

# Queensland REEF WATER QUALITY Program



## Reef regulations and Best Management Practice programs

### What are the Best Management Practice (BMP) programs?

BMP programs are voluntary, industry owned and led programs designed to support farmers to identify practices that can improve the long-term profitability and sustainability of their business while contributing to improved water quality in the Great Barrier Reef lagoon.

Since 2009, the Queensland Government has invested nearly \$70 million in voluntary practice change measures. Of this, over \$30 million has been invested in the various industry BMP programs, with over \$11 million invested directly in the Grazing BMP.

### How are BMP programs proposed to be treated under the Great Barrier Reef Protection Measures and Other Legislation Amendment Bill 2019?

The Amendment Bill 2019 (the Bill) does not mandate participation in Best Management Practice (BMP) programs.

The Bill does contain a provision that enables owners of an accreditation program, like BMP programs, to **voluntarily apply** to be recognised by the Queensland Government. To be recognised, the program must enable accreditation of producers who use farming practices that are consistent with, or better than, the minimum practice standards required under the Bill.

### Will the existing BMP programs be automatically recognised?

The new legislation provides the opportunity for existing industry BMP programs to be automatically recognised, if the program owner agrees to this, as providing an alternative pathway for accredited

producers to meet the minimum regulated standards.

If a program owner wants automatic recognition of their program, they, and accredited farmers, will be given a six-month grace period to adjust the program and related practice standards to ensure full alignment with the proposed legislation.

### What are the benefits for farmers accredited under a recognised program?

Producers accredited under a recognised program would be considered compliant with the minimum practice standards and would be a low priority for compliance activities.

### What data would the government require from owners of recognised programs?

In order to treat accredited producers as a low priority, the details of accredited producers, as well as their term of accreditation will be needed. An allowance will be made for accredited producers who do not consent to their details being provided. None of the information provided will be made publically available.

### Is government able to ask for other data from a recognised program?

The Queensland Government can request other data regarding the conditions under which a person was accredited, although this is likely to be needed only in isolated cases, including where it is necessary to confirm a program is operating as intended. This information will not be made publically available.



### **Does the Bill require AgForce, or other industry representative bodies, to provide paddock level practice data about BMP participants to the government on commencement of the Bill?**

No. There is no clause or power in the Bill that would allow the Queensland Government to automatically acquire paddock level data from BMP databases on commencement of the Bill.

### **Does the Bill require non-recognised programs to provide data to the government?**

No. There is no clause or power in the Bill that would compel an owner of a non-recognised program to provide the Queensland Government with data from the non-recognised BMP database.

### **Will provision of information be required from producers?**

The Bill enables minimum practice standards to be set for those individuals or businesses operating an Agricultural Environmentally Relevant Activity (Ag ERA) which includes beef, grain, banana, sugarcane and horticultural production. If the legislation is approved by Parliament, Queensland Government compliance officers would be able to visit individual farmers to assess their operation against the new practice standards (where those exist) and may require information about on-farm activities. The minimum standards require producers to keep certain records. These records may be requested as part of a compliance inspection and would be provided directly to the compliance officer.

### **Will the Bill enable the government to mandate provision of data?**

The Bill does include the ability for a regulation to be made to acquire data, but this is limited to fertiliser and chemical use, soil testing and crop yield. Further legislative change, and consultation, would be necessary before these provisions could take effect.

### **Does the current Grazing BMP program support farmers to meet the regulated standards?**

The current Grazing BMP standards have been assessed as being consistent with or better than the proposed regulated standards.

The proposed minimum standards for graziers have been developed through extensive consultation with

grazing industry representative bodies and individual graziers. The standards are based on an industry-wide understanding of minimum practices and target the need to address areas or aspects of farming operations that present an erosion risk. The measures a producer can take to address the erosion risk are deliberately not prescriptive, enabling graziers to determine what actions best suit their operation and land type/s.

### **What has been the consultation process around the regulations?**

Since 2016, the Queensland Government has consulted with industry representative bodies (including AgForce) and individual landholders to develop minimum practice standards to improve the condition of land managed under agriculture. Industry consultation has been detailed and extensive with over 60 consultation sessions held throughout the six Reef regions. Many industry stakeholders have recognised the regulatory standards as 'good farming practice'.

### **How is the government supporting the grazing sector?**

The Queensland Government continues to commit resources through programs that support voluntary measures by producers to adopt environmentally sound practices that minimise harm to the Great Barrier Reef while maintaining their profitability and productivity.

For the last decade, the government has supported agricultural industries to voluntarily improve their practices. In addition to supporting the BMP programs, initiatives include addressing barriers to adoption; extension, education and research; two large scale, catchment wide projects in the Burdekin and Wet Tropics (Major Integrated Projects) which includes trialling market-based instruments; and catchment repair and landscape remediation projects.

### **More information**

More information about the Reef protection regulations is available [online](http://www.qld.gov.au/ReefRegulations) at [www.qld.gov.au/ReefRegulations](http://www.qld.gov.au/ReefRegulations).

If you have further questions, please email the Office of the Great Barrier Reef at [OfficeoftheGBR@des.qld.gov.au](mailto:OfficeoftheGBR@des.qld.gov.au).