



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

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MINISTERIAL STATEMENT

Great Barrier Reef

 **Hon. SJ MILES** (Mount Coot-tha—ALP) (Minister for Environment and Heritage Protection and Minister for National Parks and the Great Barrier Reef) (2.23 pm): In the draft decision of the UNESCO World Heritage Committee released late Friday night, key policies of the Palaszczuk government are singled out and welcomed. These are: our goal to improve the quality of the water running into the reef by reducing run-off pollution by 80 per cent by 2025; the commitment to ban the dumping of capital dredge spoil in the whole World Heritage area; and limiting capital dredging for the development of new or expansion of existing port facilities to within the existing port limits of the four major ports.

The ALP came to office with a suite of election commitments designed to protect the Great Barrier Reef from the impact of dredging and dumping, because we accept the evidence about the damage this causes to the sensitive reef ecosystems. Capital dredging involves literally digging up the seabed. Millions of tonnes of sand, rock and clay are dug out in areas where fish, dugong and turtles feed and breed. The churn throws into the water fine sediment that can drift for over 100 kilometres, ruining the clear waters of the reef, settling over coral and seagrass beds, and blocking out the sunlight.

The answer is not to shut down activity on the reef coastline. As a maritime nation, Australian ports are our gateway to the world. The ports along the Great Barrier Reef coast are and will continue to be major import and export hubs. This is integral to the Queensland and, indeed, the Australian economy. Our plan is a sustainable one that strikes a responsible balance between preserving those gateways and the jobs that rely on them and protecting the reef and the jobs that rely on it. We will achieve this balance by banning the dumping of port related capital dredge spoil, greatly limiting the number of ports that can be built along the reef coastline and concentrating development in four major existing ports in the best locations with the best channels.

The draft WHC decision notes that our port related commitments require translation into legislation. I am pleased to report that the Sustainable Ports Bill to be introduced later today does just that. I congratulate the Minister for State Development for his forward-looking and comprehensive legislation. The introduction of this bill is a milestone in our campaign to save the Great Barrier Reef. It is a milestone the Deputy Premier and I will report on in person to the World Heritage Committee when we attend its meeting in June. I am confident it will help shore up the support of the 21 UNESCO member states to adopt the draft decision and not list the reef as 'in danger'. More importantly, though, these measures will help us ensure that we successfully reverse the decline of the reef and ensure its survival for future generations.