

# Reef Trust Partnership

**Water Quality Regional Programs**

**Mulgrave-Russell Regional  
Water Quality Program**

**COMMUNICATIONS &  
STAKEHOLDER ENGAGEMENT PLAN**



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## 1. Introduction and background

### Reef Trust Partnership

The partnership between the Australian Government and GBRF is centred on a landmark investment of \$443.3 million to build the resilience of the Great Barrier Reef (the Reef). Commencing in July 2018, this is the largest single government investment in protecting the Reef and its outstanding universal value. Over six years, this investment supports delivery of the Reef Trust Partnership (the RTP). The RTP includes an investment of \$201 million to address water quality improvement targets impacting the Great Barrier Reef World Heritage Area through activities such as improved farming practices, improving fertiliser use efficiency, and uptake of new technology and innovative land management practices (the Water Quality Component).

The \$141 million for regionally focussed on-ground actions will be delivered through a series of regional programs targeting catchments identified by GBRF as a priority for water quality investment. The purpose of the regional water quality programs is to achieve an enduring reduction in the long-term end-of-catchment pollutant loads from the priority catchments.

### Mulgrave-Russell Regional Water Quality Program

The Mulgrave-Russell Regional water quality program (MRRWQP) is a 6.1-million-dollar investment aimed at achieving a reduction in Dissolved Inorganic Nitrogen (DIN) of 72 tonnes across the catchments from 2021 to 2024. The program aims to achieve improved land management practices and stewardship, as a means of achieving the target reductions in pollutant loads, while providing a platform for sustaining these practices long after the end of the project. Where practicable, the programs will also be designed to contribute towards other RTP outcomes, including those related to innovative solutions for systems change. Increasing engagement with Traditional Owners and where appropriate collaborating in any Traditional Owner-led water quality improvement projects is an additional and important focus.

The Reef Rainforest Research Centre (RRRC) is Regional Program Manager, responsible for managing the design and on-ground implementation of the MRRWQP. RRRC reports directly between the delivery projects and GBRF. CANEGROWERS Cairns Region (CCR) is the Regional Partnership Coordinator, collaborating with and assisting to coordinate industry stakeholders along with the program manager, GBRF and on ground delivery projects including JCU/TropWATER and Farmacist.

## 2. Purpose

This Communication and Stakeholder Engagement plan is a guide to inform planning and execution of communications and stakeholder engagement activities for the MRRWQP. This plan is critical to building understanding of the framework, successful engagement and two-way communication with the MRRWQ delivery partners and aims to facilitate positive and successful messaging of the project's objectives and achievements to the wider community.

This plan supports the overarching [RTP Communication and Engagement Plan](#) developed by the GBRF, which is critical to building understanding, trust and community ownership of the RTP projects in an area where multiple programs are underway that are underpinned by government and industry investment. It is critical that communication and engagement activities for RTP projects are driven by the strategic objectives of the RTP.

By encouraging diverse stakeholder engagement, the MRRWQP will be able to capitalise on existing projects and skills within the catchment, increasing the projects reach and efficiency. Engagement with other stakeholders including, but not limited to Sugar Millers, Traditional Owners, NRM Groups, Productivity Committees, Secondary and Primary Schools and Community Groups, forms a framework for the communications strategy.

CCR has solid relationships and established links across the Mulgrave-Russell catchments. With a strong membership base, CCR is well placed to coordinate and implement appropriately targeted communications to its members who, as land managers, form the major businesses within the Catchments.

### 3. Goals

Communication and stakeholder engagement goals for the MRRWQ Program to be achieved by 30 June 2024 are to:

1. Effectively engage with MRRWQP delivery providers to facilitate open communication and collaboration, ensuring that there is clear recognition of the requirement for alignment with the goals of the overarching Regional Program Plan and Regional M&E plan.
2. Effectively communicate the objectives, progress and achievements of the MRRWQP between GBRF, RRRRC, CCR, project delivery providers, participants, and other regional stakeholders.
3. Increase awareness of best management practices that keep nutrients on farm, resulting in improved profitability and water quality outcomes.
4. Increase awareness and understanding among Mulgrave-Russell cane growers of how improvements to local water quality increases the resilience of the Great Barrier Reef.
5. Communicate the benefits of MRRWQP project DIN reductions and water quality improvement goals through management practice changes and catchment intervention.
6. Facilitate a clear understanding in the Mulgrave-Russell region of the role played by GBRF, RRRRC, CCR and delivery partners in delivering the MRRWQP.
7. Develop meaningful relationships with the Traditional Owners of the Mulgrave-Russell catchment.

### 4. Key messages

Key communication messages in this plan will build on the RTP messaging (as outlined in the [RTP Communication and Engagement Plan](#) relating to climate change, GBRF role, RTP, collective impact, everyone's role and economic impact to facilitate successful grower engagement and participation within the project:

1. The MRRWQP is a partnership between the GBRF, regional delivery providers, RRRRC and CCR to support industry uptake and awareness of improved cane farm productivity/profitability and water quality.
2. The MRRWQP is helping mitigate a significant threat to the Great Barrier Reef (GBR), and aims to improve water quality on the GBR by reducing annual DIN loads leaving farms in the catchment by 72 tonnes.
3. Regional partners work together to coordinate and communicate the delivery of improved nutrient and water quality management practices to achieve the MRRWQP water quality targets.
4. The MRRWQP will benefit the local economy and help to build strong relationships between all stakeholders, potentially increasing soil health and crop uptake of nutrients leading to improved profitability.
5. Landholders have opportunity to implement practices that aim to improve farm profitability and productivity, while also benefiting water quality. By continued education Landholders who reduce DIN runoff, will better understand the impacts of poor water quality.
6. Project delivery partners are working together to design and deliver effective extension support that meets cane growers needs and helps address nutrient and water management challenges.
7. The MRRWQP will seek opportunities for collaboration and knowledge sharing with Traditional Owners within the catchment.
8. The desired outcomes aimed at reducing DIN runoff will be achieved through the delivery providers implementing whole of farm planning, and extension officers working with growers to implement the full Six Easy Steps process with a focus on steps five and six, consisting of checking efficacy of nutrient applications, leaf sampling as well as utilising Sugar Research Australia's Six Easy Steps Toolbox as a decision-making tool.

## 5. Stakeholders

Primary stakeholders for the MRRWQP are:

- Cane growers (landholders)
- MRRWQ Program delivery providers (Farmacist; JCU TropWATER)
- CCR (MRRWQ Program Partnership Coordinator)
- RRRRC (MRRWQ Program Manager)
- The Milling Company (MSF Sugar)
- Traditional Owners
- Productivity and Research Organisations (Innisfail Babinda Cane Productivity Services; Mulgrave Cane Productivity Committee; Sugar Research Australia)
- Australian Department of Agriculture, Water and the Environment (DAWE)
- GBRF.

As all these organisations work with growers, a large part of the communication strategy will be a combination of face-to-face communications supported by newsletters and reviews.

Secondary stakeholders for the MRRWQP include but are not limited to:

- Local Landcare groups
- NRM groups
- Community groups
- Government agencies
- Local Council
- Healthy Waterways
- Wet Tropics Management Authority
- Queensland Cane Growers Organisation Ltd (QCGO)
- Broader community.

Engagement with the broader community will rely on a range of communications including brochures, social media, and events.

## 6. Communication / Engagement approach and audience

The MRRWQP Partnership Coordinator aims to facilitate broad-scale communication about the outcomes of the delivery projects.

The communication and engagement approach with delivery providers will consist of continuous feedback as per figure 1, and collaborative engagement between the MRRWQP Manager, Partnership Coordinator and the Delivery Providers. Communications between these stakeholders will focus on ensuring all parties remain engaged with the key objectives of the MRRWQP and targets are met.

Highlighting successes of the program and effectively identifying and communicating any current or future challenges will lead to maintaining transparency for all stakeholders, with regards to any current or future challenges the program may face in reaching the programs goals.

Communications with Traditional Owners will set about building an authentic relationship, understanding common values and principles around water quality within the Mulgrave-Russell region and the Great Barrier Reef.

Landholder communication and engagement will be in line with the delivery providers key project outcomes as per their project Communications and Stakeholder Engagement Plans. Engagement will be targeted towards landholders who are likely to deliver large reductions in DIN, ensuring the overall programs DIN reduction targets are achieved in the most economical manner.

Communication material will include a series of videos to showcase the program to the broader public, highlighting project objectives, outcomes, successes and benefits to the Reef and the farming community.



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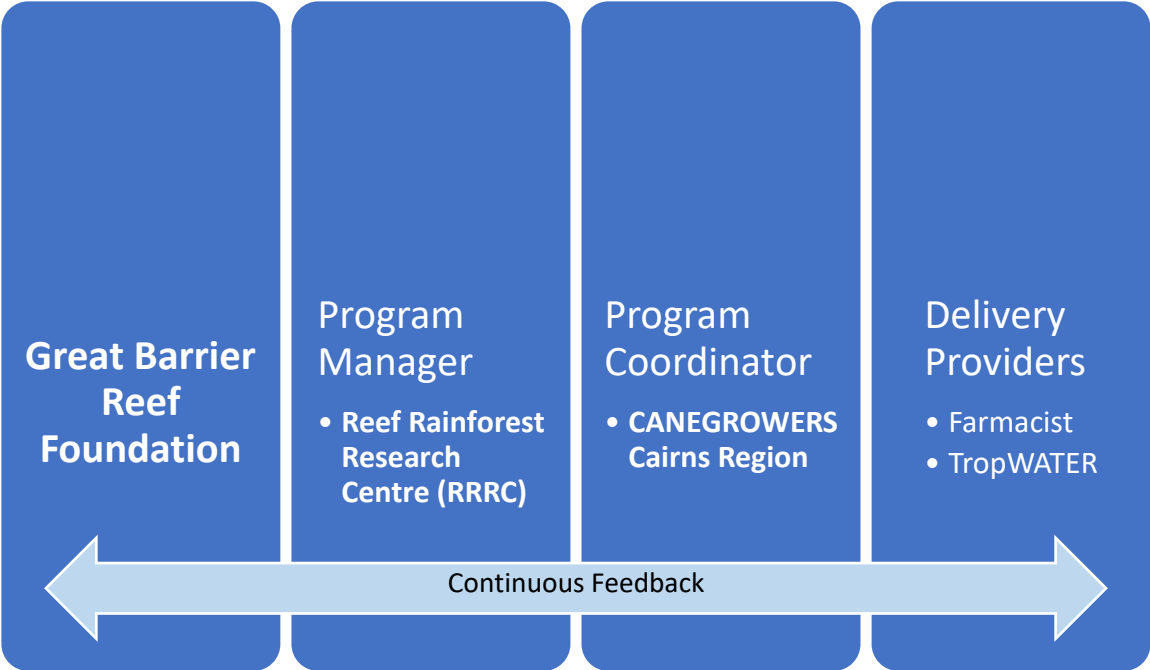


Figure 1. Continuous feedback between all levels of the program ensuring open communication.



7. Communication and engagement activities

**Goal 1:** Effectively engage with MRRWQP delivery providers to facilitate open communication and collaboration, ensuring that there is clear recognition of the requirement for alignment with the goals of the overarching Regional Program Plan and Regional M&E plan.

Audience	Key message	Purpose	Method and or activity	Channels	Frequency	Indicators or measure of success	Target
Delivery Providers	The MRRWQP is a partnership between the GBRF, regional delivery providers, RRRC and CCR to support industry uptake and awareness of improved cane farm productivity, profitability, and water quality	Ensure end of project outcomes are achieved and projects communicate and engage effectively with all stakeholders	In person meetings	Meetings	Quarterly	Alignment with regional plan, M&E Plan and Stakeholder Communications and Engagement Plan	4 meetings per year minimum

**Goal 2:** Effectively communicate the objectives, progress and achievements of the MRRWQP between GBRF, RRRC, CCR, delivery providers and other regional stakeholders.

Audience	Key message	Purpose	Method and or activity	Channels	Frequency	Indicators or measure of success	Target
GBRF, RRRC & CCR	The MRRWQP is helping mitigate a significant threat to the GBR, and aims to improve water quality on the GBR by reducing annual DIN loads leaving farms in the catchment by 72 tonnes	Clear communication of progress	Participate in steering committee meetings	Zoom	Quarterly	Clear understanding of objectives	4 meetings per year
RRRC, CCR and delivery providers		Clear communication of progress	Participate in delivery partner meetings	In person	Quarterly	Clear understanding of objectives and current progress	4 meetings per year
Wider community and stakeholders		Program promotion	Publications	Newsletter and social media	Biannual	Track views and shares on social media	2 per year



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**Goal 3:** Increase awareness among cane growers of best management practices that keep nutrients on farm, resulting in improved profitability and water quality outcomes.

Audience	Key message	Purpose	Method and or activity	Channels	Frequency	Indicators or measure of success	Target
Cane farmers	Matching inputs to soil test recommendations in line with MRRWQP Key message 3: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Regional partners are working together to coordinate and communicate the delivery of improved nutrient and water quality management practices to achieve the MRRWQP water quality targets.</li> </ul>	Practice change	Assist delivery providers to promote practice change	Projects and social media	Quarterly	Track views and shares on social media	100 views of post
	Soil health improvements and Precision Agriculture can lead to increased profitability and productivity in line with MRRWQP Key message 3.			Advertised through Canegrowers Newsletters and through delivery provider channels	As demonstration site data becomes available.	Attendance at site demonstration events	15 growers per event

**Goal 4:** Increase awareness and understanding among Mulgrave-Russell cane growers of how improvements to local water quality increases the resilience of the Great Barrier Reef.

Audience	Key message	Purpose	Method and or activity	Channels	Frequency	Indicators or measure of success	Target
Cane farmers	Improving local water quality improves reef resilience. MRRQWP key messages 4 & 5: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>The MRRWQP will benefit the local economy and help to strengthen relationships between all stakeholders, potentially increasing soil health and crop uptake of nutrients leading to improved profitability.</li> <li>Landholders can implement practices aiming to improve farm profitability and productivity, while also benefiting water quality. Landholders who reduce DIN runoff will better understand the impacts of poor water quality.</li> </ul>	Educate growers	Grower meetings with project delivery providers	Shed meetings	Annually	Attendance and feedback	15 growers pre meeting



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**Goal 5:** Communicate the benefits of MRRWQ project DIN reductions and water quality improvement goals through management practice changes and catchment intervention

Audience	Key message	Purpose	Method and or activity	Channels	Frequency	Indicators or measure of success	Target
Cane farmers and regional community	Using low-cost intervention within existing drainage boards and other localised farm drains can result in improved water quality	Reduce off farm DIN losses as per program outcomes	Media Grower meetings	CANEGROWERS magazine, local newsletter and social media	Quarterly (depending on project data)	Track views and activity on social media. Feedback from growers on published articles.	100 views. 15 growers attending meeting.
	Farmers can maintain productivity whilst reducing DIN runoff	Build grower confidence in whole of farm approach to nutrient management	Social media	Social media, website	Quarterly (depending on project data)	Track views and activity on social media. Feedback from growers on published articles.	100 views. 15 growers attending meeting.
	Highlight the success of the Mulgrave Russell Regional Water Quality Program delivery partners	Inform growers, regional community	Social media	Social media, website	3-5 videos published by 15 July 2023; 8 videos published by 30 April 2024	Track views and activity on social media	8 videos

**Goal 6:** Facilitate a clear understanding in the Mulgrave-Russell region of the role played by GBRF, RRRRC, CCR and delivery partners in delivering the MRRWQP.

Audience	Key message	Purpose	Method and or activity	Channels	Frequency	Indicators or measure of success	Target
Cane farmers and regional stakeholders	Project delivery partners are working together to design and deliver effective extension support that meets cane growers needs and helps address nutrient and water management challenges.	Inform growers, regional community	Information sharing/grower engagement	Shed meetings	Annually	Grower attendance	15 growers

**Goal 7:** Develop meaningful relationships with the Traditional Owners of the Mulgrave-Russell catchment

Audience	Key message	Purpose	Method and or activity	Channels	Frequency	Indicators or measure of success	Target
Traditional Owners and cane farmers	The MRRWQP will seek opportunities for collaboration and knowledge sharing with Traditional Owners within the catchment.	Collaboration and knowledge sharing	Face to face	On-ground meetings	Annually at minimum	Engagement or collaboration has been successful	Annual



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\*Indicators of success may include:

- **Effectiveness** – Did the program deliver the communications and engagement products committed?
- **Efficiency** – Did the program deliver these on time and within budget?
- **Appropriateness** – Were the messages to stakeholders clear, digestible, and suitable for target audiences?
- **Impact** – What difference did it make? (e.g. did people come to the events?)
- **Legacy** – Did the program learn valuable lessons from the communications and engagement activities (e.g. what worked and what didn't) that could be applied/change to future projects?)



8. Risk and Mitigation

Risk	Mitigation measures
Growers do not use social media or electronic communications and remain disengaged	Farm visits by CCR, Grower Services Staff member
Complacency around the importance of water quality	Further education and understanding of water quality through grower workshops and shed meetings. Along with information shared via newsletter.
Lack of trust framework with Traditional Owners	Continue to engage in a meaningful way with Traditional Owners and increase the trust framework
Key stakeholders are not identified or effectively engaged	Stakeholders provide input into the MRRWQ Program Plans to ensure they are appropriately engaged

