



HEALTHY RIVERS TO  
REEF PARTNERSHIP  
MACKAY-WHITSUNDAY-ISAAC

# 2023-24

## *Annual Report*



*Working together*  
for waterway health in  
the Mackay, Whitsunday  
and Isaac Region

*Tchundal Malar perform at the Stories and Stewardship  
event held at Clairview on Koinmerburra Country.*





*A message from*  
**CHARLIE  
MORGAN**

**Healthy Rivers to Reef  
Partnership Chair**

I'm thrilled to share some of the amazing work we've done together in FY2023-24 to report on, monitor, and support the health of our waterways. Our region is rich in diversity when it comes to water resources, ecosystems, and aquatic life. Seeing the dedication from all our partners to protect and nurture these areas has been truly inspiring.

This year has been a fantastic example of what we can achieve when we all pull together. From government bodies and industry, to farmers, fishers, scientists, tourism operators, Traditional Owners, environmental groups and local communities, the teamwork within our Partnership is something special.

It's this collaboration that fuels our success and helps us support a thriving Mackay, Whitsunday and Isaac (MWI) region, from rivers to Reef.

We were excited to welcome two new partners this year—Ark Energy and Reef Check Australia—as well as Partnership representation from the Queensland Rural Industry Development Authority (QRIDA - Central Coast and Whitsundays). Their involvement makes us stronger and broadens our impact in the community.

In July, we launched our 9th MWI Waterway Health Report Card and Technical Report. This, as always, is a major achievement. As the only local waterway health report for MWI, the report card and the data it utilises is uniquely placed to help local decision-makers and investors take informed action.

FY2023-24 also marked the beginning of the Partnership's involvement and coordination of Project Blueprint. This significant waterway health and citizen science initiative in the Whitsundays evolved under Partnership management from August 2023, with a strengthened focus on Traditional Owner participation and greater science and community engagement.

Partnership staff took part in 19 community events, workshops, and forums, underlining our role as both guardians and reporters of waterway health.

**A huge thank you to all 36 partners for your incredible dedication and support. Your contributions—over \$1.1 million—have been key to ensuring the Partnership can realise its wider vision of working together for healthy rivers and Reef, contributing to a prosperous MWI region.**

Activities such as these show our commitment not only to the environment but also to stewardship and engaging and educating the community.

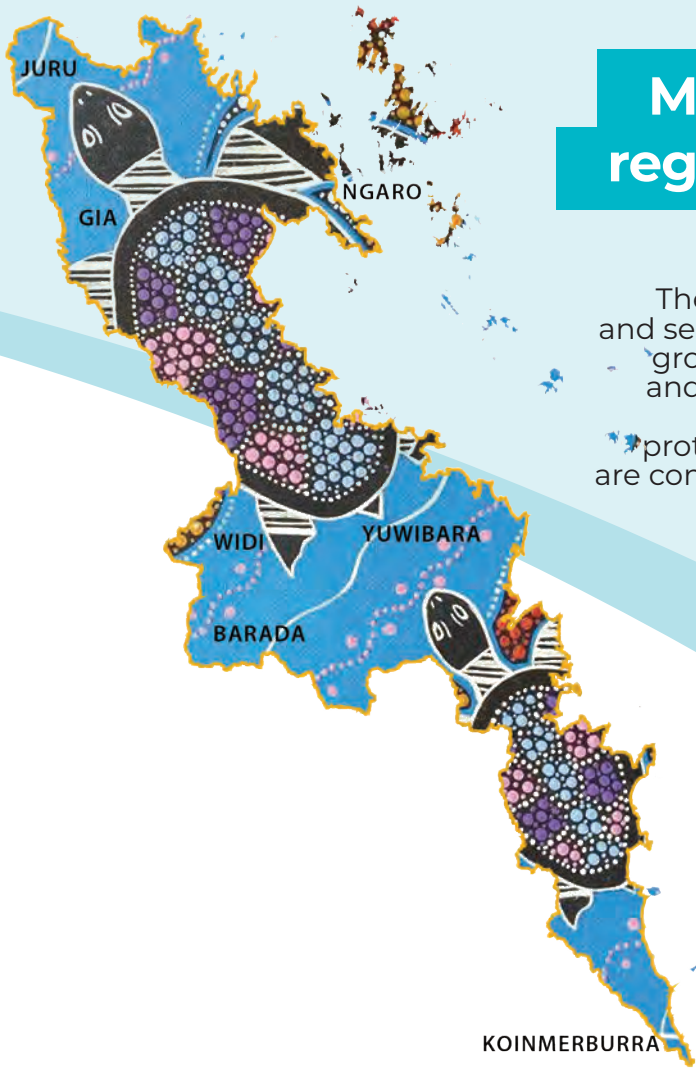
I'm looking forward to what's next. Our journey is all about growing and adapting, and I'm confident that together, we'll keep making a positive impact on our waterways and community.

Thank you for your passion and commitment.

*~ Charlie Morgan*

Working with

## Mackay, Whitsunday, Isaac region's First Nations people



### Acknowledgement of Country

The Partnership acknowledges the continuing land and sea country management of the Traditional Owner groups within the Mackay-Whitsunday-Isaac region and Great Barrier Reef, whose rich cultures, heritage values, enduring connections, and shared efforts protect the land and Reef for future generations. We are committed to working together with our Traditional Owners when it comes to waterway health.



## Connecting Queensland

We are proud to be one of five Regional Reef Report Card Partnerships (RRCPs) working across Queensland to provide an annual snapshot of ecosystem health and local waterway health.

RRCPs are one of a number of activities under the Reef 2050 Long-Term Sustainability Plan and are a vital part of a nested approach to wider Reef planning, part of the framework that also includes the wider Reef Water Quality Report Card which focuses on tracking towards Reef 2050 Water Quality Improvement Plan targets.



# 2023-24 *Our People*

## Technical Working Group

**Di Tarte**

*Chair*

**Carlos Bueno**

*Reef Catchments*

**Dr Alex Carter**

*James Cook University's Centre for Tropical Water and Aquatic Ecosystems (JCU TropWATER)*

**Dr Paula Cartwright**

*JCU TropWATER*

**Dr Jamie Corfield**

*Office of the Great Barrier Reef and World Heritage, Department of the Environment, Science and Innovation*

**Dr Nicole Flint**

*Coastal Marine Ecosystems Research Centre, CQUniversity Australia*

**Dr Katie Hillyer**

*Department of the Environment, Science and Innovation*

**Dr Paulina Kaniewska**

*Office of the Great Barrier Reef and World Heritage, Department of the Environment, Science and Innovation*

**Dr Reinier Mann**

*Department of the Environment, Science and Innovation*

**David Moffatt**

*Department of the Environment, Science and Innovation*

**Dr Andrew Moss**

*Department of the Environment, Science and Innovation*

**Glynis Orr**

*Department of the Environment, Science and Innovation*

**Trent Power**

*Catchment Solutions*

**Dr Michael Rasheed**

*JCU TropWATER*

**Ken Rhode**

*Department of the Environment, Science and Innovation*

**Nicola Stokes**

*North Queensland Bulk Ports*

**Angus Thompson**

*Australian Institute of Marine Science*

**Phil Trendell**

*Department of Agriculture and Fisheries*

## Independent Science Panel

**Dr John Rolfe**

*A/Independent Chair, CQ University, expertise: resource economics*

**Dr Peter Doherty**

*formerly Australian Institute of Marine Science, expertise: marine, ecology and modelling*

**Dr Eva Abal**

*International River Foundation expertise: water quality and ecosystem health target setting and monitoring, information integration, synthesis, reporting and communication*

**Dr Graham Bonnett**

*CSIRO, expertise: sugarcane production*

**Dr Andrew Ash**

*formerly CSIRO, expertise: grazing land ecology, climate impacts and adaptation*

**Mr Hugh Yorkston**

*formerly Great Barrier Reef Marine Park Authority expertise: marine monitoring, coastal ecosystems*

**Dr Jenny Stauber**

*CSIRO, expertise: ecotoxicology, environmental risk assessment, contaminants, water and sediment quality guidelines*

**Dr Bill Venables**

*formerly CSIRO, expertise: mathematics and statistics*

## Management Committee

**Charlie Morgan**

*Chair*

**Kev Kane**

*Deputy Chair North Queensland Bulk Ports*

**Robyn Birkett**

*Mackay Regional Council*

**Rachel D'Arcy**

*Office of the Great Barrier Reef and World Heritage, Department of the Environment, Science and Innovation*

**Katrina Dent**

*Reef Catchments*

**Jeff Stewart-Harris**

*Mackay Isaac Tourism*

**Donna Jackson**

*Pioneer Catchment Landcare*

**Kirili Lamb**

*CANEGROWERS Mackay*



# 2023-24 *Our People*

## Staff

**Jaime Newborn**  
*Executive Officer*

**Brie Sherow**  
*Senior Technical Officer*

**Cinzia Cattaneo**  
*Project Officer*

**Rebekah Smith**  
*Communications Officer*



*Thank you*

to our host

**REEF  
CATCHMENTS**



## Statement of Expenditure

Income: \$1,912,180  
Expenditure: \$1,005,300  
Carry forward funds: \$906,880

*How important are healthy waterways to*

# HEALTHY COUNTRY



*Gia & Ngaro*

**Robert Congoo**  
Gia & Ngaro  
Traditional Owner

Healthy waterways are the singular most important component to a healthy Country. We can tell whether there has been an interruption to the ecosystem system when things like posions from runoff go into the river system, moving a lot of native fish from their known locations, or we have backed up river sand deposits fill our local swimming holes from the dams. The outcomes to these significantly affect how we view Country and in some cases alter our significant Cultural sites.



*Yuwi*

**Pam Young**  
Yuwi Traditional Owner &  
Senior Ranger, Yuwi Aboriginal  
Corporation

Healthy waterways are essential to the overall wellbeing of our Country. Waterways are not just vital for our ecosystems; they are foundational to our cultural heritage, economic sustainability, health and supporting the health of our diverse aquatic life, including plants and animals that hold significant cultural importance to Indigenous peoples.



*Koinmerburra*

**Samarla Deshong**  
Koinjmal Traditional Owner  
Koinmerburra Country

Water is a significant priority to a healthy country and healthy people. Water is the biggest priority because if it is not healthy, our people are not and our country is not.

# 2023-24 Achievements

## PARTNERSHIP POWER

**36** dedicated partners working together to improve waterway health representing key sectors



in the MWI region including resources, agriculture, science, ports, community, conservation, tourism, traditional owners, and all tiers of government.



Ark Energy (Industry), QRIDA (Government), Reef Check Australia (Community)

**\$1.1M**

contributed by our partners and investors in waterway health



## RESULTS & PUBLICATIONS



[Read me online](#)

Release of the **Reef Fish Citizen Science Data Assessment Report** a joint initiative of the 'Northern 3' Partnerships



Findings from the [Read me online](#) **Southern Inshore Monitoring Program (SIP) 2017-2022** released in **2** special reports including a **Technical Results Summary** and **Key Findings Community Summary**

**6<sup>th</sup>** **Above and Beyond Stewardship Report** released (November 2023)

Featuring **26** profiles of work being done by our partners to support our region's waterways

**400** copies printed and distributed



[Read me online](#)

**9<sup>th</sup>** MWI Waterway Health Report Card and technical reports released (July 2023)

Special Launch Event at Eimeo Beach with a **'Focus on Fish'**

**65** people attended the launch event

**500** copies printed and distributed



[Watch the video](#)

Special Stewardship event with a focus on traditional culture held on **Koinmerburra Country** at Clairview (Isaac Regional Council)

**Whitsunday Gross Pollutant Trap Project** results released via an **interactive dashboard**



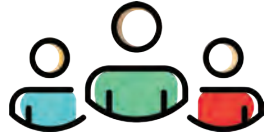
[View](#)



# 2023-24 Achievements

## COLLABORATION & CONNECTION

**3** partnership meetings & **4** management committee meetings held to guide direction of the partnership and turn ideas into action



participated in **19** community events workshops, forums and field trips

Urban Water Stewardship Framework (UWSF) results delivered to **3** key council Partners:

Mackay Regional Council, Whitsunday Regional Council, and Isaac Regional Council



**8** online news articles published & **2** media statements released



more than **73,000** people reached

through growing online reach including LinkedIn, Facebook and the Partnership website

## PROJECT BLUEPRINT

A leading water quality monitoring and citizen science program, commences under Partnership management in August 2023, with renewed focus on **Traditional Owner participation** and greater **science & community engagement**

[Learn more](#)

**11** trips with tourism operators Red Cat Adventures Ocean Rafting &

**2** sampling sites in the Whitsundays at **Cairn Beach & Tongue Bay**

**10** samples collected every month at each site



measuring **12** water quality parameters







## Our Partners



## CONTACT

Jaime Newborn, Executive Officer  
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[www.healthyriverstoreef.org.au](http://www.healthyriverstoreef.org.au)

 MWIHR2RP