

## Mackay regional growers tally benefits from \$1.7 million in Major Grants funding as program draws to a close

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Over the last 3 years the Mackay Whitsunday Water Quality Program (MWWQP) Major Grants project has been able to approve 80 grower applications achieving a funding allocation of \$1.7 million while smashing nutrient reduction targets of 2.6 tonnes and pesticide reduction targets of just over 732,500 Risk Units.

Reef Catchments has distributed the funding to sugarcane growers in the Mackay Whitsunday region to support adoption of practice changes benefiting both farming profitability and water quality outcomes. The distribution of grant funds has been made possible with the help of local service delivery providers Mackay Area Productivity Service, Farmacist, LiquaForce, and Plane Creek Productivity Service.

Equipment funded by the scheme to improve farming operations and water quality has included:

- High-rise boom sprayers
- Three-row stool splitters
- Air seeders/tillers
- Legume planters
- Double disc openers
- Variable rate controllers
- Hydraulic folding booms
- Section rate controllers

Grower feedback from the project has been enthusiastic. An anonymous monitoring and evaluation feedback form asked, "What do you expect to be the biggest challenge maintaining improved practices?" One response was, "I don't see any challenges, if it was hard, we wouldn't have adopted the practices."

Reef Catchments Project Officer Ruby Gerke, spoke about the alignment of benefits for growers with water quality outcomes. "Not only have the grants allowed growers to improve production and profitability on-farm, they have also been able to contribute in a meaningful way to the quality of water flowing into the catchment area."

### Background

The Mackay Whitsunday regional water quality improvement program is funded by the partnership between the Australian Government's Reef Trust and the Great Barrier Reef Foundation. It is part of the larger Reef Trust Partnership Water Quality Program (RTPWQP) between the Australian Government and the Great Barrier Reef Foundation. This four-year program aims to achieve an enduring reduction in the long-term, end-of-catchment pesticide and dissolved inorganic nitrogen (DIN) loads from the extensive Plane Creek and Pioneer River catchments to improve water quality in the Great Barrier Reef lagoon.

## ENDS MEDIA RELEASE

### Attachments:

- Photo: Grower Andre Camilleri with High Rise Spray Cab Tractor with Rate Controller
- Photo: High Rise Spray Cab Tractor with Rate Controller

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