

Fitzroy Basin resilience the key at 10th Report Card launch

Fitzroy Basin waterways are in the spotlight with local waterway monitoring collective Fitzroy Partnership for River Health launching its tenth Report Card today grading the waterway health of the eleven Fitzroy Basin catchments and estuary.

Fitzroy Partnership for River Health Chair Executive Officer Dr Leigh Stitz said the 10th Report Card launch allowed the group to reflect on the reasons for its commencement in the region.

“While waterway health might not be top of mind all the time, the reporting we do each year brings together significant data from across the Basin so that if there is community concern, there is independent, verified results and grades demonstrating the health of waterways in this region,” Dr Stitz said.

“In 2008, community concern about drinking water quality after major wet season flooding and authorised releases of mine water into the catchment led to the then Queensland Premier Anna Bligh to call for an independent report on water quality, which started the push for independent waterway reporting for the community across the state” she said.

“While today we announce a ‘C’/Fair Report Card grade for the 2019-20 year, down from a low B last year, the trends do show there is overall stability and resilience of the Fitzroy Basin over ten years of reporting.”

“More than 525,000 results were collated and assessed across 244 sites this year, with the majority of the catchments remaining unchanged, although the Fitzroy and Connors catchments did see a marked decline.”

“The expectation is that the decrease in overall grade can be partly attributed this year to lower than average rainfall across the Basin.”

“Ecosystem health is complex as at times waterway health may decline in a dry rainfall year if pollutants remain in-stream and are not flushed through the river system as we believe has happened this time, or it can improve if there is a reduction in sediment and run-off due to lack of rainfall,” Dr Stitz said.

“The Fitzroy Basin is an economic powerhouse for the nation with significant agriculture, mining, industry and regional population and our partners have committed in various ways to a better water future in this region,” she said.

“With significant attention on water quality outcomes and the Great Barrier Reef, with ongoing regulation and management of land users, and with new stewardship initiatives underway across

mining, coal seam gas, agriculture and community to support positive waterway health outcomes, we are working towards a better-managed and stable Fitzroy Basin,” Dr Stitz said.

“Interested community members can drill down to the detail of how each catchment fared this year on our website www.riverhealth.org.au.”

“Our partners also recently committed to a new Regional Receiving Environment Monitoring Program, which means that more comprehensive data from a better range of sites will feed into our Report Card each year,” she said.

“With this new system we will move from limited data or no data in some catchments to more wide-spread data for a more robust waterway reporting system; providing cost-savings to our partners by reducing the duplication in predominantly mining areas.”

Print copies of the latest report card are available for use at events, for school resources and to display at businesses throughout the Fitzroy Basin by emailing info@riverhealth.org.au.

Fitzroy Partnership for River health was formed in 2012 and includes organisations from government, agriculture, resources, industry, research and community, working together to provide a more complete picture of river health in the Fitzroy Basin.

To find out more about the report card visit riverhealth.org.au

For all Media Enquiries please contact:

Nicole Dendle P: 0439 389 934 nicole.dendle@riverhealth.org.au

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