

REEF GUARDIAN COUNCIL PROGRAM

A local government alliance to
address the key threats to the
Great Barrier Reef

The Reef Guardian Council program is a partnership between local government and the Reef Authority which recognises that local and regional approaches are central to protecting and managing the Reef and the communities it supports.

It is the Reef Authority's flagship stewardship program engaging local government in the protection of the Great Barrier Reef.

Contribute to the bigger picture

Local governments are key management partners as many of the threats to the Reef and heritage values arise outside of the Marine Park boundaries and the Reef Authority's jurisdiction.

Councils are directly involved in a myriad of both statutory and non-statutory activities that minimise

impacts, improve values and support the resilience of the Reef, contributing to the Reef 2050 Long-Term Sustainability Plan and the objectives of the *Great Barrier Reef Marine Park Act 1975*.

The Reef Guardian Council program recognises this and celebrates and supports the important role of local government in the protection and management of the Reef catchment region.



Reef Guardian Council members

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Protecting the Reef starts by protecting your patch

Councils undertake a wide range of environmental initiatives that help address the key threats to the Reef. This might include acting to:

- **Limit the impacts of climate change** – contributing to global efforts to reduce greenhouse gas emissions, building capacity to adapt to climate change, and providing community education
- **Reduce impacts from land-based activities** – through waste management, erosion control, planning and development assessment, stormwater and wastewater management, reducing light pollution near sensitive ecosystems, and implementing programs to reduce marine debris entering the Reef
- **Protect, rehabilitate and restore habitats** – vegetation and pest management, restoring and rehabilitating coastal habitats, identifying, prioritising, removing or remediating artificial barriers to water flow and increasing connectivity through fish passages in catchment and estuarine areas
- **Reduce impacts from water-based activities** – encouraging and supporting stewardship actions and behaviours to reduce the impact of water-based activities including recreational fishing, raising awareness of the biodiversity and heritage values of the Reef
- **Conserve historic and cultural heritage** – protecting and conserving sites with historic and/or cultural heritage values, raising awareness of historic and/or cultural heritage values
- **Support voluntary stewardship** – providing education, capacity building and developing partnerships to share knowledge and promote stewardship behaviours.

As an example the [Climate Change Initiatives Snapshot](#) showcases the collective actions being taken and the thematic reporting the program provides to promote council actions and advocate for support.



Douglas Shire Council water treatment plant
© Douglas Shire Council



Cassowary Coast Regional Council rubbish collection
© Cassowary Coast Regional Council



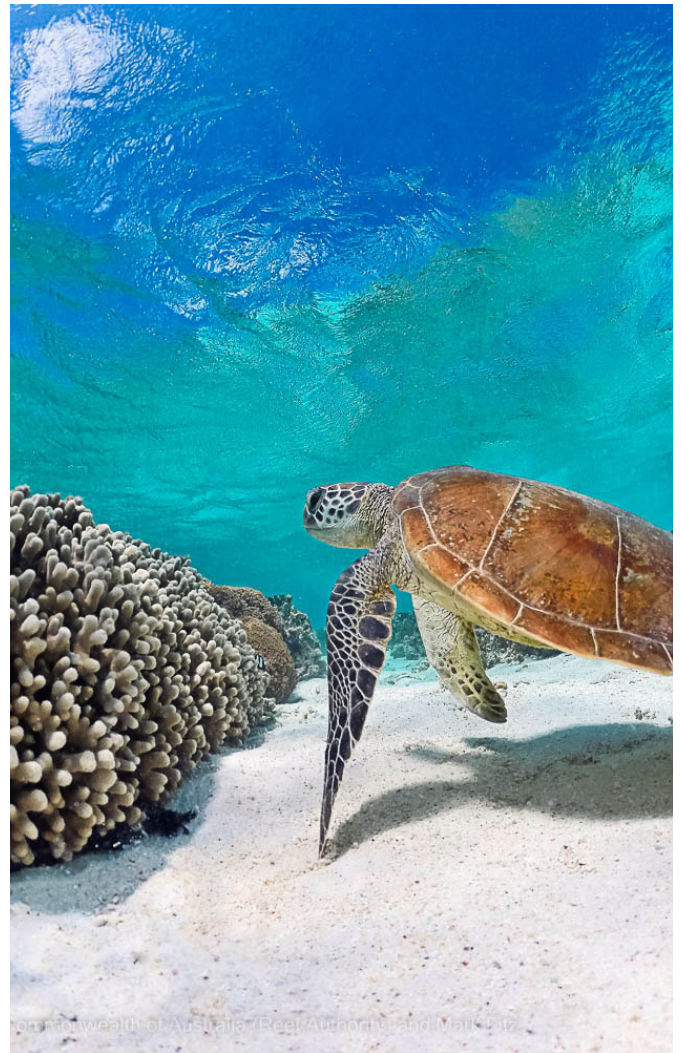
Livingstone Shire Council Yeppoon Lagoon
© Livingstone Shire Council



Hinchinbrook Shire Council fish ladders
© Commonwealth of Australia (Reef Authority)

What are the benefits of being a Reef Guardian Council?

- It's free! And there are very little out of pocket costs for participating in workshops etc. In fact there is some financial support for this
- Access to a network of like-minded councils, and key partners to harness the power of the collective and share knowledge. Check out the current participants [here](#)
- Capacity building opportunities provided for council staff to encourage innovation and the uptake of best practices to address the key threats to the Reef
- Support to produce and deliver on an action plan that addresses the key threats to the Reef
- Opportunities to contribute to the network via various face to face and online meetings, workshops and field trips
- Support to engage with your catchment community to encourage Reef stewardship
- Promotion of council's environmental initiatives addressing the key threats to the Reef
- Advocation for further action through the Reef Guardian Council platform.



Turtle at Lady Elliot Island
© Commonwealth of Australia (Reef Authority)



Reef Guardian Council annual meeting
© Commonwealth of Australia (Reef Authority)



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What is involved?

Councils sign a Memorandum of Understanding to participate in the program, which is governed by terms-of-reference.

Each Reef Guardian Council develops an Action Plan outlining the activities they commit to undertake to help protect the Reef, implements the (voluntary) plan and reports on achievements.

The program includes an Executive Committee providing high level strategic involvement, and a Working Group providing an important forum for technical and operational staff to network, build capacity by sharing best practices, and collaborate to find solutions.

The program is also building connections between the Reef Authority and council's communications teams to better enable sharing of Reef protection and sustainability messaging, and promotion of council actions.

Capacity building and networking opportunities such as lunchtime learning sessions, field trips, support to attend training and meetings, are offered throughout the term.

A quarterly newsletter is also produced to showcase Reef Guardian Council initiatives, share information and promote activities on the [Reef Authority website](#).

The Reef Authority also provides the opportunity for Reef Guardian Council's to connect with and share the wonder of the Reef with their catchment community through twice yearly Virtual Reef Adventures offered through regional libraries in the school holidays. This also gives councils a chance to promote the actions they're taking in their local government area and engage the audience on various household behaviour change actions.

Want to know more?

Or to discuss the program please contact the Reef Guardian Council team:

gbrmpa.gov.au/our-work/programs-and-projects/reef-guardian-councils

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