




Speech By
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MEMBER FOR MOUNT OMMANEY

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

 **Ms PUGH** (Mount Ommaney—ALP) (11.46 am), continuing: As I was saying yesterday, the Great Barrier Reef is iconic and we need to ensure that it is protected, and that is exactly what this legislation will do. The reef contributes some \$6 billion to our economy, mainly through the tourism industry but through a variety of other industries, and 60,000 jobs rely on the reef's health. Sadly, we know that the Great Barrier Reef is facing two major threats—climate change and water quality. The Palaszczuk government is already taking steps to improve water quality through our proposed reef regulations. We know that some farmers are already doing the right thing through voluntary practices, and that is fantastic, but water quality improvements have not been happening fast enough.

The Environmental Protection Act 1994 objective is to protect Queensland's environment while allowing for development that improves the total quality of life both now and for future generations in a way that maintains and preserves ecological processes. Protecting the Great Barrier Reef is one of the Queensland government's six priorities under *Our Future State: Advancing Queensland's Priorities*. We know that the Barrier Reef is under threat. Besides climate change, poor quality water as a result of polluted land based run-off is the next biggest threat to the health of our reef. The Great Barrier Reef Water Science Taskforce recognised in 2016 that dual action on climate change and water quality improvement will be critical for the long-term health of the reef.

Poor reef water quality is a cumulative impact problem. Many small releases together across a vast area are causing the issue. The Burnett-Mary region is identified in the *Reef 2050 water quality improvement plan* as a lower priority for water quality improvement relative to other regions such as the Wet Tropics and the Burdekin. This is because of the comparatively lower impacts to marine ecosystems including seagrasses, estuaries and corals from land based run-off in this region. However, the science is clear that polluted run-off results in poor water quality and poor water quality impacts the health and resilience of aquatic ecosystems. This in turn affects the ability of aquatic organisms and marine life to thrive, and that is why the bill proposes to require the adoption of lower risk farming practices across all key reef catchments for all key commodities.

Practice adoption information suggests that many sugarcane growers in the Burnett-Mary region are not farming according to industry agreed best practice. The reef water quality report card 2017 and 2018 concluded that only 6.6 per cent of sugarcane growers have adopted those practices and the target is 90 per cent.

For the reasons that I have mentioned previously, the new regulatory requirements will be implemented in the Burnett-Mary over a longer time frame in recognition that this region is a lower priority for water improvement. Farmers in the Burnett-Mary region will have three years in which to transition to compliance with the regulated minimum practice standards established by the new legislation. These farmers then have another three years to show that they can meet the standards voluntarily. Burnett-Mary farmers will need to keep records of nutrient and pesticide application rates

from commencement. This will ensure that the agricultural sector has data in the future that can show how their practices relate to water quality monitoring results and progress towards the reef water quality targets.

We all have a role to play in protecting the Great Barrier Reef. This bill strikes that thriving balance that Minister Enoch spoke of earlier by protecting jobs in the agricultural sector and also the jobs that rely on the reef, such as tourism. Like many Queenslanders, I am incredibly proud of my state. I have also been lucky enough to visit many beautiful spots along the coast, including Cairns, Palm Cove, the mighty Townsville, Airlie Beach and more. I want to make sure that these spots are just as beautiful for the Centenary State High School students, who visited me, when they go to visit them one day as well, and for my own kids, Heath and Allegra. This legislation is forward looking. It acknowledges the importance of the Great Barrier Reef, not just to Queensland but to the entire world. I commend it to the House.