

Reef Catchments to oversee major water quality improvement program

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Local not-for-profit natural resource management organisation, Reef Catchments, will be overseeing an exciting four-year program which will benefit and support landholders to improve farm management practices and adopt new technologies.

Reef Catchments, which is community owned and operated, has been awarded \$2.25m from the Great Barrier Reef Foundation to design and develop a regional program for managing major water quality improvement projects within the Plane and Pioneer Catchments. These catchments have been identified as priority areas.

The aim of the regional program is to improve reef water quality by reducing annual nutrient loads (dissolved inorganic nitrogen (DIN)) by 26t and pesticides by 215 kg. It will also benefit the local economy and help to build strong relationships between all stakeholders.

A regional forum aimed at fostering collaboration between stakeholders and industry will be held early in March. The forum provides an initial platform for communication and engagement from the outset of the project. Input from partners will help guide the design, planning and delivery of the regional program and ensure maximum support and adoption.

A key focus of the project is to:

- engage regional involvement in the design and focus of future investment,
- work with regional partners and growers on delivering on water quality improvements.
- provide opportunity for pesticide activities to be funded on a large scale, something not seen before.

Reef Catchments CEO, Katrina Dent said: “This is very exciting news and cements our role as program leaders for water quality for sugar cane. Congratulations to everyone involved in developing the proposals that led to this funding.”

Great Barrier Reef Foundation Managing Director Anna Marsden said the Foundation is looking forward to working with Reef Catchments to deliver this important regional water quality program.

“A healthy Reef needs clean water, which is why improving water quality from land-based run-off is so important to the health of our global icon,” Ms Marsden said.

“Reef Catchments has a strong track record of working with landholders and others in the local community who are committed to making a positive difference to Reef health



and this program will build on the some of the great initiatives underway and bring forward new on-ground activities proposed for the Mackay Whitsunday region.”

The regional water quality improvement program is funded by the partnership between the Australian Government’s Reef Trust and the Great Barrier Reef Foundation which is building on and supporting delivery of the joint Australian and Queensland Government Reef 2050 Long-Term Sustainability Plan.

For more information, please contact Sally Stutsel at Reef Catchments on sally.stutsel@reefcatchments.com or (07) 4968 4225

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