




Speech By
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MEMBER FOR CALLIDE

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

 **Mr BOYCE** (Callide—LNP) (5.30 pm): I rise to make a contribution to and support the Environmental and Other Legislation (Reversal of Great Barrier Reef Protection Measures) Amendment Bill 2021. Before I begin, I declare I am a landholder. These holdings are on the eastern fall of the Great Dividing Range, situated in the Fitzroy River catchment area. The details of my land holdings can be found on my statement of interests.

The original bill passed by the Labor government was to ‘amend the Environmental Protection Act 1994 to strengthen the Great Barrier Reef protection measures to improve the quality of water entering the Great Barrier Reef’. It was based on the 2017 Scientific Consensus Statement, which places the blame for poor water quality squarely on the shoulders of agriculture in Queensland. Page 11 of the 2017 Scientific Consensus Statement states—

Sugarcane areas are the largest contributors of dissolved inorganic nitrogen and pesticides, while grazing contributes the largest proportion of sediment and particulate nutrients to the Great Barrier Reef ...

Expansion of agriculture in the Great Barrier Reef catchments will increase pollutant loads delivered to the Great Barrier Reef. The recommendation is to continue to prioritise agricultural sources of pollutants in the Great Barrier Reef catchments—in short, blame the farmers.

Acknowledgements at the back of this paper recognised James Cook University TropWATER with contributions from the Australian Institute of Marine Science; the University of Queensland, Central Queensland University and Griffith University; and the Queensland departments of agriculture and fisheries, environment and heritage protection, natural resources and mines, and science, information technology and innovation—in short, the government.

There is a long list of co-authors. They are all funded by the departments of environment and heritage and energy—again, in short, the government. Nowhere is there any recognition of producer bodies or agricultural people who are affected. I ask: were they even consulted? It appears to me that the government has commissioned a paper with a predetermined outcome.

Dr Hardisty of the Australian Institute of Marine Science was questioned in the federal Senate inquiry by Senator McDonald about a letter written by his department that said, ‘Coral calcification rates are not significantly impacted by agricultural activities.’ Dr Hardisty answered—

... there were questions about whether or not climate change was something that we were blaming on farming activities ... ‘No, we’ve never said that those things are connected.’

Again, when questioned by Senator Roberts on the same subject of coral growth rates, Dr Hardisty answered—

... coral growth rates ... which you’re talking about, we have never connected with anything to do with farm run-off.

A few minutes later Dr Hardisty said—

... if you want to get into growth rates of *Porites*, that’s a whole other story. As we’ve said, it’s not connected to farm practices—we don’t believe it is.

Here is proof of the staggering inaccuracies and conflicting statements that have come from the federal Senate inquiry in relation to the 2017 Scientific Consensus Statement on which reef legislation is based and what is actually happening on the reef.

I believe the government has deliberately demonised agriculture for political gain to appease the environmental left. Reef legislation is based on manipulated, inaccurate science and modelling that cannot be replicated.

The Queensland government has spent \$330 million on misleading campaigns denigrating the \$19 billion agriculture industry that puts fresh food and fibre on the plates of Australians. The damage caused to the image of the Great Barrier Reef as being denigrated and the subsequent cost to the \$6 billion tourist industry has not been considered with the implementation of reef legislation.

International spokespeople with no idea have now assisted the Chinese-led UNESCO push to have our great national asset deemed as 'in danger'. The Queensland government has created this problem and only the reversal of this damaging legislation can solve it.

Rising sea levels is frequently mentioned as likely to endanger the Great Barrier Reef. I have heard it said by many people on that side of the House. In a paper written by Dr Bill Johnston analysing data gathered by the sea level tide gauge at Cooktown in Far North Queensland, he concluded as follows—

The Great Barrier Reef Marine Park Authority (GBRMPA) claims that due to global warming, sea level is increasing and that the fastest rate of sea level rise is in the northern sector of the Reef. Further, the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC) predicts sea level will rise by around 26 to 29 centimetres over the next 9 years ...

Dr Johnston said—

Satellite data depended upon by IPCC do not stack up with tide gauge data or aerial photographs taken between 1969 and 1994 compared with high-definition Google Earth Pro Satellite imagery of the same sandy beach.

Satellite aerial photographs of Cherry Tree Bay at Cooktown taken in 1969 overlaid on satellite imagery taken in 2018 show no encroachment or change in exposure due to rising sea levels over the last 49 years. Satellite data upon which speculation relating to sea level rise depends is preloaded with trend and should not be used for critical studies, for spreading alarm or for forming government policy. It is a ridiculous notion that sea levels will increase by almost 300 millimetres during the next nine years.

I would like to table that report for the benefit of the House. Furthermore, I table a paper of monthly sea level graphs at Cairns issued by the Bureau of Meteorology from 1958 to 2022 which indicate no discernible sea level rise.

Tabled paper: Bureau of Meteorology report, dated 26 October 2021, titled 'Trends in sea level at Cooktown, Great Barrier Reef: Mean sea level change at Cooktown, Great Barrier Reef, Queensland' and graph titled 'Monthly sea level at Cairns, QLD' [288](#).

The Great Barrier Reef is a living treasure and every effort should be made to ensure its health and longevity. There is an abundance of evidence the Great Barrier Reef is in and enjoys good health. Since reliable records began, the amount of coral on the reef and coral growth rate has not declined despite the fearmongering and alarmism promoted by environmental groups and the Labor government. The Labor government has deliberately targeted agriculture with its misguided and badly thought out reef legislation. The Labor government has made no attempt at recognising the vast changes and huge leaps forward the agricultural sector has made in its management and farming practices over recent years.

In contrast, the federal Morrison government has committed moneys in the order of a billion dollars to ensure the reef's health and prosperity. It has not apportioned blame to the agricultural sector, rather it is helping it deal with its challenges and will do so into the future.

Another point that I would like to raise concerns the renewable energy industry. If we are to see the transition to alternative energy sources and the construction of wind farms and solar farms, this will require vast tracts of land in the reef catchment areas. The land will have to be cleared and developed and access roads and power connections built. Why then does the renewable energy sector industry not have to comply with the same regulation as the agricultural industry? This is just one example of the inequities of this misguided reef legislation.

To close, I am here to defend the agricultural sector and to try to put some sense to this argument. I support the KAP bill.