



Regulating ag not the solution for the Reef

The Queensland Farmers' Federation (QFF) and industry members are frustrated and disappointed following the passing of legislation that will see a greater regulatory burden placed on Queensland's farmers while not guaranteeing any benefits for the Great Barrier Reef.

The Environmental Protection (Great Barrier Reef Protection Measures) and Other Legislation Amendment Bill 2019 places yet another layer of responsibility onto farmers and will stifle much needed flexibility and sustainable growth in several established agricultural industries and communities across the Reef catchments.

QFF President Stuart Armitage said while no one is questioning the value of the Great Barrier Reef or that we must do what we can to extend its adaptation window in the face of climate change, which is its greatest threat, it was unfortunate that the government viewed regulation as a cheap and effective option for such a complex problem.

"The Reef is one of the most spectacular and complex natural systems on earth. Couple that with complex farming systems and the changing climate, we need collaborative partnerships that deliver a sophisticated and properly resourced response if we want to improve the quality of water entering the Reef lagoon," Mr Armitage said.

“The 2017 Scientific Consensus Statement for the Great Barrier Reef, which underpins the Reef 2050 Water Quality Improvement Plan, emphasises finding collaborative solutions for farmers, industry and scientists.”

“The government’s blunt regulatory strategy is eroding the spirit of cooperation the Consensus Statement focused on when defining the best path to accelerated adoption of best practice and the resulting impact on improved water quality. Understandably, many farmers will be disillusioned and deflated by the approach the government is taking.”

“We acknowledge the government has addressed some of our concerns with the Bill and is proposing to incorporate amendments to the regulations that sit under it. However, with the head of power remaining in the Bill, the regulations can be amended by the Environment Minister at any time so does not provide adequate certainty for farmers.”

“We also understand the LNP Opposition was prevented from putting forward sensible amendments to the Bill that addressed our concerns.”

“Agriculture has been and remains committed to doing its bit for the Reef. Over the past few years there has been an exponential increase of farmer participation in Best Management Practice and other voluntary practice improvement programs, and for every dollar government invests, farmers on average are investing about \$1.60.”

“We remain firmly of the view that applying a blanket approach to regulating agricultural activities across all six Reef regions at the expense of true practice change will not realise the best environmental, social and economic outcomes for the Reef, farmers or Reef catchment communities.”

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ONLINE QFF STATEMENT

