

# Stories

OF NRM PARTNERS

## Collaboration helps grow Great Barrier Reef

In 2015 when funding was announced for Reef Trust III, 12 Reef Alliance partners came together to successfully submit one collaborative bid, launching the innovative Reef Alliance: Growing a Great Barrier Reef (GGBR) project.

Its structure was innovative, bringing together government, the agricultural sector and six NRM groups to proactively work together to minimise soil loss and optimise fertiliser and pesticide applications, to safeguard the future of the reef.

It was an ambitious undertaking — the investment of \$45.6 million to support 1200 farmers and graziers in the sugarcane, grazing, horticulture and broadacre cropping industries to improve their practices over nearly 2 million hectares in 33 Great Barrier Reef catchments.

By December 2019 the project had achieved its goal of establishing one database, one consistent monitoring and evaluation framework, one reporting mechanism, and reef-wide communication amongst the

industries involved, and learned much about the challenges of collaboration.

“While it was hard going to gain consistency across five regions and the number of commodities involved, the reward was the building of strong partnerships between industry and NRM bodies, and it was a successful model,” says Adam Knapp, coordinator for the project facilitators, the Queensland Farmers Federation.

“We had to be adaptive in shifting resources and money around industries and regions where we could. From a partnership point of view the committee had a lot of responsibility in ensuring we could meet the targets.”

The statistics speak for themselves: as a result of the GGBR project, more than 40 dedicated extension officers engaged with 1,588 landholders to deliver one-on-one customised farm planning and personalised technical advice.

This resulted in 1,143 enterprises across almost 1.8 million hectares of farmland in Queensland’s Reef catchments demonstrating practice change to safeguard the Reef, such as saving 366 tonnes of dissolved inorganic nitrogen from leaving the catchments. By industry, cane (58.4%) and grazing (19.7%) contributed to the majority of enterprises making changes.

“This has been a positive experience in collaboration — I’ve learned about effective monitoring and evaluation, ideas on extension delivery, how to partner with other organisations and use existing processes and systems, rather than duplicate.”

**Australian Banana Growers’ Council**

Two key achievements were the single database for collaborative capture and reporting, and the Reef Champion awards, which publicly recognised the efforts of outstanding individuals and organisations who had taken action to improve the quality of water entering the Great Barrier Reef.

“The database held by QFF only cost a small amount of money, but it meant data from regional and industry groups could be fed into it in a uniform way to provide the outputs on learning and impact of investment that we were after,” says Adam.

**NRM groups were proud to partner with QFF, CANEGROWERS, Growcom, Australian Banana Growers Council, Queensland Dairyfarmers Organisation and AgForce to safeguard the future of the reef.**

**Funded by: The Australian Government Reef Trust Program.**

**Brochure funded by Australian Government National Landcare Program.**

### LEARN MORE

➔ [www.qff.org.au/projects/reef-alliance/growing-great-barrier-reef](http://www.qff.org.au/projects/reef-alliance/growing-great-barrier-reef)