

A clearer picture is emerging of river health in the Fitzroy Basin

Fitzroy Partnership for River Health has reported on the condition of Fitzroy Basin waterways for more than a decade and, today, an even clearer picture of ecosystem health in the Fitzroy Basin has become available with the release of our latest Report Card.

For the first time, the 2022-23 Report Card has been released only months after data collection, allowing the community closest to real-time reporting of the condition of rivers that span the breadth of the basin from the Nogoia in the west, the Dawson in the south, the Connors and Mackenzie in the north right through to the Fitzroy and out into the Great Barrier Reef.

Fitzroy Partnership for River Health Chair, Mr Tim Kendrick, said that with stronger data than ever before and new indicators added to the report card assessment, the community could gain a clearer picture of river health throughout the entire Fitzroy Basin.

“We have been seeking to address data gaps for a number of years, and with the implementation of the new Fitzroy Basin Monitoring Program we have added two important new indicators, fish and habitat condition, for the first time,” Mr Kendrick said.

“We are pleased to report the Fitzroy Basin attained an overall score of B for ecosystem health in 2022-23, an increase from recent years when a C was attained,” he said.

“Both data collection and climate factors do impact the results, but this year more comprehensive and regular data sampling is allowing a better picture of river health than ever before,” he said.

“The assessment of freshwater fish including native and pest species and habitat condition which includes water flow, channel alteration, bank stability and vegetation cover, merge with existing sampling of nutrients, toxicants, turbidity, electrical conductivity and pH to create a more complete picture for our community.”

Of the 11 catchments within the Fitzroy Basin, the Fitzroy catchment had the largest change this year from an overall score of 43 to 63.

“As the Fitzroy catchment represents the most downstream catchment, our Independent Science Panel is confident this improvement is a strong indication that increased ecology data does expand our representation of waterway health.

“This region is growing at a significant rate, and we depend on industries such as resources and agriculture to keep our communities thriving, however this needs to be balanced with maintaining

and improving ecosystem health, so understanding with clear data the condition of our waterways is essential.”

“It is only with the financial and in-kind commitment of our partners that this Report Card can be produced.”

“Report Cards are essential for science-based certainty and assurance, and importantly they allow our partners to better understand conditions and ultimately work towards water management practices that support a better water future for all stakeholders within the Fitzroy Basin.”

“After more than a decade of reporting trends are emerging showing a resilient system, even in years of droughts and flooding rains.

“More complete reporting also supports regional water quality guidelines that protect ecosystem health and is another example of how reporting at a whole of Basin scale supports improved direction in water management.”

The Independent Science Panel has once again guided report card development and scrutinised results to ensure methods used for assessment are locally relevant and based on best available science.

Interested community members are encouraged to drill down to the detail at www.riverhealth.org.au

Fitzroy Partnership for River Health is supported by the Queensland, Australian and local governments, industry, community and other partners. The ongoing support of our Major Partners and Partners is critical to our ongoing success - <https://riverhealth.org.au/our-partners/>.

Environment Minister Leanne Linard said the Queensland Government strongly supported the work undertaken by Fitzroy Partnership for River Health.

“The partnership’s work to introduce an improved monitoring program and additional ecological indicators will bring longer term benefits, giving better data on waterway health moving forward.

“The Regional Report Card Partnerships are a foundational activity under the joint Queensland and Australian governments’ Reef 2050 Plan.

“They complement the Reef Water Quality Report Card, communicating science and environmental information in an easily understandable format for their Partners and local communities.

“Regional Report Card Partnerships bring together government and local stakeholders who have a shared vision for healthy waterways in their region. “We are investing \$3.75 million over three years to continue the Regional Report Card Partnerships in Great Barrier Reef catchments, continuing the level of annual investment of \$1.25 million across the five partnerships.”

For all Media Enquiries please contact:

Nicole Dendle P: 0439 389 934