

2014-15 Budget Estimates

Report No. 42

Agriculture, Resources and Environment

Committee

August 2014

AGRICULTURE, RESOURCES AND ENVIRONMENT COMMITTEE

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Chair's Foreword

This report presents a summary of the committee's examination of the budget estimates for the 2014-15 financial year contained in the Appropriation Bill 2014 for portfolios within the committee's areas of responsibility, namely: Environment and Heritage Protection; Natural Resources and Mines; and Agriculture, Fisheries and Forestry.

The committee recommends that the proposed expenditure be agreed to by the Legislative Assembly without amendment.

On behalf of the committee, I wish to thank ministers and departmental officers for their cooperation in providing information during our examination of the budget estimates.

I would also like to thank the members of the committee and other members who participated in the committee's hearings for their valuable contribution.



Ian Rickuss MP

Chair

August 2014

1. Introduction

1.1 *Role of the Committee*

The Agriculture, Resources and Environment Committee is a portfolio committee of the Queensland Parliament required under section 88 of the *Parliament of Queensland Act 2001* and established under the Standing Rules and Orders.

The committee's areas of responsibility are:

- Agriculture, Fisheries and Forestry
- Environment and Heritage Protection, and
- Natural Resources and Mines.¹

On 6 June 2014, the estimates for these portfolios contained in the Appropriation Bill 2013 were referred to the committee for investigation and report.²

The committee conducted public hearings on 15 and 17 July 2014 and took evidence about the proposed expenditure from: the Minister for Natural Resources and Mines; the Minister for Agriculture, Fisheries and Forestry; the Minister for the Environment and Heritage Protection; and other witnesses. The transcripts of the committee's hearing can be accessed at: <http://www.parliament.qld.gov.au/work-of-committees/committees/AREC/inquiries/current-inquiries/Estimates2014-15>

1.2 *Aim of this report*

This report summarises the estimates referred to the committee and highlights issues the committee examined.

The committee considered the estimates referred to it by using information contained in:

- budget papers
- answers to pre-hearing questions on notice, and
- evidence taken at the hearings.

Prior to the public hearings, the committee provided ministers with questions on notice in relation to the estimates. The answers to these questions, documents tabled during the hearings, answers provided by ministers after the hearings, and the minutes of the committee's private meetings are included in a volume of additional information tabled with this report.

1.3 *Other Members' participation*

Ms Anastacia Palaszczuk MP, Leader of the Opposition and Member for Inala had sought, and was granted, leave to participate in the committee's hearings, though did not participate.

The Leader of the Opposition also appointed Mrs Desley Scott MP, Member for Woodridge, and Mrs Yvette D'Ath MP, Member for Redcliffe to attend sections of the committee's hearings in the absence of Ms Jackie Trad MP, Member for South Brisbane. Mrs Scott attended the hearing for all sessions on Tuesday 15 July. Ms D'Ath attended the hearings between 1.30pm and 3.00pm on Thursday 17 July 2014.

¹ Standing Rules and Orders, Schedule 6. The schedule provides that departments, statutory authorities, government owned corporations or other administrative units related to the relevant Minister's responsibilities regarding these areas are included.

² Standing Order 177 provides for the automatic referral of the annual Appropriation Bills to portfolio committees once the Bills have been read a second time.

Recommendation

Recommendation 1

The committee recommends that the proposed expenditure, as detailed in the Appropriation Bill 2014 for the committee's areas of responsibility, be agreed to by the Legislative Assembly without amendment.

2. Minister for Environment and Heritage Protection

2.1 Department of Environment and Heritage Protection

Hon Andrew Powell MP is the Minister responsible for the Department of Environment and Heritage Protection (DEHP).

The following table taken from the Appropriation Bill 2014 compares the appropriations for the department for 2013-14 and 2014-15.

Appropriation	Budget 2013-2014 \$'000	Est. Actual 2013-2014 \$'000	Vote 2014-2015 \$'000
<i>Controlled Items</i>			
departmental services	128,162	125,501	128,436
equity adjustment	21,758	7,134	26,310
<i>Administered Items</i>	..		
Vote	149,920	132,635	154,746

Source: Appropriation Bill 2014, Schedule 2, p.8.

Proposed capital purchases for DEHP for 2014-15 total \$29.9 million.³

2.2 Budget highlights – Department of Environment and Heritage Protection

The department's key policy and service delivery priorities in 2014–15 are to⁴:

- ensure continued reductions in regulatory burden for the coal seam gas (CSG) industry, whilst
- maintaining strong standards of environmental protection by designing a more strategic and cost-effective compliance monitoring program (for example, satellite imagery), further standardising and streamlining the assessment, conditioning and approvals processes for CSG development proposals, continuing engagement with the community and industry on CSG water management and responding to the Queensland Competition Authority review of CSG regulation including implementation of model conditions for petroleum and gas activities, at a cost of \$5.2 million
- provide a further \$5 million for Round Three of the Everyone's Environment grant program, an initiative established to provide funding for eligible Queensland community groups to undertake projects aimed at delivering grassroots practical actions for local environmental improvements and conserving Queensland's built heritage
- provide a further \$2.3 million over two years to complete the three year pilot crocodile management plan in North Queensland, including the Hinchinbrook and Cassowary Coast local government areas as well as Cairns and Townsville to limit risks of potential crocodile/human interaction

³ State Budget 2014-15 Capital Statement – Budget Paper No.3, p.50.

⁴ State Budget 2014-15 Service Delivery Statements – Department of Environment and Heritage Protection, p.3.

- under the Reef Water Quality Program, continue to partner with industry to further develop and implement best management practice systems for sugarcane, grazing and bananas. The department will deliver robust research to provide evidence and inform continuous improvement of these systems and provide on-ground advice to landholders in partnership with the Department of Agriculture, Fisheries and Forestry at a total cost of \$10 million in 2014–15 and \$50 million over five years
- streamline assessment of significant investment projects through implementation of the proposed Approvals Bilateral Agreement with the Commonwealth. Expected to commence in September 2014, the Agreement will see Matters of National Environmental Significance assessed by the State, providing a one-stop-shop for proponents and removing duplication. The increased assessment costs will be offset by an increase in application fees, consistent with the ‘user-pays’ principle. Applicants will benefit from reduced project holding-costs and efficiency savings
- through the Queensland Indigenous Land and Sea Ranger Program, provide \$ 9.1 million in 2014-15 to build the participation of Indigenous people in caring for country activities that protect the health of Queensland’s unique species, ecosystems, land and waterways. The program will contribute to sustainable economic development by providing full-time employment for Indigenous rangers in regional and remote communities and, through the Junior Ranger Program, educate the next generation about looking after country
- simplify and streamline departmental compliance and assessment through the Compliance Renewal Program which will introduce a new compliance framework for certifiers and auditors, implement a new ‘proactive compliance’ methodology, and introduce simplified processes and systems. The Compliance Renewal Program will cost approximately \$8.7 million over three years commencing in 2013–14 and \$3.8 million in 2014–15. The program will deliver standardised, integrated and cost-effective services across the department including a new Information and Communication Technology (ICT) system to replace at risk systems and take advantage of new technologies (such as ‘cloud hosting’ and smartphone integration). This new ICT system will be a result of Project Unify, the cornerstone project within the Compliance Renewal Program. Project Unify will enable the department to be more adaptable, and improve services to both Queensland industry and the general public ☐ develop a risk based model for financial assurance to effectively manage the risk of a resources operation not meeting their rehabilitation requirements, be more cost effective for industry and generate an income stream to fund rehabilitation of historical abandoned mines
- release a new industry-led Waste Strategy for the State Government. The new Strategy will provide the vision and framework for managing waste for the next ten years, and be supported by detailed action plans.

2.3 Issues raised at the public hearing –Environment and Heritage Protection

- Gladstone Healthy Harbour Partnership
- World Heritage Committee and UNESCO monitoring of the Great Barrier Reef
- Best management practice programs for the Great Barrier Reef
- Environmental impacts of redevelopment of the Ben Lomond Mine
- Impacts of flying foxes
- Expenditure by government on Great Barrier Reef programs

- Great Barrier Reef strategic assessment
- Funding for the eradication of the Crown of Thorns Starfish
- Funding for Reef Trust
- The approvals process for any expansion of the Abbot Point coal terminal
- The management of crocodiles
- Programs to address climate change
- The Government's Reef Facts website
- The absence of performance measures for waste management in the service delivery statement for DEHP
- The *State of Waste Recycling in Queensland 2013* report
- Grants provided to private companies for waste management strategies
- The impact of storms and cyclones on the Great Barrier Reef, and
- Protected area estates acquired under the Our Environment for the Future program.

3. Minister for Natural Resources and Mines

3.1 Department of Natural Resources and Mines

Hon Andrew Cripps MP is the Minister responsible for the Department of Natural Resources and Mines (DNRM). The department has four service areas as follows:

- Land Services
- Water Services
- Mining and Petroleum Services, and
- Mine Safety and Health Services.

The following table taken from the Appropriation Bill 2014 compares the appropriations for the department for 2013-14 and 2014-15.

Appropriation	Budget 2013-2014 \$'000	Est. Actual 2013-2014 \$'000	Vote 2014-2015 \$'000
<i>Controlled Items</i>			
departmental services	320,693	324,692	333,967
equity adjustment	3,393	3,817	4,572
<i>Administered Items</i>	3,264	1,100	1,100
Vote	327,350	329,609	339,639

Source: *Appropriation Bill 2014, Schedule 2, p.9.*

The value of proposed capital expenditure for DNRM for 2014-15 is \$16.3million.⁵

3.2 Budget highlights – Department of Natural Resources and Mines

According to the budget papers⁶, in 2014-15 the department's future direction is to be customer focused, multi-channelled and to continue to support whole-of-Government initiatives through delivering on the objectives outlined in the *Department of Natural Resources and Mines Blueprint*⁷ by:

Powering up regional Queensland and the economy

Enabling economic growth and prosperity

- enabling greater opportunities for business, individuals and communities through security of tenure, certainty of ownership, responsible access to natural resources, accessible and reliable natural resource information and the timely delivery of related services
- continuing to invest \$30 million, over three years, in geoscience to attract further investment in the resources sector
- allocating available funding under the \$80 million, five year, Queensland Regional NRM investment program which includes initiatives to protect the Great Barrier Reef
- continuing to achieve accelerated resolution of native title claims providing security of tenure allowing for economic development to proceed with certainty.

Strategic resource reform

- releasing a harmonised resource management framework that delivers significant reforms to provide flexibility and certainty to the mineral and energy resources sector
- introducing new regulatory and operation frameworks that are responsive to emerging industries and challenges of managing resource conflicts
- progressing the outcomes of ResourcesQ to realise the value and commitment of the partnership agreement.

Growing our resources and agriculture sectors

- completing delivery of the \$15 million ex Tropical Cyclone Oswald On-farm Productivity and Riparian Recovery Program.

Strategic Water Reform

- allocating \$2 million for the Rural Water Use Efficiency Irrigation Futures delivered through six irrigation industry groups
- allocating \$0.6 million to the 12 River Improvement Trusts in Queensland primarily to address water quality
- achieving priority reforms in water monitoring, licensing, management and planning

⁵ *State Budget 2014-15, Capital Statement – Budget Paper No. 3, p.81.*

⁶ *State Budget 2014-15, Service Delivery Statements – Department of Natural Resources and Mines, pp.2-4.*

⁷ Department of Natural Resources and Mines, 2014, *Department of Natural Resources and Mines Blueprint.*

- transforming the *Water Act 2000* to streamline and simplify provisions, reduce overly-prescriptive regulations and to reflect contemporary approaches that support responsible and productive management, allocation and use of Queensland's water resources.

Strategic Land Reform

- legislative amendments delivering major reforms to Queensland's leasehold land system to provide greater security of tenure for leaseholders by providing pathways to freehold land title where appropriate and help drive growth in the key agriculture and tourism sectors
- progressing the review of the *Land Act 1994* and other land legislation to deliver an outcome that will enhance opportunities for private sector development from land currently administered by the Government, and develop a new and more productive relationship with local government
- working with all trustees, individual community members and other stakeholders to remove the barriers to sustainable home ownership on Indigenous land in Queensland
- reforming Indigenous land tenure to deliver security of tenure and ability to participate in an open market for successful homeownership, economic development and prosperity creation.

Customer-focused design and delivery of services

Engagement with customers

- responding to customer feedback (particularly from mining and resources customers, water customers and land customers). The department will proactively provide all forms online and refocus web based information to be more customer focused
- developing policy and regulatory frameworks to implement the government's priorities of economic growth and prosperity for Queensland to ensure customer benefits are realised
- working with the resources industry to review regulatory issues and to ensure benefits to Queenslanders and industry
- investing in new service channels to respond to customer requirements to deliver online products and improved service delivery.

Improving services

- DNRM will explore the creation of a new leadership role to grow the availability and use of spatial data. This recognises the pivotal role DNRM plays as a service provider of spatial information to other government agencies, industries and the community
- developing the Queensland Globe by providing and investigating services based on geographical spatial data in areas such as flood mapping and real-time flood monitoring
- commence consultation on a roadmap to streamline and reform mining and petroleum reporting requirements, to enhance the provision of open, accessible data and the ongoing productive, responsible use of Queensland's natural resources
- continuing to implement the system for national electronic conveyancing in Queensland
- implementing the system to provide landowners with electronic land valuation notices in 2015
- ongoing development and release of online services for the mining sector (e.g. MyMinesOnline).

Be the best natural resources agency in Australia

A comprehensive focus on continuous improvement

- under the Blueprint, implement a comprehensive and broad-reaching business improvement program through:
 - optimising the effectiveness, efficiency and overall performance of our functions and services
 - adapting our core functions and services to reflect government policy and meet the needs of our customers across the state
 - developing new business partnerships and new value-added services or products to meet customer needs or implement government policy directions.

Stakeholder partnerships and collaboration

- ResourcesQ is a key initiative working in collaboration with industry to develop a shared vision for Queensland's resources sector over the next 30 years.

Best safety in resources industries

- the department is currently working on legislative reforms to enable improvements to further enhance industry safety and health standards, and maintaining our 'safest' status
- maintaining Queensland's mining safety standards through adopting appropriate new technologies and collaborative working relationships with industry
- focussing on achieving a more nationally consistent approach to the regulation of explosives
- implementing amendments to the *Coal Mining Safety and Health Act 1999* and the *Mining and Quarrying Safety and Health Act 1999* to improve mine safety and health
- the Abandoned Mine Lands Program will progress ground truthing and public risk mitigation, continue the Charters Towers and Gympie shaft repair programs, and the ongoing management of mining legacy issues at major legacy sites across Queensland.

3.3 Issues raised at the public hearing –Natural Resources and Mines

- High-value agriculture
- Soil quality mapping
- Uranium mining development
- Water entitlements in the Condamine/Balonne area
- The use of GIS technology for stock management
- Reformed vegetation management codes
- Work of the Coal Seam Gas Compliance Unit
- Leasehold properties that are eligible for freeholding
- Coal seam gas wells in the Condamine Alluvium
- The Integrated Food and Energy Developments project
- The Statewide Land Cover and Trees Study, and
- Developments opportunities in regard to irrigation on the Gilbert and Flinders rivers.

4. Minister for Agriculture, Fisheries and Forestry

4.1 Department of Agriculture, Fisheries and Forestry

Hon Dr John McVeigh MP is the Minister responsible for the Department of Agriculture, Fisheries and Forestry (DAFF). The department has three key service areas:

- Agriculture
- Agri-Science Queensland
- Biosecurity Queensland, and
- Fisheries and Forestry.

The following table taken from the Appropriation Bill 2014 compares the appropriations for the department for 2013-14 and 2014-15.

Appropriation	Budget 2013-2014 \$'000	Est. Actual 2013-2014 \$'000	Vote 2014-2015 \$'000
<i>Controlled Items</i>			
departmental services	257,016	279,519	287,899
equity adjustment	(7,625)	(8,299)	(4,625)
<i>Administered Items</i>	9,330	9,549	9,203
Vote	258,721	280,769	292,477

Source: Appropriation Bill 2014, Schedule 2, p.7.

Total capital purchases for the Agriculture, Fisheries and Forestry portfolio including statutory bodies reporting to the Minister are \$23.6 million for 2014-15, including \$3.4 million for the Queensland Agricultural Training College and \$2 million for the QRAA.⁸

Total proposed capital purchases for the department is \$19.6 million. The focus of this capital program will be on developing and upgrading research facilities to deliver outcomes for agriculture, fisheries and forestry.⁹

4.2 Budget highlights – Department of Agriculture, Fisheries and Forestry

According to the budget papers, key policy and services delivery priorities for 2014-15¹⁰ are:

Increase resource availability by:

- continuing to develop interactive tools that enable industry, planners and investors to take best advantage of the Queensland Land Audit and industry profiling
- realising agriculture's and fisheries' potential to expand the northern regional economy by:
 - contributing to establishment of a proposed Northern Australia Cooperative Research Centre, in partnership with other jurisdictions, CSIRO and universities; and

⁸ State Budget 2014-15, Capital Statement – Budget Paper No. 3, p.21.

⁹ State Budget 2014-15, Capital Statement – Budget Paper No. 3, pp.21-2.

¹⁰ State Budget 2014-15, Service Delivery Statements – Department of Agriculture, Fisheries and Forestry, p.3.

- investing in opportunities to maximise irrigated cropping and support growth of high value agriculture in the Flinders and Gilbert river catchments in North Queensland.
- providing \$15 million over five years (\$10 million of which is provided through a Memorandum of Agreement with the Department of Environment and Heritage's Reef Water Quality program) for the delivery of Best Management Practice programs and extension and technical services to improve uptake of management practices by producers and agricultural industries across reef catchments
- focusing further rounds of the buyback on fisheries symbols to reduce the pressures imposed by net fishing under the \$9 million voluntary buyback of commercial net fishing scheme
- continuing to rationalise and upgrade aged agri-science research facilities, other infrastructure and assets.

Drive productivity by:

- providing \$2.5 million over three years to enhance Queensland's foot and mouth disease (FMD) preparedness focusing on Biosecurity Queensland's surveillance, prevention and response systems
- investing a total of \$1.4 million (\$0.63 million in 2014-15) for a new forest and timber research and development program to drive innovation in the industry.

Secure market access by:

- supporting Ministerial trade missions and working with Trade and Investment Queensland to pursue better access for Queensland producers and establish effective business relationships in key Asian markets
- streamlining accreditation processes and maintaining necessary certifications for agricultural produce, native forest timbers and fisheries to access interstate and international markets.

Minimise production costs by:

- continuing to provide Drought Relief Assistance to drought affected producers and modernising the drought claims processing system to improve the timeliness of processing of claims
- strengthening the approach to research, control and management of pests and weeds in drought affected areas. The Australian Government contributed \$2.1 million in 2014-15 for control and management of farm pests in drought affected areas.
- implementing initiatives in the department's regulatory reform plan including revised Biosecurity regulations and review of fisheries management.

Strengthen customer service delivery by:

- making it simpler and easier for our customers to access the information and services from the government's One-Stop Shop
 - - by being a contributor to Scenic Rim and Lockyer regional service trials
 - - increasing online transactions.

4.3 Priorities in 2014-15 – Queensland Agricultural Training Colleges

In 2014-15, the QATC will focus on:

- launching the flagship two year training programs at Longreach and Emerald in January 2015
- undertaking extensive market analysis to ensure product alignment with consumer demands
- embedding new literacy and numeracy training products to support students with learning difficulties
- development of online learning modules
- upgrading infrastructure at both Longreach and Emerald
- working with industry to ensure the most effective agriculture skills training.

4.4 Priorities in 2014-15 – QRAA

During 2014-15, QRAA will continue to provide a broad, flexible and cost effective range of administrative services to assist government agencies to deliver financial programs to the highest standards including continuation of the:

- Queensland Cattle Industry Biosecurity funding through the Bovine Johne's Disease Assistance Scheme (Queensland Government initiative)
- Subsidised Interest Rate Scheme for Pastoralists and Service Businesses involved in Live Cattle Exports to Indonesia (Australian Government initiative).

QRAA is also expecting to play an active role in the delivery of a wide range of new loan, grant, rebate and structural adjustment programs including, but not limited to:

- Drought Concessional Loans Scheme (Australian Government initiative)
- Queensland East Coast Commercial Net Fishing Reduction Scheme (No.3).

Looking forward, QRAA will continue to build organisational capability and remain flexible and responsive to government priorities and the needs of our growing client base.

4.5 Issues raised at the public hearing –Agriculture, Fisheries and Forestry

- Reductions in red tape to assist farming communities
- The Drought Relief Assistance Scheme
- The management of feral pigs
- Processing of claims by QRAA for drought relief assistance
- Research to assist the sugar and dairy industries
- Pest and disease management in the state's livestock industries
- Research and development for aquaculture in Queensland

- The Brigalow Research Station
- Weed research
- Best management practice programs
- Major biosecurity responses by the Government, and
- The logging of State forests.

Agriculture, Resources and Environment Committee Examination into Portfolio Budget Estimates

Statement of Reservation

Jackie Trad MP, Member for South Brisbane, offers this statement of reservation on behalf of the Opposition members who attended the Agriculture, Resources and Environment Committee's examination into the budget estimates.

Conduct of the Estimates Hearings

The Opposition was disappointed with the conduct of the 2014 estimates hearing, most notably the unjustified decision to hold seven estimates hearings concurrently over two days. This departure from past estimates process reduced the ability of non-government MPs to scrutinise Government spending and hindered the media's ability to report on each portfolio.

It is pleasing to see that the Government has since declared that hearings will return to their traditional format in 2015. This reversal demonstrates that the 2014 hearing format was nothing more than an arrogant and cynical attempt to divert public attention from the travails of a failing government and underperforming Ministers.

In addition to the schedule the Opposition has significant concerns with the conduct of the hearing, particularly on the first sitting day. It is indefensible that non-government members were allowed less than two hours of questioning compared to more than four for government members. This is a violation of convention which allows equal time for government and non-government members. It is a fact that the Chair of the Committee started questioning to the Minister for Natural Resources and Mines concerning Karreman Quarries, a matter not mentioned in the service delivery statement. It is a fact that Opposition questions on the same matter were ruled out of order. The Opposition finds it difficult to reconcile why questions on exactly the same issue were treated differently.

While it must be noted that the conduct of the estimates hearing improved markedly on the second day of the inquiry this cannot excuse the departure from parliamentary convention exhibited on Tuesday 15 July.

Environment and Heritage Protection

After three years of Estimates hearings, it is now undeniable that Minister Powell and the Department of Environment and Heritage Protection have been completely sidelined within the Newman Government. The Department has lost many of its assessment functions and with the introduction of a new software system will shift its focus almost exclusively to compliance issues. While ensuring environmental authorities are complied with is a key function of the Department, the Opposition believes the increasing centralisation of approval powers within the Department of State Development, Infrastructure and Planning will weaken the Government's capacity to determine appropriate environmental standards in the first place.

Great Barrier Reef Funding

Notwithstanding the Newman Government's shoddy environmental record, the greatest environmental issue facing Queensland is the continued stewardship of the Great Barrier

Reef as it faces significant threats from climate change, crown of thorns starfish and human activities along the coast. It is clear from this year's estimates hearing that the people of Queensland can have no faith in the Newman Government's seriousness to address these issues.

Firstly it speaks poorly to Minister Powell's commitment to the LNP's rhetoric of open and accountable government that he refused to provide information on his department's funding in the financial year 2012-13 for programs under Reef Plan 2009 on the basis that it was not relevant to the 2014-15 budget. This is a preposterous standard which was not followed by any other Minister with responsibility for elements of Reef Plan 2009 or Reef Plan 2013.

It was evident from the hearing however that the reason Minister Powell refused to provide funding figures from 2012-13 is because the Newman Government has not allocated any new spending to Great Barrier Reef programs in 2014-15 or beyond. The total Queensland Government contribution to Reef Plan 2013 totals \$175 million over five years, which is exactly the same amount of funding allocated by the previous Labor Government under Reef Plan 2009. The fact that the Newman Government has chosen not to increase spending on reef programs commensurate to the growing threats facing the reef, or at the very least inflation, should be a source of concern to all Queenslanders.

It was also unedifying that Minister Powell sought to muddy the waters by taking credit for Commonwealth Government spending programs to suggest that the total spend was \$180 million a year. This appeared to be a deliberate attempt by the Minister to steer attention away from his failure to secure any new Queensland Government funding for the protection of the reef.

Reef Facts

The Opposition does not believe the \$310,000 expended on the creation and promotion of the Reef Facts website in 2013-14 or the \$700,000 allocated in 2014-15 is an appropriate use of Government resources. While we do not dispute any of the facts contained on the website, or the scientific studies used as a basis for those facts, we believe those facts are used selectively to create a false impression as to the true state of the reef.

John Gunn, Chief Executive Officer of the Australian Institute of Marine Science, has recently pointed to a tendency of the Queensland and Commonwealth Governments to lead reports on the Great Barrier Reef with the 'good news' which while technically accurate has the effect of glossing over the serious issues facing the reef. As Mr Gunn states in his submission the Senate Committee inquiry on the health of the Great Barrier Reef;

"Almost all of the "bad news" regarding status and trend is contained somewhere within the chapters of the document, however the summaries of chapters tend to either downplay or leave the bad news until the end of the sections. For example, the statement that "at the scale of the GBR region, most of its habitats and species are assessed to be in good to very good condition." may be technically correct, but as most of its KEY habitats and vulnerable species (corals, seagrasses, seabirds, dolphins, dugong, turtles) are in very poor to poor condition and declining in the southern GBR, it would seem appropriate to lead with this point."

The Opposition shares Mr Gunn's sentiment and believes the Reef Facts website is a particularly egregious example of his wider point. We also continue to harbour concerns with the promotion of the Reef Facts website by the Queensland Resources Council and we are unsatisfied with Minister Powell's response on this issue as he refused to detail when he first had discussions with the QRC about the creation of the website.

UNESCO World Heritage Committee consideration

The Opposition is disappointed that the Minister has not detailed the amount spent funding his trip to Doha to attend the World Heritage Committee's meeting. Minister Powell did not provide that information despite being specifically asked during the hearing and nor has he in his subsequent report to parliament tabled on Friday 18 July. A key element of transparency is the timeliness of the release of information, Minister Powell has now been given two opportunities to detail the cost of his trip and he has so far failed to do so. We wait for the Minister to finally provide that information when he is required to report to parliament after August 31.

The Opposition has immense respect for the expertise and judgment of the World Heritage Committee of the United Nations Environmental, Scientific and Cultural Organisation and are concerned about Minister Powell's comments on the quality of their decisions. Specifically Minister Powell stated;

"having recently returned from Doha in Qatar for the World Heritage Committee meeting I am alarmed at the number of decisions that are potentially being made based on lies and misinformation. They are very emotive campaigns rather than based on factual and scientific evidence."

The Opposition does not believe it is appropriate for the Minister to question the judgment or scientific expertise of the World Heritage Committee as we recognise it has far more extensive experience in managing world heritage sites than the Minister or the Newman Government ever will.

Waste

The Opposition was not afforded the opportunity to examine the Government's waste strategy to the extent we desired however it is evident from the brief period which we were allowed that it can only be judged as an abject failure. The Minister was unable or unwilling to respond to or confirm figures taken from the State of Waste and Recycling Reports 2012 and 2013 however it is undeniable that amount of waste going to landfill is increasing and the amount being recycled is falling. The Minister's claim that he takes his responsibility for waste management seriously is belied by the facts he has been required to release.

Natural Resources and Mines

It was disappointing during this session that the Chair of the Committee sought to continually close down lines of questioning from non-government Members. It was also disappointing that the Committee rescheduled the order of the hearings for Natural Resources and Mines hearing without notifying the public.

Karreman Quarries

Minister Cripps stated at the hearing that the meeting he held with the Deputy Premier on 8 April 2014 was to discuss amendments (later moved during consideration in detail), on the *Land and Other Legislation Amendment Bill 2014* to make Karreman Quarries' Harlin operations retrospectively legal.

The Minister advised that the amendments related to the *Water Act 2000* which was why it was disclosed in his diary as 'Water Act Review'. However, the meeting wasn't actually about the Government's 'Water Act Review' and submissions did not close on this review

until 29 July 2014.

It is highly questionable as to why the Newman Government moved amendments to the *Water Act 2000* in consideration in detail on unrelated legislation on 20 May 2014 that made a significant political donors operations' retrospectively legal, with no time for Committee scrutiny, and prior to the Government's 'Water Act Review' consultation phase concluding. Karreman Quarries has made \$75,000 in political donations to the LNP.

Questions also remain around the Deputy Premier's involvement in the meeting on 8 April 2014 which the Minister said related to a DA that was impinged upon by previous amendments in the *Natural Resources and Other Legislation Amendment Bill 2010*.

The Deputy Premier advised the State Development, Infrastructure and Industry Committee hearing that he had not had any meetings or contact with Mr Karreman about the issue of ambulatory boundaries at Harlin. It remains unclear as to how the Deputy Premier became aware of the issue ahead of his discussion with Minister Cripps on 8 April 2014. The Minister said that a compliance notice issued to Karreman Quarries in February 2014 drew the Government's attention to the issue. Nonetheless, it is unclear as to whether it was a representative of Karreman Quarries who raised the issue with the Government.

The Minister did not provide an answer as to whether he instructed his Department to draft the amendments for consideration in detail to the *Land and Other Legislation Amendment Bill 2014* at a meeting with his department and Ministerial staff on the following day also disclosed as being about the 'Water Act Review'.

When asked why the issue of Karreman's operations at Harlin, or the Department's pending compliance action were not detailed anywhere in the explanatory notes on the amendments moved during in consideration in detail to the *Land and Other Legislation Amendment Bill 2014* the Minister advised that:

"The amendments that I moved during consideration in detail of the Land and Other Legislation Amendment Bill earlier this year do not go beyond rectifying the inadequate transitional arrangements that were put in place by the previous government from the 2010 legislation."

[and]

"That is the opinion of the government and was explained in the explanatory notes."

The Opposition does not support the expression of the 'opinion of the government' in explanatory notes on legislation in the place of the actual reasons for the amendments.

The Minister has failed to properly inform the Parliament of both the intent and the Government's reasoning for amendments to the *Water Act 2010* in the amendments moved during consideration in detail on the *Land and Other Legislation Amendment Bill 2014*.

It has also been claimed by the Minister and Deputy Premier that the LNP were clear about their position in relation to ambulatory boundaries prior to the election because of the Deputy Premier's contribution to the debate on the *Natural Resources and Other Legislation Amendment Bill 2010* where some concerns were raised about uncertainty over ambulatory boundaries and compensation to landowners.

It is important to note here that the LNP did not vote against this particular part of the legislation, nor were any amendments moved relating to ambulatory boundaries. There was also no mention made of any policy change relating to the determination of ambulatory boundaries in the LNP's 'Energy and Resources Strategy'. To claim that the public should

infer a policy position and future legislative change by the LNP from a passing comment on a bill is disingenuous.

It is also concerning that these amendments were moved in the Parliament as part of an unrelated bill to remove Parliamentary scrutiny more than a month after the meeting at which they were discussed.

Uranium Mining

The Minister advised the Committee that after the first two weeks of the framework commencing for uranium mining in Queensland there had been no applications received for mining leases.

Uranium proponent Cameco recently announced that their approved Kintyre uranium operation in Western Australia will only break even if the price of uranium rises above \$US67 with the spot price on 28 July 2014 at \$US28.50.

It is clear that uranium mining will not provide any immediate economic benefits to North West Queensland as claimed by the Newman Government where replacement jobs will need to be found for workers with the phased closure of the Century Zinc mine.

While the Department provided advice that they are working with Commonwealth agencies to align Queensland's framework for the approval of uranium mining with all Commonwealth guidelines it remains unclear as to whether separate Commonwealth approval under the *Environmental Protection and Biodiversity Conservation Act 1999* will still be required under the State's Memorandum of Understanding with the Commonwealth.

Vegetation Management

The Minister again refused to provide any information on the land that has been cleared, or can now be cleared, following the Newman Government's changes to the *Vegetation Management Act 1999*. It was advised that the Department is not undertaking any calculations on the impact of these legislative changes in terms of the areas now able to be cleared. However, the Department has been calculating savings to landholders from these reforms.

The Minister also said that his Department had no responsibility for making any calculation of the impact on carbon emissions from increased tree clearing under the Government's legislative changes to vegetation management.

The Opposition contends that the public has a right to know the exact cost to the environment of the Newman Government's legislative amendments that facilitate tree clearing across the State.

In response to Opposition questioning the Minister was unaware of the findings of a CSIRO report on the lack of availability of water at Strathmore Station where concerns have been raised about reports of a 30,000 hectare land clearing project. However, the Minister insisted that these operations were lawful following the Newman Government's amendments to the *Vegetation Management Act 1999* stating that:

"Recent changes to the Vegetation Management Act ensure that the department must prove beyond reasonable doubt that a person has committed an offence against the act. The department officers were not able to locate any credible evidence to confirm that the clearing of regulated vegetation had occurred prior to the commencement of development under the development permit."

Integrated Food and Energy Developments (IFED)

The Minister when asked about IFED stated that it was compatible with the Government's agenda for privately funded projects despite subsequent advice from the Department that they were waiting on a CSIRO report for *"the science for the water resource plan"* for IFED.

Great Barrier Reef Marine Park

The Minister failed to provide any assurance around the removal of the requirement for land management agreements. A submission from the Great Barrier Reef Marine Park Authority on the *Land and Other Legislation Amendment Bill 2014* for which the Minister was responsible stated that:

"The Great Barrier Reef Marine Park Authority reiterates the need to retain land management agreements and land conditions assessment.

[and that]

"The Bill and explanatory notes are not clear on how the Queensland Government will monitor and manage catchment condition for the long-term health of the Great Barrier Reef World Heritage Area without dedicated leasehold land management tools in place".

Despite repeated questioning from the Opposition the Minister has refused to detail what alternative leasehold land management tools will be in place to respond to the concerns of the Great Barrier Reef Marine Park Authority.

Agriculture, Fisheries and Forestry

Drought Assistance Package

The Opposition appreciates Minister McVeigh's detailed responses on spending and outcomes under the Government's drought relief and assistance package. It is evident that the ongoing drought is placing severe strain on many primary producers and regional and rural communities and is therefore imperative that government drought relief is demand based, simple to access, and directly addresses the needs of producers.

It is disappointing that the Government was unable to reach its target of 90% of drought applications processed within 21 days for several months in the 2013-14 financial year. The Opposition acknowledges the Minister's candour and obvious regret that his department fell substantially short of this target however it should have been clear that the initial allocation of staff to process applications was insufficient. It is evident there was a lack of foresight on this issue which the Opposition trusts will not reoccur if the next wet season fails again.

Agriscience Facilities

In answer to non-government question on notice 9 the Minister provided detail of which agriscience facilities have been sold by the Newman Government, the proceeds of those sales and what funds have been expended upgrading existing facilities or building new ones. On the face of the Minister's answer to that question there appeared to be some \$25 million in proceeds from sale which had not been reinvested in agriscience facilities. The Opposition takes the Minister on his word that this money is in the pipeline for reinvestment, we await

further announcements in this area and hope the money will be allocated quickly and efficiently.

Great Barrier Reef Extension Programs

The Opposition established earlier in the estimates hearing that total government spending on Great Barrier Reef programs has flatlined under the Newman Government despite the budget papers purporting to show an increase. Minister McVeigh was unable to explain the detail of the extension programs run through his department, nor why the target for the percentage of graziers and canegrowers who have increased skills through participating in best management practice extension programs remains the same if there actually has been a funding increase as suggested by the Government. The health of the Great Barrier Reef is an issue which crosses ministerial responsibilities and one for which Minister McVeigh has a significant responsibility. It is disappointing he appears not have turned his mind to these issues in much detail.

Wilmar Sugar

The Opposition is concerned with the actions Minister McVeigh is taking in regards to the decision by Wilmar Sugar, MSF and Tully Mills to withdraw from the voluntary single desk marketing system. In response to non-government question on notice 4 the Minister outlined that he has made representations to the federal Treasurer to disallow this decision and is concurrently exploring state based responses under the *Sugar Industry Act 1999*. The Newman Government's position appears to be in favour of reregulating the sugar industry. Commonwealth and state governments of both political persuasions worked closely with the sugar industry through the 1990s and 2000s to modernise and transform the industry. The decision to transition to a voluntary single desk marketing scheme was agreed by industry and supported with industry assistance totalling well over half a billion dollars. Any decision to return to compulsory acquisition of Queensland sugar would undermine this costly and lengthy reform process. It would be a departure from good economic management and will not be supported by the Opposition.

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Jackie Trad', with a large, stylized flourish above the name.

Jackie Trad MP
Member for South Brisbane