

UPPER & EAST BURDEKIN WATER QUALITY PROGRAM

The Upper and East Burdekin Water Quality Program aims to prevent 49,000 tonnes of fine sediment from entering the Reef's waters every year

The Upper and East Burdekin consists of largely undeveloped rangelands dominated by native pastures. By far the dominant land use is beef cattle grazing, taking up more than 95% of the area. Grazing properties are typically very large and there is a high proportion of family-owned and operated enterprises. Sediment tracing indicates that the Upper Burdekin has a rate of erosion 3.6 times the pre-European rate and fine sediment loads from the sub-region are the second highest in the Reef catchment (behind the Bowen Broken Bogie) despite the presence of the Burdekin Falls Dam.

The 3-year \$5.1 million Upper and East Burdekin water quality program is delivered by NQ Dry Tropics and supports enduring improvements to grazing practices across the region that will result in improved water quality discharged from high priority grazing lands. This program will increase perennial ground cover at the end of the dry season, creating soils that are 'rainfall ready' and reducing runoff and fine sediment delivery to the Great Barrier Reef.

WORKING WITH GRAZIERS

Herding Change Through Grassroots Recovery



NQ Dry Dry Tropics supports graziers in the development of property management plans that pinpoint degraded and erosive landscape features, identify management options and develop an action plan to address causal factors, and establish monitoring sites to assess progress. Broadscale grazing management practices are a key element of these action plans. A competitive financial incentive program is used to support landholders to adopt practice changes that demonstrate large scale water quality outcomes. This multidimensional support program anchors agricultural businesses with increased production and profits, functional landscapes promoting diversity, improved water quality and connected communities adaptable to change through:

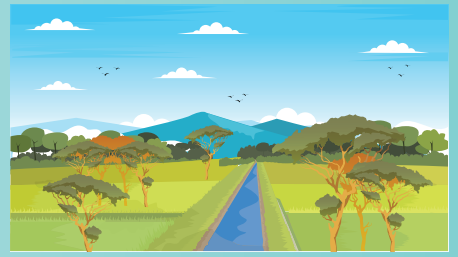
- Support for the Upper and East Burdekin grazing communities to create networks and transfer information and experiences gained during project activities
- Producer groups delivering and sharing local ideas to develop project efficiencies and implement strategies for intervening in water quality issues at a sub-catchment level
- High quality education and training to equip graziers with the necessary skills and confidence to underpin decisions and actions that lead to successful and lasting practice change
- Management changes to address root causes of poor water quality discharged from grazing lands
- Innovative practices proven to stabilise soils and intervention in sediment transport processes
- Community-based events and activities that promote participation, outcomes, networking, shared learning and celebration of successes.



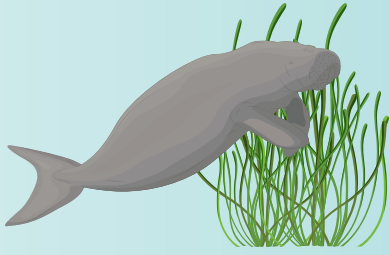
The Upper & East Burdekin Water Quality Program is funded by the partnership between the Australian Government's Reef Trust and the Great Barrier Reef Foundation.



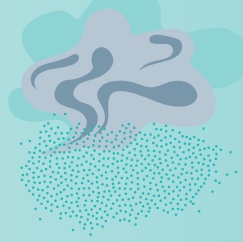
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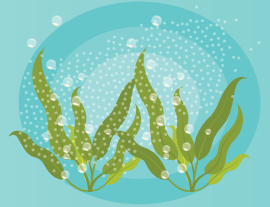
Of the 35 catchments that flow into the Great Barrier Reef, the Upper and East Burdekin is one of the five highest contributors of sediment



Seagrass meadows are important feeding grounds for turtles and dugongs, native to the Burdekin region



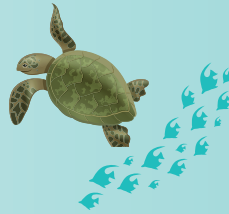
Reducing sediment also reduces the transport of phosphorous and dissolved inorganic nitrogen, other pollutants that harm Reef ecosystems



Shallow seagrass meadows and soft coral gardens near the coast make the region's marine ecosystems particularly vulnerable to high sediment loads



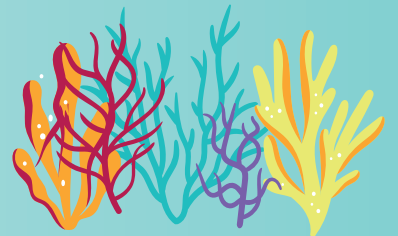
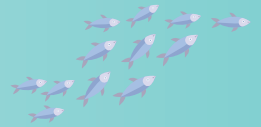
Healthy and vigorous pastures build resilience into beef production enterprises by maximising use of available rainfall, in turn reducing sediment entering local waterways



The loss of sediment by runoff from grazing lands is an indicator of vulnerable landscapes that have declining natural function and resilience



This program builds on years of working with graziers to improve land management practices and protect sensitive parts of the landscape such as gullies and streambanks



Pollutants reduce the Great Barrier Reef's ability to recover from catastrophic events such as tropical cyclones and mass coral bleaching



Great Barrier Reef Foundation

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