

Protecting the Great Barrier Reef

Welcome

Welcome to the Protecting the Great Barrier Reef e-newsletter which features work the Queensland Government is doing alongside our partners to protect the Reef.

We hope you enjoy this newsletter and encourage you to share it with your friends and colleagues who can subscribe [here](#).

What's new



New Queensland climate action to help the Reef

With climate change the most significant threat to the Great Barrier Reef's health and long-term outlook, the Queensland Government is taking decisive climate action and has introduced the [Clean Economy Jobs Bill](#) 2024 to Parliament for consideration.

If passed, the Bill will enshrine greenhouse gas emissions reduction targets in legislation, including a new target of 75% by 2035, based on 2005 levels, as well as the commitment to reach net zero emissions by 2050.

This bold legislative action is just one of the ways we are continuing our collective efforts to protect our Reef – now and for future generations.

Image: courtesy of Tourism and Events Queensland



Reef health update

[Aerial surveys conducted over the Great Barrier Reef](#) have been completed and confirm widespread bleaching across all three regions of the Marine Park.

The surveys conducted by the Reef Authority and the Australian Institute of Marine Science assessed more than 1000 individual reefs, including 836 reefs in the Marine Park and 244 reefs in the Torres Strait region.

Queensland Parks and Wildlife Service is assisting with detailed in-water site surveys to better understand the impact on bleaching and to determine the levels of coral mortality.

The Great Barrier Reef Marine Park Authority (Reef Authority) and Queensland Parks and Wildlife Service keep an eye on the Reef year-round, with efforts stepped up over summer, which is typically a high-risk period from extreme weather.

The Reef Authority releases regular updates on how the Reef is faring with a focus on sea surface

temperatures, rainfall and floods, cyclones, crown-of-thorns starfish outbreaks, and coral disease.

These updates are based on forecasts, water temperature heat mapping, in-water surveys, citizen science and aerial surveys.

[Learn more about Reef health here.](#)

Image: courtesy of the Great Barrier Reef Marine Park Authority, Australian Government

New agricultural extension officers in Reef catchments

Eight new trainee extension officers have their boots on the ground across Queensland as part of the Queensland Government's Agricultural Extension Work Placement Program.



The program, being facilitated through a partnership with the Queensland Farmers' Federation, is assisting farmers in Great Barrier Reef catchments enhance their land management practices.

The new extension officers have begun work placement programs with various natural resource management (NRM) groups and agricultural advisory groups.

They will be mentored by experienced leaders within their host organisation to help farmers refine their methods and enhance their business outcomes.

The Queensland Government has provided \$2 million in funding to continue the highly successful traineeship program, which is part of the [Queensland Reef Water Quality Program \(QRWQP\)](#).

Image: Some of the 2024 intake at a recent induction event

Progress report to UNESCO

The Australian Government has provided an update to the UNESCO World Heritage Centre on how Australia is better protecting and restoring the Great Barrier Reef.



The update outlines steps taken by the Australian and Queensland governments to protect the Reef from threats like poor water quality, climate change and unsustainable fishing practices.

Australia will continue to engage constructively with UNESCO, the World Heritage Advisory Bodies and the Committee on the long-term health of the Reef.

[The Great Barrier Reef Progress Report can be found here.](#)

Protecting our dugongs

The Great Barrier Reef region supports globally significant populations of dugong, the only plant-eating mammal that lives its entire life in the marine environment.



[The Queensland Government is boosting conservation of the dugong](#), as they play a crucial role in the health of seagrass meadows through seed dispersal and germination.

The establishment of [a pilot seagrass nursery to support the restoration of local seagrass meadows](#) in the Whitsundays has seen great success, since the establishment of the Reef Islands Initiative in 2020.

[Protecting the Great Barrier Reef](#) and its unique animals requires a collective effort and partnership involving governments, Traditional Owners, landholders, conservation groups, industries, and community

members.

This seagrass restoration project is being delivered through the Whitsundays Reef Islands Initiative, a Great Barrier Reef Foundation program, supported by funding from Lendlease, The Australian Government's Reef Trust, the Queensland Government and the Fitzgerald Family Foundation.



Reef 2050 Wetlands Strategy

We celebrated this year's World Wetlands Day with the release of the [Reef 2050 Wetlands Strategy](#).

Wetlands are an essential part of our Reef's ecosystem and flourishing biodiversity, providing habitats for marine life, including birds and plants.

Wetlands also capture and process pollutants from water flowing into the Reef lagoon, and store carbon to mitigate the impacts of climate change.

The joint Queensland and Australian government strategy acknowledges the critical role wetlands play in the functioning and health of the Reef. It also outlines how both governments are supporting the protection and sustainable management of wetlands in the Reef catchments.

Learn more [here](#).



More places to moor

Late last year, 30 new public moorings were installed for use across the Whitsundays to help protect coral on the Great Barrier Reef – bringing the total number of moorings across the region to over 240.

The environmentally friendly vessel moorings are located at key points on the Reef to provide safe and sustainable access to some of the Whitsundays' most popular snorkelling and anchorage sites.

The new moorings are part of the [Queensland Government's](#) \$3.9 million Reef Trails project to reduce anchor damage on coral reefs.

The moorings will be managed and maintained through the [Reef Joint Field Management Program](#), a joint program between the Queensland and Australian governments to plan and deliver crucial on-ground actions to protect the Great Barrier Reef.

New Island Guardian joins Reef fleet

The new 20-metre, \$6.3 million vessel, Island Guardian, was jointly funded by the [Queensland](#) and [Australian](#) governments and has joined the fleet used to protect and restore the Great Barrier Reef.

The Island Guardian will be used by Great Barrier Reef Marine Park Authority and Queensland Parks and Wildlife Service to transport materials, tools and machinery to protected islands throughout the Reef.

It will also be used as a platform for dive teams replacing and servicing marine infrastructure such as public moorings and Reef protection markers.

The barge has a cruising speed of 20 knots and a range of 500 nautical miles. It can sleep up to seven people for 10 days at a time, making it perfect for multi-day journeys and surveys of more remote sections of the Reef.

The Island Guardian takes the total number of vessels in the [Reef Joint Field Management Program](#) fleet to 21 boats.



Producer updates

Fitzroy Graziers save sediment from damaging the Reef

A projected 9,280 tonnes of sediment is being prevented from reaching the Great Barrier Reef each year thanks to the efforts of Fitzroy graziers and the Queensland Government's [Grazing Resilience and Sustainable Solutions \(GRASS\) program](#) phase one.



GRASS is funded through the Queensland Reef Water Quality Program and delivered by the Department of Agriculture and Fisheries, Fitzroy Basin Association, Burnett Mary Regional Group, and NQ Dry Tropics.

Phase one of GRASS which included an investment of \$6.8 million worked with graziers across the Fitzroy, Burdekin and Burnett Mary regions to improve land condition.

One such Fitzroy grazier, Leon Ward, reached out to Fitzroy Basin Association (FBA) after securing his 180-hectare property south of Thangool in mid-2023. With plans to run 50 head of cattle he knew he wanted to ensure a productive, profitable and sustainable future for his land, and knew the GRASS program could help.

You can read more about Leon's story here [Embracing the opportunity – A GRASS project - Fitzroy Basin Association](#).

Disaster recovery assistance for primary producers

Queensland is facing a challenging disaster season, and the increasing frequency of natural disasters highlight the importance of our land management practices that are helping build Reef resilience and improve water quality. Unfortunately, farm damage and losses can result from disaster events no matter how well you prepare.

If your farm business has been severely impacted by recent weather events, you may be eligible for:



- [recovery grants, freight assistance, low interest loans](#)
- [emergency hardship assistance](#)
- [reconnection of essential services](#)
- [free wellbeing support and financial counselling](#).

Primary producers are encouraged to report farm business damage and loss through the [Disaster Impact Survey](#).

For more information about:

- grants and loans contact [QRIDA](#) on 1800 623 946
- freight assistance contact [DAF](#) on 13 25 23
- [personal hardship assistance and reconnection of essential services](#) contact the Community Recovery Hotline on [1800 173 349](#)



Reef protection regulations statutory review

A statutory review of the Reef protection regulations was completed earlier this year.

The review did not recommend any changes to the Reef protection regulations. It also concluded the regulations have resulted in practice change and help address land-based sources (agricultural and industrial) of nutrient and sediment runoff

to the Reef.
Learn more about the [statutory review](#).



Regulated standards for horticulture and grains

The approach to managing the impacts from the horticulture and grains industries to the Great Barrier Reef will be developed as part of the [Reef 2050 Water Quality Improvement Plan review](#).

The Queensland Government has deferred the commencement of the agricultural environmentally relevant activity standards (regulated standards) for the horticulture and grains sectors in the short term and will continue to work with these sectors on related research topics.

Learn more [here](#).

Did you know?

Since 2020, the [Hort360GBR Best Management Practice \(BMP\) program](#) has accredited approximately 33% of the horticulture area in Reef regions to accepted industry standard. This is a great result and something this sector should be proud of.

Reef regulations explainer videos now online

Reef regulations explainer videos are available online if you are a [beef cattle grazier](#) or [sugarcane grower](#) in the Wet Tropics, Burdekin, Mackay Whitsunday, Fitzroy or Burnett Mary regions.



You can also find more detailed information or order an information kit with guides and factsheets by visiting [Reef protection regulations](#) or calling 13 QGOV on 13 74 68.

Project Catalyst Forum

The [annual Project Catalyst Forum](#) was held in Mackay from 18 to 20 February 2024.

The 2024 event provided a number of information sessions, keynote speakers and networking opportunities for attendees. Around 140 sugarcane growers and industry representatives gathered to hear about the latest innovations in the sugarcane industry.



The purpose of the Forum is to assist sugarcane growers and industry reduce their environmental footprint, enhance crop production and increase farm viability within sugarcane production systems in the Great Barrier Reef catchment. The Forum accelerates identification, validation, and adoption of innovative farming practices.

The Queensland Government has sponsored the event since 2018 and is proud to support the sugarcane industry.

Project updates

Gillnet fishing update

As Queenslanders, we're all committed to a seafood industry that provides quality local products. In line with this, we're committed to protecting our ocean environments, especially the Great Barrier Reef.



As a key part of delivering our shared vision, the Queensland Government is implementing significant measures to ensure a sustainable future for the commercial fishing industry while protecting the Reef.

A \$185 million joint Queensland and Australian government package adopts all the recommendations made by the Future Fisheries Taskforce.

The phasing out of gillnets and transition to more sustainable fishing practices is a key measure to prevent the Great Barrier Reef from being listed as "in danger" by UNESCO, which would have major impacts on the status of the World Heritage Area and put billions of dollars of future economic activity at stake.

The phase out of licences has now commenced, and eligible commercial licence holders can apply for structural adjustment payments.

The Queensland Rural and Industry Development Authority (QRIDA) is administering the structural readjustment and administer payments.

[More information and details on how to apply is available here.](#)

Grants and funding



Funding available: Stage Two Place-Based Integrated Projects Grants Program

The Queensland Government has released the Stage Two – Reef Place-Based Integrated Projects Grants Program.

Stage Two provides up to \$5.5 million to support the design and implementation of Reef Place-Based Integrated Projects in one or more Great Barrier Reef sub-catchments. An additional, notional allocation of up to \$750,000 is available for eligible applicants that demonstrate capacity, or willingness to increase capacity, to deliver and participate in natural capital projects.

Funding will be considered for projects that:

- support Reef water quality improvement
- leverage and integrate investment, in-kind contribution, existing resources, or initiatives
- add value across a catchment and engage communities and land managers through a range of cross-sector settings (for example, natural capital, agricultural land and catchment management, landscape remediation, agricultural whole-of-supply chain, circular economy)
- deliver additional co-benefits (for example, regional capacity building, extension, human dimensions, catchment management, landscape repair, and environmental markets)
- provide enduring legacy outcomes.

Further details regarding eligible applicants and activities are provided in the [program guidelines](#).

The closing date for applications has been extended to 12 noon Friday 17 May 2024. Applications must be submitted using [SmartyGrants](#).

Tender now open: Call for contractors to deliver fine scale water monitoring programs in Reef catchments

The Queensland Government is calling for submissions from eligible organisations to deliver cost-



effective, fine scale water quality monitoring across the Great Barrier Reef catchment.

Over the next two and half years, \$3.24 million will be invested in projects that provide local and timely water quality data and to support improved understanding of water quality and links to improved land management practices.

In addition to regional jobs creation, suppliers should demonstrate capacity to undertake water quality monitoring and effectively communicate the results to industry and landholders in the context of improving water quality for the Great Barrier Reef.

- Up to \$1,500,000 is available per contract/project (additional funding may be considered if the project demonstrates co-benefits across a region or can leverage investment with increased outcomes for the Reef)
- Funding is available until 30 June 2026, with on-ground work to be completed by March 2026.

For more information and to apply, please visit [QTenders](#), DES1231778.

Submissions close at **10am on Friday 3 May 2024**.

This program is funded through the Queensland Government's [Queensland Reef Water Quality Program](#).

Get involved



New Reef Trust e-news - subscribe now

The Australian Government has launched a new Reef Trust e-news. The newsletter is a great way to stay up-to-date with all the projects funded through the Australian Government's flagship investment program [Reef Trust](#) and the work undertaken by partners. You can subscribe to the quarterly Reef Trust newsletter here [Reef Trust Newsletter - DCCEEW](#).

Image: courtesy of the Great Barrier Reef Marine Park Authority, Australian Government



New Plan of Management - southern Great Barrier Reef

Together with the southern Great Barrier Reef Traditional Owners, the Reef Authority has embarked on a new chapter in Marine Park management and is developing a new Plan of Management for the southern Great Barrier Reef.

The Southern Plan of Management public consultation period has commenced and will be open until 19 June 2024. Comments can be provided via email, letter and/or online survey.

To learn more and have your say, please visit the [Southern POM webpage](#).

[140 Islands have been added to Queensland's protected areas in the Great Barrier Reef Marine Park... | Facebook](#)

[Four new types of algae have been discovered... | Facebook](#)

[We love to see our marine life protected and safe](#) How good are our @gldparks and Wildlife Marine rangers!?... | [Instagram](#)

Contact us

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



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