

From: [petrina.maizey](#)
To: [Committee_EC \(SEN\)](#)
Subject: Great Barrier Reef Senate Enquiry Submission
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Dear Senators,

Thank you for the opportunity to make a submission to this Senate Enquiry which is welcomed by all who have been following the plight of the Great Barrier Reef which has only been worsening for several decades. While the local, state and national authorities responsible for the Reef's protection have demonstrated ongoing neglect, ignorance, poor management, and failure to address both direct and indirect impacts, never has the Reef been under such audacious, catastrophic, and wholly avoidable threat as it is now under the present Coalition Government. This Government is carrying on the blind commercial partiality begun with the previous Labor Government in favouring the very short term, high risk, corporate-specific gains of the mining industry, which will ultimately bring Australia, and Queensland more liability than profit and is already costing the State heavily in hidden infrastructure and reparation expenditure.

Being aware that expert commentary on the many areas of threat presently imperiling the Reef will have been submitted to this Enquiry, my objective as a lay person is only to add my entreaty that this Enquiry function as a call for sane, moral and modern action, not only **to protect the Reef from further and fatal destruction, but to make the radical yet viable changes necessary to restore the Reef back to health.** These include immediate measures such as halting the dredging, expansion of ports, and increased shipping in the area; larger measures such as limiting land-sourced impacts including agriculture and mining; and global measures such as sending out an unequivocal and far reaching message that Australia must fulfill its shared role to mitigate dangerous climate change by limiting fossil fuel consumption and increasing carbon sequestration.

It is evident from ongoing policy decisions such as the continued permitting of dredging; from public statements which include watering down of evidence such as dredging damage to fauna, as well as expensive and misleading advertising amounting to unconscionable propaganda; and from the partisan, ill-informed appointments of bodies such as the GBR Marine Park Authority, that the present State Government is unwilling to face, represent or enable the truth about the threats to the GBR. The State Government, present and previous, should be censured for their bias, dishonesty, and failure to perform their elected duty to protect natural assets, to comply with international conservation agreements, to act responsibly towards all sectors of the economy, and to be truthful with the constituency.

The Enquiry is doubtlessly aware, from works of dedicated scientists like J Charles Veron, that the Great Barrier Reef is a truly unique phenomenon for our geological epoch, and that conditions for its establishment are very finely attuned to the presently evolved atmospheric conditions. For this reason alone, The Reef is under enormous threat from climate change with not only the increased risk of destructive storms, but from ocean acidification, advantaging of invasive species, and sea water temperature rise.

The Enquiry is also aware that in addition to an aesthetic and moral obligation to conserving the Reef, Australia has an economic and social survival need to ensure that dependent, high-revenue industries such as fishing, tourism, research and even international education are preserved through full protection and restoration of the Reef.

While the predicted ravages of climate change begin to be witnessed, other historic threats

to the Reef such as from agricultural, urban, and industrial development, as well as from invasive species are well documented and also highly effective in bringing the Reef to the brink of extinction. The present projected development of fossil fuel export infrastructure being imposed on us - unsanctioned, inadequately publicized, and at unprecedented scale - represents a callous and terrible irony: destruction of this national pride and world treasure, already long term threatened by climate change, will be hastened by the inevitable damage risked by the movement through it of the very substances responsible for climate disruption.

In other words, the government of the present day would ensure the Reef facilitates its own destruction. Such an outcome is not only absurd but morally reprehensible, and must be relegated to the lessons of history as a demonstration of why the unthinkable should never be allowed to become more than just a very bad idea. I trust that each Senator involved in this enquiry will sincerely work to ensure this utterly shameful page in Australia's wider record of environmental negligence is closed forever and a more morally and intellectually advanced era begins while there is still the opportunity to save The Great Barrier Reef.

Petrina van Reyk