



Speech By  
**Michael Healy**

**MEMBER FOR CAIRNS**


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## **ENVIRONMENTAL PROTECTION (GREAT BARRIER REEF PROTECTION MEASURES) AND OTHER LEGISLATION AMENDMENT ACT, PROCLAMATION**

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

#### **Disallowance of Statutory Instruments (Cognate Debate)**

 **Mr HEALY** (Cairns—ALP) (6.33 pm): I begin by acknowledging the outstanding contribution of the member for South Brisbane. The detail, accuracy and the delivery were fantastic, particularly when we talk about the history of the impact this has had at the federal level. It is very important. I want to make a couple of comments. Hopefully I will be able to get through this and not stimulate another discussion from the member for Broadwater about how things were. When he was talking to those tourism operators in Cairns, did he tell them that he was moving legislation to reduce protections on the Great Barrier Reef? I will address that a little later.

We on this side of the chamber accept the science but, more importantly, we acknowledge the importance of accepting that science. When it is portrayed as 'us against them', you would have to be dull and ignorant to push such an initiative. That is not what we are here about today. We are talking about what is vitally important, not just for industries but obviously in terms of the environmental perspective. While climate change is the most significant long-term threat to the Great Barrier Reef, improving water quality is an immediate step to building its resilience. This is what the science tells us. We are reacting to the science.

As a result, in November 2019 the Palaszczuk Labor government passed landmark legislation to protect the Great Barrier Reef and, in doing so, reflected its solid intention to protect not just the Great Barrier Reef but also our vitally important marine tourism industry. This legislation was welcomed not only throughout Queensland and Australia but also around the world. As the member for South Brisbane said, this was absolutely fundamental in ensuring that the reef was not placed on the endangered list. That would have had a detrimental impact on the jobs in our industry.

The Great Barrier Reef protection legislation sets pollution limits for each reef catchment to improve water quality. It establishes minimum agricultural practice standards, targeting nutrient and sediment pollutant from cane, bananas, grain and grazing. It also establishes a framework for recognising farmers operating at that industry best practice. This is a partnership. We have heard from the other side—and, although rarely, I do agree—that farmers appreciate and get the importance of the ecosystem. That is why we are working with farmers. That is why farmers have contributed and why many do contribute. These are the undisputed facts.

We could limit potential sources of pollution from new cropping and industrial development. We do this working with the agriculture industry, moving forward. The Queensland government is providing over \$10 million in farming and reef catchment rebate schemes, administered by the Queensland Rural and Industry Development Authority. The reef is an iconic natural wonder that needs to be preserved not just for us and for jobs but also for future generations.

As we heard, the Great Barrier Reef supports over 60,000 Queensland jobs and contributes over \$6 billion to the Australian economy. You only need to visit my city of Cairns to see the hundreds of millions of dollars invested in tourism and reef products. You can also see the significant investment in terms of generations of people having jobs in the Great Barrier Reef and hundreds of businesses it supports. It is absolutely significant. The government's plan to unite and recover for Queensland jobs includes protecting the reef as an important asset. The science is clear: climate change is having a negative impact. Bleaching events and other impacts on poor water quality continue to harm the reef. With improved water quality, the reef has a much better chance of recovering from recent climate change and extreme weather events. The reef regulations are the strongest protections introduced by the Queensland government, protecting not just jobs but also the economy and, more importantly, the environment.

The Palaszczuk government is investing a record \$330 million in the reef over five years to boost joint management and to improve water quality to make the reef more resilient. On Friday, 30 August 2019 the reef outlook and Reef Water Quality Report Card were released. This is agreed science between the state and federal governments. The science says that we need to accelerate our efforts and work together effectively to secure a bright future. This is absolutely fundamental. The LNP's inability to comprehend the reliable science highlights the fact that it cannot be trusted with the responsibility of protecting the Great Barrier Reef, not just in terms of the amazing natural asset that it is but also in terms of the tens of thousands of jobs and the hundreds of businesses it supports.