

fitzroy partnership for river health

Stewardship Report 2026

Being the change that is needed

FITZROY PARTNERSHIP FOR RIVER HEALTH

The first stewards

The First Nations people have cared for this continent for over 65,000 years and we pay our respects to them, their cultures and Elders past and present. We acknowledge the Barada Barna, Widi, Jangga, Barada Kabalbara Yetimarala, Gaangalu Nation People, Darumbal, Koinjmal, Woppaburra, First Nations Bailai, Gurang, Gooreng Gooreng, Taribelang Bunda People, Wulli Wulli Nation People, Wadja, Iman/Jiman, Western Kangoulu, Kanolu, Bidjara, Karingbal, Wangan and Jagalingou People as the First Nations peoples of the waters, and lands, within our reporting region. We look forward to continuing to engage with these first stewards and their contacts and representatives to understand their care for country, their connection to waterways and to ensure their values and priorities are considered as industry, government, environment and community moves forward together.



Information herein is provided in good faith and while every effort has been made to ensure it is accurate, complete, and up-to-date at the time of printing, Fitzroy Partnership for River Health respects diverse perspectives and deeply regrets any unintentional inaccuracies, omissions, or interpretations that may cause offence.

OUR STEWARDSHIP *vision*

To build a legacy of environmental Stewardship across the Fitzroy Basin — connecting people, environment, and future generations through shared action, knowledge, and care for Country.

ABOUT THE FPRH

Stewardship Program

This Stewardship Report is a key component of the **Fitzroy Partnership for River Health (FPRH) Stewardship Program,** which highlights the various stewardship activities undertaken by our program Partners over the past 12 months. It showcases the collective actions, innovation and collaboration helping to protect and enhance the health of the Fitzroy Basin.

The broader FPRH Stewardship Program recognises and celebrates the individuals, organisations, communities and partnerships working every day to care for the landscapes, waterways and communities of the Fitzroy Basin.

As one of Australia's most significant river systems, the Fitzroy Basin supports diverse ecosystems, productive industries, vibrant communities and deep cultural heritage. Caring for this remarkable catchment is a shared responsibility, and the Stewardship Program shines a light on those leading by example.

Through recognising practical environmental action, sharing knowledge and inspiring collaboration, the FPRH Stewardship Program helps strengthen stewardship across the region and contributes to the long-term health of the Fitzroy Basin and the Great Barrier Reef.

THE PROGRAM COMPONENTS

Our Stewardship Program has three interconnected components:



Stewardship Report

Annual collection of Partner Stewardship stories and outcomes.



Stewardship Spotlight

Presentation of shortlisted initiatives at the annual Water Forum.



FPRH Stewardship Awards

Annual award(s) celebrating outstanding Stewardship and lasting legacy across the Fitzroy Basin.

Project Categories

- First Nations
- Land Improvement
- Policy
- Urban Water
- Water Quality



BASIN WIDE INITIATIVES

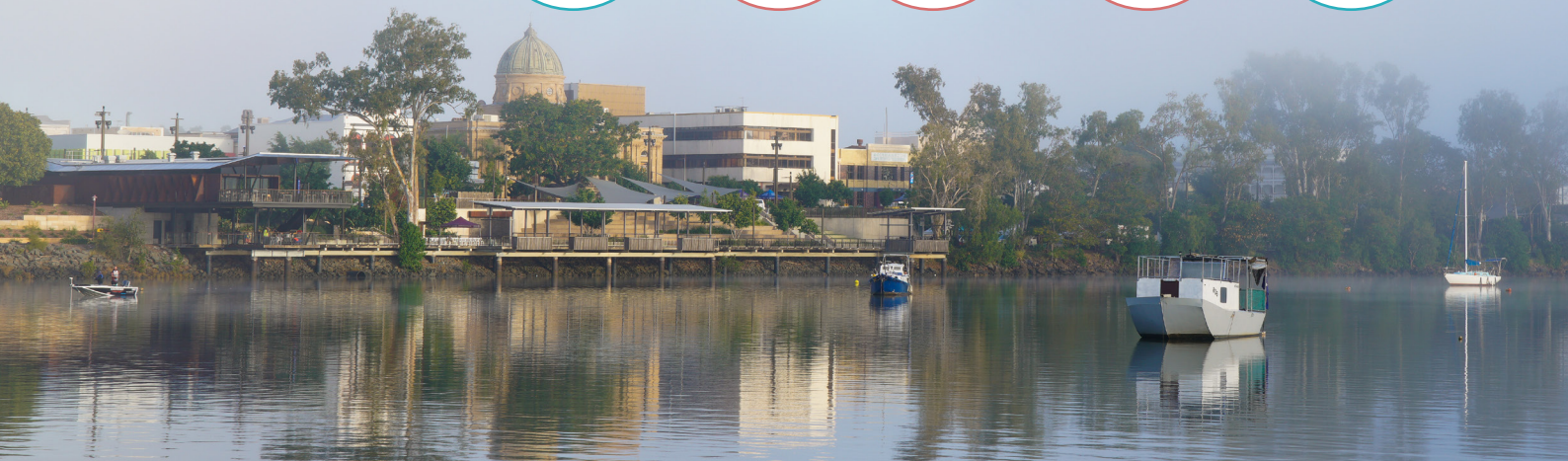
Australian Government

Australian Government

Queensland Government

CQG Consulting A BECA Company

QUEENSLAND resources COUNCIL



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About Fitzroy Partnership for River Health

Fitzroy Partnership for River Health (FPRH) brings together a unique collective of government, industry, research and community stakeholders who share a common goal: ensuring the long-term health of waterways across the Fitzroy Basin – the largest river basin draining to the world heritage listed Great Barrier Reef.

Established in 2012, FPRH plays a central role in improving water quality monitoring, bringing together data from across the region to develop independent, science-based report cards on waterway health.

Beyond reporting on the health of the waterways and stewardship activities, FPRH actively engages the community through initiatives like Fitzroy Water Watch, promoting citizen science and raising awareness of the vital connection between healthy river systems and a thriving regional economy.



Chair's foreword

A message from the FPRH Chair

As the new Chair of the Fitzroy Partnership for River Health, I am pleased to introduce the 2026 Stewardship Report and reflect on the remarkable commitment to stewardship taking place across the Fitzroy Basin.

Each year, this report provides a window into the partnerships, ideas and actions helping to shape a healthier future for our region. Together, these stories show that stewardship is not a single activity or responsibility. It is a shared commitment by people and organisations who care deeply about the places they live, work and connect with. One of the Partnership's greatest strengths is bringing together diverse perspectives around a shared purpose. Across this report, we see landholders improving the productivity and resilience of their properties, Traditional Owners caring for Country and sharing cultural knowledge, researchers advancing our understanding of complex environmental challenges, industry investing in long-term sustainability outcomes, councils improving infrastructure and educators inspiring future generations.

While the projects are varied, they share a common thread: collaboration. The strongest outcomes are often achieved when organisations reach beyond traditional boundaries, combining knowledge, resources and experiences to tackle challenges that no single group could solve alone.

This year marks an important step in the evolution of our stewardship journey. What began as a collection of Partnership stories is growing into a broader Stewardship Program, including Stewardship Spotlights and Stewardship Awards.

This evolution reflects a simple belief: stories matter. By sharing practical examples of stewardship in action, we create opportunities to learn from one another, celebrate achievement and inspire future action across the Basin. Importantly, this work is also being developed alongside the wider network of Regional Report Card Partnerships. By sharing approaches and lessons across catchments, we can strengthen stewardship efforts nationally while showcasing the innovation and leadership emerging from the Fitzroy Basin.

The stories in this report are ultimately stories of people. People restoring landscapes, improving waterways, creating opportunities, building knowledge and investing in outcomes that will endure long after projects are completed. Stewardship recognises that the health of our rivers, landscapes and communities is a shared responsibility and the examples in these pages demonstrate that this commitment is alive and well across the Fitzroy Basin. I sincerely thank every Partner who has shared their story this year, and all those whose dedication and hard work sit behind these achievements. Together, these projects demonstrate what is possible when local knowledge, science, innovation and a genuine care for Country are translated into meaningful action.

I look forward to seeing the FPRH Stewardship Program continue to grow and celebrating achievement, strengthening connections and helping create a lasting legacy for the Fitzroy Basin and the Great Barrier Reef.

Vanessa Lyons

CHAIR, FITZROY PARTNERSHIP FOR RIVER HEALTH



A collaborative model for country-led *rehabilitation*

The Barada Barna Seed Production Initiative was established to address a shared challenge across the Bowen Basin: securing a reliable supply of locally appropriate native seed for large-scale mine rehabilitation, while creating long-term economic opportunities for the Barada Barna Peoples. It brings together a strong partnership — Bargala Nanhi, a 100 per cent Barada Barna-owned enterprise leading seed work on Country; Greening Australia, providing technical expertise and mentoring; and BHP Mitsubishi Alliance (BMA), embedding the initiative into rehabilitation planning and procurement as an anchor customer. From the outset, the partners aligned ecological needs, rehabilitation demand and cultural aspirations through early workshops that defined priority species, seasonal windows and logistics, supported by staged delivery to build capability sustainably.

At its heart, the initiative represents a shift from a transactional supply model to a place-based, Traditional Owner-led system embedded in rehabilitation planning.

Combining technical expertise with deep cultural and ecological knowledge, the partnership has developed locally tailored seed mixes aligned to landscape, season and species life cycles — improving seed quality, viability and alignment with rehabilitation schedules. A strong focus on capability transfer has enabled Bargala Nanhi to progressively take ownership of end-to-end delivery, reducing reliance on external suppliers and strengthening responsiveness. BMA's role as an anchor customer has provided demand certainty, supporting investment in workforce, infrastructure and storage to enable scale.

The initiative has already seen more than $4m invested in native seed procurement to support rehabilitation *across multiple operations.*

The initiative is already delivering tangible outcomes, with more than $4 million invested in native seed procurement from Bargala Nanhi to support rehabilitation across multiple operations. Locally sourced, site-specific seed mixes are improving ecological outcomes while reducing complexity, and meaningful employment pathways are emerging for Barada Barna people through training in seed collection, handling and storage. Beyond these outcomes, the initiative offers a scalable model for integrating environmental stewardship, cultural responsibility and commercial discipline — showing how genuine partnership can embed Traditional Owner leadership and deliver enduring benefits for Country, community and industry.









BHP Mitsubishi Alliance

WATER **QUALITY**

Accelerating efforts to support healthy waterways and a *healthy reef*

Strong investments and on-ground action by farmers, landholders, Traditional Owners and other partners continue to support the health of waterways flowing from the catchments to the Great Barrier Reef.

The Reef Trust is the Australian Government's investment program for the Reef. It funds programs that address key threats and support the Reef's resilience, including programs that have helped improve the quality of water flowing to the Reef.

Improving Reef water quality remains a government priority. The Australian and Queensland governments have committed more than $2 billion between 2014 and 2030 to improve Reef water quality. This funding has supported many programs in the Fitzroy region.

The Fitzroy Water Quality Program ran from 2018 to 2024 and was funded by the Reef Trust and the Great Barrier Reef Foundation. It was coordinated by FBA.

The program worked with land managers to improve grazing practices and landscape function. It also remediated degraded land through gully and streambank rehabilitation.

This work has prevented 56 kilotonnes of fine sediment from the Fitzroy region from reaching the Reef each year. It has also increased land productivity and sustainability and restored habitat for threatened species.

As part of the $200 million Landscape Repair Program, the Reef Trust is also funding an FBA-led project in the Fitzroy region that aims to prevent 28.5 kilotonnes of fine sediment from reaching the Reef each year. The project is working with land managers to remediate and repair waterways to reduce sediment loss.



"This work has prevented 56 kilotonnes of fine sediment from reaching *the Reef each year.*



Australian Government

Looking ahead, new Reef Trust-funded programs will build on past efforts and deliver targeted funding to accelerate action to improve the quality of water flowing to the Reef.

New programs are underway to better address water quality risks associated with farmland and urban areas in priority catchments, while also supporting the health of habitats that are critical for water quality. This work is being delivered through the Reefwise Farming, Reefwise Urban and Reefwise Wetlands programs.

The new Great Barrier Reef Traditional Owner-Led Water Quality Improvement Program will draw on traditional knowledge and the success of the Reef Trust Partnership to improve Reef water quality. The program will be delivered in partnership with Traditional Owners and align with the Reef 2050 Traditional Owner Implementation Plan. Phase One of the Traditional Owner-Led Water Quality Improvement Program has commenced, with the North Australian Indigenous Land and Sea Management Alliance Ltd (NAILSMA) engaged to establish a Traditional Owner-Led Reef Water Quality Advisory Group and Working Group. These groups will help build capacity, support participation, and inform the design and delivery of Phase Two.

Phase Two will provide grants for on-ground projects that improve Reef water quality and strengthen Traditional Owner-led stewardship of Country.

Managing water quality across the Reef's 424,000 km² catchment is a significant, complex and long-term task. The Reef also receives run-off from 35 major catchments across the region.

The outcomes of Australia's water quality programs will take time, but they are making a difference now. They are delivering benefits for the land, habitats, waterways and the resilience of the Reef.

Photo credits: FBA, Ocean Image Bank, Katerina Katopis

Australian Government

REEF TRUST



Enhancing and restoring brigalow across the Fitzroy Region

FBA is working to enhance and restore brigalow landscapes across the Fitzroy region and support the species that rely on them. Delivered in partnership with land managers, First Nations peoples, industry and government, FBA's work in the brigalow landscape aims to create lasting ecological, agricultural and cultural outcomes.

Brigalow is both the name of a native Australian tree species (Acacia harpophylla) and the woodlands and ecosystems it dominates. Once stretching across an area known as the Brigalow Belt, from north Queensland to northern New South Wales, these ecosystems supported a rich diversity of native plants and animals. Today, the Brigalow Threatened Ecological Community (TEC) is listed as endangered and continues to face threats including weeds, inappropriate fire regimes, pest animals and livestock disturbance.

In collaboration with BHP Mitsubishi Alliance (BMA), FBA worked with land managers across Central Queensland to explore innovative approaches to managing brigalow within grazing systems and challenge the perception of brigalow as a barrier to production.

The participating properties represented a range of landscapes and production systems, providing valuable insights into how brigalow management can be applied across the Fitzroy region.

When managed effectively, brigalow can improve both land condition and agricultural productivity. As a legume, it fixes atmospheric nitrogen, contributing to soil fertility and supporting plant growth. Brigalow also contributes to soil health and nutrient cycling, stores carbon and provides important habitat for native wildlife. Maintaining healthy brigalow vegetation can help reduce erosion, improve water infiltration and support waterway health by slowing the movement of soil and nutrients into rivers and streams.



RESTORING HABITAT, SUPPORTING SPECIES

Building on this work, FBA is working with land managers to support the restoration of the Brigalow TEC. Through brigalow regrowth management, weed control, feral animal control, and vegetation monitoring, FBA is helping regrowth brigalow communities develop into more ecologically sustainable ecosystems while increasing local knowledge of effective management practices.

This innovative work has gone deeper than managing brigalow, it has opened conservation doorways for the species that call it home. Working with TropWATER (James Cook University's Centre for Tropical Water and Aquatic Ecosystem Research), FBA undertook the first formal DNA sequencing of the endangered Ornamental Snake (Denisonia maculata), enabling future environmental DNA (eDNA) monitoring and opening new opportunities for conservation of this brigalow-dependent species.

SUPPORTING FIRST NATIONS STEWARDSHIP

FBA is also supporting greater First Nations involvement in brigalow management through skills development, on-ground stewardship and the incorporation of traditional ecological knowledge into activities such as fire management and ecosystem restoration.

By bringing together science, local knowledge and practical land management for a holistic conservation approach, FBA is helping shape a future where brigalow landscapes continue to support people, production and the environment.







"FBA is helping to shape a future where brigalow landscapes continue to support people, production and the environment.

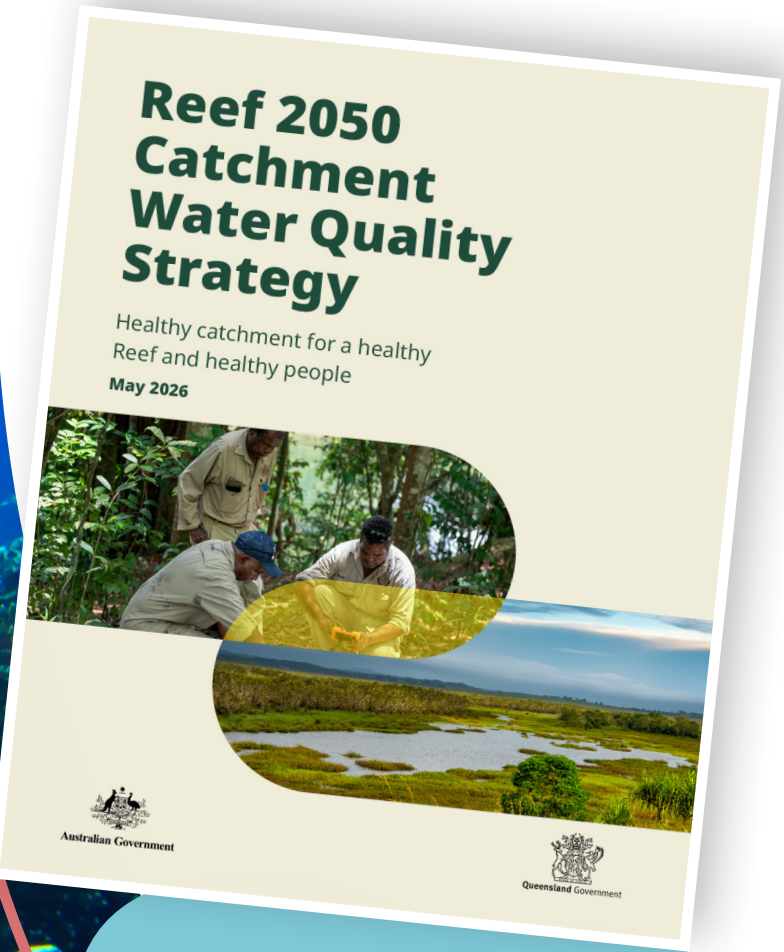


Australian Government

Queensland Government

New strategy sets direction for Reef *water quality*

The Australian and Queensland governments released the Reef 2050 Catchment Water Quality Strategy in May 2026, a modernised, evidence-based Strategy developed in close consultation with communities, industry, landholders, Traditional Owners, and experts.



Read the full Reef 2025 Catchment Water Quality strategy:

The health of the Great Barrier Reef is linked to the actions we take on land, and improving water quality from the 35 major catchments remains one of the most effective ways to build the Reef's resilience against climate change.

The strategy is guided by 20 years of investment, research and innovation, and management initiatives aimed at improving Reef water quality. It also acknowledges the commitment and efforts of partnerships like the Fitzroy Partnership for River Health that have helped drive significant progress.

Priority areas for action under the strategy include:

- Improving the quality of the water flowing to the Reef
- Repairing nature and landscapes to protect the Reef
- Supporting sustainable practices across the Reef catchment
- Strengthening capacity to care for Country
- Growing strong communities and regional economies while protecting the Reef
- Enhancing and sharing knowledge that drives action.

The strategy empowers local communities to address key pollutants and tailor actions to their unique catchments, ensuring healthier waterways, stronger communities, and a more resilient Reef for future generations.

Scientific consensus statement highlights latest *reef science*

Released in August 2024, the 2022 Scientific Consensus Statement remains the most comprehensive and rigorous review to date of how land-based activities affect Great Barrier Reef water quality and ecosystem condition.

Drawing on the latest scientific evidence, the Statement explains how land-based activities influence Reef water quality, and what can be done to manage that influence. It continues to underpin how governments, industry and catchment partners like FPRH approach water quality investment and planning across the Fitzroy Basin.

Led by C2O Consulting and funded by the Australian and Queensland governments, the Statement drew on more than 200 experts, including 78 authors and 69 reviewers from Australia and overseas, synthesising evidence from over 4,000 publications.

From this evidence base, 35 scientific experts reached consensus on eight overarching conclusions, including that historical and ongoing land management and catchment modification continue to impair Reef water quality through vegetation degradation, altered hydrology, increased erosion, and the expansion of fertilised land uses, urban centres and coastal developments.

These findings echo what's playing out on the ground in the Fitzroy Basin. Projects featured in this report are practical, local responses to the very pressures the Statement identifies, turning national-scale evidence into on-ground action.

Read the full statement:

Image: Conceptual diagram for the values, condition and drivers of the health of the Great Barrier Reef. Prepared by C2O Consulting and Hodge Environmental for the 2022 Scientific Consensus Statement.





> **The progress at Tomaren highlights the value of strong partnerships between BMA and landholders.**

LAND **IMPROVEMENT**

Tomaren advances healthy environment *goals*

Tomaren, a BHP Mitsubishi Alliance (BMA)-owned grazing property near Caval Ridge Mine in the Bowen Basin, is emerging as a flagship example of BMA's planned contribution to BHP's 2030 Healthy Environment goal. This ~5,000-hectare property is set to demonstrate how non-operational land can play a meaningful role in delivering regenerative practices while continuing to support productive land use.

The property is managed by local agistees with strong generational ties to the land, whose deep knowledge and commitment are underpinning the successful adoption of regenerative grazing practices. These include targeted erosion control, strategies to build drought resilience, ongoing monitoring of soil health, and the development of feed budgets and property management plans to guide sustainable stocking and land use decisions.

BMA has supported these efforts through baseline data collection, including soil and land condition assessments, enabling the tracking of environmental improvements over time. This data-driven approach will help ensure that outcomes are measurable and can be aligned with broader Healthy Environment metrics.

The progress at Tomaren highlights the value of strong partnerships between BMA and landholders, demonstrating how shared stewardship is key to advancing a project designed to enhance land condition, improve ecosystem resilience, and contribute meaningfully to corporate environmental goals.

WATER **QUALITY**

Aquatic ecology *in action*

CQG's environmental scientists are often out and about conducting aquatic ecology surveys, including macroinvertebrate sampling, water quality monitoring and fish community surveys. The information collected helps build an understanding of the ecological values of waterways upstream, within, and downstream of sites providing important input into environmental approvals and compliance reporting.

One recent survey recorded a range of native fish species which, together with macroinvertebrate and water quality data, helped build a comprehensive picture of the waterway's overall health. In a separate dewatering project, our team successfully captured and relocated hundreds of native aquatic animals to suitable nearby habitat. This work helped reduce impacts on the ecosystem while allowing the project to proceed safely and responsibly.







CQG Consulting
A Beca Company

The transformation of *Six Mile Creek*

Through an ever-changing timelapse of photographs, Six Mile Creek transforms before your eyes. It didn't happen all at once, but month by month and year by year. What started as an eroding bank with towering, steep and crumbling walls in 2023 has evolved into a landscape that has weathered the storms and remained a rehabilitation success.

The site sits within the Fitzroy catchment, about 15 kilometres south-west of Raglan. Over roughly 440 metres of streambank, the bank has been carefully reshaped, its most vulnerable edges stabilised where erosion once carved steadily inward.

This site was not chosen at random. Six Mile had up to a hundred metres of bank lost between 1999 and 2019. And beyond the site there is a chain of connection: downstream waterways carry the sediment that eventually reached the Great Barrier Reef Lagoon.

The numbers tell the 'why' behind the project – an estimated 1,368 tonnes of fine sediment kept from washing downstream each year. But the timelapse shows the results.

Photos from the middle of the project's timeline show the once heavily eroded banks battered back to a gentler 3:1 slope. Pile fields appear like ribs along the edge with rock benches in place along the bottom. These structures anchor the creek where it once slipped away and absorb the force of high flows, redirecting the current's insistence to erode when heavy rains cause the creek to flow.

Then came the quieter gestures. Lines of native seedlings, now grown into waist high plants that will only keep growing thanks to irrigation systems threading water back to them in their most fragile days. Fencing is part of this too - it's a simple but deliberate method to keep stock at a distance so the banks can continue healing without interruption.

Over time, these small acts accumulated. Roots took hold. Soil stopped crumbling away. The creek edge, once uncertain, began to steady itself.

Images:
1) Six Mile Creek before work commenced 2023, 2) Six Mile Creek site plan, 3) Banks being battered and pile fields installed 2023, 4) Pile fields installed 2023, 5) Revegatation work taking hold 2025.













DELIVERING LASTING *change*

At Six Mile Creek, FBA worked side by side with the properties land managers to deliver lasting, on-ground change that enhances productivity and profitability for the property while safeguarding the Great Barrier Reef.

- Approximately 440 meters of streambank restored
- 1,368 tonnes of fine sediment saved from entering the Great Barrier Reef Lagoon per year
- Reduced loss of productive agricultural land, by slowing bank retreat

To wrap up the end of this project, nature decided to provide the site with a flooding test in early 2026. The structures did their job, holding the site steady through the currents.

As the water rose, muddy and forceful, it pressed against the banks with the same old intent. But this time when it receded, the banks were un-harmed and standing strong. Some of the surface was roughened, plants bent or buried. Nature provided the test and the bank is still there.

Which, in the end, is the point of projects like this one.

The Streambank Remediation project is funded through the Queensland Government's Queensland Reef Water Quality Program.

fba

Queensland Government


6


7


8

Images:
6 & 7) Revegatation work established 2026,
8) Site entrance after 2026 flooding.

(Above): Site fully complete and standing strong after 2026 flooding.



POLICY

Delivering environmental outcomes through government partnership in the Fitzroy Basin

The Queensland Resources Council (QRC), representing member companies operating across the Fitzroy Basin, is committed to delivering strong environmental outcomes through close collaboration with all levels of government, while supporting sustainable economic development in Central Queensland.

QRC plays a key role in bridging industry expertise with policy development, working with the Queensland Government, Commonwealth agencies, and regional stakeholders to ensure environmental frameworks are practical, robust, and outcomes-focused. This includes engagement on water quality standards, rehabilitation requirements, and reef protection settings, ensuring regulation is both scientifically grounded and capable of being effectively implemented on the ground.

This collaborative approach enables better environmental outcomes. By working alongside regulators, QRC and its members contribute operational insights, data, and technical expertise that help shape risk-based frameworks and adaptive management approaches. These frameworks are designed to minimise sediment and contaminant run-off, improve water efficiency, and support progressive rehabilitation, directly contributing to the health of the Fitzroy River system and the Great Barrier Reef.

Importantly, QRC advocates for streamlined and aligned processes across State and Commonwealth systems, reducing duplication and enabling faster, more coordinated environmental decision-making.

This not only improves compliance and transparency but also ensures that environmental protections are delivered efficiently and consistently across jurisdictions.

QRC facilitates the exchange of best practice water management approaches between member companies, supporting initiatives that improve water efficiency, reduce sediment movement and protect water quality in local catchments.

For regions like Rockhampton and the broader Central Queensland community, this balance is critical. The resources sector underpins local economies, jobs, and investment, while also carrying a responsibility to protect the natural assets that communities depend on. Through its engagement with government, QRC helps ensure that policy settings deliver a fair return to regional communities, supporting both environmental stewardship and long-term economic resilience.

Collaboration extends beyond government to partnerships with regional organisations such as the Fitzroy Partnership for River Health and Healthy Rivers to Reef, contributing to a shared evidence base and coordinated catchment management.

By aligning industry practice, government policy, and regional priorities, QRC and its members are helping to deliver a future where strong environmental outcomes and economic prosperity go hand in hand, creating a lasting legacy for the Fitzroy Basin.



The upgrades ensure the region's wastewater infrastructure can support projected population growth while protecting the Fitzroy River estuary and Great Barrier Reef lagoon.





URBAN **WATER**

Future-ready infrastructure for *cleaner water*

Rockhampton Regional Council has expanded the capacity of the North Rockhampton Sewage Treatment Plant from 50,000 to 75,000 equivalent persons, ensuring the region's wastewater infrastructure can support projected population growth over the next 30 years while protecting the Fitzroy River estuary and Great Barrier Reef lagoon. With more than 3,500 new residential allotments approved in areas serviced by the plant, the upgrade provides the essential infrastructure needed to accommodate sustainable regional growth.

The upgrade has improved operational efficiency through the construction of a new sewage treatment process train, along with upgrades to electrical and mechanical aeration equipment.

New effluent filtration, ultraviolet (UV) disinfection technology, and an effluent pump station and reticulation system have also been installed to maximise future effluent reuse.

The UV disinfection facility will remove the need for chlorine treatment before discharge, improving water quality outcomes and supporting future reuse opportunities such as irrigation. It also ensures the plant meets updated Queensland environmental discharge requirements.

By improving the removal of nutrients and bacteria from treated effluent before it is discharged, the upgraded facility reduces its environmental footprint on the Fitzroy River estuary and contributes to the ongoing protection of downstream ecosystems, including the Great Barrier Reef lagoon. The project demonstrates how investment in essential infrastructure can support regional development while delivering long-term environmental benefits.

Inspiring the next generation of *environmental leaders*

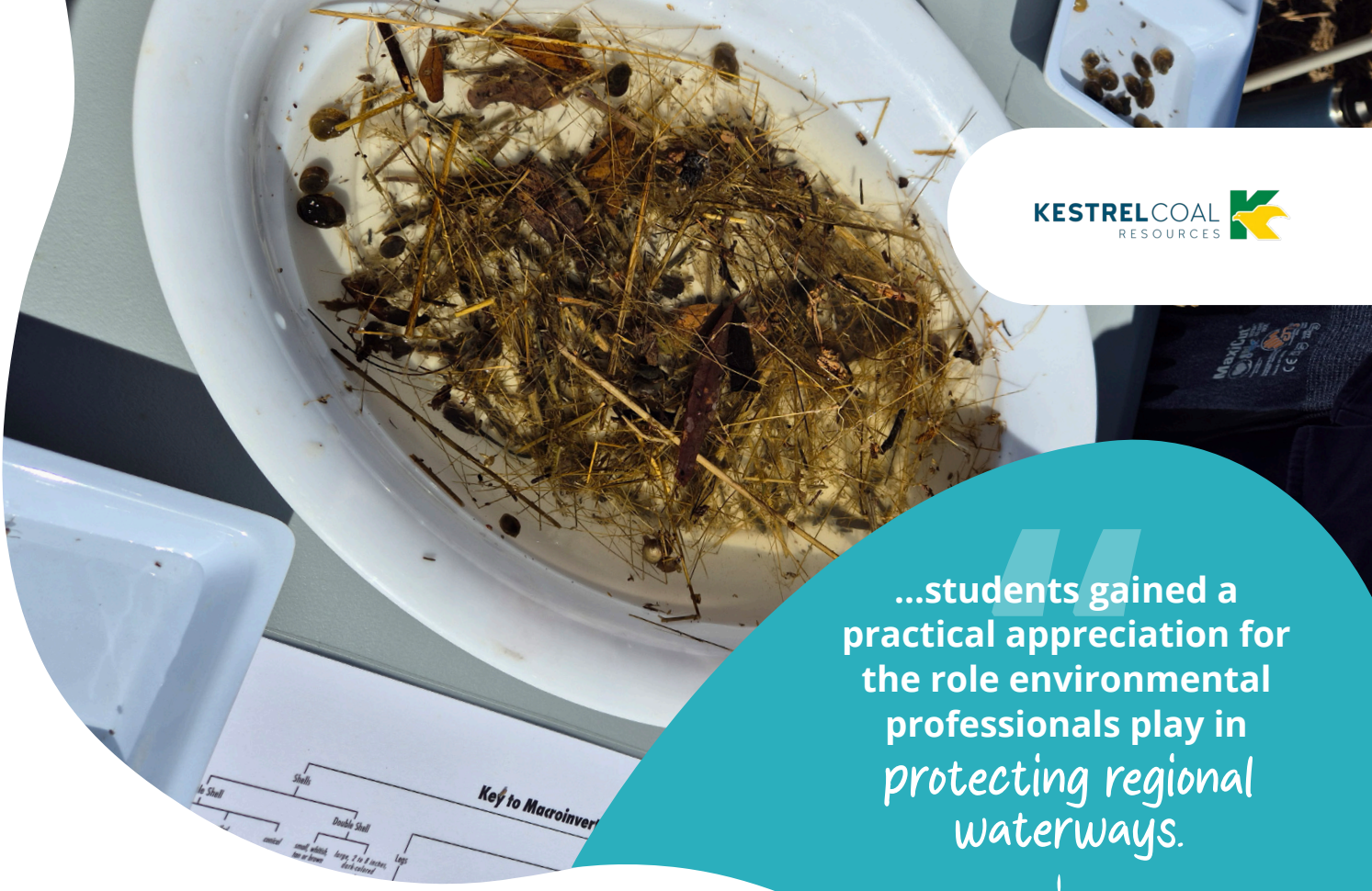
Kestrel Coal Resources is helping to inspire the next generation of environmental professionals through its NEXTGEN Immersion Program, an initiative designed to connect local students with the diverse career opportunities available within the resources sector while building a deeper understanding of environmental stewardship.

Following a successful program for Grade 10 students earlier in the year, Kestrel recently delivered a dedicated Environment Pathway for Grade 12 students preparing to transition to university and the workforce. The program provided students from across the Emerald region with a firsthand look at how environmental science is applied every day to support responsible mining operations and protect the surrounding environment.

Moving beyond traditional classroom-based career presentations, students were welcomed onto site to experience environmental management in action. Guided by Kestrel's Environment team and supported by local environmental consultancy 4T Consultants, students participated in a practical field demonstration focused on macroinvertebrate (water bug) sampling.

The session explored how the diversity and abundance of aquatic macroinvertebrates provide valuable biological indicators of river health. Students learned how the presence (or absence) of sensitive species can be used to assess water quality and monitor the effectiveness of water management practices, providing an important measure of environmental performance and supporting the ongoing protection of the broader Fitzroy catchment.





KESTREL COAL RESOURCES

> **...students gained a practical appreciation for the role environmental professionals play in protecting regional waterways.**

Importantly, the experience demonstrated how field data collected by environmental specialists informs operational decision-making, environmental compliance and long-term water management strategies. By connecting scientific monitoring with real-world environmental outcomes, students gained a practical appreciation for the role environmental professionals play in protecting regional waterways.

The initiative was delivered in partnership with local secondary schools and 4T Consultants, strengthening connections between education, tertiary study pathways and local industry. By providing meaningful, hands-on learning experiences, the program helps students better understand the breadth of environmental careers available close to home while fostering greater awareness of catchment health and sustainable resource management.

Through initiatives such as the NEXTGEN Immersion Program, Kestrel is investing in the future of regional Queensland by encouraging young people to pursue careers in environmental science and equipping them with a greater understanding of the science, collaboration and stewardship required to protect healthy waterways for generations to come.



Restoring river health through mine *rehabilitation*

At the historic and abandoned Mount Morgan Mine site in Queensland, Heritage Minerals is implementing an innovative, multi-faceted approach to combat severe acid mine drainage (AMD) and restore downstream river health.

Heritage Minerals and its partners are at the very early stages of a long-term environmental rehabilitation journey to remove legacy risks and contaminants in waterways downstream from the abandoned Mount Morgan mine which rests in the Dawson sub-basin of the Fitzroy Basin which drains into the southern portion of the Great Barrier Reef.

Even before production starts later this year, Heritage Minerals and partners are making new investments and initiating new activity which is already improving downstream waterway health and reducing long-term environmental risks facing the catchment.

Historically, the site has been plagued by severe Acid Mine Drainage (AMD), heavily polluting the downstream Dee River and impacting the broader Fitzroy River catchment.

Heritage Minerals is investing $250m and will use proprietary technology to process 2 million tonnes of legacy tailings annually. This extracts valuable residual gold and copper while permanently removing toxic waste from unlined, historic stockpiles.

> **The increased environmental flow is already showing remarkable improvements in** *downstream waterway health.*



This re-commercialisation of the mine site will enable rehabilitation of the site that otherwise remains a major contingent liability for the State of Queensland and the environment.

Heritage Minerals has already made a number of major investments well before production. The company constructed a dedicated cofferdam to separate the Open Cut Pit from Sandstone Gully. This infrastructure isolates freshwater flows from contaminated areas, making site water management far more efficient. Paired with high-capacity pumps, this reduces the mine pit freshwater catchment by more than 40%, drastically mitigating the risk of uncontrolled, toxic overtopping events during heavy wet seasons.

Also, under contract to the Queensland government's Abandoned Mine Land Program, Heritage Minerals operates the on-site Water Treatment Plant and has been expanding treatment rates. This facility neutralises highly acidic pit water and intercepts contaminated seepage before it can overflow into the downstream ecosystem. The increased environmental flow is already showing remarkable improvements in downstream waterway health.

The company has implemented a comprehensive environmental monitoring program. They routinely sample stream and groundwater quality down the Dee River and into the Don River to closely track baseline waterway recovery. This is paired with efforts to work with partners such the Mount Morgan High School to inform students about the science behind the investments and the benefits that are being sought.



HERITAGE MINERALS

Peer learning helps growers improve *irrigation efficiency*

Dawson Valley cotton growers are improving water use efficiency following a trip to the Darling Downs two years ago to see first-hand how other irrigators were adapting irrigation systems to better suit their farms.

Funded by a grant from the Queensland Department of Primary Industries Peer-to-Peer Water Quality Program, the tour provided members of the Dawson Valley Cotton Growers' Association with the opportunity to speak directly with growers who had already implemented water management changes. They were able to discuss costs, benefits and practical challenges, and see how different systems worked in operation.

Dawson Valley CGA president Andrew French said the main value of the program was learning directly from other growers.

"You get way more out of talking to somebody who's tried something, asking how it actually works and how they did it – it's the best way to learn," Mr French said.

A key focus of the trip was pipe-through-bank irrigation, where siphons are installed through the head drain bank to deliver a more even flow of water to each row. Growers inspected a machine developed on the Darling Downs that installs siphons quickly and accurately, using laser levelling to place them at the correct height.

Mr French said the system offered a practical and cost-effective way to improve existing siphon layouts, particularly where full bankless systems were not suited to the landscape, water supply or business needs.





COTTON AUSTRALIA

> **...the siphons are all on zero grade so you've got an even flow coming out of each siphon, reducing erosion** and sediment runoff.



"It's a really impressive system - it's probably the easiest and cheapest way to convert to more automated irrigation if you've got existing siphon irrigation already," he said.

Since the tour, one Dawson Valley grower has bought a machine and begun converting his farm to pipe-through-bank irrigation. Along with water efficiency gains, the change has delivered major labour and time savings and reduced erosion.

"Instead of stopping and starting 100 pipes, you can just open and shut a gate and go home – it makes it a bit easier to get out of bed at 3am," Mr French said.

"And because the siphons are all on zero grade, you've got an even flow coming out of each siphon, reducing erosion and sediment runoff."

Mr French plans to adopt the same system on his own farm and said other Dawson Valley growers are also considering conversion when they next upgrade their siphons.

The tour also exposed growers to other approaches, including bankless and overhead sprinkler systems, reinforcing that there is no single solution for every farm.

For the Fitzroy Basin, the project shows how practical, grower-led learning can support better water stewardship by helping irrigators identify systems that improve water efficiency, reduce runoff and sediment movement, and contribute to healthier waterways.



LAND **IMPROVEMENT**

Improving the resilience of threshold regional ecosystems at Nuga Nuga National Park

Origin, in partnership with FBA, has delivered an indirect offset commitment within an area of Nuga Nuga National Park through the Threshold Regional Ecosystem Project (TRE Project). The TRE Project aimed to improve the resilience of threshold Regional Ecosystems (RE) by investing $100,000 in targeted on-ground activities. Origin engaged FBA in early 2022 to scope and design the TRE Project, with delivery completed in 2025.

Located in the southern section of Nuga Nuga National Park in the Arcadia Valley, the TRE Project focused on improving the resilience of threshold RE 11.9.8 'bonewood scrub' *(Macropteranthes leichhardtii)* at one of the few remaining locations where relatively intact remnant communities of this RE still exist in Queensland. This unique landscape also supports endangered Brigalow *(Acacia harpophylla)* and Belah *(Casuarina cristata)* vegetation communities.

The site is recognised as culturally significant Country for two Traditional Owner groups, who were actively involved in project planning and on-ground delivery alongside FBA, Queensland Parks and Wildlife Service (QPWS) and technical specialists.

This partnership approach was a key strength of the TRE Project. Traditional Owner representatives contributed cultural knowledge and on-ground expertise that helped guide the works while ensuring activities respected cultural values and achieved environmental outcomes.

The TRE Project focused on targeting key environmental pressures impacting the ecosystem, including erosion, uncontrolled water flow and bushfire risk. On-ground works included the construction of a strategic firebreak and erosion control measures across priority areas near Lake Nuga Nuga. Diversion banks and silt trap weirs were installed to slow and redirect water flow, stabilising degraded areas, reducing erosion and improving soil stability to support native vegetation recovery.

The TRE Project demonstrates the value of collaboration in delivering meaningful environmental outcomes. Beyond immediate rehabilitation outcomes, the TRE Project has strengthened stakeholder relationships and identified future opportunities for ongoing restoration within the national park. Origin is proud to support initiatives such as the TRE Project, which combines environmental stewardship, cultural collaboration and practical on-ground action to help protect and restore Queensland's natural landscapes for future generations.



AUSTRALIA PACIFIC LNG | Operated by origin | fba

> **"The project targeted key environmental pressures...including erosion, uncontrolled water flow and bushfire risk.**



A spotlight on the

2025 Stewardship Recognition *Award*

FBA was the proud recipient of FPRH's 2025 Stewardship Recognition Award, which recognised projects that demonstrate outstanding leadership and deliver lasting environmental impact across the Fitzroy Basin.

Presented by FPRH Chair, Tim Kendrick, to FBA's Chief Executive Officer Elyse Riethmuller at the 2025 Water Forum, the award acknowledged FBA's commitment to improving water quality and reducing sediment run-off through their Stoney Creek Riverbank Restoration Project, which is making a measurable difference to the health of the Fitzroy Basin and the Great Barrier Reef.

The project exemplifies the power of partnership, science and stewardship in delivering lasting outcomes for both the environment and the community.

By addressing erosion at its source, FBA is helping to improve water quality, build healthier waterways and contribute to the long-term protection of the Great Barrier Reef.

To learn more about the Stoney Creek rehabilitation project, revisit the feature article in our 2025 Stewardship Report.

read more.

THANK-YOU TO

Our Partners

We recognise our Partners as being the change that is needed for Fitzroy Basin's water future.

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Fitzroy Partnership for River Health

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Fitzroy Partnership for River Health

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