

# Message from the Director-General

---

I am pleased to present the Department of Environment and Science (DES) annual report for 2019–20.

The past year has been dominated by Queensland's response to COVID-19, which impacted both the department's internal working environment and our public-facing services and operations including national parks, arts venues and compliance activities.

It also affected a number of industry sectors that we support and regulate. In response, a range of measures were developed to provide them with much needed operational flexibility as well as funding and fee relief to help sustain jobs.

As part of our support for the whole-of-government response, departmental staff were deployed to the Queensland Government's Community Recovery Ready Reserves and Public Service Commission Employee Mobilisation programs to support the health response to the pandemic.

The department has also supported the state's economic recovery strategy of building vital infrastructure, strengthening Queensland's industries and enabling future growth through a range of initiatives including the National Parks Works and Jobs Boost, Arts and Cultural Recovery Package and Reef Assist program.

During 2019–20, Queensland also experienced an unprecedented bushfire season with more than 8000 fire events across the state. Fire crews from the department's Queensland Parks and Wildlife Service played a critical role in the frontline response efforts, being deployed to all major fires and often working around the clock to support Queensland Fire and Emergency Services. Staff from across the agency also provided essential support in areas such as incident response, operations and public information teams. I would like to acknowledge all those involved in the response effort for their tireless work and dedication in helping to protect and support affected communities.

Despite these significant challenges, we have delivered on a number of our strategic priorities including:

- Arts, cultural and creative sectors roadmap
- Land Restoration Fund
- Plastic Pollution Reduction Plan
- Biodiscovery Act reforms
- Native animal licensing regulations
- Financial assurance and mine rehabilitation reforms
- Ecotourism projects and nature-based recreation opportunities
- Queensland Reef Water Quality Program and enhanced Reef protection regulations

This year, we also released the Gurra Gurra Framework 2020–2026 as part of our commitment to acknowledge, respect and partner with Queensland's First Nations peoples. It aims to foster deeper cultural understanding within our agency and improve the way we do our business. We continued to keep our communities safe and healthy and protect the state's natural and cultural values through our frontline services.

I would like to thank the department's staff and the executive leadership team for their unwavering commitment to deliver high quality services and better environmental and cultural outcomes for all Queenslanders.

**Jamie Merrick**