



Speech By  
**Christian Rowan**

**MEMBER FOR MOGGILL**

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Record of Proceedings, 13 October 2016

**AGRICULTURE AND ENVIRONMENT COMMITTEE REPORT**

**Motion to take Note**

 **Dr ROWAN** (Moggill—LNP) (12.31 pm): I rise to address the Agriculture and Environment Committee's consideration of the Auditor-General's report No. 20 of 2014-15: *Managing water quality in Great Barrier Reef catchments*. I noted the Agriculture and Environment Committee's comments and absolutely agree that improving water quality in reef catchments is crucial to ensuring the health and survival of the Great Barrier Reef and protecting coastal communities and industries that depend on it. The Auditor-General's report No. 20 of 2014-15 undertook a strategic audit of the management of water quality in the reef's catchments and highlighted pressures on reef catchments and the challenges for government and agricultural industries seeking to reduce sediment, nutrient and pesticide run-off into reef waters. The reef report card 2014 released in 2015 highlighted the scale and extent of water quality improvements required to meet agreed targets and the scope for improvements in farming and land use practices in reef catchments.

The Auditor-General's audit made a number of recommendations to government. All have been implemented or are the subject of substantial ongoing work. The Agriculture and Environment Committee also noted a substantial increase in funding by the government for programs to improve reef water quality. The Agriculture and Environment Committee noted good progress by agricultural industries in adopting best management practice programs, with nearly 10.6 million hectares of grazing land in the Burdekin, Fitzroy and Burnett-Mary catchments now covered by grazing best management practice programs. Certainly, congratulations go to rural landholders and farmers on achieving this outcome. Over 240,000 hectares, or nearly 50 per cent, of cane growing areas in reef catchments are covered by the Smartcane best management practice program, and 6,200 hectares, or 55 per cent of land, under banana cultivation in the wet tropics are now covered by the banana best management practice program.

The report of the Great Barrier Reef Water Science Taskforce, established in relation to recommendation 2 from the audit, has provided further frank advice to the current government to achieve some ambitious 2025 water quality improvement targets. I also noted that having a mix of incentives and regulations that recognise farmers who adopt best management practices promises to be a better approach for farmers and graziers, on whom the achievement of water quality improvements for the reef largely depends. This is one of the critical elements for implementing evidence based best practice and achieving good outcomes for the Great Barrier Reef.