

QUESTION ON NOTICE

No. 1929

asked on Thursday, 15 November 2007

MS JARRATT ASKED THE MINISTER FOR NATURAL RESOURCES AND WATER AND MINISTER ASSISTING THE PREMIER IN NORTH QUEENSLAND (MR WALLACE)—

QUESTION:

How is the government working to minimise the risk of fertilizer run-off into coastal water catchments, including the Great Barrier Reef?

ANSWER:

The Reef Water Quality Protection Plan (the Reef Plan) was signed in 2003 by the Queensland and Australian Governments, aiming to reverse the declining quality of water entering the Reef by 2013.

My Department of Natural Resources and Water leads or contributes to approximately 85% of the 65 Reef Plan actions. The Reef Plan targets diffuse sources of water pollution from farming, mainly pesticides, sediment and nutrients from fertiliser, and sediment run-off. Its key strategy is to improve land management practices by farmers and graziers.

Other key stakeholders involved in nutrient and fertiliser management are community based regional natural resource management bodies (which are jointly funded by the Queensland and Australian Governments), local government and industry groups. The Queensland Government is working closely with regional natural resource management bodies in the development and implementation of catchment-scale management targets to reduce the impact of fertiliser run-off on water quality entering the Great Barrier Reef lagoon.

Other achievements include the identification of nutrient management zones within which effort should be focussed to minimise the impact of nutrients on the Reef.

My Department is also building a user-friendly computer-based tool called 'SafeGauge' to help farmers balance productivity against the risk of pesticide and fertiliser run-off.