

Reef Catchments achieves major milestones toward protecting the Great Barrier Reef

Reef Assist 2.0 program streambank and gully remediation and Koinmerburra Healthy Country Plan

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Reef Catchments is proud to announce significant progress in the delivery of the Mackay Whitsunday Streambank Stewardship Program, marking an important contribution toward improving water quality flowing into the Great Barrier Reef and increasing employment opportunities in the region.

Within the Reef Assist 2.0 project, Reef Catchments has facilitated the Koinmerburra people to develop the Koinmerburra Healthy Country Plan. Driven by Reef Catchments Project Officer Jamay DeShong, the project has already conducted its inaugural on-country workshop, facilitated by Regional Advisory and Innovation Network Pty Ltd (RAIN). Koinmerburra selected RAIN to guide the Healthy Country planning process based on their commitment to amplifying the voice of First Nations people in environmental projects.

Further supporting local capacity and regional upskilling, the Reef Assist 2.0 program also provided on-going support to three Landcare groups - Whitsunday Catchment Landcare, Pioneer Catchment Landcare and Sarina Landcare Catchment Management Association. This has enabled the employment of staff to undertake work at 22 sites to improve the health of our local waterways. The three Landcare groups have completed weed maintenance and revegetation activities which have enhanced over eight hectares of waterways, contributed to the stabilisation of streambanks and created habitat for native wildlife.

Sarina Catchment Management Association Coordinator, Saskia von Fahland, highlighted the program's triple benefits, saying, "The Reef Assist Program not only bolsters local employment and training but also plays a critical role in the rehabilitation of our vital riparian and natural areas."

Echoing this sentiment, Whitsunday Catchment Landcare Field Officer, Kayla Simpson, shared her personal experience: "The project has made it possible for me to work and learn in the field. I'm looking forward to being able to undertake further training. I also like that I can contribute to long term goals of rehabilitating local waterways." Pioneer Catchment Landcare Senior Project Officer Danny Hudson expressed how "Reef Assist 2.0 has allowed the organisation to engage an indigenous cadet, to develop a career path in Landcare and be involved in water quality projects".

To improve and build resilience within local riverine systems, Reef Catchments has completed streambank and gully remediation works at three sites located within the O'Connell River catchment. This effort will reduce an estimated 1,200 tonnes of fine sediment reaching the Great Barrier Reef, with the remediation process involving the implementation of engineered solutions (instillation of physical structures that slow/direct water flow and catch sediment such as pile fields, rock groynes and large woody debris (LWD) structures), planting of 4,000 plants across 0.75 hectares and supporting employment for over 10 local

companies. Project outcomes include stabilisation of local waterways, reduced erosion, increased biodiversity and support for the local economy.

Reef Catchments Senior Project Officer, Emma Jones, summarises the project by stating “The Reef Assist 2.0 project provides a multifaceted approach to remediation with the three project components working simultaneously to support First Nations people, local employment and improve water quality entering the Great Barrier Reef.”

The \$2 million Mackay Whitsunday Streambank Stewardship Program is funded through the Queensland Government’s Queensland Reef Water Quality Program.

For additional details about these transformative environmental projects, please visit www.reefcatchments.com.au

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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