

Message from the Director-General

I am pleased to present the Department of Environment and Science (DES) annual report for 2020–21.

The past year has been one of challenge and change but also of new opportunities.

The state's response to the COVID–19 pandemic remained a key focus for the department. We have had to manage the profound impacts on our operations but also across the broader community and those industries we regulates. Despite the challenges, the department continued to deliver and improve our core services and functions.

A significant number of staff were mobilised to the Queensland Government's Ready Reserves program to bolster the broader health response and undertake important tasks such as contact tracing and check-in app education. I thank all of those staff for their willingness to take on new and vital roles that are essential to keep Queenslanders safe and the economy functioning.

To assist those industries most affected by the pandemic, the department provided fee relief for commercial tourism operators working on Queensland Parks and Wildlife Service-managed areas and continued to implement flexible operational arrangements for regulated industries.

During 2020-21, the department contributed to the state's economic recovery plan through a range of initiatives designed to: boost job creation in nature-based and cultural tourism; stimulate environmental markets and land restoration employment opportunities; support jobs growth in the waste management and resource recovery industries; strengthen and harness scientific excellence to safeguard community health; and improve the translation of science and research to create jobs.

As a result of machinery-of-government changes in November 2020, the department gained responsibility for the Youth Engagement portfolio. By harnessing the potential of existing DES programs, this brings new opportunities to engage and empower young people in shaping a strong future for Queensland.

In addition to its response activities, the department continued to deliver on a number of our strategic priorities including:

- Queensland Climate Action Plan 2020–2030
- South East Queensland Koala Conservation Strategy 2020–2025
- Queensland Protected Area Strategy 2020–2030
- Ban on the supply of single-use plastic items
- Land Restoration Fund
- Reef 2050 Long-Term Sustainability Plan and Reef regulations
- The state's first Special Wildlife Reserve
- Ecotourism projects and nature-based recreation opportunities
- Legislative protections for the use of traditional knowledge in biodiscovery
- Expansion of the statewide air quality monitoring network
- Engaging Queenslanders in citizen science
- Safer Schoolies initiative
- Youth Week and Speak Out Series.

I would like to thank the department's staff and the executive leadership team for their unwavering commitment to deliver high quality services. It is this commitment and expertise that is central to delivering environmental and cultural outcomes that make a real difference to Queenslanders.

Jamie Merrick