

**Senate Standing Committee on Environment and Communications**  
**Legislation Committee**  
Answers to questions on notice  
**Environment portfolio**

**Question No:** 391  
**Hearing:** Supplementary Budget Estimates  
**Outcome:** Agency  
**Programme:** Great Barrier Reef Marine Park Authority  
**Topic:** DRAFT REEF 2050 PLAN – WATER QUALITY  
**Hansard Page:** N/A  
**Question Date:** 29 October 2014  
**Question Type:** Written

**Senator Waters asked:**

Part of GBRMPA's responsibility is assessing progress towards the water quality target of "no detrimental impact". That target has been around since 2009, but does GBRMPA know what reductions in pollutants and run off will actually be required to achieve it?

- a. Does GBRMPA have any good estimate?

**Answer:**

The present water quality targets are a negotiated outcome between farmers and government based on the levels of investment in actions known to reduce pollutant loads and estimated using catchment to marine modelling. This modelling also used the trigger levels for key pollutants needed to maintain healthy marine waters, which are documented in the Great Barrier Reef Marine Park Authority's Great Barrier Reef Water Quality Guidelines, to calculate ecologically relevant targets. To achieve these Guideline trigger values in the Great Barrier Reef Marine Park the estimated load reductions for nutrients and sediment concentrations need to be approximately 80 per cent and 50 per cent respectively. This is documented in the Tully Murray Water Quality Improvement Plan 2008 (nutrients) and the Burdekin Water Quality Improvement Plan 2009 (sediments). Pesticide concentrations in the Great Barrier Reef are relatively low and generally below Guideline trigger levels. However, even at low levels pesticides may have synergistic effects with other pollutants and, given they are totally unnatural and sourced from human activities, the reduction in loads of 50 per cent in developed catchments were identified in the Great Barrier Reef Marine Park Authority's Action Plan in 2001 and subsequently reflected at similar Reef wide levels in Reef Water Quality Protection Plan 2009 and regional Water Quality Improvement Plans.