



Speech By  
**Hon. Meaghan Scanlon**

**MEMBER FOR GAVEN**

---

Record of Proceedings, 11 May 2023

## **MINISTERIAL STATEMENTS**

### **Great Barrier Reef, Protection**

 **Hon. MAJ SCANLON** (Gaven—ALP) (Minister for the Environment and the Great Barrier Reef and Minister for Science and Youth Affairs) (10.07 am): Ambitious, rapid and sustained: these are the words UNSECO's World Heritage Centre 2022 monitoring report used to describe the action needed to protect one of Queensland's greatest natural assets, the Great Barrier Reef, and that is exactly what we are doing, because the reef is not just the world's largest coral reef system; it is a sea country for First Nations Australians—more than 70 traditional owner groups—whose connections to the marine environment date back more than 60,000 years. Here in Cairns it is the cornerstone of a \$1.5 billion tourism economy, supporting thousands of jobs and more than five million international visitor nights before COVID hit.

We have taken ambitious action on climate change with an Energy and Jobs Plan that will generate cleaner, cheaper energy right at the reef's doorstep. We have committed \$270 million to continue our Queensland Reef Water Quality Program to address water pollution, taking our total spend since 2015 to over \$1 billion. We are scaling up land restoration, supporting farmers to improve run-off, banning more single-use plastics and protecting more threatened species habitat, both on land and at sea.

Today I am announcing that the government has purchased the leases for two key islands within the Great Barrier Reef—St Bees Island, 35 kilometres north-east of Mackay, and Long Island Broad Sound in the southern Great Barrier Reef Marine Park. The purchase of the Long Island Broad Sound rolling term lease will add more than 3,500 hectares of the island's unique natural habitat and a known rookery for the vulnerable flatback turtle to Queensland's protected area. Combined with the recent acquisition of Wild Duck Island, it will significantly add to the conservation of critical rookeries for flatback turtles. The St Bees Island lease includes 4.2 hectares of land that fronts onto Homestead Bay and consolidates the South Cumberland Islands National Park and the Great Barrier Reef Marine Park.

The purchase of these leases means that the unique and critical ecosystems of the Great Barrier Reef will be protected into the future and the entirety of the St Bees Island and Long Island Broad Sound will become national parks and flatback turtles will be able to lay their clutches on those pristine isolated beaches.

These new acquisitions and policies complement our strong tree clearing laws we introduced in 2018, as well as reef regulations we introduced to address land-based sources of water pollution into the reef—both measures those opposite opposed. It all goes together to protect the reef for biodiversity, for the economy and for future generations.