

REEF WATER QUALITY



Queensland's Great Barrier Reef

Elisa Nichols - Executive Director
Office of the Great Barrier Reef
Department of Environment and Heritage Protection

Facts about the Great Barrier Reef

- **Precious and globally significant** - the world's largest coral reef.
- Home to a **breathtaking array of marine life** – 1600 species of fish, 600 types of coral, 100 species of jellyfish, 30 species of whales and dolphins and 130 varieties of sharks and rays.
- **Contributes an estimated \$5.7 billion a year** to the economy.
- Supports around **69,000 jobs**.



But the reef is in trouble

- **Climate change** is the biggest long-term threat.
- **Improving water quality** now will help build resilience.
- Despite big efforts by farmers and graziers to improve management practices, **land-based run-off from agriculture remains the biggest water quality threat.**

Threats



Climate
change



Water
quality



Coastal
development



Direct
use

UNESCO

- Listed Great Barrier Reef as a World Heritage Area in 1981 for its “**outstanding universal value**”.
- Agreed to **not place** the Great Barrier Reef on the world heritage ‘**in danger**’ list in 2015.
- **Decision recognised the significant work** under taken including the **Reef 2050 Long-Term Sustainability Plan**.
- Due to report progress with implementing Reef 2050 Plan in **December 2016**.



Reef 2050 Long-Term
Sustainability Plan



Reef 2050 Plan

Vision: To ensure the GBR continues to improve on its outstanding universal value every decade between now and 2050 to be a natural wonder for each successive generation to come.

- **Joint** Australian and Queensland government plan. Delivered in **partnership** with **stakeholder groups and scientists**.
- **Seven** themes.

Ecosystem health



Biodiversity



Water quality



Heritage



Community benefits



Economic benefits

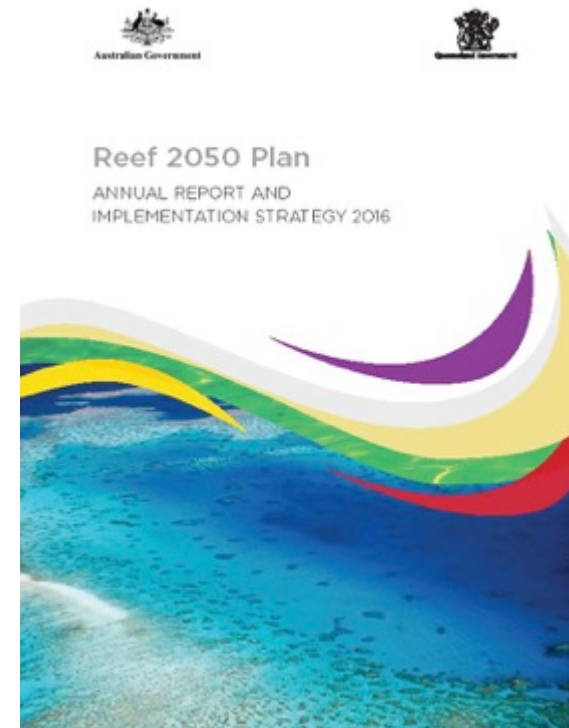


Governance



Annual report

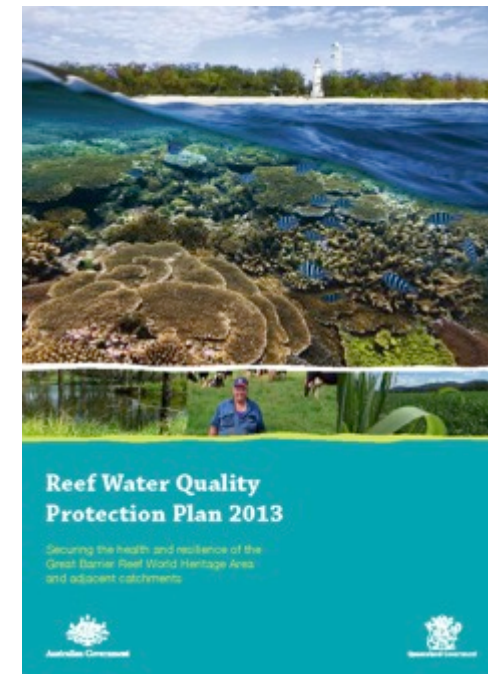
- Reef 2050 Plan **Annual Report and Implementation Strategy 2016** released on 28 September 2016.
- Details progress towards **151 actions**:
 - **29 completed** or in place
 - **102 on track** or underway
 - **3 delayed** or limited progress
 - **17 not yet due.**



Reef Water Quality Protection Plan

Goal: To ensure that by 2020 the quality of water entering the reef from broadscale land use has no detrimental impact on the health and resilience of the GBR.

- Key delivery mechanism for the **water quality theme** under Reef 2050 Plan.
- Designed to **reduce runoff** from agriculture.
- Being **reviewed** – scope will be **broadened** from farming to address **all land-based sources of water pollution**.



GBR Water Science Taskforce

Formed in May 2015 to provide advice to Queensland Government on:

- **how it could meet its ambitious reef water quality targets** (reduce sediment run-off by up to 50% and nitrogen run-off by 80% by 2025)
- **priorities for investing an additional \$90 million** over the next four years.



What did the Taskforce do?

- **Consulted widely** (what could work, what hadn't worked and what are the investment priorities).
- **Released an Interim Report in December 2015** with draft recommendations for consultation.
- **Received 103 responses** – consultation closed in February 2016.
- **Provided a Final Report to Government in May 2016** with 10 recommendations.



There is **no silver bullet** solution or intervention; rather a mix of tools and approaches will be needed.





10 recommendations

1. Review the reef water quality **targets**.
2. Better **communicate** how everyone can improve reef water quality.
3. Increase **extension services**.
4. Use **incentives** to drive water quality improvements.
5. Implement **staged regulatory approaches** .



10 recommendations

6. Funding for **innovation**.
7. Expanded **monitoring**.
8. Establish **two major integrated projects** to trial different tools.
9. Develop a **strategic investment plan**.
10. Simplify and strengthen **governance arrangements**.

Funding

- Committed almost **\$22 million in 2016-17** for implementing the Government response to the **Taskforce's recommendations**.
- Brings the Government's **total 2016-17 reef water quality investment** to almost **\$57 million**.
- Seeking to leverage that investment with **private and philanthropic funding**.

The Queensland Government is:

- Firmly committed to working with the agricultural sector to **ensure the sustainable growth and prosperity of our farming communities while safeguarding the Great Barrier Reef.**
- Recognises the **good performance of many producers but greater water quality improvements** are needed.



More information:

Great Barrier Reef Water Science Taskforce and Queensland Government response:

<http://www.gbr.qld.gov.au/taskforce/final-report>

Reef Water Quality Protection Plan:

www.reefplan.qld.gov.au

Reef 2050 Plan:

www.environment.gov.au/marine/gbr/long-term-sustainability-plan

Email:

OfficeoftheGBR@qld.gov.au