



Australian Government

Australian Government response to the
Senate Rural and Regional Affairs and Transport
References report:

Identification of leading practices in ensuring evidence-
based regulation of farm practices that impact water
quality outcomes in the Great Barrier Reef

May 2024

Response

Recommendation 1

The committee recommends the Australian and Queensland governments ensure adequate stakeholder engagement and education processes are integrated into future Water Quality Scientific Consensus Statement processes.

Response

NOTED

The Government notes this recommendation. However, given the passage of time since this report was tabled, a substantive Government response is no longer appropriate.

Recommendation 2

The committee recommends the Australian and Queensland governments improve consultation, information, accessibility and transparency of data used to inform the findings of the Paddock to the Reef Integrated Monitoring, Modelling and Reporting Program.

Response

NOTED

The Government notes this recommendation. However, given the passage of time since this report was tabled, a substantive Government response is no longer appropriate.

Recommendation 3

The committee recommends the Australian Government continue to uphold its responsibilities under the precautionary principle in the Great Barrier Reef Marine Park Act 1975.

Response

NOTED

The Government notes this recommendation. However, given the passage of time since this report was tabled, a substantive Government response is no longer appropriate.

Recommendation 4

The committee recommends the Australian and Queensland governments ensure future Reef report cards adequately incorporate and recognise the adoption of best practice across the sugarcane sector.

Response

NOTED

The Government notes this recommendation. However, given the passage of time since this report was tabled, a substantive Government response is no longer appropriate.

Recommendation 5

The committee recommends the Australian and Queensland governments conduct a strategic review of the communication strategy used to inform stakeholders about Great Barrier Reef policies and science.

Response

NOTED

The Government notes this recommendation. However, given the passage of time since this report was tabled, a substantive Government response is no longer appropriate.

Recommendation 6

The committee recommends the Australian and Queensland governments' commission additional research into the impact of the horticulture and banana industries (including small-scale agro-ecological farmers) on water quality in the Great Barrier Reef catchment regions.

Response

NOTED

The Government notes this recommendation. However, given the passage of time since this report was tabled, a substantive Government response is no longer appropriate.

Recommendation 7

The committee recommends the Australian and Queensland governments, in partnership with Reef science research bodies, agricultural representatives, natural resource management bodies and other stakeholders, establish a Great Barrier Reef water quality forum.

Response

NOTED

The Government notes this recommendation. However, given the passage of time since this report was tabled, a substantive Government response is no longer appropriate.

Recommendation 8

The committee recommends the Australian and Queensland governments explore future opportunities to establish water quality research projects that incorporate citizen science principles throughout the Great Barrier Reef's catchment regions.

Response

NOTED

The Government notes this recommendation. However, given the passage of time since this report was tabled, a substantive Government response is no longer appropriate.

Dissenting Recommendation 1 (Coalition)

The Queensland and Australian Governments should establish an Office of Scientific Review to evaluate the existing science of the Great Barrier Reef and how it informs policymaking.

Response

NOTED

The Government notes this recommendation. However, given the passage of time since this report was tabled, a substantive Government response is no longer appropriate.

Dissenting Recommendation 2 (Coalition)

The Australian and Queensland Governments should prioritise any future funding for additional research into coral growth rates and the concentration of nitrogen, fine sediment and particulate nutrients in the Great Barrier Reef. This research should be published according to open source data principles.

Response

NOTED

The Government notes this recommendation. However, given the passage of time since this report was tabled, a substantive Government response is no longer appropriate.

Dissenting Recommendation 3 (Coalition)

The Queensland Government should revert to a cooperative approach and incentivise the implementation of best management practice principles and move away from the strict mandatory approach that has damaged relations between farmers and government officials.

Response

NOTED

The Government notes this recommendation. However, given the passage of time since this report was tabled, a substantive Government response is no longer appropriate.

Dissenting Recommendation 4 (Coalition)

The Queensland Government should return the penalties for infringement to previous levels.

Response

NOTED

The Government notes this recommendation. However, given the passage of time since this report was tabled, a substantive Government response is no longer appropriate.

Dissenting Recommendation 5 (Coalition)

If the Queensland Government does proceed with strict mandatory best practice requirements, then the Queensland Government should compensate farmers for the costs imposed.

Response

NOTED

The Government notes this recommendation. However, given the passage of time since this report was tabled, a substantive Government response is no longer appropriate.

Dissenting Recommendation 6 (Coalition)

The Australian and Queensland Governments should review the merit of the water quality targets under the Reef 2050 Plan. The existing targets should not be used as a basis for additional restrictions on farming in the Great Barrier Reef.

Response

NOTED

The Government notes this recommendation. However, given the passage of time since this report was tabled, a substantive Government response is no longer appropriate.

Dissenting Recommendation 7 (Coalition)

The Queensland Government should reduce the additional restrictions around 'no net decline' placed on new and expanded cropping and horticultural activities on greenfield sites in the defined catchment zones, especially when they are inconsistent with the Australian Government's policy to expand agricultural production.

Response

NOTED

The Government notes this recommendation. However, given the passage of time since this report was tabled, a substantive Government response is no longer appropriate.

Dissenting Recommendation 8 (Coalition)

The Australian Government should review the precautionary principle with a view to considering a risk-based approach following the completion of Professor Samuels' review of the Environmental Protection and Biodiversity Conservation Act.

Response

NOTED

The Government notes this recommendation. However, given the passage of time since this report was tabled, a substantive Government response is no longer appropriate.