

QSIA/GBRMPA Climate Change and Fisheries Partnership



The Queensland Seafood Industry Association (QSIA) and the Great Barrier Reef Marine Park Authority (GBRMPA) have formed a partnership to tackle climate change and future proof the commercial fishing industry in the Great Barrier Reef.

Background

The Great Barrier Reef is a multiple-use area and a range of industries and communities rely on a healthy ecosystem. Coral reefs, including the Great Barrier Reef, are highly vulnerable to the effects of climate change, resulting in far-reaching implications for the industries and communities that depend on them.

Commercial fishers have a long association with the Great Barrier Reef, providing quality seafood and important social and economic benefits to the region. Fishers acknowledge their role as stewards of a natural asset of national and international significance, and are committed to working with the GBRMPA to build the resilience of the Great Barrier Reef to climate change.

Strategies that can build the resilience of the Great Barrier Reef to climate change and help fishers adjust to changing conditions are essential for the long-term sustainability of fishing. These strategies are also key to the effective conservation of the Great Barrier Reef in the face of climate change. Recognising the shared goals of marine managers and commercial fishers, GBRMPA and QSIA have formed a partnership to confront the climate change challenge and work with fisheries managers to ensure a sustainable future for the Great Barrier Reef.

The QSIA are seeking to put the commercial fishing industry on the front foot as leaders of change with the capacity to predict and shape their business rather than simply having to react to impacts. The new partnership enables this to occur and acknowledges the long association that commercial fishers have with the Great Barrier Reef and the considerable knowledge they can contribute to developing future proofing solutions.

Objectives

The QSIA and the GBRMPA are working in partnership over a three year period to build the resilience of the Great Barrier Reef ecosystem to climate change and ensure commercial fisheries remain viable in the face of future change. Major project areas include:

- **Workshops for commercial fishers**

These will provide the latest science and information on climate change and its implications for viability and sustainability of fishing, as well as provide tools (such as the fisheries emissions calculator) and guidance to increase operating efficiency and reduce climate foot prints.

- **Vulnerability assessments and adaptation plans**

These will provide detailed syntheses of current knowledge about the predicted effects of climate change for key fishery sectors, and use fishery expertise to identify strategies for building resilience of fishery resources and fishing businesses to future change.

- **Ecosystem resilience analyses**

Many fishery species depend strongly on the health of other parts of the Great Barrier Reef ecosystem. This dependency is often mutual, with many ecosystem components and functions reliant on healthy populations of fishery species. The resilience analyses will evaluate the status and vulnerability of species groups that may provide key ecosystem functions (such as apex predators, corals and sea cucumbers) to better understand the role of fishery species in ecosystem resilience and identify strategies for protecting fishery productivity and ecosystem health.

- **Cyclone Hamish impacts**

A research program has been implemented to assess the biophysical impact of cyclone Hamish on reefs in the southern Great Barrier Reef and how fishers responded to it in social and economic terms, especially through changing their fishing practices.

- **Fisheries Incident Response Plan**

QSIA are providing input into the GBRMPA Climate Change Incident Response Framework and building on this to develop a Fisheries Incident Response Framework to assist the industry to deal with future major incidents such as cyclones, disease outbreaks or introduced species.

Progress to date

A QSIA climate change and fisheries liaison officer, Eric Perez, has been appointed to develop and drive fisheries and climate change-related projects established under this partnership. This role will also provide a first point of contact for commercial fishers on all matters relating to these projects and raise awareness about the risks and opportunities presented by climate change. Work has begun on projects for the first year of the partnership and engagement with other management agencies and stakeholders is progressing to ensure that projects are inclusive and well integrated across sectors and jurisdictions.

Future directions

A Strategic Plan is being developed as a road map to achieve these goals. It includes the development of an overarching communications plan, timelines for projects initiated in the first year, a summary of the scope of each of the projects, and engagement and dissemination strategies for projects. Project development and implementation under this partnership are guided by a steering committee to ensure they are integrated with other relevant climate change initiatives.