



Australian Government

Australian Government response to the Environment and
Communications References Committee report:

Management of the Great Barrier Reef

APRIL 2016

REPORT ON SENATE INQUIRY INTO MANAGEMENT OF THE GREAT BARRIER REEF – RESPONSE TO RECOMMENDATIONS

Introduction

The Great Barrier Reef is not only one of the natural wonders of the world, it is a significant part of Australia's national identity. Inscribed on the World Heritage List in 1981, the property is recognised as having Outstanding Universal Value (OUV). Given the broad scope of criteria under which the Reef was listed (the Great Barrier Reef meets the four natural criteria set out in Article Two of the World Heritage Convention), almost all attributes of its environment contribute to its OUV. This includes the values of the region including biodiversity, geomorphology, Traditional Owner connections, ecological processes, aesthetic values and natural phenomena.

For almost 40 years, the Great Barrier Reef has been managed as a multiple-use marine protected area, providing for protection and allowing for ecologically sustainable use, supporting a range of commercial and non-commercial activities. In managing the Great Barrier Reef, environmental, economic and social aspects are continually considered in order to achieve the best outcomes for both the Great Barrier Reef and the community.

The Outlook Report 2014 found that while the OUV and integrity of the Great Barrier Reef World Heritage Area remain in good condition, it is under pressure. The report identified that the greatest risks to the Reef are climate change, poor water quality from land-based run-off, impacts from coastal development and some remaining impacts from fishing and illegal fishing and poaching. It recognised significant management improvements and substantial investments in recent years and concluded that it will take time to turn around the overall outlook for the Reef and to improve its resilience and capacity to recover from both contemporary and legacy impacts.

Management Initiatives

Maintaining and protecting the OUV of the Reef and its natural integrity and cultural values is a critical priority for the Australian and Queensland governments. Both governments have undertaken a number of key initiatives outlined below to ensure that the Great Barrier Reef World Heritage Area is managed with a strong focus on protection and sustainable use.

The Comprehensive Strategic Assessment

The comprehensive strategic assessment of the Great Barrier Reef World Heritage Area and adjacent coastal zone was endorsed by the Australian and Queensland environment ministers and was the largest of its kind in the world. The comprehensive strategic environmental assessment analysed impacts affecting the Reef from activities on both land and water, assessed the effectiveness of existing management arrangements and identified improvements to strengthen management of the Great Barrier Reef World Heritage Area.

The Reef 2050 Plan

The Reef 2050 Plan responds to the challenges facing the Reef and presents actions to protect its values, health and resilience while allowing ecologically sustainable development and use.

It addresses the findings of the Great Barrier Reef Marine Park Authority's Outlook Report 2014 and builds on the comprehensive strategic environmental assessment of the World Heritage Area and adjacent coastal zone completed in 2014.

The biggest identified long term threat, climate change, is a global problem. It requires a global solution which is why Australia is an active participant in international efforts and has in place significant domestic plans and targets.

Developing ecosystem resilience in the face of a variable and changing climate is a key principle of the Plan. By improving water quality, maintaining biodiversity and ensuring port development and shipping has minimal impact on the Reef, it is targeting activities over which governments and other stakeholders have most control.

Tangible outcomes, objectives and measurable targets have been identified across seven themes —biodiversity, ecosystem health, heritage, water quality, community benefits, economic benefits and governance — to form an integrated management framework.

The Plan drives greater coordination, efficiency and effectiveness of all Reef programs and activities. It describes how all levels of government, non-government organisations, industry and community groups can work together to strengthen and develop initiatives for the Reef.

The Plan was developed by government in partnership with industry, community, Indigenous and conservation stakeholders and was submitted to the World Heritage Centre in early March 2015 for consideration at the 39th session of the World Heritage Committee. The final decision of the World Heritage Committee was to keep the Great Barrier Reef off its world heritage in-danger list. This unanimous decision acknowledges the strong response that Australia and Queensland have put in place through the development and implementation of the Reef 2050 Plan.

The North-East Shipping Management Plan

The North-East Shipping Management Plan, released in October 2014, enhances ship safety and environmental protection in the north-east region of Australia. The Plan specifically considers shipping-related risks to the OUV of the Great Barrier Reef World Heritage Area and identifies measures, implemented through a work program, for preventing or mitigating ship-sourced pollution and other environmental impacts of shipping.

Reef Trust

The Reef Trust is a key mechanism for delivering on the Reef 2050 Plan combining both Australian Government and private funds to focus on improving coastal habitats; reducing key pollutant loads to improve water quality entering the Great Barrier Reef; maintaining and enhancing the viability of threatened and migratory species and reducing significant threats to the Reef including crown-of-thorns starfish; and counter balancing impacts on matters of national and state environmental significance through delivery of offsets.

The Reef Trust is being developed and implemented in a phased approach with initial investments in high priority areas now underway.

The Australian Government made an initial contribution of \$40 million to the Reef Trust to address key threats to the Reef. In March 2015, the Australian Government announced an additional \$100 million for the Reef Trust, bringing total investment to \$140 million. This will provide the opportunity for cost effective, strategic investment that will build on the existing funding commitments and help to deliver on the Reef 2050 Plan.

Queensland water quality

In addition to its \$35 million a year investment in improving water quality, the Queensland Government has committed an additional \$100 million over five years towards water quality initiatives, scientific research and helping business transition to better environmental practices in the primary production and fishing industries. This further investment will focus on reducing nutrient and sediment loads to minimise the effect of land-based run-off in Reef catchments, helping to build the Reef's resilience to climate change.

Dredging and port development

When the current Australian Government was elected in September 2013 there were five capital dredging projects either planned or under active assessment that proposed to dispose of dredge material in the Marine Park. The Australian Government has reduced that number to zero. To ensure that position continues, in May 2015 the Australian Government used its regulatory powers to permanently ban the disposal of capital dredge material in the Great Barrier Reef Marine Park. The regulation, under the *Great Barrier Reef Marine Park Regulations 1983*, came into effect on 2 June 2015.

In November 2015, the Queensland Government passed the *Sustainable Ports Development Bill 2015* which enacts key port-related commitments under the Reef 2050 Plan. The Act extends the ban on the disposal of capital dredge material to the remainder of the World Heritage Area, restricts new port development to within current port limits and prohibits major capital dredging for the development of new, or expansion of existing, port facilities outside the four priority ports of Gladstone, Abbot Point, Townsville and Hay Point/Mackay. The Act also mandates strategic master planning at the four priority ports.

The Committee's recommendations

More than three decades after its inscription on the World Heritage List, the Australian Government continues to give high priority to protecting and conserving this vast 348 000 km² property. Australia has demonstrated substantial progress and commitment in responding to the challenges of conserving the property.

The Australian and Queensland governments have made, and continue to make, substantial investment and commitment to the protection and management of the Great Barrier Reef. Governments will continue to work with the community to focus on the effective future protection of the Reef and integrating and strengthening management measures protecting the Great Barrier Reef environment as a whole, through implementation of the Reef 2050 Plan.

RESPONSE TO COMMITTEE REPORT

Recommendation	Response
Recommendation 1: The committee recommends that, in light of the precautionary principle, no further approvals should be given under the <i>Environment Protection and Biodiversity Conservation Act 1999</i> or the <i>Environment Protection (Sea Dumping) Act 1981</i> for the disposal of dredge spoil in the Great Barrier Reef World Heritage Area until the Great Barrier Reef Marine Park Authority and Australian Institute of Marine Science Dredge Panel work is finalised.	Noted. The Dredge Synthesis Report, produced by a panel of experts brought together by the Great Barrier Reef Marine Park Authority and the Australian Institute of Marine Science, was publicly released on 25 March 2015. The decision to grant an approval under the <i>Environment Protection and Biodiversity Conservation Act 1999</i> (EPBC Act) or the <i>Environment Protection (Sea Dumping) Act 1981</i> must be made by the Minister or delegate on a case by case basis in accordance with the relevant legislation. Both Acts set statutory timeframes for the Minister to make approval decisions. Ports are required to service a range of industries in the Great Barrier Reef including resource development, agriculture, tourism and fishing. Approvals for dredging are required on a regular basis to both maintain existing port operations and build new infrastructure. The recommendation as it stands may impact on existing port operations. In May 2015, the Australian Government passed regulations to ban disposal of dredge material from capital dredging in the Great Barrier Reef Marine Park. The ban applies to all past and present permits and future applications for capital dredge disposal. The new regulation, under the <i>Great Barrier Reef Marine Park Regulations 1983</i>, took effect on 2 June 2015. In November 2015, the Queensland Government passed the <i>Sustainable Ports Development Bill 2015</i> which enacts key port-related commitments under the Reef 2050 Plan. The Act extends the ban on the disposal of capital dredge material to the remainder of the World Heritage Area, restricts new port development to within current port limits and prohibits major capital dredging for the development of new, or expansion of existing, port facilities outside the four priority ports of Gladstone, Abbot Point, Townsville and Hay Point/Mackay. The Act also mandates strategic master planning at the four priority ports.

Recommendation 2: The committee recommends that the Minister for the Environment examine whether a cap or a ban should be introduced on the disposal of dredge spoil in the Great Barrier Reef World Heritage Area.	Noted. In May 2015, the Australian Government passed regulations to ban disposal of dredge material from capital dredging in the Great Barrier Reef Marine Park. The new regulation, under the <i>Great Barrier Reef Marine Park Regulations 1983</i>, took effect on 2 June 2015. In November 2015 the Queensland Government passed a Bill to extend the ban on capital dredge disposal to cover the rest of the World Heritage Area. The ban across the entire World Heritage Area will help to reduce cumulative pressures on this vast and spectacular ecosystem and aid in improving its health and resilience. The Reef 2050 Plan presents a comprehensive strategy to protect the Reef's values into the future while allowing ecologically sustainable development and use. The Plan includes several commitments to improve water quality from dredging activities that have been developed in partnership with industry, community and the Queensland Government.
Recommendation 3: The committee recommends that the Department of the Environment ensure that conditions of approval under the <i>Environment Protection and Biodiversity Conservation Act 1999</i> are stringently worded, monitored and enforced.	Agreed. The Department of the Environment has undertaken a comprehensive business improvement program to not only increase the capacity to monitor approval conditions, but also to ensure that compliance monitoring resources are allocated to those projects that pose the greatest risk to nationally protected matters.
Recommendation 4: The committee recommends that the Minister for the Environment ensure that funding for, and resourcing and staffing levels within, the Department of the Environment are sufficient to ensure adequate capacity to monitor and enforce conditions of approval under the <i>Environment Protection and Biodiversity Conservation Act 1999</i>.	Noted. The Department of the Environment has undertaken a comprehensive business improvement program to not only increase the capacity to monitor approval conditions, but also to ensure that compliance monitoring resources are allocated to those projects that pose the greatest risk to nationally protected matters.

Recommendation 5: The committee recommends that the Reef 2050 Long-Term Sustainability Plan be drafted and finalised, subject to full community consultation, as a matter of high priority.	Agreed. The Reef 2050 Plan was finalised and released in March 2015 following extensive consultation. Preliminary public consultation was undertaken on the Plan between 1 November 2013 and 31 January 2014 as part of the Australian and Queensland governments' comprehensive strategic assessment process. The Plan was further developed by the Australian and Queensland governments in close consultation with a partnership group, comprised of representatives from the resources, ports, tourism, fishing and agriculture sectors, as well as from Indigenous, research, conservation groups, and local government. Public consultation on the Plan was undertaken for a six week period from 15 September until 27 October 2014 and included meetings with key stakeholders and information sessions in regional Queensland centres. In addition, during this period the proposed targets and actions were subject to expert review.
Recommendation 6: The committee recommends that the Reef 2050 Long-Term Sustainability Plan bring together all existing strategies, plans and reports in relation to the Great Barrier Reef.	Agreed. The Reef 2050 Plan identifies the actions that must be taken to protect the Reef for future generations. It brings programs and activities together to ensure greater coordination, efficiency and effectiveness. It describes how all levels of government, non-government organisations, industry and community groups can work together to further strengthen existing and implement new initiatives for the Reef. In addition, as part of the Plan a Great Barrier Reef Plan Register will be established with all management plans recorded to simplify understanding of management arrangements.

Recommendation 7: The committee recommends that the Australian and Queensland Governments ensure that the Reef 2050 Long-Term Sustainability Plan contains concrete targets and actions to improve the health of the Great Barrier Reef.	Agreed. The Plan contains an outcomes framework that provides a structured approach to management planning. The outcomes framework identifies seven themes—ecosystem health, biodiversity, heritage, water quality, community benefits, economic benefits and governance. Each theme within the outcomes framework has an outcome, objectives, targets and actions. The outcomes, objectives and targets maintain a clear line of sight between on-ground actions and the attributes that contribute to the Outstanding Universal Value (OUV) of the Reef. To ensure that the Plan is effective, the targets have been designed to be Specific, Measureable, Achievable, Realistic, and Time-Bound (SMART). Actions have clear ownership and support. Targets and actions were informed by comments received during the public consultation period and expert review. This included working with representatives from key stakeholder groups, through a 'program logic' process, to articulate the relationships between outcomes, objectives, targets and actions, and identify measures of success.
Recommendation 8: The committee recommends that the Australian and Queensland Governments ensure that the Reef 2050 Long-Term Sustainability Plan adequately addresses the cumulative impacts of all activities on the Great Barrier Reef Region and its world heritage values.	Agreed. The Reef 2050 Plan commits to developing guidelines for assessing cumulative impacts and a net benefit policy for the Great Barrier Reef to guide future planning and development decisions. Principles for decision making outlined in the Plan have a focus on delivering a net benefit to the ecosystem. Many of the actions and targets in the Plan are aimed at reducing impacts to the Reef to ensure cumulative impacts are managed below threshold levels and ensure protection and transmission of the Reef's OUV.
Recommendation 9: The committee recommends that funding for, and staffing for the Australian Institute of Marine Science be maintained, and wherever possible, increased, in order to ensure that they can continue to conduct the important research work needed to support management and decision-making in relation to the Great Barrier Reef.	Noted. Resourcing decisions will be taken by the Government in the context of its overall budget decisions. The Australian Institute of Marine Science (AIMS) is resourced to conduct important research work to support management and decision-making in relation to the Great Barrier Reef.

Recommendation 10: The committee recommends that the Australian National Audit Office expand its proposed and current audits relating to the Great Barrier Reef to include an audit of the performance of the Great Barrier Reef Marine Park Authority.	Not supported. The Auditor-General is an independent officer of the Parliament. Decisions to undertake audits are a matter for the Auditor-General and are taken in the context of available resources and other audit priorities. The Australian Government notes that on 13 August 2015, the Australian National Audit Office (ANAO) tabled in the Parliament a performance audit examining the <i>Regulation of the Great Barrier Reef Marine Park Permits and Approvals</i> by the Great Barrier Reef Marine Park Authority (GBRMPA). The Australian Government, through GBRMPA has accepted the recommendations in this report without qualification and had already identified the need to strengthen its permissions system through commitments in the <i>Great Barrier Reef Region Strategic Assessment Program Report</i>. GBRMPA has commenced this work and over the next four years will stage the implementation of initiatives designed to enhance and strengthen the permissions system while maintaining high environmental standards. Independent assessments of management effectiveness have already been conducted as part of the Strategic Assessment of the Great Barrier Reef Region and the Great Barrier Reef Outlook Reports for 2009 and 2014. These independent assessments used the International Union for the Conservation of Nature (IUCN) and World Commission on Protected Areas (WCPA) framework for assessing management effectiveness which has been widely applied around the world.
Recommendation 11: The committee recommends that funding and staffing of the Great Barrier Reef Marine Park Authority be maintained in order to ensure that it can concentrate on providing independent, world-class management of the Great Barrier Reef Marine Park.	Noted. Resourcing decisions will be taken by the Government in the context of its overall budget decisions. Over four decades, GBRMPA has established a strong and comprehensive set of management arrangements to protect the Reef and adapted them in response to emerging issues and improved understanding. Resources are directed on the basis of these arrangements. The strategic assessment demonstrated that GBRMPA's management is effective for activities within the Region for which the Authority has direct jurisdictional control. Partnerships will continue to play a central role in the Authority's forward program for the protection and management of the Reef, including for more jurisdictionally complex issues.

Recommendation 12: The committee recommends that the Great Barrier Reef Marine Park Authority create a single, searchable database of all relevant reports and publications relating to the Great Barrier Reef.	Noted. GBRMPA is working with the Queensland Government, AIMS, CSIRO and James Cook University to develop an integrated Reef-wide monitoring and reporting program to provide comprehensive and systematic monitoring and reporting of: • the condition and trend of the Reef's key values and processes related to matters of national environmental significance • individual (direct and indirect) and cumulative impacts acting on the values • ecosystem thresholds, environmental standards and trigger levels for the protection of values. The program will improve the integration and coordination of existing monitoring programs through the development and implementation of standardised protocols for information collection, collation analysis, reporting and data availability. This will improve the scalability of data (from point source or local, to regional and Reef-wide scales) and synthesis of information from different sources. This will provide a more comprehensive and systematic understanding of the condition of values and scale of impacts. The program will also incorporate the knowledge and monitoring information of Traditional Owners, stakeholders and the broader community. This program will improve public accessibility to information about the Reef's values, impacts affecting values and the effectiveness of management responses. In addition, as part of the Reef 2050 Plan a Great Barrier Reef Plan Register will be created with all management plans recorded to simplify understanding of management arrangements. This will be made publicly available to improve accessibility to the management framework for the Reef.
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Recommendation 13: The committee recommends that the Australian Government take strong action, and an international leadership role, on the issue of climate change.	Agreed. The Australian Government is firmly committed to reducing Australia's emissions to meet its target of five per cent below 2000 levels by 2020. The centrepiece of the Government's approach is the \$2.55 billion Emissions Reduction Fund (ERF). The ERF is already providing the impetus for businesses and the community to improve practices, invest in new technologies, and reduce our emissions. Under the ERF's first two auctions, contracts have been awarded to deliver 92.8 million tonnes of emissions reductions from 275 projects across Australia. These reductions have been secured at an average price of \$13.12 per tonne of abatement. This is the largest emissions reduction commitment by business ever in Australia and will be built upon by subsequent ERF auctions. An increasing range of methods are now available under the ERF to capture emissions reduction opportunities across the Australian economy, including in the agriculture, coal mining, commercial building, forestry, landfill gas, transport, and waste sectors. The Australian Government accepts the science of climate change and supports national and global efforts to reduce greenhouse gas emissions. The Government announced on 11 August 2015 that Australia will reduce emissions to 26-28 per cent below 2005 levels by 2030. Australia played a significant role in the recent climate change negotiations in Paris, chairing the Umbrella Group of non European Union developed countries and joining a "High Ambition Coalition". Australia worked constructively with other nations to secure an ambitious, effective and enduring outcome, which for the first time requires all countries to take action to reduce global greenhouse gas emissions.
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Recommendation 14: The committee recommends that the Minister for the Environment examine the Reef Water Quality Protection Plan to identify explicit load reduction targets as well as management strategies to achieve these targets.	Agreed. The Reef Water Quality Protection Plan 2013 is a joint Australian and Queensland government initiative which sets targets to improve the quality of water entering the Reef. It details management actions that will be undertaken to achieve specified targets by 2018, when the Reef Water Quality Protection Plan will be reviewed. These targets are also embedded in the Reef 2050 Plan which outlines more ambitious targets to 2025. The targets in Reef Water Quality Protection Plan were set based on the best available science. It is acknowledged in Reef Water Quality Protection Plan that there is a gap in knowledge about what load reductions in which pollutants will be required to maintain Reef health and achieve GBRMPA's marine water quality guidelines at a Reef-wide scale. Addressing this knowledge gap is a key deliverable of the Plan. It is anticipated that information will be available within the life of Reef Water Quality Protection Plan and will help to further refine this plan's targets over time. As the targets are further refined, the management strategies to achieve the targets would also be examined and refined.
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Recommendation 15: The committee recommends that research funding be directed towards improving farming technologies, such as fertilisers, to make them more cost effective and less likely to negatively impact on the water quality of the Great Barrier Reef.	Agreed. Through Reef Water Quality Protection Plan 2013, the Australian and Queensland governments are continuing to focus on coordinating, integrating and improving partners' knowledge of farming technologies to make them more cost effective and less likely to negatively impact on water quality. A five year research, development and innovation strategy has been developed, and continues to be updated, to identify research and development priorities and encourage identification of innovative ways of reducing nutrient, pesticide and sediment runoff. The Australian Government is continuing to invest in improving farming technologies, through the delivery of the Reef Programme and Reef Trust by: • Providing support for trialling innovative cane, grazing, grains, dairy and horticulture practices. • Funding a project to fast-track the adoption of 'game changing' sugarcane nutrient and pesticide management practices. • Trialling of innovative practices, including estimation of water quality benefits, through a series of paddock scale monitoring and demonstration farm sites for cane, grazing, bananas and grains. • Providing incentives for cane farmers to trial innovative practices to improve nitrogen use efficiency. In addition, the Australian Government supports: • Department of Agriculture and Water Resources innovation grants. • Funding for research through industry bodies such as Sugar Research Australia. • Funding for the National Environmental Research Programme to deliver research into improving water quality in the Great Barrier Reef Marine Park. • Funding for the delivery of the National Environmental Science Programme, including funding in 2015 for the Tropical Water Quality Hub for research that will maintain and improve coastal and marine water quality, particularly focused on the Great Barrier Reef, Torres Strait and other tropical waters. Over five years the Queensland Government will provide \$100 million towards water quality initiatives and helping businesses transition to better practices in the primary production and fishing industries. A comprehensive investment strategy for 2016-2020 will be developed within 6-12 months.
Recommendation 16: The committee recommends that the Minister for the Environment commission a scientific review of the impacts on water quality of farm-related	Noted. Through the Reef Water Quality Protection Plan 2013, the Australian and Queensland governments are

products. In undertaking such a review, the committee recommends that an assessment be undertaken of: • the potential benefits of new farming technologies, including use of new types of fertiliser; and • mechanisms to decrease the use of pesticides.	focused on coordinating, integrating and improving partners' knowledge of the impacts on water quality of diffuse source pollution from broadscale land use. The establishment of Reef Water Quality Protection Plan in 2003 and the updates in 2009 and 2013 were supported by scientific consensus statements that included consideration of the impacts of farm-related products on water quality. As part of the implementation of the Reef Water Quality Protection Plan, a five year research, development and innovation strategy has been developed, and continues to be updated, to identify research and development priorities and encourage identification of innovative ways of reducing nutrient, pesticide and sediment runoff. As a result of major investments in research and development, there continue to be significant advances in scientific understanding of the problem and solutions. For instance, through Reef Water Quality Protection Plan the Australian and Queensland governments are supporting researchers and agronomists to improve pesticide application methods. Highly efficacious methods, including dual spraying and banded spraying in sugarcane have already been developed. These methods reduce pesticide application rates by up to 90 per cent, with a concurrent reduction in environmental risk to the Reef. Through Reef Programme, the Australian Government has commissioned a detailed review of nitrogen use efficiency in sugarcane (the highest priority intensive agricultural land use in the Reef catchment). A significant component of this review will be an analysis of the potential for new types of fertiliser (e.g. controlled release, nitrification inhibitors) to increase nitrogen use efficiency of cane crops whilst reducing the runoff of nitrogen to the Reef. In addition, the Queensland Government has established and resourced a high level taskforce to determine the best approach to achieve up to an 80% nutrient run-off and up to a 50% reduction in sediment runoff from key catchments into the Great Barrier Reef by 2025. The taskforce is chaired by Queensland's Chief Scientist and presented an interim report in December 2015, and will present a final report by May 2016.
Recommendation 17: The committee recommends that the Australian Government work closely with stakeholders to deliver enhanced environmental outcomes through the Reef Trust Programme and the Reef Water Quality Protection Plan.	Agreed. Ongoing consultation with the community on the Reef Trust and Reef Programme is integral to the delivery of enhanced Reef health and resilience outcomes. Engagement with scientific institutions, key community groups and the broader public has been critical in designing and delivering the two programs. Continued

	consultation will ensure the programs remain well-informed and adaptive as the challenges they address evolve. The Australian Government is working closely with stakeholders to deliver enhanced environmental outcomes through the delivery of the Reef Trust and Reef Programme. The delivery of both programs involves partnering with a large and varied number of stakeholders and involves collaboration with research institutions and industry groups. For instance, through the delivery of Reef Programme and Reef Trust the Department of the Environment is working with GBRMPA, the Association of Marine Park Tourism Operators, the Queensland Government and a range of scientific organisations to deliver enhanced environmental outcomes by supporting a range of integrated research and control activities to deal with the outbreak of crown-of-thorns starfish.
Recommendation 18: The committee recommends that there should be a strict adherence to the precautionary principle when assessing the potential impact of the development of Northern Australia, especially in previously undeveloped areas in catchments of the Great Barrier Reef.	Noted. The Minister, or delegate, must take account of the precautionary principle when making, among other things, referral and approval decisions under the EPBC Act (section 391). This is reiterated in the decision making principles outlined in the Reef 2050 Plan, which states that "decisions are underpinned by the principles of ecologically sustainable development, including the precautionary principle". In the <i>Great Barrier Reef Marine Park Act 1975</i>, the <i>precautionary principle</i> means the principle that lack of full scientific certainty should not be used as a reason for postponing a measure to prevent degradation of the environment where there are threats of serious or irreversible environmental damage. GBRMPA applies the precautionary principle when assessing development proposals.
Recommendation 19: The committee recommends that the Queensland Government provide funding to local government authorities to assist with the upgrade of sewage treatment plants in the Great Barrier Reef catchment areas.	Noted. This recommendation relates to the responsibilities of the Queensland Government who have provided the following information in response to this recommendation. There are 36 major sewage treatment plants in the Great Barrier Reef catchments. Great Barrier Reef Catchment Loads Monitoring Program monitoring between 2007 and 2010 confirmed low contributions of sewage treatment plants to average annual loads for total suspended solids (0.005 per cent), and total nitrogen and total phosphorus (1.8 per cent). In the decade up to 2012, about \$620 million was

	invested in upgrading sewage treatment plants to a tertiary treatment standard in the three largest coastal cities adjacent to the Great Barrier Reef — Cairns, Townsville and Mackay. Most population centres that discharge sewage via waterways that lead to the Reef now treat their sewage to tertiary standard. All levels of government and the coastal communities have contributed to these initiatives. There remains a number of smaller communities along the coast that discharge secondary treated sewage to waterways that lead to the Great Barrier Reef, or that are serviced by septic systems. In these communities, it is currently not considered to be economically viable to upgrade to tertiary treatment.
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Recommendation 20: The committee recommends that the Queensland Government improve the enforcement of the <i>Transport Operations (Marine Pollution) Act 1995</i> and associated regulations prohibiting the discharge of sewage from vessels into the waters of the Great Barrier Reef. Further, the committee recommends that the Queensland Government provide funding for improved facilities at ports for the effective treatment and disposal of sewage originating from vessels in and around the Great Barrier Reef.	Noted. This recommendation relates to the responsibilities of the Queensland Government who have provided the following information in response to this recommendation. Maritime Safety Queensland, a branch of the Queensland Department of Transport and Main Roads, conducts regular vessel monitoring inspections on commercial vessels and their operations. In 2013, Maritime Safety Queensland added <i>Transport Operations (Marine Pollution) Act 1995</i> requirements, including sewage obligations, to the standard inspection checklist that is used by all Marine Safety Inspectors when they monitor a vessel. Maritime Safety Queensland has also carried a number of targeted compliance activities which have included assessment of compliance with the <i>Transport Operations (Marine Pollution) Act</i>. The following operations have been conducted since 2013: • Operation Canyon 11, Gladstone – 27-29 August 2013 – 6 <i>Transport Operations (Marine Pollution) Act</i> notices issued (Total 74 vessels monitored). • Operation Turquoise, Whitsundays Island Group, Nov 2014, Airlie Beach – 10 <i>Transport Operations (Marine Pollution) Act</i> notices issued (40 vessels monitored). • Operation Warden, Gladstone 14 May 2014 – 3 <i>Transport Operations (Marine Pollution) Act</i> notices issued (45 vessels monitored). • Operation Turquoise II, Whitsundays Island Group March 2015 – 8 <i>Transport Operations (Marine Pollution) Act</i> notices issued (34 vessels monitored). • Operation Renewal, Cairns May 2014 – 1 <i>Transport Operations (Marine Pollution) Act</i> notice issued (74 vessels monitored). Maritime Safety Queensland has facilitated a change to Queensland's State Planning Policy to make it a requirement for any marina development that caters for over 6 vessels to have available a common user facility for the handling of ship sourced pollutants including oil, garbage and sewage. These provisions have been in place since 2013 and are required to be complied with by local councils when assessing and approving development applications for facilities of this nature.
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Recommendation 21: The committee recommends that the Minister for the Environment afford higher levels of environmental protection to areas on, or adjacent to, the Great Barrier Reef, including the Fitzroy River Delta and the Bathurst Bay Region.

Noted.

The Reef is subject to high levels of environmental protection. Under the EPBC Act, the Great Barrier Reef World Heritage Area, the Great Barrier Reef Marine Park and the Great Barrier Reef National Heritage Place are matters of national environmental significance, as are a number of threatened and migratory species that use these waters. Actions taken within or surrounding the Reef require assessment if those actions are likely to have a significant impact on any protected matters.

The Great Barrier Reef Marine Park, which covers approximately 99% of the Great Barrier Reef World Heritage Area, is subject to high levels of environmental protection under the *Great Barrier Reef Marine Park Act 1975*. A new regulation under this Act was established in May 2015 to prohibit the disposal of dredge material in the Marine Park from capital dredging projects such as port developments. The new regulation came into effect on 2 June 2015.

The Queensland Government has fulfilled its commitment to protect the Fitzroy Delta, Keppel Bay and North Curtis Island through the Sustainable Ports Development Bill, passed in November 2015. Port Alma will not be a priority port and will not be included in the master planned area of the priority port of Gladstone. Port master planning for Gladstone will commence in 2015.

A number of actions in the Reef 2050 Plan will contribute to environmental protection in the Fitzroy River area, including:

- Protecting the Fitzroy Delta, including North Curtis Island and Keppel Bay, by:
 - extension and strengthened conservation zoning
 - extension of the existing Fish Habitat area
 - additional protections in associated intertidal and terrestrial areas.
- Establishing three net-free fishing zones in north and central Queensland: Trinity Bay, Cairns; St Helen's Beach-Cape Hillsborough, north of Mackay; and Yeppoon-Keppel Bay-Fitzroy River, Capricorn Coast. These were established by Queensland regulation and came into effect on 1 November 2015.
- Increasing industry participation in regional water quality improvement initiatives and partnerships aimed at managing, monitoring and reporting of water quality.
- Continuing to engage in and support the Gladstone Healthy Harbour Partnership, Mackay Whitsunday Healthy Rivers to Reef Partnership and Fitzroy Partnership for River Health.

Recommendation 22: The committee recommends that the Minister for the Environment examine measures to reduce coal particulate pollution in the Great Barrier Reef Region.	Agreed. The Reef 2050 Plan includes a commitment to identify the risk of coal dust impacts on the Reef and associated potential management measures.
Recommendation 23: The committee recommends that the relevant Minister(s) examine whether the Australian Government should adopt the International Maritime Organization's <i>Guidelines for the Reduction of Underwater Noise from Commercial Shipping to Address Adverse Impacts on Marine Life</i>.	Noted. Australia participated in the development of the International Maritime Organization's <i>Guidelines for the reduction of underwater noise from commercial shipping to address adverse impacts on marine life</i> (MEPC.1/Circ.833) – published in April 2014. These non-mandatory guidelines apply to commercial ships and are intended to provide general advice about reduction of underwater noise to designers, shipbuilders and ship operators, through both design and operational and ship maintenance measures. The guidelines consider common technologies and measures that may be relevant to the commercial shipping industry but also encourage designers, shipbuilders, and ship operators to consider technologies and operational measures beyond those included in the guidelines, which may be more appropriate for specific applications. The guidelines are explicitly non mandatory and advisory in nature and are not intended to be adopted as part of national marine safety laws and regulations. However, the Australian Maritime Safety Authority (AMSA) intends to actively encourage the use of the guidelines at relevant international and national fora and with representative industry bodies. Actions 37 to 40 of the North East Shipping Management Plan outline further ongoing actions to address potential interference with marine fauna. Additionally, GBRMPA has committed to developing a new guideline specific to the Great Barrier Reef on the assessment and management of underwater noise impacts on species. GBRMPA will consider the best available science and management in developing this guideline. The Queensland Government has committed to work with its Commonwealth counterparts and the International Maritime Organization to consider the development of a new vessel class which ensures bulk goods carriers travelling in the World Heritage Area meet stringent safety codes.
Recommendation 24: The committee recommends that the relevant Minister(s) ensure that further consultation be undertaken in relation to the draft North-East Shipping Management Plan.	Noted. The North East Shipping Management Plan was finalised in October 2014. The Plan will be subject to review and amendment by

	the North East Shipping Management Group and consultation with stakeholders as new information becomes available. The North East Shipping Management Group acknowledge the importance of stakeholder consultation in realising practical benefits of the plan. Accordingly, there are several actions in the North East Shipping Management Plan (items 60-63) emphasising the importance of continuing industry and stakeholder consultation. These include establishment of a North-East Shipping Management Consultative Group consisting of industry, regulators and environmental groups to provide input to further develop the work plan; working with industry to initiate a follow up study of shipping growth; and ensuring the Water Space Management Working Group continues as a consultative body for users of the waters in the South West Coral Sea, Great Barrier Reef and Torres Strait. Public consultation on actions that may have cost implications for business will also occur, including referral to the Office of Best Practice Regulation for assessment and Australian Government approval.
Recommendation 25: The committee recommends that the Australian Government not accredit Queensland development approval processes under the <i>Environment Protection and Biodiversity Conservation Act 1999</i>.	Not agreed. An approval bilateral agreement under the EPBC Act requires approval by both the Australian Government and the relevant state or territory government. The Australian Government will work collaboratively with the Queensland Government to deliver reforms that bring economic benefits while maintaining environmental standards. The Australian Government is committed to delivering a One-Stop Shop for environmental approvals that will accredit state planning systems under national environmental law, where high environmental standards are met. The Minister may only accredit a state or territory approval process where the Minister is satisfied that the process is consistent with the objects of the EPBC Act and that projects approved under the process will not have unacceptable or unsustainable impacts on matters of national environmental significance.
Recommendation 26: The committee recommends that the Environment Protection and Biodiversity Conservation Amendment (Bilateral Agreement Implementation) Bill 2014 not be passed.	Not agreed. The Australian Government is committed to delivering a One-Stop Shop for environmental approvals that will accredit state planning systems under national environmental law, where high environmental standards are met. The Minister may only accredit a state or territory approval process where the Minister is satisfied that the process is consistent with the objects of the

	EPBC Act and that projects approved under the process will not have unacceptable or unsustainable impacts on matters of national environmental significance.
Recommendation 27: The committee recommends that the Minister for the Environment, conduct a review to examine ways to improve the rigour and independence of the environmental assessment process under the <i>Environment Protection and Biodiversity Conservation Act 1999</i>.	Noted. The EPBC Act sets out the requirements for conducting an assessment of an action which requires approval under the Act. All assessments are conducted in accordance with the requirements of the Act, and general principles of administrative law. This means that the Minister or delegate must make an approval decision free from any bias. Proposed actions must be assessed using one of the different methods detailed in Part 8 of the EPBC Act. Approval decisions made under the EPBC Act are subject to judicial review under the <i>Administrative Decisions (Judicial Review) Act 1977</i>, including on the grounds that the requirements of the Act were not fulfilled or the decision maker made a decision at the behest of another person. Section 55A requires the Minister to cause independent reviews to be taken of the operation of the EPBC Act, to the extent to which the objects of the Act have been achieved. Reviews must be undertaken every 10 years. The first review was completed in 2009.
Recommendation 28: The committee recommends that the Department of the Environment develop a separate offsets policy in relation to the marine environment.	Noted. The principles of the EPBC Act environmental offsets policy apply to offsetting requirements in both the terrestrial and aquatic, including marine, environments. The Reef 2050 Plan commits to developing a net benefit policy for the Great Barrier Reef to guide future planning and development decisions. This will provide guidance on the application of environmental offsets and delivery of actions that will result in a net environmental benefit or improvement in condition of the Reef's values. The Australian Government is also working with the states and territories to develop and implement more detailed approaches to marine offsets, including through strategic approaches such as the Reef Trust.
Recommendation 29: The committee recommends that the <i>Environment Protection and Biodiversity Conservation Act 1999</i> <i>Environmental Offsets Policy</i> be revised to provide greater guidance on developments in which offsets are unacceptable, such as a list of 'red flag' areas, including within the Great	Not agreed. The Australian Government acknowledges that the application of offsets may not be appropriate in all cases. Decisions on offsets are made on a project by project basis. The offsets policy makes it clear that

Barrier Reef World Heritage Area.

the avoid, mitigate and offset hierarchy must be followed, and offsets used only when all reasonable avoidance and mitigation options have been considered. Offsets do not enable proposals with unacceptable residual impacts to be approved.

RESPONSE TO GREENS DISSENTING REPORT

Recommendation	Response
Recommendation 1: Ban offshore dumping - The Australian government must not approve any new offshore dumping in the Great Barrier Reef World Heritage Area, including spoil from capital and maintenance dredging, and including not approving any projects which have already been applied for but not yet approved.	Not agreed. In May 2015, the Australian Government passed regulations to ban disposal of dredge material from capital dredging in the Great Barrier Reef Marine Park. The ban applies to all past and present permits and future applications for capital dredge disposal. In November 2015, the Queensland Government passed a Bill to extend the ban on capital dredge disposal to cover the rest of the World Heritage Area. The ban across the entire World Heritage Area will help to reduce cumulative pressures on this vast and spectacular ecosystem and aid in improving its health and resilience. The decision to grant an approval under the <i>Environment Protection and Biodiversity Conservation Act 1999</i> (EPBC Act) or the <i>Environment Protection (Sea Dumping) Act 1981</i> must be made by the Minister or delegate on a case by case basis in accordance with the relevant legislation. Both Acts set statutory timeframes for the Minister to make approval decisions. Ports are required to service a range of industries in the Great Barrier Reef including resource development, agriculture, tourism and fishing. Approvals for dredging are required on a regular basis to both maintain existing port operations and build new infrastructure. The recommendation as it stands may impact on existing port operations.

Recommendation 2: That Minister Hunt immediately revoke the approvals for the Abbot Point coal port expansion and the associated offshore dumping of dredge sludge.	Noted. In May 2015, the Australian Government passed regulations to ban disposal of dredge material from capital dredging in the Great Barrier Reef Marine Park. A ban on capital dredging in the Marine Park extends to that previously permitted by the Great Barrier Reef Marine Park Authority. In November 2015 the Queensland Government passed a Bill to extend the ban on capital dredge disposal to cover the rest of the World Heritage Area. Ports are required to service a range of industries in the Great Barrier Reef including resource development, agriculture, tourism and fishing. Approvals for dredging are required on a regular basis to both maintain existing port operations and build new infrastructure. In April 2015, the Department of State Development Queensland submitted a referral for the proposed Abbot Point Growth Gateway project, including the onshore placement of dredge material. On 14 May 2015, the Australian Government notified the Department of State Development that an Environmental Impact Statement would be required to assess the impacts of the project. The public comment period on the draft Environmental Impact Statement closed on 18 September 2015. A final decision on this project will be made by the federal Environment Minister or delegate in accordance with the <i>Environment Protection and Biodiversity Conservation Act 1999</i> (EPBC Act).
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Recommendation 3: Funding and staffing of the GBRMPA should be increased in order to ensure that they can provide independent, world-class management of the Great Barrier Reef Marine Park.	Noted. Over almost four decades, GBRMPA has established a strong and comprehensive set of management arrangements to protect the Reef and adapted them in response to emerging issues and improved understanding. Resources are directed on the basis of these arrangements. The strategic assessment demonstrated that GBRMPA's management is effective for activities within the Region for which the Authority has direct jurisdictional control.
Recommendation 4: The GBRMPA should review its staffing structure in order to ensure that it is acting in an independent manner.	Noted. GBRMPA staff are engaged under the <i>Australian Public Service Act 1999</i> and carry out their duties in accordance with the Australian Public Service code of conduct. GBRMPA regularly reviews its staffing structure and delegation of powers to ensure that decisions are consistent with the <i>Great Barrier Reef Marine Park Act 1975</i> and subordinate legislation and the Great Barrier Reef Zoning Plan 2003. GBRMPA also has a transparent policy framework as established by the Board of the Great Barrier Reef Marine Park Authority in line with the statutory requirements.
Recommendation 5: The GBRMP Act should be amended to ensure that GBRMPA is truly independent of the Environment Minister and not vulnerable to political pressure. Anyone with coal and gas interests should be precluded from serving on the board of GBRMPA.	Noted. The Board is appointed by the Governor-General with the recommendation of the Government of the day.

Recommendation 6: That Australia adopts ambitious targets to reduce greenhouse gas pollution and takes a leadership role in global action to address climate change. This must include an acknowledgement that 80% of known fossil fuel reserves must stay in the ground.	Noted. The Australian Government is firmly committed to reducing Australia's emissions to meet its target of five per cent below 2000 levels by 2020. Positive and direct action by the Government, business and community will allow us to meet this challenge. For environmental policy to be successful over the longer term, the two goals of reducing emissions and ensuring economic growth must be pursued together. The Government's approach is built on science and the need to develop global efforts to reduce emissions. The Government announced on 11 August 2015 that Australia will reduce emissions to 26-28 per cent below 2005 levels by 2030. Australia's target is comparable to other developed nations and is a significant progression on Australia's 2020 target. At the international level, Australia worked constructively with other nations to secure an ambitious, effective and enduring outcome from the 21st Conference of the Parties to the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change, in Paris in December 2015. Australia has committed \$1 billion over five years to international climate change action, including action to enhance adaptation in the Pacific region. Australia will continue to promote a balance between funding for mitigation and adaptation activities in the global climate change response.
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Recommendation 7: The Australian Government should immediately reverse cuts to the funding for the Reef Water Quality Protection Plan.	Noted Funding for implementation of the Reef Water Quality Protection Plan has not been cut. Through the Reef Programme the Australian Government has committed over \$161 million for actions to protect the Reef by improving the quality of water flowing into the Great Barrier Reef lagoon and thereby enhancing the Reef's resilience to other stresses. In March 2015, the Australian Government committed an additional \$100 million to the Reef Trust, bringing total Reef Trust funding to \$140 million.
Recommendation 8: That the events surrounding environmental harm caused by the Gladstone Western Basin dredging project be comprehensively independently investigated.	Noted. The Minister for the Environment, the Hon Greg Hunt MP, commissioned an addendum to the Independent Review on 30 January 2014 to examine and report on information relevant to the design and construction of a reclamation bund wall associated with the Port of Gladstone Western Basin Dredging Project. The Independent Review of the Bund Wall at the Port of Gladstone findings were provided to the Australian Government on 8 May 2014 and publicly released on 9 May 2014. The report contained 37 findings and 19 recommendations. The Australian Government released its response to the Independent Review of the Port of Gladstone, the supplementary report and the independent Review of the Bund Wall at the Port of Gladstone on 19 August 2015. The Australian Government has agreed or agreed in principle with all the recommendations of the review that fall within the Australian Government's jurisdiction.
Recommendation 9: That the Australian Government immediately strengthen its capacity and willingness to undertake independent monitoring of environmental approval conditions it imposes.	Noted. The Department of the Environment has undertaken a comprehensive business improvement program to not only increase the capacity to monitor approval conditions, but also to ensure that compliance monitoring resources are allocated to those projects that pose the greatest risk to nationally protected matters.

Recommendation 10: That projects within or impacting on the Great Barrier Reef World Heritage Area which are unacceptable without offsets be rejected outright.	Noted. The EPBC Act environmental offsets policy clearly states that offsets do not enable proposals with unacceptable residual impacts to be approved. Offsets will not be considered until all reasonable avoidance and mitigation measures are considered.
Recommendation 11: That funding for future activities under the Reef Trust not be sourced from existing Reef Rescue funds or from financial offsets from proponents.	Noted. The initial investment of \$40 million to the Reef Trust was provided by the Australian Government through the 2014-15 Budget. In March 2015, the Australian Government announced an additional injection of funding of \$100 million. The Reef Trust provides an opportunity to pool investment in the Great Barrier Reef from a range of sources. By pooling investments and disbursing these funds more strategically based on the latest scientific information, funding for the protection of the Great Barrier Reef will be delivered in a coordinated manner, maximising the outcomes for the Reef. Offset funding is not a replacement for government funding. Any offset funds provided to the Reef Trust will be pooled and strategically utilised in line with the approval conditions to maintain or improve the condition of matters of national environmental significance within the Great Barrier Reef area.

COALITION SENATORS DISSENTING REPORT

Recommendation	Response
Recommendation 1 1.6 The Coalition Senators support the recommendation that no further approvals should be given under <i>the Environment Protection and Biodiversity Conservation Act 1999</i> or the <i>Environment Protection (Sea Dumping) Act 1981</i> for the disposal of capital dredge spoil in the Great Barrier Reef World Heritage Area until the Great Barrier Reef Marine Park Authority and Australian Institute of Marine Science Dredge Panel work is finalised.	Noted. See the Australian Government response to Recommendation 1 of the Senate Inquiry Report.
Recommendation 2 1.9 The Coalition Senators support the recommendation of the merits of an examination of a cap on the disposal of dredge spoil in the Great Barrier Reef World Heritage Area.	Noted. See the Australian Government response to Recommendation 2 of the Senate Inquiry Report.
Recommendation 3 1.10 Coalition Senators support the committee's recommendation that the Department of the Environment ensure that conditions of approval under <i>the Environment Protection and Biodiversity Conservation Act 1999</i> are stringently worded, monitored and enforced.	Agreed. See the Australian Government response to Recommendations 3 of the Senate Inquiry Report.
Recommendation 4 1.11 Coalition Senators note the recommendation that adequate resources are provided to Department of the Environment ensure adequate capacity to monitor and enforce conditions of approval under the <i>Environment Protection and Biodiversity Conservation Act 1999</i> and consider the Department is adequately resourced for this purpose.	Agreed. See the Australian Government response to Recommendations 4 of the Senate Inquiry Report.
Recommendation 5 1.12 Coalition Senators support the committee's recommendation that the Reef 2050 Long-Term Sustainability Plan be drafted and finalised, subject to full community consultation, as a matter of high priority.	Agreed. See the Australian Government response to Recommendation 5 of the Senate Inquiry Report.
Recommendation 6 1.14 Coalition Senators support the committee's recommendation that the Reef 2050 Long-Term Sustainability Plan bring together all existing strategies, plans and reports in relation to the Great Barrier Reef.	Agreed. See the Australian Government response to Recommendation 6 of the Senate Inquiry Report.

Recommendation 7 1.16 Coalition Senators note the committee's recommendation that the Australian and Queensland Governments ensure that the Reef 2050 Long-Term Sustainability Plan contains concrete targets and actions to improve the health of the Great Barrier Reef.	Noted. See the Australian Government response to Recommendation 7 of the Senate Inquiry Report.
Recommendation 8 1.21 Coalition Senators support the committee's recommendation that the Reef 2050 Long-Term Sustainability Plan adequately addresses the cumulative impacts of all activities on the Great Barrier Reef Region and its World Heritage values. Coalition Senators note the <i>Environment Protection and Biodiversity Conservation Act 1999</i> and the environmental approval framework for decision-making requires proponents to avoid, mitigate or offset potential impacts to matters of national environmental significance. The principles of the <i>Environment Protection and Biodiversity Conservation Act 1999</i> have been used effectively by successive Governments to deliver environmental safeguards in the context of development.	Agreed. See the Australian Government response to Recommendation 8 of the Senate Inquiry Report.
Recommendation 9 1.23 Coalition Senators support the recommendation that adequate resources are available to Australian Institute of Marine Science to ensure it can continue to conduct the important research work needed to support management and decision-making in relation to the Great Barrier Reef.	Agreed. See the Australian Government response to Recommendation 9 of the Senate Inquiry Report.
Recommendation 10 1.48 Coalition Senators do not support any additional or expanded audits by the Australian National Audit Office into the Great Barrier Reef Marine Park Authority. The recommendation to increase or expand an audit of the Great Barrier Reef Marine Park Authority implies that during the hearing evidence suggested the need for additional scrutiny. Coalition senators consider this assertion is unsubstantiated by the evidence.	Noted. See the Australian Government response to Recommendation 10 of the Senate Inquiry Report.
Recommendation 11 1.24 Coalition Senators support the recommendation that adequate resources are available to Great Barrier Reef Marine Park Authority in order to ensure that it can concentrate on providing independent, world-class management of the Great Barrier Reef Marine Park.	Agreed. See the Australian Government response to Recommendation 11 of the Senate Inquiry report.
Recommendation 12 1.25 Coalition Senators support the creation of a single, searchable database of all relevant reports and publications relating to the Great Barrier Reef.	Noted. See the Australian Government response to Recommendation 12 of the Senate Inquiry report.

Recommendation 13 1.27 Coalition Senators note the committee's recommendation that the Australian Government take strong action, and an international leadership role, on the issue of climate change. 1.28 Coalition Senators consider that the Abbott Government is already taking strong action on the issue of climate change, with the introduction of a suite of measures including the signature \$2.55 billion Emissions Reduction Fund and complimentary initiatives.	Agreed. See the Australian Government response to Recommendation 13 of the Senate Inquiry report.
Recommendation 14 1.29 Coalition Senators support the recommendation that the Reef Water Quality Protection Plan identify explicit load reduction targets as well as management strategies to achieve these targets be examined.	Agreed. See the Australian Government response to Recommendation 14 of the Senate Inquiry report.
Recommendation 15 1.33 Coalition Senators support the continuation of research into improved farming technology and practices to make them more cost effective and less likely to negatively impact on the water quality of the Great Barrier Reef.	Agreed. See the Australian Government response to Recommendation 15 of the Senate Inquiry report.
Recommendation 16: The committee recommends that the Minister for the Environment commission a scientific review of the impacts on water quality of farm-related products. In undertaking such a review, the committee recommends that an assessment be undertaken of: - the potential benefits of new farming technologies, including use of new types of fertiliser; and - mechanisms to decrease the use of pesticides. Recommendation 16 1.49 Coalition Senators consider that the commissioning of another scientific review into the impact on water quality of farm-related fertiliser and pesticides is unnecessary as existing and ongoing research is currently successfully addressing the issues. Coalition senators' support, to ensure accuracy, investigating the data and assumptions for the modelling used to predict the impact of pesticide usage on the Great Barrier Reef.	Noted. See the Australian Government response to Recommendation 16 of the Senate Inquiry report.
Recommendation 17 1.35 Coalition Senators agree with the committee's recommendation that the Australian Government work closely with stakeholders to deliver enhanced environmental outcomes through the Reef Trust Programme and the Reef Water Quality Protection Plan. Coalition senators note the Government is currently working with all relevant stakeholders towards this outcome.	Agreed. See the Australian Government response to Recommendation 17 of the Senate Inquiry report.

Recommendation 18 1.36 The Coalition Senators support the recommendation that there should be an adherence to the precautionary principle when assessing the potential impact of the development of Northern Australia, especially in previously undeveloped areas in catchments of the Great Barrier Reef. 1.37 Coalition Senators note that the <i>EPBC Act 1999</i> requires that the precautionary principle apply. The potential impacts of any development, in any landscape, are thoroughly considered and where appropriate, conditions applied to mitigate those impacts.	Noted. See the Australian Government response to Recommendation 18 of the Senate Inquiry report.
Recommendation 19 1.38 Coalition Senators recommend the upgrade of sewage treatment plants in the Great Barrier Reef catchment areas to the level of best practice.	Noted. These recommendations relate to the responsibilities of the Queensland Government. See the response to Recommendation 19 of the Senate Inquiry report.
Recommendation 20 1.39 Coalition Senators note the recommendation that the Queensland Government improve the enforcement of the <i>Transport Operations (Marine Pollution) Act 1995</i> and associated regulations prohibiting the discharge of sewage from vessels into the waters of the Great Barrier Reef. Coalition senators note the Queensland Government's commitment to ensuring adequate resources are provided to this end.	Noted. These recommendations relate to the responsibilities of the Queensland Government. See the response to Recommendation 20 of the Senate Inquiry report.
Recommendation 21 1.40 Coalition Senators note the recommendation for high levels of environmental protection being applied to areas on, or adjacent to, the Great Barrier Reef, including the Fitzroy River Delta and the Bathurst Bay Region. 1.41 Coalition senators note that on 18 August 2014, the Commonwealth Environment Minister stated that the Commonwealth and Queensland Governments had agreed that the development at the Fitzroy Delta would not be proceeding.	Noted. See the Australian Government response to Recommendation 21 of the Senate Inquiry report.
Recommendation 22 1.42 Coalition Senators support the recommendation to examine measures to reduce coal particulate pollution in the Great Barrier Reef region.	Noted. See the Australian Government response to Recommendation 22 of the Senate Inquiry report.
Recommendation 23 1.44 Coalition Senators support the examination of the International Maritime Organisation's Guidelines for the <i>Reduction of Underwater Noise from Commercial Shipping to Address Adverse Impacts on Marine Life</i> with a view to possible adoption.	Noted. See the Australian Government response to Recommendation 23 of the Senate Inquiry report.

Recommendation 24 1.45 Coalition Senators support ongoing consultation in relation to the draft North-East Shipping Management Plan	Noted. See the Australian Government response to Recommendation 24 of the Senate Inquiry report.
Recommendations 25 1.52 Coalition Senators reject the committee's recommendation not to accredit Queensland development approval processes under the <i>Environment Protection and Biodiversity Conservation Act 1999</i>.	Agreed. See the Australian Government response to Recommendations 25 of the Senate Inquiry report.
Recommendation 26 1.53 Coalition Senators reject the committee's recommendation that the <i>Environment Protection and Biodiversity Conservation Amendment (Bilateral Agreement Implementation) Bill 2014</i> not be passed.	Agreed. See the Australian Government response to Recommendations 26 of the Senate Inquiry report.
Recommendation 27 1.46 Coalition Senators note the recommendation to examine ways to improve the rigour and independence of the environmental assessment process under the <i>Environment Protection and Biodiversity Conservation Act 1999</i>.	Noted. See the Australian Government response to Recommendation 27 of the Senate Inquiry report.
Recommendation 28 1.60 Coalition Senators reject the committee's recommendation that the Department of the Environment develop a separate offsets policy in relation to the marine environment. Coalition senators consider existing Government policy provides for adequate coverage.	Noted. See the Australian Government response to Recommendation 28 of the Senate Inquiry report.
Recommendation 29 1.61 Coalition Senators reject the recommendation that the <i>Environment Protection and Biodiversity Conservation Act 1999</i> Environmental Offsets Policy be revised to provide greater guidance on developments in which offsets are unacceptable, such as a list of 'red flag' areas, including within the Great Barrier Reef World Heritage Area.	Agreed. See the Australian Government response to Recommendation 29 of the Senate Inquiry report.