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NEW & IMPROVED ACTIONS TO PROTECT THE GREAT BARRIER REEF

New and improved actions to protect the Great Barrier Reef and the 64,000 jobs it supports have been endorsed by Australian and Queensland environment ministers as well as the Queensland Premier at the 44th Great Barrier Reef Ministerial Forum in Brisbane.

Building on the considerable efforts already underway through the more than \$2 billion *Reef 2050 Long-Term Sustainability Plan* which has been endorsed by the World Heritage Committee, these actions reaffirm the Australian and Queensland governments' commitment to the conservation and restoration of this natural wonder of the world for future generations.

The actions will be bolstered by the recent investment of an additional \$500 million in the Great Barrier Reef by the Australian Government as well as the Queensland Government's recently announced \$500 million Land Restoration Fund.

As an update from the Great Barrier Reef Marine Park Authority on the health of the Reef indicated, while mass coral bleaching has not occurred this summer, climate change remains the single biggest threat to reefs worldwide. Of 29 World Heritage-listed reefs, about three quarters were affected by coral bleaching in 2016 and 2017.

In addition to local action that builds the health and resilience of the Reef, both governments are also committed to global action to address climate change through the Paris Agreement.

A strengthened Reef 2050 Plan

The Ministerial Forum approved an updated *Reef 2050 Plan*, following its previous request that the scheduled review be brought forward to ensure the Plan remains current and effective in response to pressures on the Reef.

The updated *Reef 2050 Plan* recognises these pressures and identifies priorities for immediate attention as well as new actions to protect the Reef. It reaffirms the importance of a strong and coordinated approach to managing the Reef.

It is no secret that the Great Barrier Reef is under pressure, but the Reef is remarkably resilient and, with the right plan and the right investment, it will give it the best chance to overcome the challenges it faces.

Advice received from the Reef 2050 Independent Expert Panel and the Reef 2050 Advisory Committee indicates that the *Reef 2050 Plan* remains the right plan for the Reef and both governments are delivering record levels of funding to support the Plan.

Six innovative ideas short-listed

From an international playing field of 69 submissions, six innovative ideas designed to boost coral abundance on the Reef were short-listed for feasibility testing as part of the \$2 million innovation challenge announced earlier this year.

From mass producing coral larvae to a biodegradable “sun shield”, the six successful submissions came from Southern Cross University, Sydney Institute of Marine Science, the University of Melbourne, the University of Technology Sydney, CSIRO in partnership with international marine engineering company Van Oord and engineering and environmental consultancy BMT Pty Ltd in partnership with the University of Queensland.

Notwithstanding the extensive, collaborative efforts underway to address pressures on the Reef, the Australian and Queensland governments recognise that new solutions are needed.

Improving water quality entering the Reef

As part of our efforts to improve the quality of water flowing to the Reef, the Ministerial Forum also endorsed the new *Reef 2050 Water Quality Improvement Plan 2017-2022*.

The new plan is the most comprehensive plan for managing Reef water quality to date, requiring everyone living and working in the catchments adjacent to the Reef to improve their land use practices.

This effort will be driven through:

- applying minimum practice standards across all industries and land uses;
- supporting industries and communities to build a culture of innovation and stewardship that takes them beyond minimum standards; and
- restoring catchments through works to improve or repair streambanks, gullies, riparian vegetation and wetlands.

Water quality improvement targets have been refined and set at the level of individual Reef catchments to allow more targeted action and investment.

In addition, the *Reef 2050 Cumulative Impact Management Policy* and *Net Benefit Policy* were also endorsed.

Through sound policy, record-breaking direct investment and world class marine park management, the Australian and Queensland governments remain firmly committed to protecting the Great Barrier Reef and are working with local governments, Traditional Owners, scientists, communities and industry to do so.

Further information

- *Reef 2050 Long-Term Sustainability Plan*: <http://www.environment.gov.au/marine/gbr/long-term-sustainability-plan>
- Innovation challenge: <https://advance.qld.gov.au/entrepreneurs-and-startups-industry-small-business/small-business-innovation-research/boosting-coral-abundance-great-barrier-reef>
- *Reef Water Quality Improvement Plan 2017-2022*: <https://www.reefplan.qld.gov.au/about/>
- *Reef 2050 Cumulative Impact Management Policy* and *Net Benefit Policy*: <http://www.gbrmpa.gov.au>

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