




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

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MINISTERIAL STATEMENT

Great Barrier Reef, UNESCO World Heritage Centre Progress Report

 **Hon. SJ MILES** (Mount Coot-tha—ALP) (Minister for Environment and Heritage Protection and Minister for National Parks and the Great Barrier Reef) (10.51 am): Today Australia's diplomats in Paris will deliver a joint progress report to UNESCO's World Heritage Centre. Members will recall that last year UNESCO did not list the Great Barrier Reef as in danger, in large part thanks to the reef protection platform this government took to the election. This progress report demonstrates to the global community just how serious the Palaszczuk government is about implementing—

Mr Seeney interjected.

Mr SPEAKER: Order! Member for Callide, you are warned under standing order 253A for your interjections. If you persist, I will take the appropriate action. I call the minister.

Dr MILES: Thank you, Mr Speaker. If the member were so concerned, he would support all elements of the long-term sustainability plan. The future of our reef and its international status are just too important. Threats to the reef must be taken seriously and only Labor is addressing them.

We have made very substantial progress. We have increased funding for water quality to record levels. We first convened the water science task force and now we have accepted and acted on its recommendations. We have greatly reduced the impacts of ports and dredging. Only yesterday we released the maintenance dredging strategy, another action in the plan, and I thank Minister Bailey, his staff and department for their efforts.

We have reviewed fisheries management and bought back net fishing licences. Unfortunately, the report is not all good news. Last summer the reef experienced its worst ever bleaching event, as did many coral reefs worldwide. While the central and southern parts of the reef have recovered well, survey reports suggest a roughly two-thirds rate of coral death in the northern sections—those that were most pristine before this event. Obviously that will cause global concern and addressing it is unavoidable, but what was avoidable was the other significant action not implemented—reducing land clearing. In this report, a joint report of the Australian and Queensland governments—

Opposition members interjected.

Mr SPEAKER: Order! Honourable members, I am trying to hear the minister.

Dr MILES: Thank you, Mr Speaker. In this report, a joint report of the Australian and Queensland governments, we reassure the global community that we understand the role land clearing plays in driving pollutants onto the reef and we will act on land clearing as soon as we can.

I am also pleased to report that last week when Mr Frydenberg and I were finalising the progress report we also reached agreement to index funding for the Great Barrier Reef Field Management Program. The FMP is award winning and critically important. In fact, the Field Management Program is leading or supporting 39 of the 139 actions within the Reef 2050 Plan. It has always been fifty-fifty

funded. The Palaszczuk government pledged our share of those funds some time ago. While the opposition did not support our calls for federal government funds, I am pleased to say that the Turnbull government has pledged to match our commitment. The World Heritage Committee will now consider our progress report. I hope that the good work of the Turnbull and Palaszczuk governments will see a positive result for our reef.