

Enabling sustainable natural resource management in the Mackay Whitsunday Isaac region for the benefit of all



Resilient ecosystems,
engaged community

REEF CATCHMENTS

STRATEGIC PLAN

2018 - 2022

MACKAY WHITSUNDAY ISAAC





WHO WE ARE

We are the regional natural resource management body for the Mackay Whitsunday Isaac region – 'Reef Catchments' which spans the Mackay, and part of the Whitsunday and Isaac local government areas and includes catchments, coasts and waters that are essential to the survival of the Great Barrier Reef and the Central Queensland way of life. Reef Catchments is one of 14 not-for-profit regional natural resource management bodies in Queensland.

Effectively managing natural resources and ecosystems involves individuals, organisations and institutions working together at the national, state, regional and local level. Over the last two decades Reef Catchments has been collaborating with stakeholders, capturing and sharing information and brokering investment to solve complex environmental and natural resource issues across our regional landscape. This Strategic Plan sets out how we will continue to enable sustainable natural resource management in the Mackay Whitsunday Isaac region for the benefit of all. We look forward to working with our partners to deliver this vision.

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OUR VALUES

OUR VALUES DEFINE WHO WE ARE AND HOW WE WISH TO WORK.

WE STRIVE FOR:

- ✓ Results - Motivated to achieve high quality outcomes
- ✓ Integrity - Act with honesty, transparency and accountability
- ✓ Respect - Show respect for ourselves, each other and our environment
- ✓ Collaboration - Be inclusive and collaborative
- ✓ Innovation - Display initiative and creativity
- ✓ Stewardship – Value and use knowledge to leave a lasting legacy

OUR PURPOSE

Enabling sustainable natural resource management in the Mackay Whitsunday Isaac region for the benefit of all.



To achieve our purpose, we will:



OUR OPERATING ENVIRONMENT

The world is rapidly changing. The dynamic relationship between human and ecological systems at the regional, national and global scale provide many strategic risks and opportunities for our organisation and the sustainable natural resource management outcomes we seek to achieve.

OVER THE LIFE OF THIS PLAN KEY STRATEGIC OPPORTUNITIES INCLUDE

- ✓ Potential use of new and emerging technologies and techniques
- ✓ Emerging collaboration prospects with Traditional Owners
- ✓ Channelling our spirit of innovation and capacity to influence natural resource management and build resilient ecosystems
- ✓ Increasing attention on improving the condition of the Great Barrier Reef
- ✓ Evolution in market-based mechanisms and growth in community-based organisations
- ✓ Capitalising on the growth of citizen science to create opportunities to engage with the community whilst filling research and monitoring gaps

OVER THE NEXT FIVE YEARS KEY STRATEGIC RISKS INCLUDE

- ✓ Legacy impacts and emerging threats to the health and resilience of critical ecosystem
- ✓ An uncertain investment environment for natural resource management
- ✓ Fluctuating socio-economic drivers and associated resource use
- ✓ Loss of Reef Catchments institutional knowledge
- ✓ Increasing local impacts from global climate change
- ✓ Fluctuating political drivers including changes in Government and overlapping or conflicting policy positions e.g. developing northern Australia and managing impacts vs. the purpose and intent of the Reef 2050 Plan



OUR PRIORITY PROGRAM GOALS AND FOCUS AREAS

Consistent with our purpose, over the next five years we will focus our effort on the following high-level program goals and supporting strategies. Many of these thematic priorities are interrelated and mutually supportive. Specific priority projects will be identified in the operational plan with progress reported in our annual report.



1. Championing the vision for sustainable natural resource management

As the designated regional NRM body we have a responsibility to be the voice and champion a bold vision for sustainable natural resource management for collective benefit. This will involve increasing emphasis on:

- Leading by example – demonstrate we are champions of NRM and environmental stewardship.
- Building and strengthening relationships among the broader network of potential collaborators across government, community and industry sectors.
- Supporting the Traditional Owner Reference Group (TORG) to develop a Strategic Plan and climate change adaptation project / plan for at risk cultural heritage resources.
- Proactively influence progressive policies and advocating for their adoption in forums at the local, regional and national scale.
- Being the 'go to' organisation and voice for sustainable NRM matters in the Mackay Whitsunday Isaac region.
- Proactively engaging with local media and contributing to public debate with engaging and evidence-based perspectives that inspire positive action.
- Building recognition and confidence with the Reef Catchments brand including through targeted use of social media.

2. Transforming behaviour and influencing attitudes

Influencing attitudes and transforming behaviours with compelling evidence is fundamental to achieving sustainable natural resource management in the region. We will focus on:

- Investing strategically in school-based programs to drive long-term society-wide attitudinal and behavioural changes.
- Better use of new and emerging technologies and management techniques to further strengthen evidenced based decision-making processes at the regional scale.
- Improving access to available evidence to support transformational changes amongst natural resource managers and users.
- Creating and converting existing knowledge into best practice guides and facilitating new research to mitigate and manage emerging risks.

3. Continually improving land use practices across all sectors

With a strong and proud history of primary production across the region we have an opportunity to work with industry stakeholders, including individuals, across all sectors to continually improve land use practices. Strategic priorities include:

- Further strengthening and expanding best-practice partnership programs and land management improvement with the grazing, cane, horticulture, forestry, fishery sectors, urban communities, local government and other NRM groups.
- Replicating successful programs and funding models, such as Project Catalyst, with willing partners.
- Facilitate additional research and evaluation of land use practice changes (including positive case studies) to build the necessary evidence-base for wider promotion and adoption.
- Undertake further extension work to promote research learnings from previous programs.

OUR PRIORITY PROGRAM GOALS AND FOCUS AREAS

4. Enhancing organisational capability

Enabling sustainable natural resource management and resilient ecosystems is a continuous journey. Enhancing the long-term capability and viability of the Reef Catchments Group (Reef Catchments and Catchment Solutions) and other collaborating organisations is therefore a critical success factor. To this end we remain committed to:

- a) Being an employer of choice.
- b) Diversifying and growing our revenue/investment streams to ensure long-term viability for the Reef Catchments Group and for natural resource management programs in the region.
- c) Increasing operational efficiency to maximise the investment into on ground projects.
- d) Continually improving governance arrangements to manage risks, operate with transparency, and integrity and inspire stakeholder confidence.
- e) Strengthening our collaboration with NRM Regions Queensland and other regional NRM bodies to support delivery of the Queensland Living Landscapes Local Livelihoods agenda.
- f) Fostering a culture of staff retention and maximising knowledge sharing within the organisation.
- g) Creating opportunities for staff development and progression through measures such as succession planning, mentoring, training and professional development.
- h) Ensuring we take a holistic view on maximising staff wellbeing.
- i) Valuing the knowledge we have, and applying the best available information and science to all that we do.
- j) Capturing organisational knowledge (collate data, retain information, manage data) and effectively using the information to deliver and understand long-term outcomes for a lasting legacy.

5. Restoring Reef resilience and enhancing ecosystem health and biodiversity

Recovery of the Great Barrier Reef relies on improving water quality and restoring healthy ecological systems on the Reef and in the adjoining catchments. To support broader Reef, NRM and ecosystem resilience efforts, we will:

- a) Strengthen the alignment of our work towards Reef health in the catchments, along the coast, and expand our positive influence into adjoining marine areas.
- b) Proactively develop and identify programs and opportunities to improve regional ecosystem health, and biodiversity to create a resilient environment.
- c) Improving the condition and stabilising the trajectory of targeted threatened species and threatened ecological communities across the region.
- d) Update the Mackay, Whitsunday, and Isaac Water Quality Improvement Plan to better reflect Reef 2050 targets and our contribution towards their achievement.
- e) Utilise the Mackay-Whitsunday Healthy Rivers to Reef Partnership and leverage off the expertise of evidence held by Partners.
- f) Proactively develop reef resilience solutions aligned with established and emerging major investment streams (e.g. Queensland Government's \$500m Land Restoration Fund and emerging market-based mechanisms such as Reef Credits).
- g) Actively work with the Reef Alliance (industry, NRM bodies and conservation sector) to drive the agenda and seek opportunities to secure the future health of the Great Barrier Reef and supporting engaged and prosperous communities and industries.
- h) Identify investment opportunities to action priorities in the Mackay Whitsunday Isaac Climate Sustainability Plan.
- i) Working with and motivating the community and industry to adapt to substantial and unprecedented changes in the climate for our region
- j) Using the best science to help us plan for a changing climate.
- k) Negotiating and implementing adaptation pathways in a changing climate that lead to a sustainable future for the region.



OUR PRIORITY PROGRAM GOALS AND FOCUS AREAS

6. Strengthening community cohesion and custodianship

Strong, cohesive and resilient communities are intimately engaged with sustainable natural resource management, and are built on a culture of collaboration, a habit of custodianship, and a sense of shared opportunity. We will continue to work as part of our community to:



- a) Better integrate Indigenous ecological knowledge with science to deliver superior natural resource management outcomes.
- b) Update our stakeholder engagement strategy and re-energise our working relationships with individuals, organisations, and communities, all levels of government, businesses and industry (including by working with groups that can help our efforts to achieve sustainable natural resource management).
- c) Create new partnership opportunities to develop and deliver on our priorities
- d) Make sustainable natural resource management relevant by giving it a function in the life of local communities.
- e) Working with Traditional Owners to better integrate natural and cultural resource management and respect and protect Indigenous connection to land and sea country.
- f) Support community groups to deliver on their strategic goals, where they align with Reef Catchments.
- g) Build capacity, community strength, preparedness and resilience for the community to address issues such as climate change.



7. Targeting investment through planning and prioritisation

With a proven track record identifying natural resource management priorities and developing professional planning products, Reef Catchments is well placed to target future investment that delivers lasting solutions. We will build on this foundation by:

- a) Better using existing natural resource management plans to secure additional resources and deliver on ground outcomes.
- b) Synthesising current knowledge to identify and raise the profile of priority projects and actions that can be implemented by partners.
- c) Identifying potential priority projects and opportunities to update relevant plans (e.g. local coastal plans, Mackay Coast Study, Natural Environment Plan).
- d) Identifying 'Project Champions' to advocate for Reef Catchments, our projects, programs, outcomes and community benefits, both environmental and productivity.
- e) Developing a prospectus of projects to proactively attract additional investment including through offsets, market-based mechanisms, philanthropic program and other sources.
- f) Evaluating long-term outcomes and success over long periods; communicating and celebrating our successes.
- g) Being an advocate for natural resource management investment in the Mackay Whitsunday Isaac region.

What does success look like?

In line with the principles of adaptive management we will continue to improve our performance by learning from experience and actively seeking feedback from staff, stakeholders and delivery partners on the success of our projects and programs. We will continue to refine our performance evaluation and reporting methods to include inputs (e.g. resources invested), processes (e.g. planning and engagement mechanisms used), and outcomes (improved condition in Reef and catchment health). This will provide a more complete picture of the value added by community-based natural resource management in the Reef Catchments region.

A living document

This Strategic Plan will be reviewed regularly and implemented through the operational plan and individual projects and programs delivered by Reef Catchments and collaborating partners.



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