



2019 Reef Water Quality Report Card shows improvement

The Queensland Farmers' Federation (QFF) has reiterated Queensland agriculture's commitment to securing the future of the Great Barrier Reef following the release of the 2019 Reef Water Quality Report Card today.

The Report Card assessed the results of all Reef 2050 Water Quality Improvement Plan actions reported up to June 2019 and found encouraging progress, particularly at a regional and catchment level, with improved practices leading to pollutant reductions.

QFF CEO Dr Georgina Davis said that while climate change remains the greatest threat to the Reef, improving the quality of water flowing from the land to the sea is critical to reduce additional pressures and support the Reef's health and resilience.

"The Report Card makes clear that landholders are investing time and resources in programs that are delivering water quality benefits, with a 4.3 per cent reduction in dissolved inorganic nitrogen, the Reef's highest risk marine pollutant, a cumulative decrease of 25.5 per cent since 2013," Dr Davis said.

"These results are considered a conservative estimate of progress as projects are in different stages of implementation so not all activities undertaken during the reporting period are captured and much of the water quality improvement information published is a long way behind on farm and water-quality reality."

“Additionally, the Report Card does not factor in the impact of severe and unavoidable weather events such as cyclones and droughts, which can quickly undo progress.”

“Agriculture has been, and remains committed to doing its bit for the Reef, and over the past few years there has been an exponential increase of farmer participation in Best Management Practice and other voluntary practice improvement programs working to minimise soil loss, fertiliser application and pesticide runoff.”

“Increased uptake of land management practices is required to continue this trajectory and meet the water quality targets.”

Dr Davis said the Report card highlighted the need for further investment to continue momentum following the conclusion of the Reef Alliance’s Growing a Great Barrier Reef (GGBR) project last year.

“With the GGBR project now concluded, government support is needed to ensure its ongoing legacy and continued capacity gains made towards long-term practice change across all Reef catchment areas and industries, while ensuring budgetary implications from COVID-19 do not hinder future progress.”

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Media Contact:

Kayla Plunkett - 0448 000 692

