



# reef guardian COUNCIL UPDATE

*Welcome to the first newsletter on the Great Barrier Reef Marine Park Authority's (GBRMPA) Reef Guardian Council programme.*

*Reef Guardian Councils is a new initiative of the GBRMPA, encouraging community participation in reef-protection and recognising councils for their good environmental work.*

*Through this newsletter we aim to keep all participants up-to-date with the programme, and showcase how councils are doing their bit to look after the Great Barrier Reef.*

## Councils help protect the reef

The role local councils can play in protecting the Great Barrier Reef underpins a new community project run by the Great Barrier Reef Marine Park Authority (GBRMPA).

The Reef Guardian Councils aims to protect and conserve the reef for future generations by encouraging best environmental practice at the local government level.

This will be achieved through:

- Identifying best environmental practice in daily operations and other core business
- Identifying best environmental practice principles in land use and infrastructure planning
- Providing locally relevant environmental communication and education programmes for staff and the community
- Identifying and developing key partnerships and collaborations that can help meet these objectives.

It centres on recognising what councils are already doing under four categories: waste, water, land management, and community involvement.

This recognition focuses on improving land management practices and water quality for the Great Barrier Reef catchment.

Improvements could include anything from upgrades to sewage treatment to stormwater management infrastructure.

Current council programmes that meet the Reef Guardian Council outcomes provide a mechanism to assess how councils can be classed as Reef Guardians.

Council programmes are currently being compiled into a database for eight pilot councils.

Once complete, projects can be compared against catchment priorities based on the *Reef Water Quality Protection Plan* risk assessment table.

Weighting will be placed on the council's capacity (for example, based on the area size, rate base and so forth).

The programme creates a myriad of benefits to local councils including raising their profile and highlighting their important role as environmental managers.

It also benefits the community by encouraging their active participation in reef-protection initiatives.

It follows the highly successful Reef Guardian Schools programme, an action-based school participation project centring on current issues affecting the Marine Park. Both recognise the world's largest coral reef ecosystem is under increasing pressure.

## Steering committee formed

A 19-person steering committee to oversee the Reef Guardian Council trial programme was established last year.

The committee agreed to the GBRMPA developing a framework based on council programmes, with a number of councils agreeing to trial the framework.

The trial councils include: Burdekin, Charters Towers, Cook, Dalrymple, Hinchinbrook, Livingstone, Thuringowa and Townsville.

Engagement included refining a framework for how councils may become a Reef Guardian Council, and identifying actions, projects and programmes each council may undertake.

The framework got the thumbs up at a meeting of the trial councils on 29 September 2005.

It was also recommended that a smaller group from the trial councils meet early next year to give a final tick-off to the framework before it goes to the full steering committee for approval.

The steering committee comprises members from the following councils:

Bowen	Douglas	Livingstone
Burdekin	Herberton	Mackay City
Burnett	Hinchinbrook	Mt Morgan
Cairns	Isis	Rockhampton
Calliope	Johnston	Townsville
Cook	Kolan	

- Refer to the following page for a map showing the trial Reef Guardian Councils.

## Spotlight on your council

Your council works hard to protect the Great Barrier Reef. Tell us, in 200 words or less, what your council is doing to protect the world's largest coral reef ecosystem. Send your responses to [l.pennisi@gbmpa.gov.au](mailto:l.pennisi@gbmpa.gov.au) or facsimile (07) 4772 6093.

## Your comments are welcome

For more information about the Reef Guardian Councils contact Jason Vains on (07) 4750 0700. Feedback on this newsletter and suggestions for upcoming editions are welcome. Email [l.pennisi@gbmpa.gov.au](mailto:l.pennisi@gbmpa.gov.au)

## Environment commitment and statements

The Local Government Association of Queensland (LGAQ) has comprehensive environmental policy statements.

The statements cover environmental protection, natural resource management, waste management and environmental health.

Local Government is also committed to helping the Australian and State Governments in meeting the *Reef Water Quality Protection Plan*. Some of these commitments include to:

- Promote, conserve, rehabilitate and protect areas such as riparian zones and wetlands
- Assist in the development of local water quality improvement plans
- Support State Planning Policies (for example on Acid Sulfate Soils)
- Provide an increased emphasis on general environmental duty, particularly in relation to diffuse sources of water pollution
- Support long-term monitoring of water quality within the catchment.

For information visit [www.lgaq.asn.au/portal/dt](http://www.lgaq.asn.au/portal/dt) and [www.gbmpa.gov.au/](http://www.gbmpa.gov.au/)

## Facts

**More than 2300km:**

the length of the Great Barrier Reef Marine Park.

**Over 2900:**

reefs and habitats in the Marine Park.

**More than 6000:**

ships visit Queensland ports each year.

**\$4.3 billion:**

generated by tourism in the Great Barrier Reef Marine Park.

**Approximately 1.6 million:**

tourists each year visit the Great Barrier Reef Marine Park, mostly Cairns and the Whitsundays.

**152:**

Local Governments and 10 Aboriginal and Islander Community Councils in Queensland.

## Disclaimer

The Great Barrier Reef Marine Park Authority has taken all reasonable steps to ensure that the information contained in this publication was accurate at the time of publication.

