queensland governments. First of all, we must see far more growers and graziers adopting improved farming practices.

The Palaszczuk government is committed to working with industry to achieve greater participation in voluntary industry led best management practice programs, which provide the best way for farmers to improve their profitability and productivity while delivering better environmental outcomes. As the previous LNP government demonstrated, relying on the voluntary uptake of BMP alone is not enough to deliver the outcomes we need. Industry leaders have told me they are sick of their efforts being undermined by those that will not even adopt the minimum standards. The Department of Environment and Heritage Protection is developing a targeted compliance program, committing \$1 million in funding to bolster on-the-ground presence and activity. The basic standards require farmers to undertake soil tests, to avoid using more than the optimum amount of nitrogen and phosphorous fertiliser and soil conditioners based on the soil tests, to keep records of fertiliser and pesticide use and to follow label instructions when using pesticides. This program will build on and complement the department's existing programs supporting BMP and the Department of Agriculture and Fisheries' extension program. Our main focus will be support and education, but targeted enforcement action will be taken where necessary.

The department will continue to work closely with key industry bodies such as AgForce and Canegrowers in the development of the compliance workforce training packages, the approved forms to be completed by farmers to evidence compliance and the selection of priority regional areas for departmental focus.

Opposition members interjected.

Dr MILES: Members opposite do not like it, but the reef report card results are a real wake-up call for everyone involved in reef water quality protection programs. I am confident that the Great Barrier Reef Water Science Taskforce, which will issue an interim report by the end of the year, will provide a road map to help us turn these results around. In the meantime we will not be repeating the mistakes of those opposite. We will keep working with agricultural industries on the reef coast to get the basics right for water quality improvement.