

# 2014 water quality IMPROVEMENT PLAN

## Blackrock Creek Management Area Progress Report

### Summary of progress

The Blackrock Creek catchment headwaters originate in the Clarke Range and High Ecological Value forest of Eungulla National Park before entering the coastal plain and estuary at St Helens Bay. Forty seven percent of the lowland are utilised for grazing, while 30% has been developed for cane production that is concentrated on the creek flats. The coastal zone is dominated by grazing to the estuary margins.

In 2007, Blackrock Creek and its' estuary were rated as being in moderate condition relative to other catchment areas in the Mackay Whitsunday region. At this time, St Helens Bay was considered to be at high marine risk from reduced water quality and ecosystem health degradation. Between 2007 and 2013, there have been excellent commitment by farmers in the Blackrock Creek catchment to improve their on-farm management practices to improve water quality entering the receiving waters of St Helens Bay.



*"Reef Rescue helped us change to an overhead, variable rate irrigation system, saving us energy, water and limiting runoff."*

John Fox (with Joe Muscat),  
Blackrock Creek cane farmer

### Ecosystem implementation highlights

- Riparian management improved on more than 10 km of Blackrock Creek by graziers who have installed riparian fencing, off-stream watering points and gully management with Reef Rescue support helping to improve more than 2478 ha of riparian land

### Agriculture implementation highlights

- Graziers have improved pasture management on 1080 ha of grazing land with Reef Rescue support
- 18 Blackrock Creek farmers managing more than 4,300 ha of sugar cane have improved management practices for water quality benefits with assistance from Reef Rescue

### Future priorities

Grazing management practices that reduce phosphorus and nitrogen loads are the highest priority for continued improvement of event water quality in the Blackrock Creek catchment area. Management practices that reduce other nutrients and residual herbicides are a moderate priority.

System repair actions that restore riparian vegetation, saltmarshes and mangroves, and improve riparian connectivity are of the highest priority to improve the ecosystem health of the important estuarine areas at Blackrock Creek and St Helens Bay.



*Visitors at Col MacKenzie's Farm Field Day inspecting variable rate fertiliser applicator that enables precision placement and nutrient rates to be applied across farm for best water quality and soil management .*