




Speech By
Hon. Jeff Seeney

MEMBER FOR CALLIDE

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MINISTERIAL STATEMENT

Great Barrier Reef

 **Hon. JW SEENEY** (Callide—LNP) (Deputy Premier and Minister for State Development, Infrastructure and Planning) (9.44 am): The importance of the Great Barrier Reef to our state and our nation will never be underestimated by our government. We understand the reef is unique and special to all Queenslanders and we are committed to its protection for this and future generations' enjoyment.

Last Thursday our commitment to the reef was acknowledged by some of the toughest environmental judges in the world—UNESCO's World Heritage Committee. The committee released its draft report and recommendations on the state of the conservation of the Great Barrier Reef World Heritage area. The draft report clearly recognised the efforts that the Queensland and Australian governments are going to in protecting the reef, and welcomed progress through a number of key initiatives introduced by our government.

Despite the scaremongering of green groups and those who sit opposite in this chamber, UNESCO's draft report did not recommend the reef be listed as a World Heritage site 'in danger'. Instead it reported that the reef's outstanding universal value and integrity remain largely intact, and it recognised the efforts that our government had gone to to ensure that that remains the case.

The draft decision recognised the hard work and progress being made by not only the Queensland government but also the Australian government to protect and manage this vast and priceless ecosystem. We are addressing the conservation of the reef through a range of approaches—both on land and in the marine environment. This includes undertaking the most comprehensive strategic assessment of the Great Barrier Reef that will lay the foundation for the development of a long-term sustainability plan for the reef.

The strategic assessment is almost complete and will be presented to the Australian Minister for Environment for consideration in coming months. This assessment will provide a substantial body of evidence that will be used to inform the development of the Reef 2050 Long-Term Sustainability Plan, also a request of the World Heritage Commission. The commission also recognised the Queensland government's ongoing commitment to improving reef water quality through the Reef Water Quality Protection Plan and through the Queensland Ports Strategy.

In particular, the commission recognised the government's commitment to concentrate port development to within existing and long-established major port areas. We have proposed the declaration of five priority development port areas where development will be concentrated and encouraged. Under the strategy, priority port development areas will be created for the ports of Brisbane, Mackay, Hay Point, Gladstone, Townsville and Abbot Point. The strategy will also prohibit dredging for the development of new or the expansion of existing port facilities outside of these priority port areas for the next decade. It will also maintain the commitment to restrict any significant

port development within and adjoining the Great Barrier Reef World Heritage area to existing port limits right through to 2022.

Our common-sense approach to reef protection will both preserve this precious ecosystem and protect Queensland's resource sector jobs and allow Queensland's economy to grow—and that is the complete opposite of what those who sit on the other side of this chamber did. What we are doing is what they promised to do but never delivered—that is, implementing real strategies that work to protect the Great Barrier Reef and to grow the economy. The people who sit opposite in this chamber are the same people who sat around the cabinet table under a Labor government and allowed 38 million tonnes of material to be dredged at Abbot Point. We are going to allow just three million tonnes to be dredged. That shows who really cares about the reef. Last week's report makes it clear that our government has the strategies and those opposite are full of empty promises.