




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

Record of Proceedings, 13 October 2016

AGRICULTURE AND ENVIRONMENT COMMITTEE

Report, Motion to take Note

 **Hon. SJ MILES** (Mount Coot-tha—ALP) (Minister for Environment and Heritage Protection and Minister for National Parks and the Great Barrier Reef) (12.34 pm): I would like to thank the Agriculture and Environment Committee for their report on the QAO audit on managing water quality in Great Barrier Reef catchments. I would also like to thank them for taking the time to talk with officers of the Department of Environment and Heritage Protection to understand progress since the audit was completed and also meeting with AgForce and Canegrowers to understand their views.

Since the QAO report, we have taken a number of steps to address its recommendations. We have established the Office of the Great Barrier Reef to oversee and coordinate reef matters across agencies. We have also established a Great Barrier Reef interdepartmental committee, chaired by my department, to improve coordination and governance, which has met eight times since July last year. We have reviewed the suite of programs to improve reef water quality to ensure they are effective and efficient as recommended. We established a water science task force to provide advice on the best approach to meeting the targets and priorities for investing an additional \$90 million over five years to accelerate progress towards water quality targets. The government has agreed with all 10 of the task force's recommendations and is well underway with implementing them.

We have also improved the transparency of Queensland's existing \$35 million per year investment into reef water quality programs by publishing an annual investment plan to identify where we intend to spend that money. As part of this, we have committed to tabling a report in parliament annually on our reef water quality investments, which I am pleased to do today.

Tabled paper: Queensland Government Annual Investment Report 2015-16: Reef Water Quality Protection Plan [\[1860\]](#).

This is the first time that the suite of activities across government has been reported formally and is part of our approach to improving the accountability of government investment and ensuring that cost-effective outcomes are delivered. The next annual investment plan is being finalised and will combine the ongoing \$35 million per year spend with the first year's funding from our additional \$90 million investment, taking our total annual commitment in 2016 to more than \$56 million.

A number of QAO recommendations related to monitoring and modelling have also been delivered upon. As recommended, we are increasing our catchment monitoring to improve the validation of models, and we are being clearer about the uncertainty in those models when reporting on modelled outputs in the reef report card. I am pleased to inform the House that since the QAO report was released a bit over a year ago we have made real and lasting changes. I would like to thank the QAO for their advice and recommendations which have helped contribute to a more effective and transparent approach to our reef water quality programs.