




Speech By
Charis Mullen

MEMBER FOR JORDAN

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INNOVATION, TOURISM DEVELOPMENT AND ENVIRONMENT COMMITTEE

Report, Motion to Take Note

 **Mrs MULLEN** (Jordan—ALP) (3.39 pm): Every member of this House should understand the importance of the Great Barrier Reef, the earth's largest coral reef system, which contributes \$6.4 billion annually to the Australian economy through tourism, recreation, commercial fishing, scientific research and reef management. Improving water quality flowing from land to the Great Barrier Reef is a critical contributor to the reef's health. The Queensland Audit Office's follow-up report has found that the relevant departments had undertaken considerable work since 2015 to implement the recommendations and to improve their strategies and programs for improving water quality in the Great Barrier Reef catchments.

Whilst the original audit had identified a fragmented program response and unclear governance arrangements, the Palaszczuk government's decision to form the Office of the Great Barrier Reef, currently within the Department of Environment and Science, has seen significant improvements. Of the five recommendations made in the report, four have been fully implemented, with one partially implemented. The follow-up report has found stronger governance, coordination, accountability and oversight by relevant departments as well as improved allocation, expenditure and accountability of public funds being directed to support this work.

The Office of the Great Barrier Reef now provides a single point of reporting on the total package of reef water quality investments, but many departments still contribute to the activities within the program and are responsible for the delivery of their investments. The Audit Office has identified further improvements to the accuracy of catchment monitoring, including projects to support even further expansion of catchment monitoring.

The report has found that the Department of Agriculture and Fisheries is still unable to adequately report on the level of change in management practice. This is because the farm management practice data is currently held by industry groups and, despite being funded by government, no information is provided to the departments, with industry groups citing privacy concerns. This was of particular concern to the committee, and we did seek additional information from the Department of Environment and Science on the status of negotiations with industry groups to access this important data. New funding agreements from June 2019 will now include a requirement for the provision of deidentified geospatial practice change data from industry to the Paddock to Reef program.

Whilst the original audit report concluded that Queensland's response lacked urgency and purpose, it is clear that all relevant departments now have a shared commitment to improving the quality of water entering the Great Barrier Reef through agricultural run-off and improving the overall health of this iconic global asset. I would like to thank the Queensland Audit Office, the committee secretariat and fellow committee members for their work on this follow-up report and, importantly, the departments that have implemented the recommendations of the original audit.