

# Reef Rescue

IMPROVING WATER QUALITY OF THE GREAT BARRIER REEF LAGOON

FACT SHEET:

ABOUT REEF RESCUE

## What is Reef Rescue?

The Reef Rescue program is a five year, \$200 million investment by the Australian Government under its Caring for Our Country initiative. This initiative, takes a coordinated approach to restoring the health of Australia's environment and building on improved land management practices.

The majority of Reef Rescue funds (\$146 million) are allocated to Water Quality Incentive Grants to support voluntary action by farmers and land managers in catchments draining to the Great Barrier Reef lagoon to adopt good land management practices.



## Objective

The objective of Reef Rescue is to improve the water quality of the Great Barrier Reef lagoon by increasing the adoption of land management practices that reduce the run-off of nutrients, chemicals such as herbicides and pesticides and sediments from agricultural land.

## Industry and Regional Natural Resource Management Group roles

The Australian Government is funding a number of major Reef Rescue projects through a collaborative partnership between six coastal regional natural resource management (NRM) groups and six peak agricultural industry bodies. The partnership aims to promote the uptake of land management practices that increase the sustainability of farming and work toward reducing sediment, nutrient and pesticide losses from paddocks.

## Reef Rescue funded projects

The first year of Reef Rescue funding was delivered in 2008/09 and an annual rollout will continue over the next four years.

Funding has enabled industry and regional NRM groups to work closely with land managers to help them better understand and assess their land management practices and determine how they can reduce their impact on the reef.

Where land managers identified practices that needed to change, Reef Rescue funds have been used to support that change to happen. In some cases, practice change was addressed by providing opportunities for land managers to access education, get expert advice, or learn new skills.

In other cases, incentives were offered to land managers to assist them to make practical on-ground change in the way they manage their land. Projects primarily focussed on supporting the uptake of a variety of management practices in the sugar cane, horticulture, grazing, grain, cotton and dairy industries. In some regions, funds were also allocated to improving catchment resilience through wetland and riparian regeneration projects.

## How it works

Extension Officers are employed across sugar cane, horticulture, grazing, grain, cotton and dairy industries and within regional NRM bodies to help producers assess the risk of their current practices and identify ways to initiate improvements, which could mean training, technical advice or the development of projects eligible for financial incentives. Recipients of financial incentives are required to contribute matching in-kind and cash to at least 50% of the project cost.

Activities may be funded under Reef Rescue if they provide a water quality benefit by reducing the nutrient, sediment and pesticide loads leaving a property. Examples include:

- More efficient use of fertilisers and nutrients
- More efficient use of pesticides
- Improving property planning and record keeping
- Improving health of soil
- Improving ground cover
- Irrigation improvements

If you manage a property located in the Great Barrier Reef region, you may be eligible for assistance.

## Who can access the grants?

Grants are potentially available to anyone who is able to implement an on-farm practice change; this includes individual farmers, groups of farmers and contractors. To be eligible to apply for funds an applicant must:

- have an ABN;
- have a property located within the Great Barrier Reef region; and
- be a primary producer.

Projects that are funded, and those that are ineligible vary in each region.

## For more information

For more information about Reef Rescue and your nearest support officer, visit <http://www.rgc.org.au/partnership> or contact the Regional Groups Collective office on 07 4699 5000.

