




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

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### **SUSTAINABLE PORTS DEVELOPMENT BILL**

 **Hon. SJ MILES** (Mount Coot-tha—ALP) (Minister for Environment and Heritage Protection and Minister for National Parks and the Great Barrier Reef) (12.02 pm): The Sustainable Ports Development Bill is an important milestone in our campaign to save the Great Barrier Reef. It delivers on commitments we made to the people of Queensland and commitments we made to the world at large through the Reef 2050 Long-Term Sustainability Plan. The bill is a substantial achievement. I congratulate the minister and all those who have worked tirelessly to bring it about. The bill protects the Great Barrier Reef primarily by banning the dumping of port related capital dredge spoil in the reef World Heritage area, greatly limiting the number of ports that can be built along the reef coast and concentrating development in four major existing ports in the best locations with the best channels. I spoke about some of the impact of dredging and dumping yesterday when I spoke against the opposition's irresponsible motion to defer consideration of this bill. As irresponsible as the motion was, I do thank the opposition for providing me with two opportunities to speak about this important matter.

Earlier this year we learnt that the previous LNP government spent millions of taxpayer funds on polling and advertising to downplay the threats facing the Great Barrier Reef and to try to shore up their reputation on reef protection and management. Budget figures show the previous government earmarked \$2.4 million for its so-called 'Reef Facts' advertising campaign. Part of this strategy was explicitly to counter the campaign by conservation groups drawing attention to the impact of ports and dredging on the reef and to downplay these impacts in the LNP's public messaging about the state of the reef.

But the ALP came to government with a suite of election commitments designed to protect the Great Barrier Reef from the impact of dredging and dumping because, unlike the LNP, we accept the evidence about the damage this causes to the sensitive reef ecosystems. On coming to government, we acted quickly to have those commitments embedded in the Reef 2050 Long-Term Sustainability Plan. The House has already heard what those commitments are, and I remind members opposite that, as much as they might try to claim this as their own, our first action on coming to government was to rewrite the LTSP and the commitments singled out by the World Heritage Committee were the commitments made by the Palaszczuk Labor team at the state election.

While welcoming the port measures and the ban on dumping of capital dredge spoil, the World Heritage Centre and IUCN and indeed many delegates specifically noted these measures were still to be translated into legislation. That is why the World Heritage Committee requires Australia and Queensland to report back next year on the steps we have taken to implement the long-term sustainability plan. We are being watched closely to see if we live up to our promises, if we will turn our words into action. Here we are—it is action time and where is the LNP? Squibbing and squirming, desperately trying to block these important reef protections. No wonder Queenslanders did not trust them to protect the reef. They were right not to trust them.

I recently had the opportunity to meet with Germany's Minister of State, Professor Dr Maria Bohmer. In her role as chair of the World Heritage Committee, she played an invaluable role in the negotiations around the Great Barrier Reef in the lead-up to the Bonn meeting. I am grateful for the leadership and passion she brought to the cause, and it was a pleasure to have her here on our side of the globe. Minister Bohmer came to Queensland late last month to see the Great Barrier Reef in all of its glory for herself. After fighting for conservation of the reef's outstanding universal values, she has now seen some of them firsthand, including the pristine white beaches and sparkling aqua blue waters of Whitehaven Beach. I was proud to update her on the progress we are making to implement the long-term sustainability plan, including the next milestone—putting our words into action on ports and dredging in the Great Barrier Reef World Heritage area.

Make no mistake: the international community is watching and Queenslanders are watching, waiting to see us deliver on our promises. I am proud to be part of a government that delivers on our promises and is serious about protecting the reef. That is demonstrated in this bill before the House. I commend the minister and I commend the bill to the House.