



Speech By  
**Cynthia Lui**


**MEMBER FOR COOK**

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## **INNOVATION, TOURISM DEVELOPMENT AND ENVIRONMENT COMMITTEE**

### **Report, Motion to Take Note**

 **Ms LUI** (Cook—ALP) (3.47 pm): I rise to speak on report No. 12 of the Innovation, Tourism Development and Environment Committee. I acknowledge and thank the Minister for Environment and Science, Hon. Leeanne Enoch, for her strong advocacy to protect the future of the Great Barrier Reef. I thank the committee secretary and assistant secretary. I thank my colleagues on the committee: the chair, the member for Stretton; the deputy chair, the member for Scenic Rim; and the members for Jordan, Noosa and Theodore.

Queensland's greatest treasure, the Great Barrier Reef, is the world's largest coral reef system, comprising over 2,900 individual reefs and 900 islands stretching over 2,300 kilometres in length and over an area of approximately 344,400 square kilometres. The Great Barrier Reef can be seen from outer space and is the world's biggest single structure made by living organisms. It supports a wide diversity of life and was selected as a World Heritage site in 1981.

Sadly, due to poor water quality the Great Barrier Reef is under enormous threat. There is strong scientific evidence to suggest that the poor condition of Great Barrier Reef ecosystems is due to poor water quality as a result of increased sediment and nutrient loads from reef catchments. Coral reefs and the ecosystems they sustain depend on the quality of the water within and around them. Declining marine coastal water quality, influenced by land based run-off, is recognised as one of the most significant threats to the long-term health and resilience of the Great Barrier Reef. Research shows that much of the declining water quality is associated with human activity and this is now posing a major long-term threat to the health of the reef.

Last year alone research found that, even though the Great Barrier Reef is able to recover over the last 30,000 years from natural disasters, changes in sea level and water quality have made the Great Barrier Reef extremely vulnerable in more recent times. The vast size of the Great Barrier Reef and its biodiversity shows that there is too much at stake. It is clear that without appropriate intervention measures the continuation of poor water quality will have major impacts on the natural state of the reef and its biodiversity over time. The 2017 *Scientific consensus statement: land use impacts on Great Barrier Reef water quality and ecosystem condition* confirms that poor water quality continues to be a significant issue for reef health and the main source of nutrient sediment pollution is cumulative run-off from agricultural land use, with local scale contributions from urban and industrial land users.

The declining marine and coastal water quality influenced by land based run-off is recognised as one of the most significant threats to the long-term health and resilience of the Great Barrier Reef. The immediate threat to the Great Barrier Reef is great, but the effects to the Great Barrier Reef in the future are even greater. The risks associated with uncontrolled regulations will most definitely see an increase in sedimentation and nutrients and, as such, there will be higher algal growth, build-up of pollutants in sediments and marine species, and reduced light smothered corals. The immediate risks to the Great Barrier Reef will potentially compromise reef dependent industries such as tourism, fishing, recreation, research and education.

The Palaszczuk government is committed to taking care of the environment, and putting the right measures in place will only enhance the future state of the Great Barrier Reef for our children and our children's children to enjoy. Despite significant government and industry investment, particularly in agriculture, voluntary approaches have failed to facilitate sufficient uptake of improved practices and at the present trajectory the reef water quality targets will not be met. The slow rate of voluntary adoption of improved practices should be noted despite nearly \$70 million in Queensland government investment since 2009 in industry led best practice management programs, science and on-ground programs directed at agricultural industries and over \$220 million in Australian government funding since 2008 in similar activities. It is quite clear that without further regulation the reef water quality targets are unlikely to be met. Protecting the Great Barrier Reef is one of Queensland's six priorities under Our Future State: Advancing Queensland's Priorities. I commend the report to the House.