

**Question on Notice  
No. 1336  
Asked on 31 October 2006**

QUESTION:

MRS SULLIVAN asked the Minister for Environment and Multiculturalism (Ms Nelson-Carr)—

With reference to a recent report which highlighted the state of the waterways in the South East—

Will she outline what the Government is doing to improve the health of our waterways?

ANSWER:

I thank the Member for Pumicestone for her question. The Member is referring to the Ecosystem Health Report Card 2006, which I joined Brisbane Mayor Campbell Newman, scientists and environmentalists to launch in Brisbane on 18 October 2006. The report is one of the most comprehensive processes of its kind in the world and has generated critical acclaim from around Australia and overseas.

The partners of Healthy Waterways include the EPA and other State Government departments, local councils in South East Queensland and several research institutions and industry groups.

The Report Card is the culmination of 12 months of monitoring at freshwater, estuarine and marine sites from Noosa to the Gold Coast and west to Toowoomba.

This year's results reflect the fact that the worst drought in Queensland history has taken its toll on the quality of freshwater waterways. This is consistent with a longer-term trend of deterioration of ecosystem health predicted by recent scientific modelling in all of the major estuaries in the region.

Overall, the water quality of Moreton Bay has remained similar to last year which is a relatively good result given the increased pressure put on our waterways through growing populations and waterway activity.

The results of the report are concerning but I am pleased to say that work is being done by all sectors to improve the health of our waterways. The Beattie government has already committed to a number of activities to improve water quality in Moreton Bay and its waterways. These include funding the \$1.7 billion Western Corridor Recycled Water Scheme to provide recycled water for industry. This will allow big water users, such as power stations, to avoid the use of precious drinking water, as well as reduce the flow of nutrients into Moreton Bay.

Foremost is the South East Queensland Regional Plan, which provides a sustainable growth management strategy for South East Queensland to the

year 2026. The Regional Plan stresses the importance of protecting the environmental values of South East Queensland waterways. The Beattie government put these community-agreed values into legislation in May this year to guide management of the water quality of these waterways.

Government commitments to address water quality are also contained in the South East Queensland Regional Water Quality Management Strategy 2001 and the South East Queensland Regional Natural Resource Management Plan.

The EPA and the Office of the Coordinator-General are jointly leading State input into preparing the South East Queensland Healthy Waterways Strategy to address water quality to 2011, based on the results of scientific modelling of the projected impacts of population and industrial growth to 2026.

State and Local Governments have already invested just over \$600 million in water treatment programs including upgrades to sewage treatment plants – and we are now seeing the benefits in Bramble Bay.

The new phase of the Healthy Waterways Strategy will also identify actions to promote the widespread adoption of water sensitive urban design in South East Queensland, aiming to reduce pollutants, as well as save water from existing and future urban development.

The Government is also working to reduce the impacts of rural loads of sediments and nutrients through supporting the South East Queensland Catchments Natural Resource Management Group, who work closely with Local Government, urban and rural industries, community, landcare groups, landowners and Traditional Owners to develop and implement on-ground projects. The Department of Natural Resources and Water and the Department of Primary Industries and Fisheries are working with rural industries to develop best management practices for farm activities.

The science says we will need to continue investing in the environment and that is exactly what we are doing.

Our challenge as a community is to continue investing in the actions required to secure the future of our waterways and catchments.