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MEDIA RELEASE

Beyond Barriers: Mackay and Isaac Coastal Wetland Rehabilitation Project

Barramundi Boost as Fish Return Upstream at Carmila Weir

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For Immediate Release

Reef Catchments' *Beyond Barriers: Mackay and Isaac Coastal Wetland Rehabilitation Project* has reached an exciting milestone, with recent monitoring at Carmila Weir fishladder confirming that key commercial, recreational, and culturally significant fish species are once again moving upstream into vital nursery habitats.

A break in the wet weather last week allowed Reef Catchments and project partner Catchment Solutions to complete four days of fishway monitoring at the newly upgraded Carmila Weir fishladder. The results show a strong return of native fish species, providing clear evidence that the barrier remediation works are already improving connectivity and restoring ecological function.

This new fishladder design is a first in Australia, creating ideal conditions for aquatic animals (fish, turtles and crustaceans) to be able to overcome this legacy weir built in the early 1970s and serving the community as an additional water supply for crop irrigation and to provide Carmila town's water supply. Monitoring recorded more than 12 different species migrating upstream, including juvenile flyspeck hardheads, rainbowfish and empire gudgeons moving during daylight hours, and larger species such as Barramundi and Mullet using the ladder at night. Turtles and eels were also observed using the purpose-built high flow bypass.

Several Barramundi were tagged during the monitoring event, providing an opportunity to track their movements and better understand how the restored passage supports their life cycle. The return of mighty Barramundi, an iconic commercial, recreational and cultural species, marks a significant ecological win for the region. Their renewed access to upstream nursery and feeding habitats is effectively creating a "Barramundi boost" for the system.

Carmila Weir was ranked the 8th highest priority fish barrier in the Mackay–Whitsunday–Isaac region, and its remediation represents a major step toward improving catchment-wide connectivity. Restoring fish passage supports biodiversity, strengthens wetland and riverine resilience, and contributes to water quality improvements flowing to the Great Barrier Reef lagoon, highlighting the power of collaborative restoration.

The project is being delivered in partnership with the Department of Local Government Water and Volunteers (DLGWV), Isaac regional council, the Koinjmal People, Catchment Solutions and local landholders.

QUOTE

"This project brings together government departments, Traditional Owners, local councils, service providers and the community to restore the health and cultural value of our coastal habitats. Seeing Barramundi and many other species moving upstream again shows how quickly these systems can respond when connectivity is restored."

Carlos Bueno, Senior Project Officer Biodiversity, Reef Catchments

FUNDING

The Beyond Barriers project is one of 18 projects awarded a share of \$28.5 million, invested by the Australian Government to support restoration of coastal habitats in the Great Barrier Reef catchments. The project continues to build momentum, with further monitoring, community engagement and Traditional Owner collaboration planned across the Mackay and Isaac regions.

FURTHER INFORMATION

As part of the broader communication strategy, Reef Catchments is developing a media package and short video showcasing the project's achievements, along with a feature article in the upcoming Reef Catchments newsletter. A dedicated project webpage is available and will be updated at: reefcatchments.com.au/projects/beyond-barriers-mackay-and-isaac-coastal-wetland-rehabilitation/

MEDIA CONTACT

Media Enquiries	Jemma Pope or Jamie-Lee Carter
Phone	07 4968 4200
Email	communications@reefcatchments.com.au
Office	Mackay

ABOUT REEF CATCHMENTS

Reef Catchments is the Natural Resource Management (NRM) organisation for the Mackay Whitsunday Isaac region. We are a non-government, not-for-profit organisation. We facilitate change and work for long-term solutions to sustain, and improve our region's natural resources and environment, now and into the future. With over 22 years of regional leadership in natural resource management, Reef Catchments operates from offices in Mackay and Proserpine, facilitating over 50 skilled staff across more than 40 active projects spanning sustainable agriculture, waterway health, reef resilience and biodiversity.

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