

## 30 Habitat Reef Modules have been deployed in Mackay's coastal waters to restore fish habitat.

Reef Catchments Turning Rubble into Reef in the Mackay Whitsundays.

**23 September 2024**

Reef Catchments is excited to announce the installation of 30 Habitat Reef (HR) modules in Mackay's coastal waters. Our Mackay Whitsunday Turning Rubble into Reef project aims to restore fish habitat and enhance marine biodiversity.

The HR modules have been purpose-built, divided into two clusters to create vertical structure in otherwise bare marine areas. These concrete structures will serve as fish habitats, providing refuge for a variety of marine life. Designed with a roughened exterior surface, the modules are also specifically crafted to encourage the settlement of marine invertebrates such as coral recruits.

Over time, these structures will offer a foundation for vibrant and diverse reef communities. Reef Catchments Project Officer, Kellie Best, expressed enthusiasm for their expected performance, stating "The installation of the HR modules is just the beginning. I, for one, cannot wait to observe the marine life they will attract."

With the support of North Queensland Bulk Ports (NQBP), monitoring of the Habitat Reef modules will commence over the next 12 months. NQBP Senior Manager Sustainability and Environment Kevin Kane said NQBP were pleased to extend their extensive monitoring program to include the new HR modules.

"Over the last few years NQBP has been working with James Cook University to investigate the unique biodiversity value offered by artificial habitats like coastal infrastructure," Mr Kane said.

"Integrating the principles of working-with-nature in designing future port infrastructure is at the heart of this research and the reef modules project offers a rare opportunity to record the establishment of new marine habitats close to a working port," he said.

Reef Catchments CEO, Katrina Dent, emphasised Reef Catchment's ongoing dedication to sustain and improve our region's marine ecosystems, stating, "This initiative is an important contribution toward improving fish habitats and building reef resilience in our local waters. In support, Reef Catchments will uphold a 30-year commitment to monitoring the performance of the HR models."

In a win for local recreational fishers, the HR modules have the potential to create, over time, an environment that supports fresh opportunities for anglers to enjoy their favourite pastime. Mackay Region Councillor Alison Jones said the HR modules would have a positive impact on recreational fishing and local industries.

“These reef modules have so much potential for improving the accessibility and health of our inshore fishery,” Cr Jones said.

“Not only will they help to spread existing fishing pressure out over a greater area, but they will also give visiting anglers an excellent starting point when towing their boats to our region,” she said.

“If visitors have more areas they can easily access and fish – they’ll stay longer, and there will be flow-on benefits to our local marine industries and accommodation providers.”

Reef Catchments would like to thank Mackay Regional Council, North Queensland Bulk Ports and Catchment Solutions, and the Mackay community, for their ongoing support in the deployment of the HR modules.

The Turning Rubble to Reef in the Mackay Whitsundays project (Rubble to Reef) is funded by the Australian Government Fisheries Habitat Restoration Program and delivered through the Regional Land Partnerships models.

#### Photo attachments



Photo (above): Loading of Habitat Reef Module at Port of Mackay with Reef Catchments Project Officer, Kellie Best.



Photo (above): Installation of Habitat Reef Module



Photo (above): Installed Habitat Reef Module (photo credit: Catchment Solutions)

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### **About Reef Catchments**

Reef Catchments are the Natural Resource Management (NRM) group for the Mackay Whitsunday Isaac region.

We facilitate change and work for long-term solutions to sustain, protect, and improve our region's natural resources and environment, now and into the future.

Our team are skilled and outcome-focused people, all dedicated to looking after the environment in the Mackay Whitsunday Isaac region.

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