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[Home](#) > [Media Statements](#) > Great Barrier Reef protection in spotlight in Townsville

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Minister for Environment and the Great Barrier Reef, Minister for Science and Minister for the Arts The Honourable Leeanne Enoch

Tuesday, November 27, 2018

Great Barrier Reef protection in spotlight in Townsville

The Palaszczuk Government's commitment to further protect the Great Barrier Reef is in the spotlight in Townsville today, where discussions with representatives from Belize are being held about how the Belize Reef Barrier System has been removed from the UNESCO "in danger" list.

In Townsville for the meeting, Minister for Environment and the Great Barrier Reef Leeanne Enoch said today's meeting was an opportunity for Belize and Queensland to learn from each other's experiences in managing World Heritage listed reefs.

"The Great Barrier Reef is the largest coral reef system in the world, and the Belize Barrier Reef is the second largest reef system," Ms Enoch said.

"Today's meeting with Deputy Prime Minister of Belize, Patrick Faber, and Secretary General of Belize's National Commission for UNESCO, Mr Roosevelt Blades was a great opportunity to share our efforts in protecting our reefs, which are both UNESCO World Heritage Sites.

"Together with the Belize Government, we share a desire to minimise the impacts of climate change and ensure the Great Barrier Reef and Belize Barrier Reef System are protected for future generations.

"Recently removed from the list of World Heritage sites in danger, the people of Belize have also taken extraordinary steps to improve and protect their reef."

Patrick Faber, Deputy Prime Minister of Belize and Minister of Education, Youth, Sports and Culture said, working hand-in-hand with the NGO community, the government of Belize recognised that protecting the reef was of paramount importance.

"The working relationship between government and the NGO community as well as other stakeholders was really the key to attaining the kind of success in getting the Belize Barrier Reef Reserve System off the in danger list of UNESCO World Heritage Sites," he said.

"Such harmonious collaboration ensured that Belize went beyond global standards to ensure sustainability in preserving the beautiful treasure that nature has entrusted in

care our little Belize.”

Ms Enoch said this meeting was timely, as this year also marks the International Year of the Reef.

“I’m also pleased to announce a new regional waterway health partnership today,” Minister Enoch said.

“The new Dry Tropics Partnership for Healthy Waters brings together government, local community representatives, Traditional Owners, farmers, scientists, tourism operators and others to improve the health of local waterways that flow to the Great Barrier Reef.

“The Palaszczuk Government is providing \$520,000 over two years to this partnership, which will develop a new report card to detail the health of local rivers, wetlands and estuaries that flow to the Reef.”

Protecting the Great Barrier Reef is one of the Palaszczuk Government’s Advancing Queensland Priorities, and was a commitment at last year’s election.

“And we are delivering on this commitment,” Ms Enoch said.

“Earlier this year we committed a record \$330 million in funding over five years to help ensure it is protected,” Ms Enoch said.

“Our Government is leading the way in tackling the two biggest threats facing the Great Barrier Reef – climate change and poor water quality. “We are transitioning Queensland to a low carbon future with the goal of reducing the State’s carbon pollution to zero net emissions by 2050.

“We are also investing heavily in measures that will improve the resilience of the Reef and its capacity to adapt to the impacts of climate change.

“Our record funding announced in this year’s Budget supports landholders to make long-term transformational changes that will reduce pollution run-off to the Reef and increases the number of rangers and officers who deliver critical conservation and compliance activities out on the water.”

The new Dry Tropics Partnership for Healthy Waters announced today comprises of representatives from government and local communities, Traditional Owners, industry, farmers and fishers, scientists, tourism operators and volunteer community and landcare groups.

Partnership Chair Di Tarte said the partnership brought together a diverse group of members who would drive progress towards the vision of improving the health of Dry Tropics waterways.

“By providing detailed information about local waterways, we can identify the priority areas where we need to take action and engage the community in making changes,” Ms Tarte said.

“Our pilot report card is due for release in April next year.”

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