

DRAFT REEF 2050 CATCHMENT WATER QUALITY STRATEGY

Have your say.



Australian Government



Queensland Government

Prepared by: Office of the Great Barrier Reef and World Heritage, Department of the Environment, Tourism, Science and Innovation.

This document represents a consultation process, with the final strategy and any potential implementation approaches subject to future Parliamentary process, by both the Australian and Queensland governments.

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October 2025

Have your say

This draft Reef 2050 Catchment Water Quality Strategy is the next step in consultation to replace the Reef 2050 Water Quality Improvement Plan.

We are now asking everyone affected, involved or interested to provide feedback on the draft strategy.

Consultation questions

- Do you think the outcomes represent what we want to achieve with this strategy?
- There are four focus areas highlighted in the strategy. How important is each one, for us to achieve our objectives and outcomes?
- Are there any priorities missing from the strategy?
- Are there any additional measures or metrics you would recommend to help us monitor progress and evaluate outcomes?
- Are the enabling initiatives outlined sufficient for ensuring this strategy is implemented so outcomes are achieved?
- Is there anything else that should be considered as part of the guiding principles?
- Do you have any additional feedback or suggestions for improving the strategy?

Have your say on the draft Reef 2050 Catchment Water Quality Strategy by visiting qld.gov.au/reef2050

Acknowledgement of Country

Traditional Owners living near the Great Barrier Reef have a deep connection with the Reef and their Country

We acknowledge the continuing management and custodianship of Country across the Great Barrier Reef Region by its Traditional Owners whose rich cultures, heritage values, traditions, enduring connections and shared management efforts continue to protect Land, Sea and Sky Country for future generations.

We pay our respects to their Elders past and present. We recognise the continuous living culture of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples – their diverse languages, customs and traditions, knowledges and systems – and the deep relationship and responsibility to Country as integral to their identity and culture.

We thank Traditional Owners for their enduring stewardship and protection of the Great Barrier Reef for thousands of generations – and for their ongoing guidance and partnership in the shared efforts to protect the Great Barrier Reef.

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From the catchment to the Reef – it's all connected

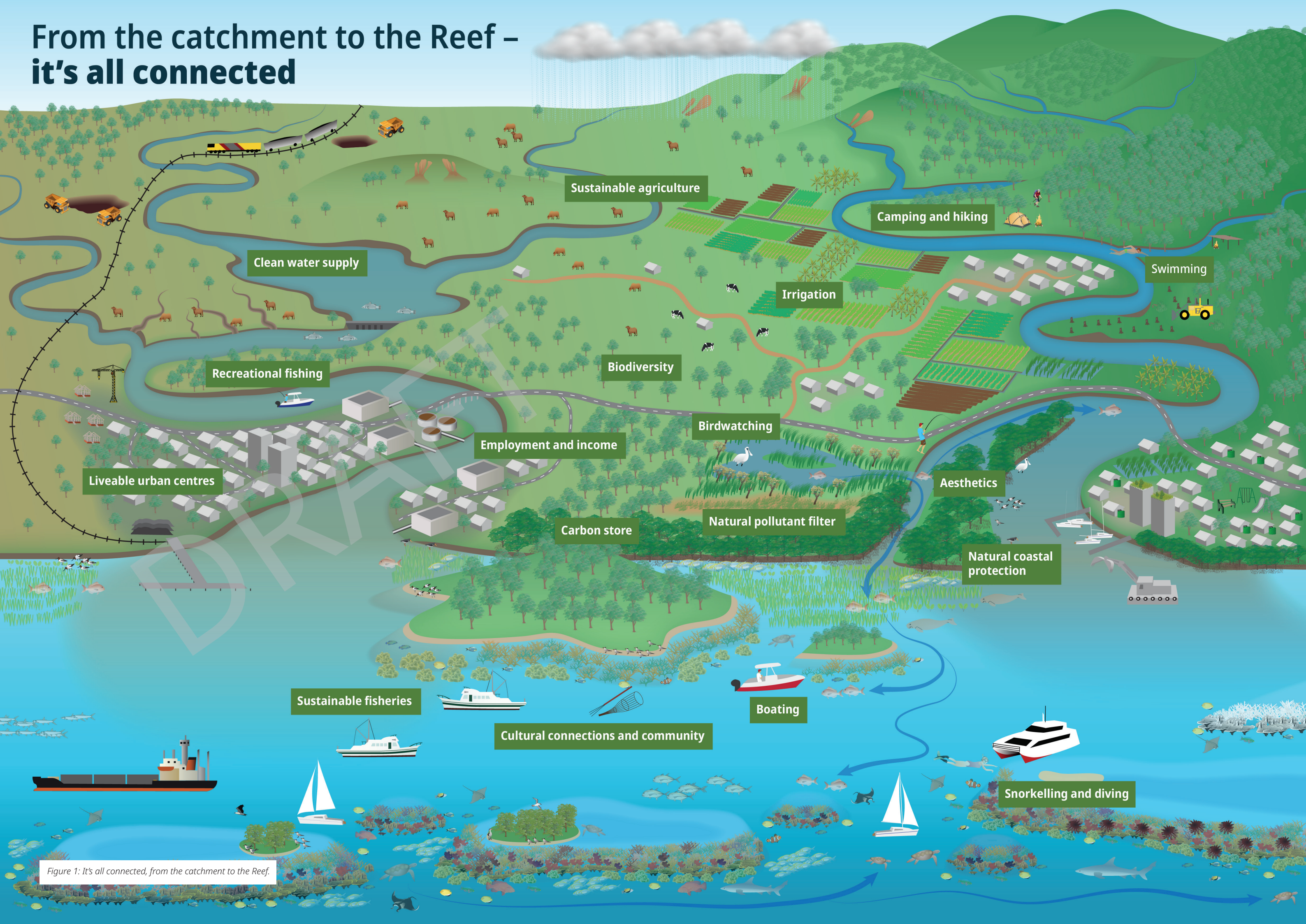


Figure 1: It's all connected, from the catchment to the Reef.

Introduction

The Great Barrier Reef World Heritage Area (GBRWHA) was inscribed in 1981 and is Australia’s largest and most valuable natural asset with one of the world’s most unique collections of plants, animals and corals. It is the sea Country home for more than 70 Traditional Owner groups.

The Great Barrier Reef (the Reef) and its catchments are a vital part of our way of life (Figure 1). They are the source of the food we love to eat – the beef, the barramundi and the bananas, the rivers and creeks where friends and family can spend their weekends, and a foundation for the livelihoods of so many. It is because of this that we must work together to protect the Reef.

This catchment spans from the Torres Strait north of Cape York to the Coral Sea Marine Park to the east and the Great Sandy Strait adjacent to the K’gari World Heritage Area in the south. To put this area’s sheer size into perspective, the Great Barrier Reef marine park covers 348,000 square kilometres while its catchments cover 424,000 square kilometres. That’s the same size as Italy, Great Britain, Greece, Portugal, and the Netherlands, combined.

The Reef is a critical foundation for Queensland’s regional economy as a vital nature-based tourism asset. The most recent published estimate of the Reef’s economic value was in 2017 by Deloitte, finding the Reef’s asset value at \$56 billion, and its annual economic contribution at \$6.4 billion and 64,000 jobs. The tourism industry in regions adjacent to the Reef from Bundaberg to Tropical North Queensland directly supported \$9.52 billion in overnight visitor expenditure and 42,700 jobs in 2023-2024.

The draft Reef 2050 Catchment Water Quality Strategy is a joint initiative by the Australian and Queensland governments. It is a key component of the broader Reef 2050 Long-Term Sustainability Plan, and it shifts our focus towards a holistic, values-based approach to protect and enhance the ecological, cultural, social, and economic values of the Reef and its catchments (Figure 2). Our core objective is to build resilience in our landscapes and communities. This will be achieved by improving the quality of the water that flows through our catchments, and by fostering local stewardship and shared responsibility. This strategy guides the pathway for a healthier Reef, healthier landscapes and healthier people (Figure 3).



Figure 2: The Reef 2050 Catchment Water Quality Strategy influences and integrates supporting plans and strategies to address cumulative land-based impacts facing the Great Barrier Reef.

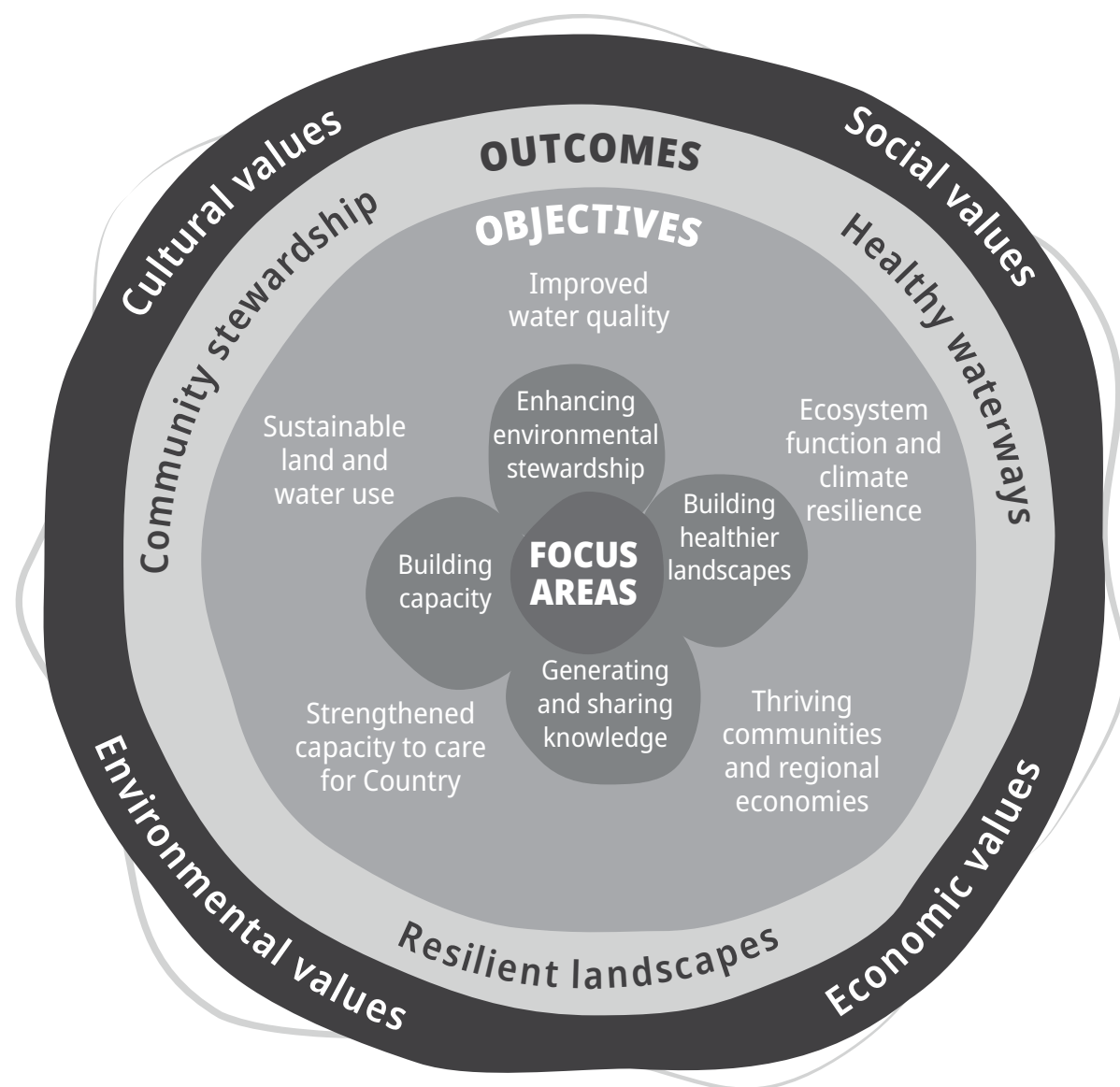


Figure 3: The strategy's three outcomes will be met by addressing five interconnected objectives. The strategy's outcomes and objectives reflect people's values.

Why we focus on improving water quality

Improving water quality is the best way to boost the Reef's resilience and its ability to recover from extreme weather and coral bleaching events, as informed by the 2022 Scientific Consensus Statement. Our approach addresses the complex challenges facing the Reef by focusing on the entire catchment and building trust and collaboration with industry and communities to make change.

This strategy builds on, and amplifies, our previous success. Actions for improving catchment health and water quality take a values-driven, holistic approach supported by the latest science, traditional knowledge, and industry and community perspectives.

This strategy focuses on continuing to manage pollutants, particularly nutrients, sediments and pesticides, that flow from the Reef's enormous catchment (Figure 4) and impact the Reef's water quality. This makes coral more susceptible to bleaching and disease and impacts other ecosystems including seagrass meadows where green sea turtles and dugongs feed and breed, and wetlands, freshwater aquatic ecosystems and riverbanks where native fish and birds live.

For more than two decades, the Australian and Queensland governments have been working with their partners to improve water quality flowing from the Reef's catchment. Previous plans introduced ecologically relevant water quality targets, outlined monitoring frameworks including the Paddock to Reef program, and strengthened accountability.

Implementing previous actions and listening to you during consultation has helped our knowledge grow. Thanks to partnerships with communities, landholders, Traditional Owners and industry we have made progress towards the Reef 2050 Water Quality Improvement Plan water quality targets (Figure 5). Scientific advancements and developments mean our approach is continuing to evolve. We will keep working with local communities to achieve the water quality targets.

We recognise the critical role people play in delivering successful outcomes. Protecting the Reef is a shared responsibility that requires collaboration from everyone who lives, works and plays in the Reef and its catchments.



Figure 4: The Great Barrier Reef catchment

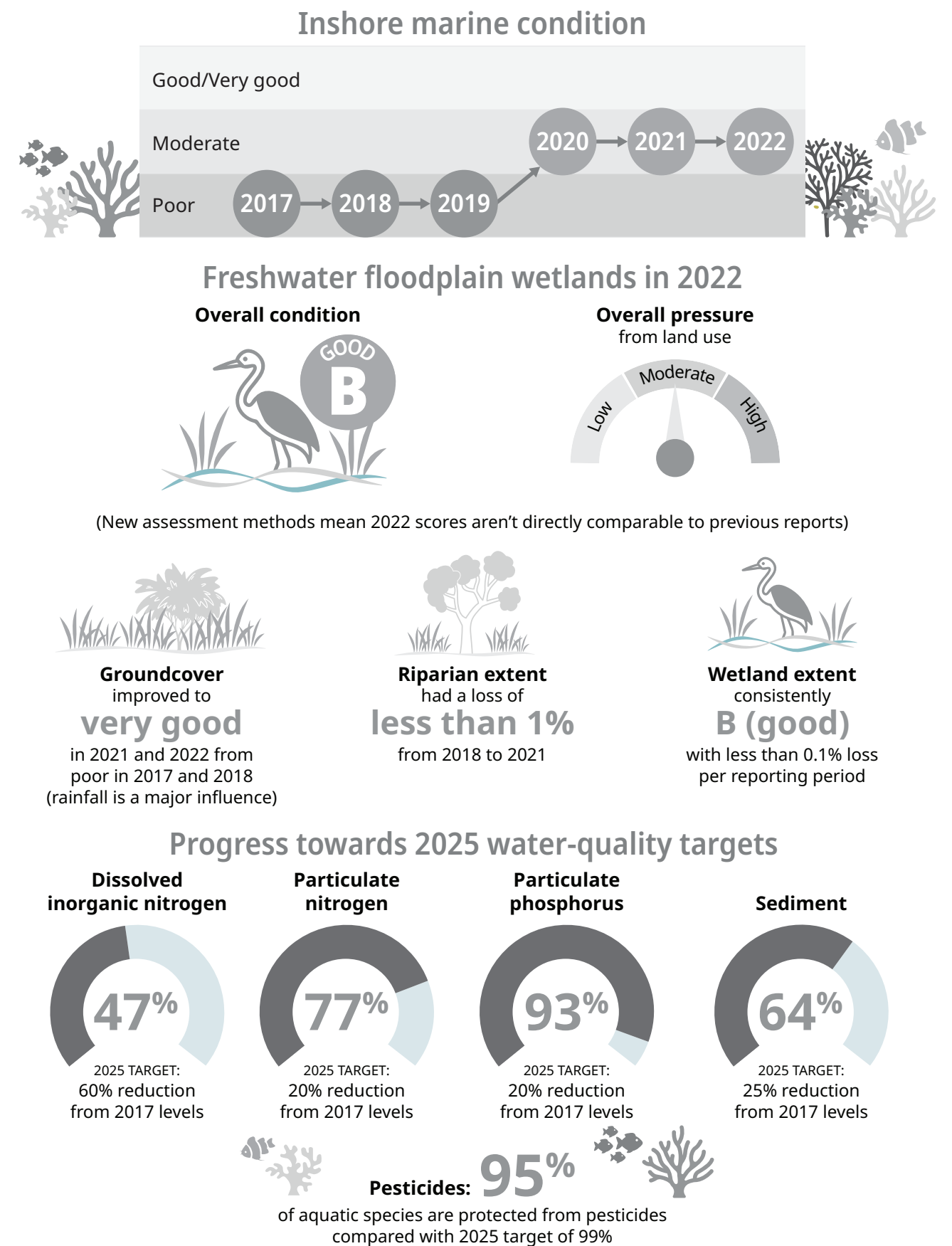


Figure 5: Progress made since reporting started for the 2017 Reef 2050 Water Quality Improvement Plan

Strategy snapshot

Vision		
A healthy catchment for a healthy Reef and healthy people		
Focus areas for activity	Enhancing environmental stewardship People are stewards and leaders of innovative practices for sustainable management - Best-practice management - Sustainable land and water management - Environmental stewardship financing	Building healthier landscapes Ecosystems are maintained and improved through regionally tailored initiatives - Ecosystem repair and landscape rehabilitation - Soil health and stability - Innovation in ecosystem protection and rehabilitation
	Building capacity People have the knowledge, skills and resources to partner, participate in, and deliver collaborative solutions - Targeted education and awareness - Capacity building - Inclusive and collaborative delivery of programs and projects	Generating and sharing knowledge Strengthen access to and communication about scientific, Indigenous and community knowledge - Knowledge integration and evidence-based design and delivery - Accessible knowledge
Outcomes		
Healthy waterways: The condition and biodiversity of the waterways in the Great Barrier Reef catchment are healthy	Community stewardship: Landholders with community and Traditional Owners contribute to and benefit from maintaining and building resilience of catchments	Resilient landscapes: Ability for landscapes to sustain, adapt and recover in response to changing conditions

Targets

We will continue to accelerate progress towards the ecologically relevant water quality targets and land management indicators (Table 1). These targets aim to improve catchment health and land management from local to Reef-wide scales, ensuring we achieve the strategy's overall objectives.

The water quality targets continue from the Reef 2050 Water Quality Improvement Plan. They are ecologically relevant, meaning they are designed to ensure the long-term health of Reef ecosystems. The 2022 Scientific Consensus Statement provides authoritative evidence for setting targets and guiding priority water quality decisions.

Objective	Targets/indicators
1. Improved water quality	60% reduction in anthropogenic (from human activity) end-of-catchment dissolved inorganic nitrogen loads 20% reduction in anthropogenic end-of-catchment particulate nutrient loads 25% reduction in anthropogenic end-of-catchment fine sediment loads Pesticides: Protection of at least 99% of aquatic species found at the end of catchments
2. Ecosystem function and climate resilience	Wetland and marine condition Improved wetland condition Improved coral condition Improved seagrass condition Catchment conditions No loss of the extent of natural wetlands (lakes, swamps and estuarine wetlands) No net loss of woody vegetation in riparian areas 90% of grazing lands have greater than 70% ground cover in the late dry season
3. Sustainable land and water use	Human Dimensions - Agricultural landholders’ positive sentiment towards practice change to improve water quality shows an improving trend. - Communities within Reef catchments and agricultural landholders’ positive sentiment towards actively protecting and maintaining the resilience of the Reef shows an improving trend. Practice management for agricultural and urban land uses is being further developed as part of the Paddock to Reef Monitoring, Modelling and Reporting Program Design review.
4. Strengthened capacity to care for Country	To be developed through further consultation with Traditional Owners.
5. Thriving communities and regional economies	To be further developed as part of: - The Paddock to Reef Monitoring, Modelling and Reporting Program Design review - Funding programs monitoring, evaluation, reporting and improvement (MERI) evaluation. Indicators could include the level of capacity building, Reefonomics and engagement

Table 1: Summary of the targets and indicators to achieve the strategy's objectives

Focus areas

Enhancing environmental stewardship

People are stewards and leaders of innovative practices for sustainable management

Queensland and Australian government Reef programs have engaged thousands of landholders to support their adoption of enhanced stewardship practices. The success of these partnerships has shown that landholders and catchment managers are driving change and reaping rewards through on-land co-benefits including improved soil, water and biodiversity.

The 2022 Scientific Consensus Statement and consultation to date have shown that trust, collaboration, and shared responsibility are drivers of effective change. By empowering stewards, including Traditional Owners, we know that on-ground action is led by those with a connection to, and understanding of, the land.

The 2022 Scientific Consensus Statement also highlights the co-benefits of land management practices from improved social and human health to positive economic and cultural outcomes. Seizing

opportunities in emerging markets to diversify funding will build economic and environmental resilience in regional communities to protect and sustain activities for future generations.

To achieve this, we will support the development and adoption of best-practice management through a mix of regulatory and voluntary programs. Our actions will also promote sustainable land-use changes and efficient water use across agriculture, urban areas and other industries.

What success looks like?

We will see widespread adoption of identified best-practice management across agriculture, urban areas and other industries. Traditional Owners and industry leaders will be working together to promote sustainable practices that are financially viable and environmentally sound, contributing to the resilience of our landscapes and communities.

Actions

Enhancing environmental stewardship	
Best-practice management	Support best-practice management for productive and sustainable industries and land use.
	Support integration of Indigenous knowledge into best-practice and sustainable land-management practices.
Sustainable land and water management	Trial and implement innovative, sustainable management practices.
	Ensure compliance with requirements under relevant Acts and policies.
	Support Traditional management of Country through Traditional Owner-led programs and initiatives.
	Support productive and sustainable land-use change.
	Promote and support the adoption of water-efficient technology for all industries and land uses.
Environmental stewardship financing	Support access to diverse investment sources, including market-based financing opportunities, for environmental stewardship.

Building healthier landscapes

Ecosystems are maintained and improved through regionally tailored initiatives

Climate change is the primary threat to the Reef, and other local pressures from water quality, changes to the catchment’s landscape and habitat loss worsen its impacts. The 2022 Scientific Consensus Statement states that improved water quality is crucial for the Reef’s ability to recover from disturbances including mass bleaching and extreme weather events. Our actions must prioritise healthy landscapes and waterways through investment in protecting and rehabilitating ecosystems. This will improve water quality, but also enhance biodiversity and provide critical habitat for plants and animals that are part of the Reef’s Outstanding Universal Value.

The 2022 Scientific Consensus Statement also highlights the critical role that ecosystems including seagrass meadows, wetlands, riverine ecosystems and riparian corridors play in the health and resilience of the Reef. These ecosystems are essential for supporting resilience to climate change, biodiversity, providing vital services, and sustaining cultural and community values.

To achieve this, our initiatives will be guided by the Reef 2050 Wetlands Strategy’s whole-of-system approach, supporting key actions that safeguard ecosystems in good condition while restoring degraded ones. We will improve the connection

between water and land ecosystems and increase biodiversity. We will support improving soil health by growing a skilled workforce and improving data collection.

The 2022 Scientific Consensus Statement and Reef 2050 Water Quality Improvement Plan Review Report emphasise the importance of inclusion of Traditional Owners in protection and rehabilitation initiatives as the original experts in sustainability. We will respect Traditional Owners’ rights, integrating traditional knowledge and the valuable insights of Traditional Owners into our work to complement scientific methods.

We’ll support the generation of new knowledge through trial-and-error investigations of innovative catchment management and intervention practices. Furthering understanding of the effectiveness of ecosystem protection and rehabilitation initiatives.

What does success look like?

We will see improvements in water quality, biodiversity, and soil health.

We will have a resilient landscape where high-functioning ecosystems are protected and degraded habitats are rehabilitated. These efforts, guided by the integration of Indigenous knowledge, will deliver lasting benefits for the Reef and the communities that depend on it.

Actions

Building healthier landscapes	
Ecosystem repair and landscape rehabilitation	Support erosion control initiatives including catchment and streambank repair.
	Support initiatives that improve groundwater condition.
	Support initiatives that protect and rehabilitate native forests, woodlands, wetlands and waterways.
	Support initiatives that better connect and rehabilitate water and land ecosystems.
	Support initiatives that protect water and land ecosystems in good condition to maintain their biodiversity and resilience.
	Incorporate Western and Indigenous knowledge into ecosystem protection and rehabilitation efforts to improve ecosystem protection and rehabilitation approaches.
Soil health and stability	Support soil-health initiatives to improve soil structure, function and erosion control.
	Build a skilled soil-health workforce and improve access to tailored soil-health advice for land managers.
	Improve data collection and knowledge sharing to support long-term soil health.
Innovation in ecosystem protection and rehabilitation	Trial and implement innovative management and intervention practices to accelerate large-scale catchment repair.
	Support research and development of new technologies for soil, water and vegetation management.

Case study: Values-based project prevents thousands of tonnes of sediment running off onto the Reef

In the Upper Herbert region of the Wet Tropics, erosion hotspots were contributing significant loads of fine sediment to the Great Barrier Reef. A 2020 project, delivered over four years, partnered farmers and Terrain Natural Resource Managers to address the sediment challenge.

The project prevented thousands of tonnes of sediment from entering the Reef lagoon each year, significantly improving water quality. It also strengthened the resilience of the landscape, improved grazing productivity and built local people’s capacity for sustainable land management.

The project combined engineered erosion-control structures with improved grazing practices across several properties. Farms benefited from newly constructed rock chutes, pile fields and bund walls to stabilise gullies and streambanks, alongside tailored grazing management to improve pasture health and reduce soil loss.

Farming families worked with technical specialists to restructure paddocks, rotate cattle more effectively and restore vegetation cover. These efforts were supported through workshops, on-property consultations and ongoing monitoring of land condition.

The approach reflects a values-based model of catchment management. It brought together ecological rehabilitation, landholder stewardship and knowledge sharing to deliver practical, place-based action.

Scientific data and local knowledge informed the design of interventions. Investment through a partnership between the Australian Government’s Reef Trust and the Great Barrier Reef Foundation supported the infrastructure and engagement activities. Strong partnerships between landholders, technical experts and regional organisations ensured the project was delivered cost-effectively.

Building capacity

People have the right knowledge, skills and resources to actively partner, participate in and deliver on collaborative decisions

Based on consultation and the Scientific Consensus Statement 2022, we know that building capacity is a critical element for achieving water quality improvements, enhancing catchment resilience and supporting community wellbeing. This is in response to feedback that emphasised the need for better access to knowledge, skills, resources and inclusive governance to effectively implement change.

By developing and enhancing the abilities of individuals, organisations, and communities through targeted education and career pathways, as well as by planning for program legacies and long-term catchment health, we are empowering communities that can drive change.

What does success look like?

By increasing capacity, we empower Traditional Owners, industry, local stakeholders, and communities to actively partner, participate in, and lead projects that deliver long-term, sustainable outcomes for healthy catchments and a resilient Reef.

Actions

Building capacity	
Targeted education and extension of water quality actions	Support expert and specialist education and career-development programs focused on identified knowledge gaps for communities to improve understanding and awareness of catchment issues and facilitate actions for change.
	Provide extension and education programs on minimum environmental standards for land use and best practices for maintaining ecosystem values and services.
Capacity-building	Identify and address barriers to the successful expansion and adoption of programs and interventions.
	Build education and career pathways, including school and youth engagement.
	Expand and increase on-Country education and employment opportunities for Traditional Owners.
	Support the ongoing development of whole-of-system and integrated catchment and regional plans including Healthy Country Plans and Reef 2050 Wetlands Strategy catchment action plans.
	Support succession and legacy planning of people and programs.
Inclusive and collaborative delivery of programs and projects	Support development of inclusive regional-governance arrangements to facilitate inclusive partnerships and on-ground activities.
	Promote and support co-design and co-delivery of regional programs and projects.
	Support inclusive community-led initiatives and programs.
	Support stewardship leaders to influence their peers and the broader community to adopt improved practices.

Case study: Equipping the agricultural extension workforce of the future

The Agricultural Extension Workplace Placement Program is delivered by the Queensland Farmers’ Federation and focuses on building an agricultural extension workforce that is equipped to support producers in practices that protect water quality and build resilient farming enterprises.

The program addresses the shortage of extension advisers in the Reef catchment by providing trainees, recent graduates and early career professionals with a 15 month placement with suitable host organisations.

Both trainees and mentors are provided with professional development opportunities and avenues to extend their networks across commodities, regions and organisations.

The program plays a crucial role in succession with an ageing workforce and few opportunities for young people to enter, learn from those more experienced and become future leaders in sector.

Since 2018, 37 trainees have been mentored by industry experts from 21 organisations across the grazing, sugarcane, horticulture, banana and natural resource sectors.

During 2024-2025, eight new trainees came on board and graduated from the program in mid-2025. Another seven were also recruited with their placement to finish in mid-2026.

Generating and sharing knowledge

Generate and strengthen access to and communication about integrated scientific, cultural and community knowledge systems to include the generation of new knowledge

Catchments and communities are facing rapid transition due to climate change, land-use change and economic pressures. Our knowledge and practices continue to evolve with these changes.

The success of the Reef 2050 Integrated Monitoring and Reporting Program and the Paddock to Reef Integrated Monitoring, Modelling and Reporting program in providing scientifically robust datasets which consider drivers, pressures and the state of a catchment has been highlighted by the 2022 Scientific Consensus Statement. We will support and improve these programs for agile and informed management responses.

Through diverse knowledge sources, including scientists, Traditional Owners and communities, we will support a holistic approach to catchment management and deepen our understanding of our environment. The 2022 Scientific Consensus Statement and our extensive consultation have shown that effective and targeted actions need a strong evidence base and accessible information to empower all stakeholders to make informed, place-based decisions.

What does success look like?

We will see transparent and accessible knowledge systems, including a redesigned Reef Water Quality Report Card that clearly communicates progress. As well as successfully generating and integrating science, Indigenous knowledge and community knowledge into our decision-making processes ensuring that the action is informed, inclusive and locally led.

Actions

Generating and sharing knowledge	
Knowledge generation integration and evidence-based design and delivery	Redesign the report card to improve communication of progress towards targets and to incorporate reporting on projects and outcomes as they are signed.
	Strengthen and continue to build on scientific, Indigenous and community knowledge to inform locally tailored and inclusive planning and decision-making.
	Apply integrated monitoring, modelling, analysis and evaluation to support whole-of-system understanding.
	Support respectful, secure data-sharing agreements that recognise Indigenous Cultural and Intellectual Property rights.
	Explore emerging risks and opportunities to inform climate resilience and future management approaches.
	Support reactive monitoring and reporting of large-scale Reef and catchment disturbances.
	Promote new knowledge and innovation in future management approaches.
	Support further understanding of social, cultural, economic and environmental values and how they interact in Reef catchments.
Accessible knowledge	Ensure Traditional Owners are engaged in generating and sharing new knowledge and data.
	Monitor and report progress towards targets, indicators, objectives and outcomes.
	Improve accessibility of data, mapping and decision-support tools to guide targeted interventions and adaptive management
	Deliver accessible and responsive communication initiatives to promote environmental stewardship.
	Support Traditional Owners to protect and retain traditional knowledge, including through increased capacity to record, manage and securely store this information.
	Support natural and cultural tourism enterprises and citizen science projects that increase people’s appreciation of the Reef and its catchments, and the need to protect and rehabilitate those ecosystems.

Case study: Point source evaluation and stewardship delivery

While urban areas make up just one percent of land in the Reef’s vast catchment, they contribute a disproportionate share of pollution — up to seven percent of the dissolved inorganic nitrogen (nutrient pollution) and nearly two percent of fine sediment that flows into the Reef. This means how local councils manage urban run-off matters.

The Urban Water Stewardship Framework helps local councils in the Reef catchment evaluate and improve how they manage urban water by benchmarking their practices against best practice standards and reporting on progress on aspects that pose a high risk to water quality.

Every two years councils report and evaluate their urban water management strategies against the framework assessment criteria. As of 2024-2025, 19 local councils have been involved in the Urban Water Stewardship Framework assessments, with data now available for all six natural resource management regions and all major urban centres within the Reef catchment.

A new Point Source Information Portal developed in collaboration with Griffith University was also launched in 2024-2025. The portal provides detailed data on sewage treatment plants, aquaculture farms and wastewater management practices.

Users can access reports on point source activities, pollution loads, and best management practices, and explore specific regions or locations through an interactive database.

Guiding principles

Our strategy is a commitment to a shared vision for the Great Barrier Reef and its catchments. By working together, we will ensure catchment health and protect the Reef’s values and ensure its long-term health and resilience in the face of a changing climate.

Traditional Owner rights

Decisions respect and uphold the inherent rights and unique knowledge of Traditional Owners as the primary stewards of the Reef. This means we recognise their foundational rights, interests and obligations for healing Country, ensuring their engagement in program and policy design is consistent and genuine. We will include and respect Traditional Owners’ values to align management practices with the diverse cultural contexts of local communities.

Everyone has a role to play

The strategy fosters genuine partnerships, collaboration and stewardship to achieve the shared vision, as everyone has a role to play in protecting, and caring for the Reef. Genuine collaboration will build strong community support and strengthen partnerships especially with Traditional Owners.

Best available evidence

Actions are based on a broad range of knowledge including scientific, Indigenous and community knowledge. Decisions are supported by responsible planning and management that safeguards the environment for the benefit of current and future generations. The latest science will support management actions that are adaptable and responsive to current and emerging risks, including those associated with climate change.

Reef and catchment values

Funding and planning prioritise protecting the Outstanding Universal Value of the World Heritage area. Planning and funding decisions must prioritise actions that build the Reef’s resilience to climate.

Regional and integrated approach

Projects need to be regionally appropriate and informed by engagement with local communities, including Traditional Owners, industry and regional bodies where appropriate. Our priorities will be aligned with complementary strategies and plans published by governments and Reef partners to ensure a coordinated effort. Management decisions will account for these interconnections, be adaptive, and be informed by the outcomes of the latest monitoring and reporting programs. change and extreme weather events. Funding programs will be co-designed with the affected communities to support continued resilience and sustainability.

Enabling delivery

Prioritisation and decision-support tools

All our decisions and management choices will be based on the best available evidence. Tools including the Spatial Management Prioritisation Framework and Reefonomics to provide data-driven insights to guide investment and on-ground action.

Investment and funding programs

The strategy is backed by significant, long-term government, partner funding and opportunities for market-based instruments. It seeks diverse financing and supports on-ground managers to deliver holistic programs.

Policies and planning

The strategy drives greater policy alignment by complementing regional and sector plans, reducing conflicting priorities, and working with local councils to improve coastal planning.

Legislation and regulation

An effective and updated regulatory framework will provide certainty and consistency. Red tape will be reduced to streamline environmental repair works.

Governance

Governance is inclusive and participatory, ensuring shared decision-making at the most local levels possible. This means people at the regional or local levels are the ones who are leading decision-making and driving change to meet agreed catchment water quality outcomes.

Evaluation

The Paddock to Reef Program and other regular evaluations ensure the strategy is adaptive, and making progress towards its objectives. Evaluation happens at all levels to assess the success of investment and initiatives.

Glossary for the Draft Reef 2050 Catchment Water Quality Strategy

Best-practice management – a proven suite of management practices that minimise risk and impact on water quality and surrounding ecosystems.

Biodiversity – the variability among living organisms from all sources including, inter alia, terrestrial, marine and other aquatic ecosystems and the ecological complexes of which they are part; this includes diversity within species, between species and of ecosystems. (Convention on Biodiversity – Article 2. Use of terms)

Community – all the people of a specific locality or country; the public.

Condition – the ‘health’ of a species or ecosystem, which includes factors such as the level of disturbance from a natural state, population size, genetic diversity and interaction with invasive species and diseases.

Country – a Traditional Owner’s land, sea, sky, rivers, sites, seasons, plants and animals; and place of heritage, belonging and spirituality. The term Country refers to an interdependent relationship between Traditional Owners and their ancestral lands and seas.

Ecosystem – a dynamic complex of plant, animal and microorganism communities and their nonliving environment interacting as a functional unit.

Great Barrier Reef (the Reef) – the Great Barrier Reef World Heritage Area

Healing Country – the restoration and protection of Country by respecting and caring for all elements of an ecosystem to restore balance, and support strong wellbeing and culture.

Integrated catchment management – an approach that reflects the interdependencies between catchments, wetlands and the broader reef ecosystem, which demand a management approach that considers the connected system as a whole rather than addressing parts of the system in isolation.

Landscape – the spatial arrangement of various ecosystems and habitats, shaped by both environmental factors and human activity.

Objectives – are goals that will contribute to achieving an outcome.

Outcome – is an overall statement of what is expected to be achieved, which will contribute to achieving the Reef 2050 Plan vision.

Outstanding Universal Value – cultural and/or natural significance that is so exceptional as to transcend national boundaries and to be of common importance for present and future generations of all humanity.

Reef – in this strategy, the ‘Great Barrier Reef’ or ‘the Reef’ is taken to mean the Great Barrier Reef World Heritage Area.

Reef catchments – land that is bounded by natural features like hills or mountains from which all run-off water flows to a low point. This low point will be a dam, a location on a river, or the mouth of a river where the water enters a bay or the ocean.

Reef communities – the diverse groups of people and organisations who are directly or indirectly connected to the Reef and its catchments, and who play a role in its protection, use and stewardship.

Region – natural resource management regions covering the Great Barrier Reef catchments. The regions are Cape York, Wet Tropics, Burdekin, Mackay Whitsunday, Fitzroy and Burnett–Mary.

Resilience – the capacity of a system to resist and recover from disturbances and undergo change while still retaining essentially the same function, structure and integrity. It is not about a single state, but the capacity of an ever-changing, dynamic system to return to a healthy state after disturbance or impact.

Rehabilitation – the process of reinstating a level of ecosystem functionality on degraded sites as a means of enabling the ecosystem to keep providing ecosystem goods and services.

Restoration – the process of assisting the recovery of an ecosystem that has been degraded, damaged or destroyed. (Note: single species and habitat restoration can be considered complementary to, and an important component of, ecological restoration.)

Riparian – relating to, or situated on, the bed and banks of a river or watercourse.

Stewardship – local environmental stewardship refers to the actions undertaken by individuals, groups or networks, with various motivations and levels of capacity, to protect, care for or responsibly use the environment in pursuit of environmental and/or social outcomes in diverse social–ecological contexts.

Traditional Owners – in the context of the Great Barrier Reef and its catchments, Traditional Owners are Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples who hold inherent rights, interests and obligations under Lore and Culture to care for and protect their Land, Sea, and Sky Country.

Values – in this strategy, values represent the uses, worth or benefits that people perceive are gained from healthy ecosystems. They include people’s environmental, cultural, social and economic values. We also recognise the Reef’s Outstanding Universal Value.

Water quality – the chemical, physical, biological and radiological characteristics of water. It is a measure of the condition of water relative to the requirements of one or more living organism and/or for any human need or purpose.



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