



Australian Government

Department of Climate Change, Energy,
the Environment and Water

Reef 2050 Water Quality Improvement Plan Review

OFFICIAL



Queensland
Government

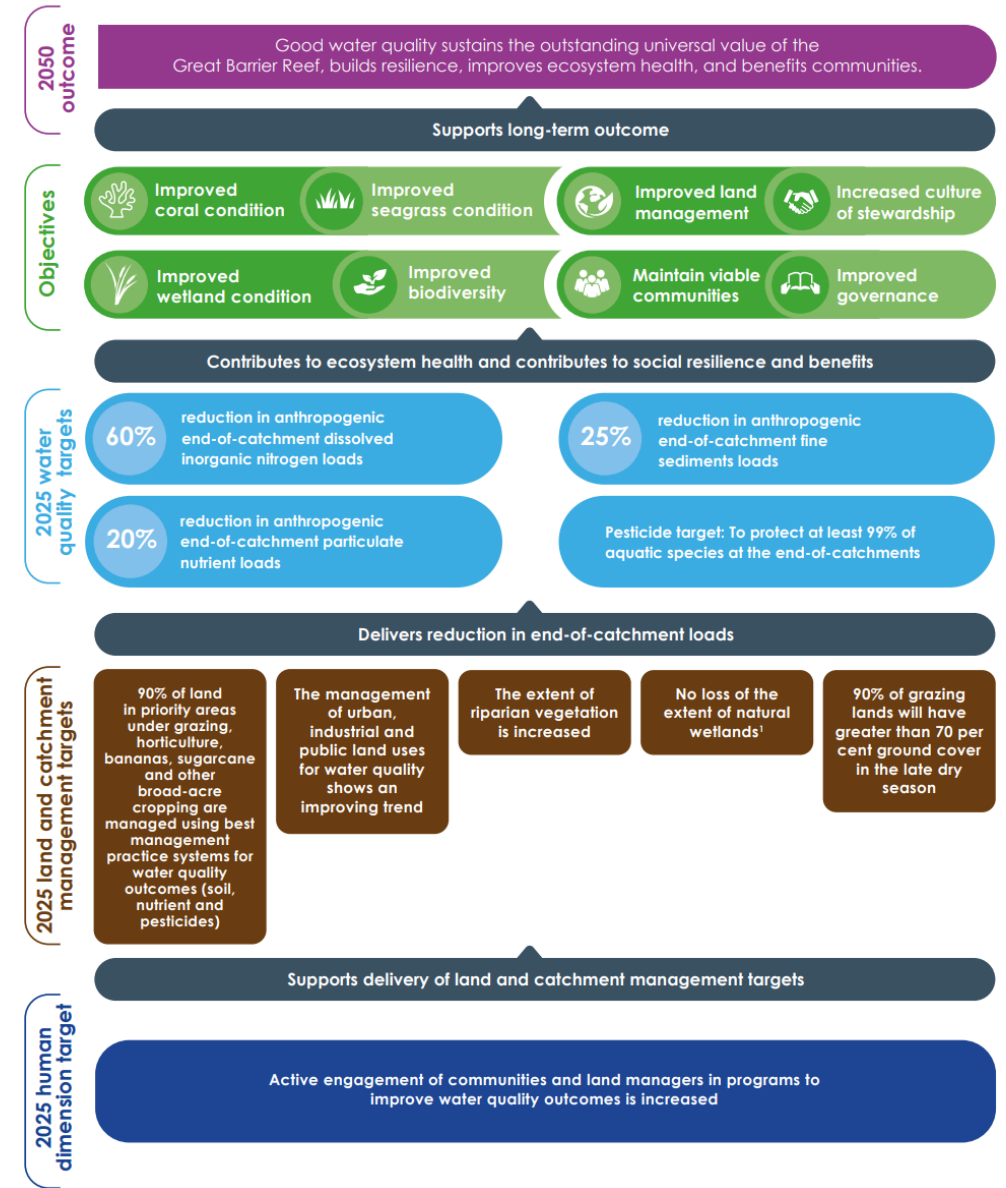
An aerial photograph of a river winding through a lush, green forest. The river's surface is calm, reflecting the surrounding trees and foliage. The forest is dense with various types of trees, some with light-colored bark and others with darker, more solid green canopies. The lighting suggests a warm, golden hour, with long shadows cast across the landscape. A semi-transparent rectangular box is centered over the river, containing the text "Acknowledgement of Country" in a bold, white, sans-serif font.

Acknowledgement of Country

Current framework

- The Reef 2050 Water Quality Improvement Plan guides how governments, Reef communities, Traditional Owners, industry, and partners work together to improve the quality of water flowing through local waterways and wetlands to the Great Barrier Reef.
- The Reef 2050 Water Quality Improvement Plan set outcomes, objectives and targets to be achieved by 2025.
- The Paddock to Reef program uses monitoring and modelling to report on the progress towards targets and objectives which are reported in a Reef Water Quality Report Card.
- A review of the plan is underway, commencing with a Listening Phase in 2024.

Figure 4. Summary of Reef 2050 WQIP outcome, objectives and targets



Best management practices are defined by this Reef 2050 Water Quality Improvement Plan's water quality risk frameworks priority areas as defined in Appendix 3

¹ Natural wetlands include lakes, swamps and estuarine wetlands.



We went out with this scope proposition

- Produce a more **holistic and inclusive narrative** that reflects the connection between Reef catchments and the Reef and how Reef communities work together to enhance that connection.
- **Build on the knowledge, experience and successes** of partners including Traditional Owners, stakeholders and communities.
- **Set priority actions** that reflect aspirations of Reef communities and the needs of the Reef.
- Provide a comprehensive, clear and **easy to understand framework** for the implementation of priority actions and evaluation of progress towards targets.

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**We used this
conceptualised
approach to
explore a holistic
narrative**



We delivered a range of activities

Engagement Type	Total	Attendances
Seminars	10	1285
Tailored workshops	6	176
P2R mini workshops	5	193
WQIP workshops	6	111
Meetings Internal	62	422
Meetings External	28	81
Open Survey	1	54
Written Submission	11	11
Traditional Owner workshop	1	15
Totals	130	2348
Totals (minus seminars)		1063

*Data compiled 1 May 2024 to 30 September 2024 inclusive with the addition of a Traditional Owner focused workshop on 7 November 2024.

** Attendances represent an attendance count for that engagement type. It is recognised that one individual may have attended multiple engagement types.



- Diverse attendances across different engagement types - NRMs, conservation, industry, local government, land managers, Traditional Owners, academia and interested community members
- Repeat attendance was high with many attending multiple engagement types.

We heard about barriers being experienced when implementing the current WQIP

Funding approaches

- Short term
- Competitive
- Lack of coordination within government programs
- Insufficient funding towards research and development

Skills shortage and retention

Blame narrative

- Driven from the threat-based approach

Sole focus on water quality

- From the delivery perspective projects deliver much more than just pollutant reductions.

Mis-trust of government

Pollutant hotspot prioritisation restricting collaboration and partnerships

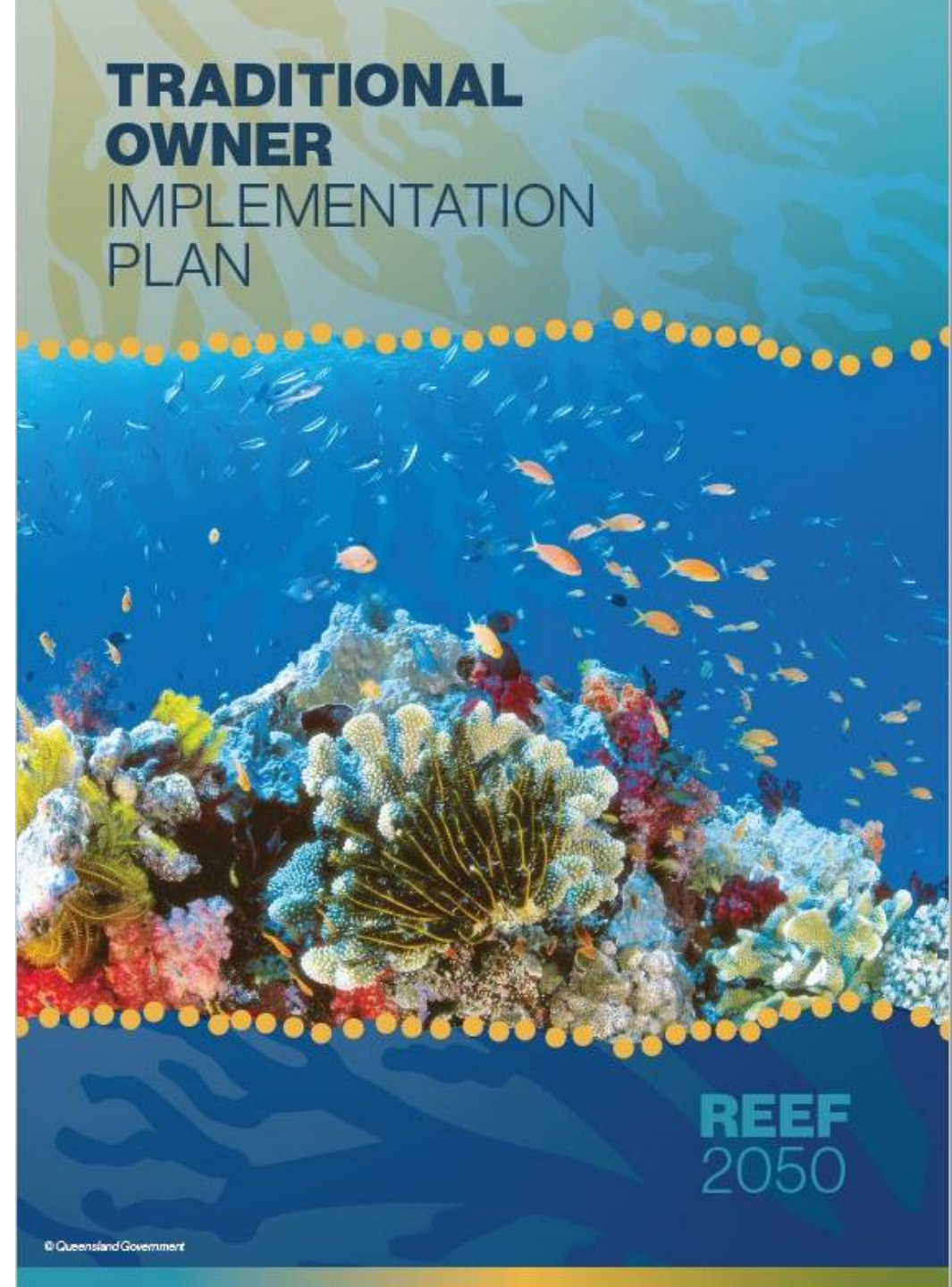
- From the delivery perspective, there is a need to be flexible to partnerships, resource sharing and collaboration beyond DIN and sediment hotspots to achieve maximum reach.


All the projects that are celebrated widely are those that have elements of community and landscape benefits beyond the tunnel vision approach of only valuing DIN and sediment reductions.

We need flexibility around catchments to do the work that needs to be done

We heard from Traditional Owners

- Disappointment that **Traditional Owners are largely absent** from the current plan. Traditional Owners stated they “must be embedded in the change process” and that the next plan must **reflect Traditional Owner voices**.
- That **Government should report on action taken** to address previous advice from Traditional Owners over 20+ years of consultation.
- Traditional Owners raised concerns with the differences in the **values systems** that drive land management and decision making and asked how the next plan will reflect differing values yet create a shared narrative.
- **Sustainable funding** is critical to effective Traditional Owner engagement.





We heard there are opportunities for the review

The revised WQIP must represent an intergenerational commitment to create enduring policies and sustained funding programs to achieve the intended outcomes of the plan and ensure the long-term improvement of the ecological condition of freshwater, estuarine and marine ecosystems – as opposed to a project-by-project approach with short-term funding cycles and fixed end dates.

- **Long term goal setting** with focus on outcomes instead of outputs
- **improved integration** in policies and catchment planning **and coordination** in between government agencies
- ensuring sufficient, **long term funding** arrangements that cater for critical enablers (e.g. capacity / capability building), on ground delivery and long-term legacy (e.g. monitoring and maintenance)
- **empowering regional communities** to work in collaborative partnerships towards shared benefits from grassroots projects tailored to local circumstances.
- **re-setting the public narrative** on how Reef catchments can be managed to protect the Reef, create opportunities for regional communities and celebrate a sustainable agricultural industry.

We heard scope for a shift in narrative

Current WQIP



DIN and sediment savings is the primary way to achieve water quality outcomes



Threat based approach resulting in feelings of 'blame' creating division and mistrust



Traditional Owners absent in current plan



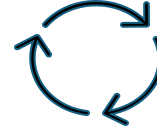
Outcomes outside of immediate goal are ripple effects or 'co-benefits' and not reportable



Top down, process focused enablers losing the role of people and community



Next Plan



Focusing on people, landscapes and water is the way to achieve water quality outcomes



A values-based approach enabling collaboration, trust and shared responsibility



Traditional Owners obligations, rights and culture are an integral part of the plan



Outcomes outside of immediate goal are equally important and reportable



Recognition of people and community as the foundational enabler for delivering outcomes

NEW PLAN - DRAFT APPROACH



Better protecting the Great Barrier Reef requires support for **Four Core Values:**
Cultural
Social
Economic
Environmental



Protection of values is achieved via three interconnected outcomes:
Healthy waterways,
Resilient landscapes and
Community stewardship.



Delivery of three interconnected outcomes
is achieved through clear
purpose and intent



Healthy Waterways, Resilient Landscapes and Community Stewardship are intrinsically interconnected outcomes to achieve water quality improvement for a healthy Reef.

NEW PLAN - DRAFT APPROACH

“Sustainable Catchments for a Healthy Reef”

The pressures of a changing climate on the Reef are more urgent than ever.

Sustainable catchments for a healthy Reef is a story that goes beyond water quality. It's a story of rebuilding and enhancing resilience in communities and landscapes. By bringing people, land and water together, we can get lasting outcomes for catchments and the Reef

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Draft

Next Strategy

How do we get there?

**Not Government
Policy**

Scaled Approach

Next WQIP

Catchment Strategies

Catchment Plans

District Plans

Whole of Farm Systems

Our greatest successes, with lasting legacy come from integrated scaled approaches e.g. MIPS, Burdekin Integrated project

By placing community and catchments in the centre of planning we can leverage the successes of the past and enhance regionalised, place centric approaches.

Flexibility and adaptability to regional needs is key to ensuring strategies and actions can respond appropriately to the fluid dynamics of the environment we aim to protect and support.

We can achieve this via an Implementation framework that allows action at the scale appropriate for the Intervention/need.

Draft

Next Strategy

How do we get there?

**Not Government
Policy**

Reef Catchment Strategy Scaling

Reef Wide

Catchment Wide

Catchment and sub-
catchmentScalable action:
Whole of farm,
district, sub-
catchment

Reef Catchment Strategy

Sets Reef wide objectives and outcomes

- Water Quality Targets
- Reef 2050 Traditional Owner Implementation Plan
- Reef 2050 Wetlands Strategy

Spatial Management Prioritisation

Enables catchment focused strategic documents to set
catchment objectives and outcomes

- Traditional Owner Country Plans
- NRM Regional Water Quality Strategies
- LGAQ Reef Rescue Plan

Catchment Planning

Supports catchment scale actions and reporting

Catchment sustainability report:

- land use
- condition and extent indicators
- waterway indicators
- Community stewardship indicators

On-ground action

Supports implementation at whole of farm,
district, sub-catchment scale

- Safeguard, sustainable use, repair

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Next Steps:

- **Continue development of draft new plan including new framework and logic**
- **Continue stakeholder and partner engagement**
- **Draft new plan by end 2025**



Thank-you on behalf of the Joint Australian Government and Queensland Government WQIP Review Team.

If you wish to engage further, please contact the team at OfficeoftheGBR@des.qld.gov.au

Information on the review can be found at www.reefplan.qld.gov.au/water-quality-and-the-reef/the-plan/review