




Speech By
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ADJOURNMENT

Great Barrier Reef

 **Mr O'CONNOR** (Bonney—LNP) (6.40 pm): With UNESCO scientists on a monitoring trip to our state over the last week, tonight I want to talk about government actions to protect our precious Great Barrier Reef. It is our most significant natural asset—a mosaic of ecologies the size of Europe. With climate change causing more frequent and severe bleaching events from rising temperatures, the risk to it is real. We must do all we can to protect it. There is no time to waste on blame games. Blaming others is not going to convince UNESCO to not downgrade it, nor is taking a year to reannounce old commitments as the minister did last week. All we have seen from the state government is spin. It asks for a matching of funds that it has not even spent. It ignores the fact the federal government is spending three times as much as it is on the reef. It talks big but delivers little.

Queensland trails the nation on emissions reduction, in our recycling rates, and in our protected areas estate. On water quality, to help farmers meet best practice standards there has been very little investment. I visited the Burdekin last week and heard that in that region alone there are around 530 sugarcane growers but just one agronomist funded by Canegrowers—only a single one of these vital experts to support over 500 farms. How does that help growers to put in place best practice? We are at real risk of having the reef downgraded by UNESCO and if this happens it will be a devastating blow for Queensland. It will impact tourism and the jobs in that sector, but most importantly it calls into question the health of our reef for future generations. If it is downgraded I am not going to put all of the blame at the state government's feet and, likewise, for it to put it all on the federal government would be equally wrong. The state and federal governments share responsibility for the reef and both levels of government need to pull out all stops to protect it. Playing the blame game does not help do that. Making announcements, especially recycled ones, also does not. We need outcomes. We need to start meeting targets, to make progress on reducing our impact.

Finally, once again I raise the Scientific Consensus Statement. This important document is put together every five years, with a new one due this year. I urge the minister to make this process as open as possible and to do more to promote it. Transparency on how this is put together and explaining how it is compiled and the research to people, particularly regional Queenslanders—even doing things like pop-up stalls and public meetings—is really important. We need better communication of the science so that all Queenslanders can understand this statement, what it means and how it was put together. That will greatly help with action to protect the Great Barrier Reef.