



## **The Hon. Greg Hunt MP**

Minister for the Environment

## **The Hon. Warren Entsch MP**

Federal Member for Leichardt

# **MEDIA RELEASE**

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### **Improving water quality in the Great Barrier Reef**

Australia's iconic and precious Great Barrier Reef and the surrounding tropical waters will benefit from 24 innovative research projects conducted by this Government's Tropical Water Quality Hub.

This scientific investment being launched today supports practical policy and programmes to improve the Great Barrier Reef under the Government's \$140 million Reef Trust.

Hub scientists will develop a tradable permit scheme for cost-effective reduction of nitrogen runoff in the sugarcane reef catchments.

This scheme will support the Reef Trust's work with farmers to deliver real reductions in the amount of nitrogen entering the Great Barrier Reef lagoon. It has the potential to create real and lasting improvements to water quality in the marine park.

The hub will also work with the Association of Marine Park Tourism Operators to develop a box jellyfish (Irukandji) research project to determine how this marine hazard responds to changing water quality and how to predict its presence, based on environmental conditions.

This work will lead to a better understanding of the risk factors associated with jellyfish outbreaks and help inform management practices. This research is crucial to protect the Great Barrier Reef's \$5.2 billion tourism industry.

The hub connects scientists, policymakers and communities to deliver a research programme that will provide practical solutions to maintain and improve the water quality in the Great Barrier Reef and other tropical waters.

It is funded with \$31.98 million from the Australian Government's National Environmental Science Programme.

This six-year investment, with equal funding from research partners and other stakeholders, focuses on collaborative, practical and applied research that informs action on the ground.

The hub's research will improve our understanding of the reef on issues like cumulative impacts on water quality, Crown of Thorns Starfish outbreaks and ways of reducing sediment loads and nitrogen runoff from agriculture.

It also supports the everyday management of the reef by the Great Barrier Reef Marine Park Authority.

The Tropical Water Quality Hub will play a vital role in delivering research that will help to achieve the targets and outcomes identified in the Reef 2050 Long Term Sustainability Plan.

The National Environmental Science Programme, through the Tropical Water Quality Hub, is building on almost a decade of previous investment in reef research.

The seagrass meadows that are habitat for dugongs and turtles will be comprehensively mapped to allow for better targeted management.

The hub will build Indigenous capacity and participation in the management of Queensland sea country.

The research includes assessment of the use of market based instruments to achieve reef water quality outcomes. A pilot tender held in the Lower Burdekin catchment will be evaluated.

Sediment from alluvial gully erosion has a major impact on reef water quality. Effective management strategies for reducing erosion and sediment sources to the reef will be developed.

The hub is led by Dr Damien Burrows and the Reef and Rainforest Research Centre and brings together research expertise from CSIRO, James Cook University, the Australian Institute of Marine Science, Central Queensland University, Griffith University and the University of Queensland. The hub will also work closely with industry and Indigenous organisations and communities.

The Australian Government is committed to integrating science into decision-making as a key principle of good environmental policy.

A full list of projects under the Tropical Water Quality Hub is attached.

More information on the National Environmental Science Programme is available at:  
<http://www.environment.gov.au/science/nesp>

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