

## Question on Notice

No. 447

Asked on Tuesday, 19 May 2020

**MR S ANDREW** ASKED THE MINISTER FOR ENVIRONMENT AND THE GREAT BARRIER REEF, MINISTER FOR SCIENCE AND MINISTER FOR THE ARTS (HON L ENOCH)—

QUESTION:

With reference to Covid 19 having had and continuing to have profound impact on the State of Queensland's Economy—

Will the Minister rescind parts of the vegetation management laws to allow clearing of regrowth outside of the 15 year period and recall money from the Reef 2050 Water Quality Improvement plan for redirection to cane farmers, to help bolster valuable environmentally conscious fallow crops to allow farmers and graziers to become more viable to help Queensland recover from COVID-19?

ANSWER:

I thank the Honourable Member for the question.

Responsibility for the vegetation management laws falls within the portfolio of the Minister for Natural Resources, Mines and Energy. I refer the Member to the relevant Minister.

The Great Barrier Reef supports over 60,000 jobs and injects more than \$6 billion of income annually into the Australian economy. It is essential that we continue to take action to protect the Reef and the thousands of jobs that depend on it, particularly as Reef tourism and related local businesses recover from the impacts of the COVID-19 pandemic.

The Reef 2050 Water Quality Improvement Plan is a joint Queensland and Australian government initiative guiding how industry, government and the community will work together to improve Reef water quality and the health of the Great Barrier Reef. Under this Plan, the Queensland and Australian governments continue to invest in programs that support farmers to adopt industry-accepted improved practices that reduce the risk of off-farm water pollution.

Since 2012, the Queensland Government has invested more than \$110 million to help farmers to improve farming practices and consequently, water quality in the Great Barrier Reef. On-farm trials have shown that these improved practices at least maintain or improve productivity and profitability for sugarcane farmers, while also improving water quality.

In direct response to the COVID-19 health and economic emergency, the government delayed the commencement of the regulatory requirements for new or expanded cropping development under the Reef protection regulations until 1 June 2021. This was done to ensure the agricultural community has enough time to prepare for the changes in light of the COVID-19 pandemic.