



**THE HON JOSH FRYDENBERG MP**  
Minister for the Environment and Energy



**THE HON STEVEN MILES MP**  
Queensland Minister for Environment

## **JOINT MEDIA RELEASE**

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### **REPORT CARD SHOWS ON-GROUND PROJECTS DELIVER POLLUTION REDUCTION FOR THE REEF**

The Australian and Queensland Governments today released the Great Barrier Reef Report Card 2016 which shows that better targeting of investment is resulting in less pollution flowing to the Reef.

The Report Card 2016 assessed the reported results of Reef Water Quality Protection Plan 2013 actions up to June 2016, including progress towards the 2018 targets.

#### Reducing nitrogen run-off

“We have seen steady improvement in reducing all pollutants, including good reduction in dissolved inorganic nitrogen in the Burdekin,” said the Minister for the Environment and Energy, the Hon Josh Frydenberg MP.

Modelled annual average loads reduced by a further 5.5 per cent in the Burdekin, up to a total of 25.5 per cent.

“Improved nitrogen and irrigation management by sugarcane growers and the highly targeted Phase 1 Reef Trust Reverse Tender and the RP20 Burdekin Nitrogen Project were key to delivering this result. We expect to see accelerated progress towards the targets in future years as the outcomes of investments under the five Reef Trust phases and the Queensland Reef Water Quality Program are reported,” said Minister Frydenberg.

Queensland Minister for Environment, the Hon Steven Miles MP, thanked canegrowers in Queensland for their part in reducing nitrogen on their farms.

“This is thanks to the efforts of sugarcane growers who have improved their nitrogen and irrigation management practices. Farmers are benefitting from these changes as they can improve their productivity while reducing their nitrogen fertiliser application rates,” said Minister Miles.

#### Reducing sediment run-off

Modelled annual average loads of sediment also reduced by a further 4.1 per cent in the Fitzroy, up to a total of 9.6 per cent.

“Fitzroy graziers are to be commended. Their efforts plus the clever targeting of investment in streambank protection is behind this result. Landholders are making changes on their farm which not only provide great outcomes for the Reef, but also improve their profitability and productivity,” said Minister Frydenberg.

### Reporting wetland condition

For the first time, the state of and pressures on wetland environmental values were reported across the Great Barrier Reef. Overall, natural freshwater floodplain wetlands were in moderate condition.

“Wetlands are invaluable for protecting the Great Barrier Reef as they provide a vital connection between freshwater areas and the marine environment. They are nature’s water filter and help improve the quality of water flowing to the Reef while also providing carbon storage. We will report wetland condition every four years, tracking trends against this baseline information,” said Minister Miles.

### Combating coral bleaching

The report card confirmed coral bleaching and mortality was highly variable across the Great Barrier Reef, with inshore coral reefs south of the Daintree in the Wet Tropics in moderate condition in 2015-2016. Corals in the far northern and northern regions between Port Douglas and Cape York were the most affected by coral bleaching.

This report card does not detail the full extent of the coral loss from the back-to-back bleaching events in 2016 and 2017 and from severe tropical cyclone Debbie. These results will be detailed in future report cards but, in the meantime, the latest information can be found on the Great Barrier Reef Marine Park Authority website.

“A lack of cyclonic activity in 2015-2016 allowed coral and seagrass communities in the southern parts of the Reef to recover from the effects of multiple severe weather events in previous years. However, recovery is still in the early stages and the legacy of impacts from severe tropical cyclones may last for decades,” said Minister Miles.

The Reef Water Quality Protection Plan has also recently been updated. The new plan – the draft Reef 2050 Water Quality Improvement Plan 2017-2022 – includes water quality targets for catchments that flow to the Reef and future report cards will assess progress towards these new targets.

The Report Card 2016 and the draft Reef 2050 Water Quality Improvement Plan 2017-2022 are available at: [www.reefplan.qld.gov.au](http://www.reefplan.qld.gov.au)

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