

Question on Notice

No. 850

Asked on Thursday, 17 June 2021

MR C BOYCE 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 new reef discharge standards for industrial activities commencing 1 June 2021, for industrial activities such as mining, quarrying, sewage treatment and aquaculture, and the exemption to the standards for diffuse runoff such as stormwater—

Will the Minister advise why agriculture is not included in this exemption?

ANSWER:

I thank the Member for the question.

From 1 June 2021, new or expanding industrial activities within Great Barrier Reef catchments are required to meet new discharge standards for fine sediment and nutrients.

These standards are part of the Queensland Government's Reef protection regulations and are designed to ensure that industrial activities such as mining, quarrying, sewage treatment and aquaculture are doing their part to protect the water quality of the Great Barrier Reef. There are separate requirements in place for the agricultural industry.

The new discharge standards for industrial activities apply to 'point sources', or wastewater that comes out of a pipe. The new standards are not intended to apply to diffuse runoff such as stormwater. Management of stormwater is already regulated in these industries and forms part of the conditions of an environmental authority. Accordingly, diffuse stormwater containing sediment is not exempt but regulated through a different mechanism.

Similarly, farm run-off is also regulated through a different mechanism. To improve water quality from agricultural run-off, the Reef protection regulations require producers to comply with minimum practice agricultural standards for key agricultural industries, and to plan, design and maintain new or expanding cropping or horticulture areas to minimise the loss of sediment and nutrients.