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To whom it may concern

**Re: Agricultural and Veterinary Chemicals Legislation Amendment Bill 2012**

In relation to the above matter and in the light of the known impact of agricultural chemical runoff on the Great Barrier Reef, North Queensland Conservation Council requests that the Senate Committee conduct hearings in Townsville.

Townsville is at the heart of much intensive coastal agriculture and the source of considerable runoff into the Great Barrier Reef lagoon.

Agricultural enterprises include sugarcane, horticulture and aquaculture as well as more extensive grazing further inland in the catchments.

Research undertaken by James Cook University (JCU), the Australian Institute of Marine Science (AIMS) the Great Barrier Reef Marine Park Authority (GBRMPA), all of which are based in Townsville, have identified nutrient and pesticide runoff as one of the most significant causes of reefal degradation. As, I am sure you would know, recent AIMS research found that the health of the reef (as measured by coral cover) has dropped alarmingly, with coral cover halving in the last few years, and cover now being down to a mere 13.8% of original levels.

Water quality projects over recent years have resulted in some improvement – but it is often seen as too little, too late. Photographs of flood plumes of the Burdekin River demonstrate how huge an impact runoff has.

North Queenslanders are extraordinarily (and rightly) protective of ‘their’ reef. A market stall arranged by NQCC recently garnered 377 signatures calling on the Federal Minister for the Environment to slow down the expansion of the coal industry in order to protect the reef in less than 4 hours.

Overall, NQCC is of the opinion that, with the level and range of expertise in

Townsville, with the concentration of impacting and impacted areas, and with the strong community 'ownership' of the issue, your committee would benefit greatly from holding a public hearing in Townsville.

I commend this idea to you and look forward to welcoming you to Townsville.

Wendy Tubman  
Coordinator

17 December 2012