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Media release

Minister for Environment and Heritage Protection
and Minister for National Parks and the Great
Barrier Reef
The Honourable Steven Miles

Funding to improve Great Barrier Reef water quality and address climate change

The Palaszczuk Government is delivering on its commitments to protect the Great Barrier Reef, with an additional \$100 million over five years to improve water quality allocated in the 2015-16 State Budget.

Additionally, local governments will share in \$15 million over the next three years to weather the impacts of climate change through the establishment of the Climate Change Adaptation Fund and the development of a Queensland Climate Change Adaptation Strategy.

Minister for Environment and Heritage Protection, National Parks and the Great Barrier Reef Dr Steven Miles said the Budget delivered on the Government's promises to tackle some of the key threats facing the Reef and to help coastal communities prepare for rising sea levels, storm tides and erosion.

"We have committed an additional \$100 million for Reef water quality initiatives, scientific research and tools to help business transition to better environmental practices," Dr Miles said.

This will include encouraging primary production landholders to reduce fertiliser and sediment run-off through sustainable industry practices, as well as a buy-back of net fishing licences in three zones in Cairns, Mackay and Yeppoon-Rockhampton to provide recreational fishers with exclusive access to prime inshore fishing spots.

Dr Miles said the Great Barrier Reef Water Science Taskforce was on track to deliver an interim report to the Government by December, advising on the best investment strategies for the \$100 million commitment to achieve the Government's ambitious Reef water quality improvement targets.

"We have also put an extra \$2 million over the next two years towards a cutting-edge project that gives people near real time information about the quality of water in the Great Barrier Reef," Dr Miles said.

On top of the \$100 million to improve Reef water quality, the Government has committed an additional \$6 million over four years to expand the regional report cards program to include Cairns and Townsville.

The Government is partnering with the Local Government Association of Queensland to deliver \$12 million to coastal councils to assist with the development of local plans and options to deal with their escalating climate risks, with applications open from October this year.

"If we are to collectively reduce the cost of climate impacts and protect our people and economy, the State needs to provide leadership and support to councils," Dr Miles said.

"The remaining \$3 million will go towards developing and implementing a Climate Adaptation Strategy in collaboration with industry and local government.

"The strategy will support regional councils in non-coastal areas to address impacts from our changing climate.

"We cannot allow climate change to be the elephant in the room – it is real and is with us now."

Dr Miles said the Queensland Government was also delivering on its promise to reinstate world class coastal planning laws.

"Planning decisions should reflect sea level rise projections," Dr Miles said.

"We want to ensure people have the right direction and advice when making long-term decisions.

"However, we won't leave local governments to manage this risk on their own. We will support them to better consider current and future coastal hazards," he said.

Other initiatives include:

- NatureAssist – in keeping with its election commitment, the Government is providing \$5 million in 2015-16 to continue the NatureAssist program to secure nature refuges for lands of significant conservation and high climate change value on leasehold and freehold land.
- Queensland Parks and Wildlife Service Indigenous rangers – the Government is providing \$7.3 million over four years to provide continued employment of Indigenous rangers to work across the protected area estate to ensure that parks are adequately managed and maintained, including protection from the threats of fire, pest and weed infestation and ensuring sustainable visitor access outcomes.
- Cape York Peninsula joint management – the Government is providing \$7.4 million over four years to jointly manage with traditional owners approximately 2.6 million hectares of park estate on Cape York Peninsula, as part of Indigenous management agreements. This includes the employment of seven additional Queensland Parks and Wildlife Service rangers.

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