

Community takes the lead in Reef protection

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In 2020, Reef Catchments led the development of the Mackay Whitsunday Isaac Reef Community Action Plan (CAP) of which 10 community-led strategies emerged all focused on protecting the Great Barrier Reef and improving Reef values.

Mackay Whitsunday Isaac CAP Leader Kellie Best said that over the past year, two of these strategies have progressed to on-ground projects in our region.

Sarina Landcare Catchment Management Association (SLCMA) recently led one of these projects engaging the community, including youth, Mackay Regional Council, volunteers and local residents to undertake coastal rehabilitation activities. The activities were focused on improving on-ground condition and building resilience at Carmila and Grasstree beaches. The project originates from community identification of expanding multi-stakeholder revegetation events as a priority for action.

SLCMA Coordinator Saskia von Fahland said it was great to see the CAP process come to fruition and lead to meaningful activities being undertaken in the catchment.

“Our local CAP project was a great opportunity to undertake a range of on-ground activities at local beaches and engage with the local community to raise awareness of the importance of having a healthy, resilient coastal zone, as the interface to the marine environment,” Ms von Fahland said.

With the help and hard work of a suite of people, SLCMA have planted 300 trees, removed more than 90 kilograms of invasive weeds, and cleaned up 55 kilograms of marine debris to improve the local environment, which will also provide benefits to adjacent marine environments.

Whitsunday Regional Council are also leading a school waste minimisation program in the Whitsundays, following the identification of helping schools reduce their carbon footprint by reducing food waste as a priority by our community.

Whitsunday Regional Council Mayor Julie Hall said the waste minimisation programs are a great tool to empower schools and to and educate our community.

Five schools have been visited by a waste education officer to conduct waste bin audits as a first step. The findings from these analyses have enabled each school to identify a series of focus areas and actions for implementation to improve their waste management practices, captured in goal-oriented waste management plans. Some common priorities include organics diversion from landfill, reducing soft plastics and introducing recycling.

The project then takes an additional step by empowering schools to make positive on-ground change. It does this through the provision of grants to support the implementation of the key initiatives outlined in school waste management plans.

"It is more important than ever to ensure that the younger generation in our community understand the importance of sustainable waste management practices in order to preserve our environment and delicate ecosystems for years to come.

These school-based waste education programs have been really successful in educating our young residents on the difference they can make by following a few simple waste reduction steps," Mayor Hall said.

To learn more about the achievements and impacts of the Mackay Whitsunday Isaac CAP program to date, please visit the [Great Barrier Reef Foundation's website](#) to view a newly released regional case study.

The Mackay Whitsunday Isaac Reef Community Action Plan is funded by the partnership between the Australian Government's Reef Trust and the Great Barrier Reef Foundation.

ENDS



Grasstree Beach community beach clean-up.

Photo credit: Sarina Landcare Catchment Management Association