

## Mackay Regional Council lends a hand turning rubble into reef

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Reef Catchments have moved one-step closer to the deployment of 30 Habitat Reef modules in the coastal waters off Mackay. This occurred on 24 May, when Mackay Regional Council resolved ownership of the Habitat Reef modules, which are part of the **Turning Rubble to Reef in the Mackay Whitsundays** project.

Kellie Best, Project Officer with Reef Catchments is delighted to have the support of Mackay Regional Council as a long-term project partner.

"Securing ownership of the Habitat Reef modules is a major project milestone and puts us one step closer to getting them into the water," she said.

Chair of council's Recreational Fishing Advisory Committee Cr Belinda Hassan said council is happy to support the project as it aligns with council's strategic vision to make our region as one of the best fishing destinations in Australia.

"We know these Habitat Reef modules support fish stocks and grow coral, so to have 30 of them in our coastal waters, accessible to small boats and visiting anglers, will be a real coup for our region," Cr Hassan said.

"We are blessed to have beautiful offshore islands and the Great Barrier Reef off our coastline, but accessing those requires considerable travel time in medium to large vessels," she said.

"These modules will be a viable option for those in smaller boats and will help to spread out fishing pressure in our inshore waters."

The Habitat Reef modules have been specially designed by Catchment Solutions to provide complex vertical relief structures for both adult and juvenile fish and improve recruitment of marine sessile organisms such as corals and oysters.

"We expect that over time the Habitat Reef modules will develop into healthy functioning reef ecosystems," Ms Best said.

Strategically positioned to transform areas of the marine environment into vertically complex reef ecosystems, the Habitat Reef modules will increase food resources and fish biomass of important recreational fish species, provide important nurseries for juvenile fish, and support the long-term sustainability of local fish stocks.

Species anglers can expect to encounter at the new reef sites include coral trout, grass emperor, striped bass, jewfish, golden snapper (fingermark), small bait species such as hardyheads and herring, as well as pelagic fish species like mackerel and tuna.

Habitat Reef modules have already proven successful in the region, with 45 bommies in the Pioneer River attracting more marine life and fishing clubs alike!

Matt Moore, Fisheries Ecologist with Catchment Solutions said the monitoring results of the Pioneer River bommies demonstrated the reef design and project had been a huge success, both in terms of increasing populations of iconic recreational fishing species at the sites, like barramundi and mangrove jack, and providing habitat for juvenile fish species.

To be the first to know when the Habitat Reef modules have been deployed, keep an eye out on Reef Catchments social media platforms.

This project is funded by the Australian Government's Fisheries Habitat Restoration Program and delivered through the Regional Land Partnerships model.

For more information visit [www.reefcatchments.com.au](http://www.reefcatchments.com.au)

See the Pioneer River modules in action: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=h7DrBXR94ho>

## ENDS

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**Pictured:** Reef Catchments Project Officer Kellie Best next to Habitat Reef module.