

Question on Notice

No. 681

Asked on Tuesday, 14 July 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 the Commonwealth Environment Protection and Biodiversity Conservation Act (EPBC Act) which states governments who engage in actions that impact on areas of national environmental significance, such as the Great Barrier Reef, are required to obtain approval from the Commonwealth Minister for the Environment first—

Will the Minister confirm that she or her office consulted with the Commonwealth Environment Minister during the drafting of the Environmental Protection (Great Barrier Reef Protection Measures) and Other Legislation Amendment Act 2019 and whether the Commonwealth Government Environment Minister gave approval for the new laws as required under the EPBC Act?

ANSWER:

I thank the Honourable Member for the question.

The Commonwealth *Environment Protection and Biodiversity Conservation Act 1999* does not require that the Commonwealth Minister for the Environment give approval to the Queensland Parliament to enact the *Environmental Protection (Great Barrier Reef Protection Measures) and Other Legislation Amendment Act 2019*.

The Commonwealth and Queensland governments have a long and continuous history of collaboration and joint management of the Great Barrier Reef, commencing with the first Intergovernmental Agreement (the Emerald Agreement) in 1979. The joint Reef 2050 Long-Term Sustainability Plan and Reef 2050 Water Quality Improvement Plan set out actions to manage the Reef and the threats to it.

Under the Water Quality Improvement Plan, the Commonwealth and Queensland governments have agreed to an action to:

“Implement minimum practice standards for agricultural industries, which can be met either voluntarily, e.g. through industry-led best management practice (BMP) programs, or as a result of regulation.”

These plans are underpinned by scientific evidence that is endorsed by both governments, including the Great Barrier Reef Marine Park Authority’s Great Barrier Reef Outlook Report 2019 and the 2017 Scientific Consensus Statement: Land Use Impacts on Great Barrier Reef Water Quality and Ecosystem Condition. Both of these documents confirm that poor water quality continues to be a major threat to the Great Barrier Reef.