

Protecting the **Great Barrier Reef**



Season's greetings and best wishes! It's been an incredibly busy year for all of us. We'd like to take this opportunity to thank you for your continued commitment and support in helping to protect our Great Barrier Reef. We look forward to working with you in 2026.

What's new



Critical tools to drive Reef water quality improvement

Three new reports are now available to help landholders, natural resource management bodies, industry, investors, government and decision-makers make more informed decisions on water quality actions for the Great Barrier Reef.

The reports, which focus on investment priorities for improved urban water management, a regional approach to land management practice adoption and a spatial management prioritisation tool respectively, provide vital science-based, current best practice advice for more targeted and effective water quality management.

Find the reports [here](#).



Gully remediation: key learnings for future work

A [new report](#) is available that compiles the findings from three years of monitoring and maintaining gully sites remediated through the Landholders Driving Change (LDC) project in the Burdekin.

The NQ Dry Tropics report highlights the effectiveness of different remediation approaches and provides recommendations for future efforts.

The report is one of the outcomes from the [Gully Monitoring and Maintenance Project](#) which was a LDC legacy project designed to provide better understanding of the longer-term effectiveness of different gully remediation techniques.



Gudjuda Rangers and DPI team-up to test the water

An exciting collaboration is underway between the Department of Primary Industries' (DPI) Reef team and Gudjuda Indigenous Rangers.

Eight Gudjuda trainee rangers are working with the DPI harvesting and transplanting native wetland plants to transform a bare drain near Ayr into a vegetated water filtration system. The vegetated drains are being monitored to understand how well they naturally filter nitrogen from farm run-off.

The project is building Indigenous capacity in wetland management providing the trainees with practical skills in native wetland plant establishment and weed identification, in addition to safeguarding sustainable agricultural production and the Reef into the future.



It's a 'B' for Fitzroy Basin and Gladstone Harbour

Both the Fitzroy Basin and Gladstone Harbour received a 'B' (Good) grade overall with the release of their annual waterway report cards in November.

This is a reflection of more than a decade of work by both partnerships to raise awareness on the importance of healthy waterways and the work being done by community, industry and government to protect them.

The [Fitzroy Partnership for River Health](#) and [Gladstone Healthy Harbour Partnership](#) are two of five regional waterway partnerships operating across the Great Barrier Reef catchment, jointly funded by the Queensland and Australian governments.

Community effort to clean up Curtis Island

Over the October long weekend, [Curtis Island](#) became the focus of an inspiring environmental effort as the [Tangaroa Blue Foundation](#), Capricorn Coast Rangers, and a dedicated group of volunteers joined forces for [ReefClean](#).

The team removed 471 kilograms of marine debris from the island's coastline. Among the items collected were lighters, plastic pegs, glow sticks, a hard hat, glass bottles and cigarette butts. Every



piece of rubbish removed contributes to cleaner waters for marine life, a healthier Reef, and reduced risks of entanglement and plastic ingestion for whales, marine turtles, seabirds and fish.



Healthy Land and Water 'commended' at international erosion control conference

Healthy Land and Water (HLW) – Water by Design, which receives funding through the Queensland Reef Water Quality Program, was awarded a 'highly commended' in the Education and Innovation category at the [2025 Australasian International Erosion Control Association \(IECA\) Conference](#).

The commendation recognises HLW's valuable contribution to improving urban stormwater management and reducing sediment run-off from urban development sites across south-east Queensland and the Great Barrier Reef catchment.

The Water by Design program focuses on building capacity, sharing knowledge and enhancing connections.

Read more about managing urban run-off to the Great Barrier Reef [here](#).



Queensland scientists make waves in water quality research

Queensland's leadership in water quality management was showcased earlier this year at the International Interdisciplinary Conference on Land Use and Water Quality, Agriculture and the Environment.

As part of the [Reef Catchments Science Partnership](#), representatives from Queensland presented groundbreaking research on water quality and agricultural land management including insights from the Paddock to Reef Integrated Monitoring, Modelling and Reporting program, pesticide risk assessment and the innovative use of social and behavioural science to drive land management changes.

Key outcomes included learning from international approaches to address water quality challenges, such as nitrate contamination in Europe, and exploring advanced monitoring and evaluation frameworks.

This engagement reinforces Queensland's reputation as a global leader in sustainable water management.



Annual symposium reflects on human insights

Social science practitioners, researchers, Reef managers and Traditional Owners gathered in Townsville in September for the fifth annual Symposium of the Social Science Community for the Great Barrier Reef.

Hosted by the Reef Authority and organised by representatives from eleven partner organisations across the research, not-for-profit and government sectors, the symposium's theme for this year was 'Reeflections: Understanding the Great Barrier Reef through time' which marked [50 years since the establishment of the Great Barrier Reef Marine Park](#).

Personal journeys were shared and presentations showcased cutting edge research, stories of the Reef's peoples, moral dilemmas, climate change perceptions and community-led stewardship.

The event, once again, highlighted the importance of the human dimensions to conservation, and how social science plays a critical role in the evolution of Reef management.

Project updates

Next steps for Regulated Standards Statutory Review

Over the past 12 months, the Queensland Government has undertaken a [statutory review of the regulated standards](#) under the Reef protection regulations.

The review, which involved public consultation, looked at whether changes are required to the standards (and supporting materials) to ensure they are easy to understand, clear to comply with and remain fit for purpose and evidence based.

The Queensland Government will consider the [review findings and recommendations](#). Should changes to the regulated standards be supported, a formal regulatory process will be undertaken, with further public consultation.



Better with GRASS

Better ground cover, increased productivity and improved water infiltration are just some of the benefits that graziers listed in a recent [evaluation](#) of the Grazing Resilience and Sustainable Solutions (GRASS) program.

The program, which has been operating since 2019 and wraps up in 2026, has worked with over 580 graziers across the Burdekin, Fitzroy and Burnett Mary regions, improving pasture and land condition across more than 3.70 million hectares of grazing land.

More than \$4.40 million in cash and in-kind has been co-contributed by participating graziers for on-ground work since 2019, reflecting the program's value to graziers.



And for the Reef, better land condition means better water quality with an estimated 28,000 tonnes of sediment (or around 660 semi-trailers' worth) stopped from reaching the Great Barrier Reef each year thanks to the program.

Agricultural extension trainees hit the road

As part of a unique training opportunity offered under the [Agricultural Extension Work Placement Program](#), which focuses on building extension capacity in Reef regions, agricultural extension trainees hit the road in October for a two-week long cross-regional, cross-industry bus trip.



The bus trip provides an opportunity for trainees to showcase their host organisation, region and the projects they're working on to their peers while making valuable connections with other industry advisers, former trainees and local communities.

The October event included a mid-term program evaluation workshop in Rockhampton. Trainees visited various host organisations including Dawson Catchment Coordinating Association, Mackay Area Productivity Services, Reef Catchments NRM, Farmacist Pty Ltd and Burdekin Productivity Services, in addition to tours of Rockhampton State High School Aquaculture Centre, Inkerman Sugar Mill and Home Hill State High School greenhouse.

Image: Early-career agricultural extension trainees, Anna and Teagan in front of Inkerman Sugar Mill

Burdekin students are farming for the future

Students from Home Hill High School in the Burdekin are learning how responsible, sustainable farming practices can be productive and safeguard the environment thanks to the Farmers for the Future program funded through the Queensland Reef Water Quality Program.



The program teaches practical skills from contemporary best practice farming through to learning how to market and sell produce. Hands-on activities and partnerships with local farmers, agronomists, and organisations help students to understand how agriculture fits into today's world.

Inspiring the next generation of land managers and raising awareness about sustainable practices, Home Hill agricultural science teacher, Louise Nicholas says "students are gaining skills that will prepare them for future careers in horticulture, land management, agribusiness and beyond."

The program has been operating since 2017, with around 100 students participating this year.

Image: Home Hill State High School greenhouse

Contact us

For more information about any of these projects, to provide feedback or story ideas, email officeofthegbr@detsi.qld.gov.au.



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