

## **Question on Notice**

**No. 836**

**Asked on Thursday, 17 June 2021**

**MRS D FRECKLINGTON** ASKED THE MINISTER FOR THE ENVIRONMENT AND THE GREAT BARRIER REEF AND MINISTER FOR SCIENCE AND YOUTH AFFAIRS (HON M SCANLON)—

### **QUESTION:**

With reference to the Reef Regulations and the commencement on 1 June 2021 of the new or expanding cropping and horticulture standard in the Burnett Mary region and given the lack of water and paddock monitoring being undertaken in the southern section of the catchment—

Will the Minister outline (a) why, in the South Burnett area, there are no (i) water quality monitoring or (ii) paddock monitoring programs and (b) advise what baseline data is available to determine whether the implementation of the cropping and horticulture standard in the South Burnett is of value to the improvement of water quality for the Great Barrier Reef?

### **ANSWER:**

I thank the Member for the question.

The Great Barrier Reef Catchment Loads Monitoring Program is a long-term, large-scale water quality monitoring program conducted along the east coast of Queensland. The Program monitors approximately 92 per cent of total suspended solids load, and 88 per cent of dissolved inorganic nitrogen loads to the Great Barrier Reef. The focus of the Program is to calculate end of catchment loads of key pollutants of concern to the Great Barrier Reef.

The Burnett River has been part of the Catchment Loads Monitoring Program since 2009. There are three monitoring sites in the Burnett River at Mount Lawless, Ben Anderson Barrage and Quay Street Bridge. The water quality results at these sites accumulate all water quality impacts from catchment activities upstream, including the South Burnett. The monitoring shows the Burnett River can discharge over 3.5 million tonnes of fine sediment a year following flood conditions.

Catchment modelling, validated against this monitoring, assesses increases in pollutant loads above natural levels. Data for the Burnett catchment shows a near four-fold increase in fine sediment loads and a two-fold increase in particulate nutrients compared to pre-development conditions.

The new permit requirements for new or expanding commercial cropping and horticulture in the Great Barrier Reef catchment enable agriculture to expand while not worsening Reef water quality.