

QUESTION ON NOTICE

No. 502

asked on Tuesday, 23 March 2010

MR WETTENHALL ASKED THE MINISTER FOR CLIMATE CHANGE AND SUSTAINABILITY (MS JONES)—

QUESTION:

Will the Minister advise what water quality monitoring is undertaken in the Barron River and other waterways in the Great Barrier Reef catchments and in the Great Barrier Reef Lagoon itself?

ANSWER:

The Department of Environment and Resource Management (DERM) undertakes a variety of monitoring activities in the waterways in the Great Barrier Reef (GBR) catchments.

The GBR Catchment Loads Monitoring Program is one of the key monitoring activities being conducted as part of the Reef Plan Monitoring and Evaluation Strategy to determine the effectiveness of the Reef Water Quality Protection Plan 2009. This plan aims to improve the quality of water entering the reef lagoon by 2013. The Paddock to Reef Integrated Monitoring, Modelling and Reporting Program is being coordinated by the Department of the Premier and Cabinet.

Through the Loads Monitoring Program, DERM collects a variety of data at 24 sites across priority GBR catchments, including a site on the Barron River. The locations of these sites were determined through a rigorous process. Data on sediment, nutrients, herbicides and pesticides are being collected. The data from this program will be used to underpin models which will be used to report on sediment loads, nutrients, pesticides and herbicides discharging from the GBR catchments. DERM scientists are working with the eWater Cooperative Research Centre, to produce these models.

Another monitoring program undertaken by DERM is the Statewide Surface Water Ambient Network. There are currently 129 water quality sites monitored across the Great Barrier Reef Catchment, including 8 in the Barron Catchment. Data is collected on sediment, nutrients and other general water quality indicators.

Additional monitoring is also conducted in the Fitzroy catchment where water quality data and some aquatic ecosystem health data are collected across a number of sites within the catchment.

DERM also monitors water quality in the major estuaries of the Great Barrier Reef Catchment, including the Fitzroy and Burnett Estuaries. Data collected in these estuaries includes water quality data and some biological variables such as algal biomass and dissolved oxygen concentrations.

The Reef Plan Monitoring and Evaluation Strategy includes a component focussed on monitoring the water quality and aquatic ecosystem health of the Great Barrier Reef lagoon. This program is being managed by the Great Barrier Reef Marine Park Authority.