




Speech By  
**Ann Leahy**

**MEMBER FOR WARREGO**

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## **ENVIRONMENTAL PROTECTION (GREAT BARRIER REEF PROTECTION MEASURES) AND OTHER LEGISLATION AMENDMENT BILL**

 **Ms LEAHY** (Warrego—LNP) (11.49 am), continuing: In summary, the basis for the LGAQ's position on the reef regulations bill is that it is unreasonable to propose to further regulate local government sewage treatment plants to achieve a no net decline outcome while there is insufficient evidence that local government sewage treatment plant impacts overall are significant and warrant the additional costs of increased regulation of all the sewage treatment plants in the reef catchment. Also, there is a lack of proven, cost-effective and efficient alternative solutions to expensive sewage treatment plant upgrades to meet the no net decline requirement. There is also a lack of proven, cost-effective and efficient offset options that can be used in a range of environments and climatic conditions.

With this legislation, down the track there will be a significant increase in the cost of living. As ratepayers have to pay more to upgrade those sewage treatment plants to get them up to standard, that money is going to have to come from somewhere and it will most likely come from ratepayers. Those people in that catchment area will have an increase in their rates, which will effectively increase their cost of living.

At this stage, I do not think we have seen the appropriate modelling as to what those costs and ongoing costs might be. Local governments in the reef catchment area are already investing over \$200 million per annum in actions to benefit the reef and are committed to further improvements as resources allow. The other important point raised by the LGAQ in its submission is that it believes that there is currently insufficient evidence and cost-effective and efficient alternatives to reasonably justify compelling local governments to undertake expensive upgrades to achieve a no net decline for the small contribution of dissolved inorganic nitrogen by sewage treatment plants in the reef catchment waters.

There is a consistent theme of disappointment and outrage from many stakeholders—not just local governments but landholders, the agricultural industry, canefarmers—about this legislation. It is so disappointing that this legislation is all about cheap political expediency rather than doing something that is based on science and is totally responsive to looking after a world-class asset, the Great Barrier Reef.

I have heard something similar before. I will not forget the salinity data that was collected in the Murray-Darling Basin. At the time we were told by the then premier, Peter Beattie, that the railway line to St George would rust. He was not too good on geography, because there is no railway line to St George. Ten years down the track, that salinity that he predicted through the misuse of data has not materialised. In fact, he was wrong. That is what we see when governments try to misuse data. We hear that everything is going to die, everything is going to rust, that it will not be there in 10 years time. Down the track, in 10 years time we find that it is still there and, in fact, it is probably in better health than when it started because the landowners and the people who live in that area, who are so much closer to the values of the area, work very hard to make sure that what is in their backyard is well looked after.