



## Great Barrier Reef Protection Amendment Act 2009

Courtesy of Tourism Queensland

- The Great Barrier Reef is Queensland's most treasured ecosystem and is worth \$6 billion to the economy, supporting 63,000 jobs.
- The reef is suffering from a range of environmental and human factors, including farming activities in the catchments that flow into its waters.
- Scientific evidence is telling us that there are damaging levels of fertiliser, sediment and pesticide in reef's waters.
- The vast majority of these pollutants are from cattle and sugarcane production.
- The Premier of Queensland has set a target to reduce the levels of dangerous pesticides and fertilisers found in reef waters by 50 per cent in four years.
- To help achieve this objective, the Queensland Government has introduced the *Great Barrier Reef Protection Amendment Act 2009*.
- The new legislation is a mix of strict controls on farm chemicals and regulations to improve farming practices at the least cost to taxpayers.
- Under the new Act to take effect from 1 January 2010:
  - Sugarcane farmers and graziers in the Mackay-Whitsunday, Burdekin Dry Tropics and Wet Tropics must apply no more than the optimum amount of fertiliser to their soil. They must also keep annual records on soil testing results and their use of chemicals and fertilisers.
  - These farmers must follow a range of new controls and restrictions for the pesticides atrazine, diuron, ametryn, hexazinone and tebuthiuron.
  - Property owners whose activities are considered high risk to the reef will be required to prepare and implement environmental risk management plans showing how they are improving their practices as necessary to achieve a standard compatible with reef health.
- The costs and benefits for farmers will vary. There are no government charges or fees associated with the new Act.

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- Farmers and graziers already taking all reasonable and practical steps to avoid or minimise damage to the reef from sediment, fertiliser and pesticides will not be greatly affected by the new legislation.
- Those farmers that are not, will need to change how they do things to comply with the new laws and regulations.
- The state government is providing free tools and advice to help farmers adjust to the new requirements.
- Although the new Act is designed to stop the declining health of the reef and make it more resilient to the effects of climate change, farmers also will ultimately benefit from improved productivity and efficiency on their land at reduced fertiliser costs.
- The state government is investing \$50 million over five years to implement and support the new legislation.



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- The state government is working with farmer organisations, such as CANEGROWERS and Agforce, to introduce the new requirements gradually and allow farmers to adjust.
- Both the Queensland and Australian Governments have made improving reef water quality a top priority through the 10-year Queensland-Commonwealth Reef Water Quality Protection Plan and the \$200 million Commonwealth Reef Rescue Plan.
- In addition to the \$50 million allocated for the new legislation, the state government is spending about \$125 million on additional measures.
- Earlier this year, State Parliament passed greater protection of riparian vegetation and wetlands in reef catchments to further improve the water quality.

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