



reef guardians

*Working together today
for a healthier Reef tomorrow*



Australian Government

**Great Barrier Reef
Marine Park Authority**

A precious resource right on our doorstep

Our Great Barrier Reef is home to thousands of species of plants and animals, and it plays an important role in the lifestyles and livelihoods of hundreds of thousands of Queenslanders.

This World Heritage-listed icon is the world's largest coral reef ecosystem and is recognised as one of the richest and most diverse natural areas on Earth.

As well as being an environmental powerhouse, this multi-use marine park is also a vital economic hub; contributing over \$5 billion to the Australian economy each year.

It is central to a range of activities including tourism, commercial fishing, recreational boating and fishing, shipping, diving, aquaculture and research. Most of these activities require a vibrant and healthy reef ecosystem to be viable.

While our Great Barrier Reef continues to be known as one of the healthiest coral reef ecosystems in the world, it faces some challenges that impact on its health and resilience.

It's no surprise that the impacts of climate change dominate concerns about the Reef's future. Continued declining water quality from catchment run-off, loss of coastal habitats from increasing coastal development, illegal fishing and poaching, and a few remaining impacts of fishing are also reducing the resilience of the Reef.

But the good news is ...

Every day, individuals and organisations who use and enjoy the Reef for leisure and recreation or to make their living are taking practical steps to help safeguard its future.



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The Reef Guardian stewardship program is based on the Great Barrier Reef Marine Park Authority building relationships and working closely with those who use and rely on the Reef for recreation and business.

The Great Barrier Reef Marine Park Authority launched the Reef Guardian program in 2003 with Reef Guardian Schools, with the aim of guiding everyday actions and decisions in a way that will help to ensure long-term environmental benefits for the Reef.

Almost a decade on, the Reef Guardian program continues to go from strength to strength with the program now expanding to also include councils, farmers, graziers and fishers.

It is proving that a hands-on, community-based approach to caring for the Great Barrier Reef is essential to help preserve its immense social, economic and environmental value.

To find out more visit www.gbrmpa.gov.au, follow us on Facebook, or email us at reefguardians@gbrmpa.gov.au.





Reef Guardian Fishers

The Reef Guardian Fishers program showcases fishers who are fishing sustainably and maintaining the health of the Great Barrier Reef while building a viable future for their fishery.

The program is aimed at commercial fishers who fish in the Great Barrier Reef Marine Park. They care about the Reef and realise that the success of their businesses relies on the Reef being healthy.

They set robust protocols for their operations, develop innovative practices to minimise their environmental impact and are happy to share knowledge with other fishers and their communities.

Reef Guardian Fishers are also undertaking additional initiatives to improve the management of their business, their fishery and the health of the Great Barrier Reef.

FEEDBACK FROM INDUSTRY REPRESENTATIVES

“The Queensland Seafood Industry Association is very supportive of the Reef Guardian program. What it’s done is establish a tangible set of standards for the fishing industry, which generally operates at a high level but Reef Guardians has taken it one step further. We’ve introduced robust environmental standards which will have great benefits to the industry and the Reef itself.”

- Michael Gardner
Queensland Seafood Industry Association
board member and former President

Meet some of our Reef Guardian Fishers

“The Reef Guardians program is a great platform to share different ideas and different skills that will positively benefit the Reef, like proper anchoring practices and waste disposal. Working towards a healthier Reef is the ultimate goal especially when you engage the whole community.”

- Steve Howe
Reef Line Fisher, Innisfail

“Our business undertakes a number of activities that make us a Reef Guardian. We’re conscious about the amount of fuel that we use when we’re obtaining our product. We’re mindful of the practices we use when we go out in the marine environment. Every aspect of our business is about minimising our footprint on the environment.”

- Lyle Squire Jnr
Marine Aquarium Fish and Coral Collector, Cairns

“I think it’s part of my job and part of the Reef Guardian program to ensure there is an industry for the younger people going through. It’s a fantastic trade, it’s a healthy lifestyle, and it’s one that I really hope will continue in the generations to come.

Reef Guardians is a good initiative and it shows we are running a sustainable business, looking after the Reef and looking after the fish stocks. It benefits us because we can get feedback from the public and it makes for a more efficient and better business for years to come.”

- Gareth Andrew
Reef Line Fisher, Gladstone





Reef Guardian Farmers and Graziers

Participants in the Reef Guardian Farmers and Graziers program are passionate and forward-thinking farmers and graziers who want to promote their sustainable farming practices and demonstrate how they are doing their bit to look after the Great Barrier Reef.

Many farmers are doing great work on their properties to conserve the environment and the Reef Guardian Farmers and Graziers program is about sustainable farming practices that are economically viable as well as environmentally sound.

The Reef Guardian Farmers and Graziers program recognises these efforts and finds ways to support progressive farmers. There's a strong focus on continual improvement of safe farming practices that are economically beneficial for the farming business and benefit the Great Barrier Reef.

These growers and graziers also demonstrate the Reef Guardians ethos through land management practices such as efficiently managing soil, water, energy, waste and ecosystems to ensure clean and healthy catchments.

FEEDBACK FROM INDUSTRY REPRESENTATIVES

"The Reef Guardian program is an excellent way of recognising some of the work that banana growers are doing to maintain good environmental practices. There is more that we can do, and I think we will be promoting that. We certainly want to do the best. But recognising the efforts that have been made to date is a fantastic thing to do."

- Doug Phillips
Banana Grower and Director
Australia Banana Growers' Council, Innisfail

Meet some of our Reef Guardian Farmers and Graziers

"We know the Great Barrier Reef lagoon absolutely needs protecting for many, many reasons. We try to do the best we can, and we use best management practice as a base. But the extra bits we need to do to improve the quality of the water that does get to the lagoon are the steps we are taking now. We do that in very subtle ways with water management through the wet season here, like maintaining grassed drains and having natural filters before the water hits the creeks."

- Paul Gregory
Cane Farmer, Cairns

"We've recently become involved in the Reef Guardian program and already we can see the benefits. It gives us the chance to tell people we are doing the right thing and we are looking after the Reef - even though we are 'way out there' in the country. With graziers and community working toward the common goal of looking after the Reef, the world will be a better place."

- Jeff and Karen Mills
Graziers, Fitzroy River

"We were prompted to become a part of the Reef Guardian program for the opportunity to show the wider community some of the initiatives we, and the rest of our industry, are already implementing in an effort to improve our practices to help promote water quality in the Great Barrier Reef.

It's important that we all work together to protect the Great Barrier Reef to sustain the wonderful environment that we have here and the ability to live the lifestyle we have. Using the Reef and the water is a big part of our life here."

- Brett Gaia
Banana Farmer, Innisfail





Reef Guardian Councils

A diverse range of rural, urban and industrial development occurs in the Great Barrier Reef catchment and almost 900,000 people live in this 300,000 km² area.

The Reef Guardian Councils program recognises effective protection and management of the Reef requires coordinated efforts from all levels of government, industry and communities.

Currently, 13 councils from Bundaberg to Cooktown are signed up to the Reef Guardian Councils program, effectively demonstrating actions to improve the health and resilience of the Great Barrier Reef through initiatives such as:

- Water management - waterways rehabilitation, water monitoring, urban stormwater treatment, wastewater and trade waste treatment
- Waste management - waste avoidance, waste reuse and recycling, and recovery of energy
- Land management - vegetation and pest management, resource assessment, erosion control, and land planning and management
- Climate change - planning and policy, energy and resource efficiency, and community education
- Community - education, capacity building and development of partnerships.

Meet some of our Reef Guardian Councils

“The Reef Guardian program means a great deal to me personally, to the Regional Council and to the community. It's a win for council and it's a win for the environment. With pressures on the Reef such as climate change, to have something as valuable as the Great Barrier Reef on our doorstep it's imperative that everything is done to ensure that this asset is not lost.”

- Bill Shannon
Mayor, Cassowary Coast Regional Council

“We've been involved in this program since 2010 and we recognise the need to get our community involved in understanding the importance of protecting this great asset. We have to demonstrate through our leadership to our community and the rest of Australia and the rest of the world that we are determined and committed to protecting our environment.”

- Brad Carter
Mayor, Rockhampton Regional Council

“It's particularly important for our council to be a part of the Reef Guardian program for a number of reasons. It's a very cost-effective method of engaging with the community to get people involved in environmental projects such as the Great Northern Clean-up. By engaging with our Reef Guardian schools we can build on the value of community programs such as tree planting and cleaning up our environment.”

- Vern Veitch
Councillor, Townsville City Council





Reef Guardian Schools

Students, teachers and their communities involved in the Reef Guardian Schools program are taking positive action for the environment in the face of emerging threats to the Reef.

Now in its tenth year and comprising over 285 schools and 111,000 students, the Reef Guardian Schools program encourages understanding and awareness of the Great Barrier Reef and the connected ecosystems it relies on to be healthy.

Students from across Queensland have been involved in many projects to improve waste, water and energy management and increase biodiversity of local habitats.

Reef Guardian projects range from tree planting to implementing solar panels or installing hydroponics gardens in school communities.

GET INVOLVED

Each year the Reef Guardian Schools program provides schools with the opportunity to participate in Reef Guardian Networking Meetings and the Future Leaders Eco Challenge. Through these events schools can engage with each other as well as with councils, industry, businesses and other local organisations to achieve better sustainability outcomes for their region.

The Reef Guardian Schools Annual Awards and Ripples of Change funding grants give schools the recognition, support and inspiration to continue their outstanding work.

As the next generation of Reef custodians, students are aware of the issues facing the Great Barrier Reef and being part of the Reef Guardian Schools program inspires them to make a positive difference.

Meet some of our Reef Guardian Schools

"The Reef Guardian School program has been important to Carrawal School because it has given us an umbrella under which we can operate a lot of our environmental and sustainability activities. It gives us a focus and when we're looking for new direction we can come back to some of the resources that are available from the Reef Guardian program or we can look on the GBRMPA website and see things other schools have done that may give us the initiative to try something different.

If we can show the students at Carrawal how every action they do is a positive for looking after the Reef for the future maybe their children and grandchildren will continue the work."

- Lynne Shanks
Teacher, Carrawal State School

"We've got a lot of programs to help reduce the waste that goes down the drain and out into our Great Barrier Reef. At Loam Island we are making sure there is no rubbish and weeding it so that the weeds don't get out of control. We have a recycling team which helps reduce the rubbish in our school and a worm farm that is helping to reduce our organic waste.

It is good that the Reef Guardians combine us as a team with other schools because sharing more ideas means that projects get done much faster together."

- Caitlyn
Student, Thuringowa State High School



You can help improve the health of the Great Barrier Reef too!

- Reduce, reuse or recycle what you can - for example, plastics, paper, batteries and mobile phones
- Buy food and products with minimal or no packaging, or packaging that can be recycled
- Set up a worm farm and use the castings to fertilise your garden
- Compost fruit and vegetable scraps, shredded paper, grass clippings, leaves and cuttings (except noxious weeds and diseased cuttings), vacuum cleaner dust, used vegetable oil, tea leaves and bags, coffee grounds and egg shells
- Wash your car on the lawn, not on the driveway or road, to minimise detergent run-off into drains
- Use environmentally-friendly cleaners and fertilisers
- Keep gutters, sinks and drains free of chemicals and rubbish, as what washes down sinks and drains could end up on the Reef
- Use re-useable shopping bags rather than plastic bags
- Participate in community clean-up days
- Open windows and catch the breeze rather than using an air-conditioner
- Take your own coffee mug to work instead of using polystyrene cups
- Reduce energy consumption by switching off lights and appliances when they're not being used
- Install energy efficient lighting and appliances
- Donate quality second hand furniture, household items and clothing to charity organisations, rather than sending it to landfill
- Share these messages and your knowledge about the Great Barrier Reef with others
- Learn more about how you can protect the Reef at www.gbrmpa.gov.au
- Join our online community of people who care about the Reef at [Facebook.com/Great Barrier Reef Marine Park](https://www.facebook.com/GreatBarrierReefMarinePark).



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