




Speech By
Hon. Mark Bailey

MEMBER FOR MILLER

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

 **Hon. MC BAILEY** (Miller—ALP) (Minister for Transport and Main Roads) (4.52 pm): I rise to support the Environmental Protection (Great Barrier Reef Protection Measures) and Other Legislation Amendment Bill 2019. My constituents care very much about the protection of the Great Barrier Reef and the protection of our environment, so, as the member for Miller, it is a great pleasure to support the bill of the Minister for Environment and Minister for Science. The Great Barrier Reef is iconic and it needs to be protected. While the reef contributes \$6 billion to our economy and 60,000 jobs rely on its health, the most important thing is its environmental integrity and the fact that it is one of the seven wonders of the modern world. We have a responsibility to do everything we can to protect it and to preserve it for future generations and for all the creatures that live within it.

Sadly, the reef is facing two major threats: climate change and water quality. The Palaszczuk Labor 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 we sincerely thank them for their efforts, but water quality improvements have not been made fast enough. Protecting the Great Barrier Reef is one of the Palaszczuk Labor government's main priorities.

I am proud to be part of a progressive and achieving government that is acting to save the Great Barrier Reef. The Great Barrier Reef is certainly under threat, despite the words of LNP members opposite, particularly the member for Callide, who ignore the facts so readily. The devastating impacts of climate change aside, we know that poor water quality as a result of polluted land based run-off is the next biggest threat to the health of the reef and it is one that any responsible government needs to tackle.

In 2016 the Great Barrier Reef Water Science Task Force recognised that dual action on climate change and water quality improvement will be critical for the long-term health of the reef. The Great Barrier Reef Marine Park Authority's outlook report for 2019 makes that clear. Climate change is escalating and it is the most significant threat to the outlook of the reef. It is certainly impacting the reef now. In 2016 and 2017, two consecutive years of extreme sea surface temperatures, mostly due to climate change, caused mass coral bleaching. The extent and severity of the coral bleaching was unprecedented, impacting two-thirds of the Great Barrier Reef and causing large numbers of coral deaths. Research published in April this year in the journal *Nature* found that coral reproduction has fallen 89 per cent as a result of the bleaching—I repeat, 89 per cent.

While coral cover fluctuates, the overall trend is that it has been declining across the reef since monitoring started in the mid-1980s. Some corals in northern and central regions of the reef survived the bleaching event and that provides some hope for the future. However, extreme weather events have also contributed to the current situation where coral cover is now in decline for all reef regions—northern, central and southern. This was confirmed recently by the Australian Institute of Marine Science in its *Annual summary report on coral reef condition for 2017/18*.

Recently, the International Panel on Climate Change released a special report warning that even under a 1.5 degrees warming scenario reefs around the world will continue to decline. The report states that countries' current commitments under the Paris agreement are not sufficient for limiting warming to 1.5 degrees Celsius relative to average annual temperatures between 1850 and 1900 and cannot be sufficient if action is not ramped up until after 2030.

I strongly encourage the Queensland LNP to listen to the science. Science is fundamental to good policy. This science supports the work of both the Palaszczuk Labor state government and the current federal government. If the Queensland LNP are against this science, they are also against the science that even their federal colleagues acknowledge and that underpins the joint *Reef 2050 water quality improvement plan*.

In contrast, the Palaszczuk Labor government understands the fundamental importance of science and is taking a lead in addressing climate change. We have bold targets to achieve that across many policy areas. I note our Powering Queensland Plan, which has a 50 per cent renewable energy target by 2030 and 335 large-scale renewable energy projects that have been funded with billions of dollars worth of investments in solar, wind and hydro projects, many of which have already been built. Currently between Kingaroy and Dalby, one of the largest wind farms in Australia is under construction at Coopers Gap. We are achieving our net zero emissions by 2050 target. We are achieving emissions reductions of at least 30 per cent below 2005 levels by 2030. Also, we should transition not just in terms of clean energy generation but also in our transport sector. We have shown leadership on the electric vehicle superhighway. It is the largest electric vehicle superhighway in one state in the world. We have been nation leading in that regard and we will continue to do so.


The LNP may want to play farmers off against other industries that rely on a healthy reef, but we are pursuing a solution that will work for both industries. We need action on both a global and a local scale to reduce greenhouse gas emissions and ensure the future of the Great Barrier Reef. In the meantime, it is more important than ever that other threats to the reef are reduced, particularly in the short term, including by improving reef water quality. Other research that substantiates the relationship between water quality and the ability to recover from coral bleaching was recently published in the journal *Nature: Ecology and Evolution*. Science shows that water quality is essential to boosting the resilience of the reef to be able to better withstand the impacts of climate change.

We ignore science at our peril. In modern life, most things that we rely on are dependent upon science. If we think of changes over the past 100 years in terms of vehicles, phones, trains, television, medicine, planes, the radios we listen to, the worldwide web, how we manufacture goods and move things across our oceans, and energy generation, they are all based on science. However, so many people are willing to ignore the science on one particular sectional area. I say to the people who pose those questions around and oppose science that if you have this one wrong you have a pretty big one wrong. In the science community, the overwhelming belief is very clear and it is that we need action. The clear thing is—

Opposition members interjected.

Mr BAILEY: I can hear the deniers of climate action yelling across the chamber. I can hear their interjections. The longer the partisan divide on climate change continues the more inaction and damage will result. I say to those people that they should think about that.

Hopefully everyone in this chamber will live long lives and see a lot of change and future generations come along. We have to be very clear on what our role is on this fundamentally important issue. We have to end this partisan divide. Future generations depend on it. I say that from the heart and sincerely to everybody in this chamber.

 **Hon. MC BAILEY** (Miller—ALP) (Minister for Transport and Main Roads) (6.08 pm), continuing: When it comes to action on climate change and science, we have to be very clear that human evolution is based on knowledge and science. We put our heads in the sand and ignore it at own peril. It is sad to see this still being a partisan issue when there is so much scientific consensus around it.

This bill is another step forward when it comes to protecting the Great Barrier Reef. It should be seen in partnership with the Palaszczuk Labor government's reforms in a whole lot of other areas, particularly our renewable energy target of 50 per cent by 2030, which has seen billions in investment in clean energy in this state, and our electric vehicle superhighway leading the way in this nation in transforming the transport sector to cleaner energy forms.

I congratulate the Minister for Environment and Science on her leadership on this. She is very clear. She is very reformist. She is a trustworthy minister who believes in science, who is a steady hand—getting the reforms done as part of a government that is progressive and that understands that issue very well and is acting on it, as any responsible government should.