

## 6.4. REEF GUARDIAN COUNCIL PROGRAM

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### RECOMMENDATION

**That Council resolves to:**

- 1. Continue to participate in the Reef Guardian Council Program for the period 2024-2028.**
- 2. Nominate two (2) representatives as core members of the Executive Committee (Councillor and/or Senior Management) over the four-year term.**
- 3. Delegate Authority under s 257 of the *Local Government Act 2009* to the Chief Executive Officer to finalise all matters in relation to the Reef Guardian Council Program.**

### EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The Great Barrier Reef Marine Park Authority (Reef Authority) has invited Douglas Shire Council to continue participating in Reef Guardian Council Program (the Program) for the period 2024-2028.

Participating in the Program requires Council to:

- Sign a Memorandum of Understanding, which is governed by a Terms of Reference.
- Develop an Action Plan, outlining the activities they commit to undertake to help protect the Reef, implement the activities and report on achievements.
- Nominate two (2) representatives to be core members of the Executive Committee (Councillor and/or Senior Management).
- Nominate two (2) Council Officers to be core members of the Reef Guardian Council Working Group (currently Council's Sustainability Officer) to attend meetings throughout the year.

The Reef Guardian Council Program was workshopped with Councillors on 30 April 2024.

### BACKGROUND

Council has been part of the Reef Guardian Council Program since 2014. The Program was first launched in 2007 and has grown to include 19 Council's. The Program is a partnership between Councils located in the Great Barrier Reef Catchment and the Reef Authority. It is designed as a collaborative stewardship Program, engaging Councils in protecting the Great Barrier Reef. It recognises that local and regional approaches are central to protecting and managing the Reef and the communities it supports.

Councils are key management partners as many of the threats to the Reef and heritage values arise outside of the Marine Park boundaries and the Reef Authority's jurisdiction.

The Program recognises and supports the important role of local government in the protection and management of the reef.

Participating in the Program has enabled Council to:

- Tackle illegal dumping,
- Upgrade Council infrastructure,
- Rehabilitate natural areas,
- Reduce water quality impacts,
- Reduce our carbon footprint,
- Foster sustainable fishing practices,
- Deliver a successful waste education program,
- Strengthen relationships with Traditional Owner Groups,
- Secure \$920,000 funding from the Australian Government through the Reef Guardian Councils Program - Activating Local Councils' Reef Action Plans grant.

## PROPOSAL

That Council resolves to:

1. Continue to participate in the Reef Guardian Council Program for the period 2024-2028.
2. Nominate two (2) representatives as core members of the Executive Committee (Councillor and/or Senior Management) over the four-year term.
3. Delegate Authority under s 257 of the *Local Government Act 2009* to the Chief Executive Officer to finalise and execute all matters in relation to the Reef Guardian Council Program.

## FINANCIAL/RESOURCE IMPLICATIONS

Participating in the Reef Guardian Council Program is normally budgeted for within Environment and Planning operational allocation.

There will be a requirement to nominate two (2) representatives to be core members of the Executive Committee (Councillors or Senior Management) and two (2) representatives to be core members of the Working Group (Council Officers). The expectation is that only one (1) of the representatives attends meetings as required.

There will be costs associated with attending in-person the Executive and Working Group meetings. The Great Barrier Reef Marine Park Authority does offer financial support for Council Officers to attend Working Group Meetings reducing the expense to Council.

Council's Sustainability Officer is responsible for administering the Program.

## RISK MANAGEMENT IMPLICATIONS

There could be a risk of reputational damage to Council through negative public perception and by other Government peers by not actively undertaking actions to protect the Reef.

## SUSTAINABILITY IMPLICATIONS

**Economic:** The costs associated with participating in the Reef Guardian Council Program will need to be considered in Council budgets for the duration of the four (4) year term (2024-2028).

The Great Barrier Reef is a critical economic asset to the Douglas Shire, providing income and employment for local businesses and the community.

**Environmental:** The Program promotes Council's environmental initiatives addressing key threats to the reef. Encourages innovation and uptake of best practice. Encourages reef stewardship within the Community.

**Social:** The Great Barrier Reef provides numerous social benefits to the local Community. It has historic and cultural values to the local Traditional Owners. Participating in the Program presents an opportunity to Council to enhance community well-being, support our local Traditional Owners groups and sea country, and show our due diligence in preserving a global icon.

## CORPORATE/OPERATIONAL PLAN, POLICY REFERENCE

This report has been prepared in accordance with the following:

### Corporate Plan 2019-2024 Initiatives:

#### Theme 3 - Leading Environmental Stewardship

Our visitors and residents deeply value the unparalleled environment in which we live. We recognise our responsibility in protecting and preserving our natural world for generations to come. We understand the strong link between the environment and the economy: they are interdependent. Douglas Shire will be at the forefront of environmental protection by developing strategies, setting policies, and working with all stakeholders to become the envy of and to inspire locations across Australia and the World.

**Goal 1** - *We will protect our sensitive environment and plan for the impact of climate change.*

**Goal 2** - *We will implement programs that reduce and offset our environmental footprint.*

**Goal 4** - *We will partner with the community to educate and monitor.*

### Operational Plan 2023-2024 Actions:

Reef Guardian Action Plan Theme - Implement 5 actions under the Reef Guardian Council Program.

## COUNCIL'S ROLE

Council can play a number of different roles in certain circumstances, and it is important to be clear about which role is appropriate for a specific purpose or circumstance. The implementation of actions will be a collective effort and Council's involvement will vary from information only through to full responsibility for delivery.

The following areas outline where Council has a clear responsibility to act:

<b>Advocate</b>	Council makes representation on behalf of the community on important issues, funding opportunities, projects and programs. Council will use its influence to seek the best outcomes for the community.
<b>Builder/Owner</b>	Council makes a significant investment every year in the infrastructure that underpins the Shire through its capital works program. Council will manage its assets with appropriate frameworks and deliver its projects through robust project management.
<b>Facilitator</b>	Council often brings stakeholders together on important issues, projects or for service delivery. In this role, Council can act as a mediator, connector, collaborator or initiator.

## CONSULTATION

<b>Internal:</b>	Nil
<b>External:</b>	Nil

## ATTACHMENTS

1. Reef Guardian Council program information sheet [6.4.1 - 4 pages]
2. Final draft Reef Guardian Council program Terms of Reference 2024-28 [6.4.2 - 19 pages]



# REEF GUARDIAN COUNCIL PROGRAM

A local government alliance to  
address the key threats to the  
Great Barrier Reef

The Reef Guardian Council program is a partnership between local government and the Reef Authority which recognises that local and regional approaches are central to protecting and managing the Reef and the communities it supports.

It is the Reef Authority's flagship stewardship program engaging local government in the protection of the Great Barrier Reef.

## Contribute to the bigger picture

Local governments are key management partners as many of the threats to the Reef and heritage values arise outside of the Marine Park boundaries and the Reef Authority's jurisdiction.

Councils are directly involved in a myriad of both statutory and non-statutory activities that minimise

impacts, improve values and support the resilience of the Reef, contributing to the Reef 2050 Long-Term Sustainability Plan and the objectives of the *Great Barrier Reef Marine Park Act 1975*.

The Reef Guardian Council program recognises this and celebrates and supports the important role of local government in the protection and management of the Reef catchment region.



Reef Guardian Council members

© Commonwealth of Australia (Reef Authority)



## Protecting the Reef starts by protecting your patch

Councils undertake a wide range of environmental initiatives that help address the key threats to the Reef. This might include acting to:

- **Limit the impacts of climate change** – contributing to global efforts to reduce greenhouse gas emissions, building capacity to adapt to climate change, and providing community education
- **Reduce impacts from land-based activities** – through waste management, erosion control, planning and development assessment, stormwater and wastewater management, reducing light pollution near sensitive ecosystems, and implementing programs to reduce marine debris entering the Reef
- **Protect, rehabilitate and restore habitats** – vegetation and pest management, restoring and rehabilitating coastal habitats, identifying, prioritising, removing or remediating artificial barriers to water flow and increasing connectivity through fish passages in catchment and estuarine areas
- **Reduce impacts from water-based activities** – encouraging and supporting stewardship actions and behaviours to reduce the impact of water-based activities including recreational fishing, raising awareness of the biodiversity and heritage values of the Reef
- **Conserve historic and cultural heritage** – protecting and conserving sites with historic and/or cultural heritage values, raising awareness of historic and/or cultural heritage values
- **Support voluntary stewardship** – providing education, capacity building and developing partnerships to share knowledge and promote stewardship behaviours.

As an example the [Climate Change Initiatives Snapshot](#) showcases the collective actions being taken and the thematic reporting the program provides to promote council actions and advocate for support.



Douglas Shire Council water treatment plant  
© Douglas Shire Council



Cassowary Coast Regional Council rubbish collection  
© Cassowary Coast Regional Council



Livingstone Shire Council Yeppoon Lagoon  
© Livingstone Shire Council

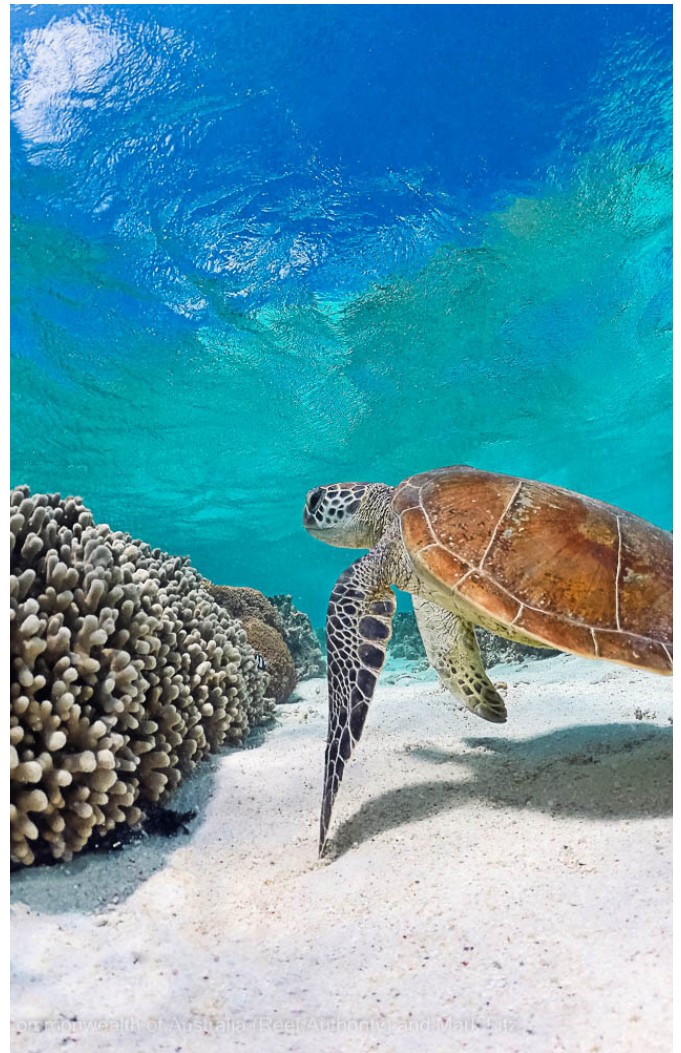


Hinchinbrook Shire Council fish ladders  
© Commonwealth of Australia (Reef Authority)



## What are the benefits of being a Reef Guardian Council?

- It's free! And there are very little out of pocket costs for participating in workshops etc. In fact there is some financial support for this
- Access to a network of like-minded councils, and key partners to harness the power of the collective and share knowledge. Check out the current participants [here](#)
- Capacity building opportunities provided for council staff to encourage innovation and the uptake of best practices to address the key threats to the Reef
- Support to produce and deliver on an action plan that addresses the key threats to the Reef
- Opportunities to contribute to the network via various face to face and online meetings, workshops and field trips
- Support to engage with your catchment community to encourage Reef stewardship
- Promotion of council's environmental initiatives addressing the key threats to the Reef
- Advocacy for further action through the Reef Guardian Council platform.



*Turtle at Lady Elliot Island*

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*Reef Guardian Council annual meeting*

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## What is involved?

Councils sign a Memorandum of Understanding to participate in the program, which is governed by terms-of-reference.

Each Reef Guardian Council develops an Action Plan outlining the activities they commit to undertake to help protect the Reef, implements the (voluntary) plan and reports on achievements.

The program includes an Executive Committee providing high level strategic involvement, and a Working Group providing an important forum for technical and operational staff to network, build capacity by sharing best practices, and collaborate to find solutions.

The program is also building connections between the Reef Authority and council's communications teams to better enable sharing of Reef protection and sustainability messaging, and promotion of council actions.

Capacity building and networking opportunities such as lunchtime learning sessions, field trips, support to attend training and meetings, are offered throughout the term.

A quarterly newsletter is also produced to showcase Reef Guardian Council initiatives, share information and promote activities on the [Reef Authority website](#).

The Reef Authority also provides the opportunity for Reef Guardian Council's to connect with and share the wonder of the Reef with their catchment community through twice yearly Virtual Reef Adventures offered through regional libraries in the school holidays. This also gives councils a chance to promote the actions they're taking in their local government area and engage the audience on various household behaviour change actions.

## Want to know more?

Or to discuss the program please contact the Reef Guardian Council team:

[gbrmpa.gov.au/our-work/programs-and-projects/reef-guardian-councils](https://gbrmpa.gov.au/our-work/programs-and-projects/reef-guardian-councils)

[reef.councils@gbrmpa.gov.au](mailto:reef.councils@gbrmpa.gov.au)

(07) 4848 7878



# REEF GUARDIAN COUNCIL PROGRAM

## TERMS OF REFERENCE 2024-28



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The Great Barrier Reef Marine Park Authority is an organisation committed to child safety and to the implementation of Child Safe principles and procedures.

While all efforts have been made to verify facts, the Great Barrier Reef Marine Park Authority takes no responsibility for the accuracy of information supplied in this publication.

This publication should be cited as:

Great Barrier Reef Marine Park Authority 2023,

Reef Guardian Council program terms of reference 2024-28, GBRMPA, Townsville.

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[gbmpa.gov.au](http://gbmpa.gov.au)

The Great Barrier Reef Marine Park Authority acknowledges the continuing sea country management and custodianship of the Great Barrier Reef by Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Traditional Owners whose rich cultures, heritage values, enduring connections and shared efforts protect the Reef for future generations.

# Reef Guardian Council program Terms of Reference

2024-2028

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## 1. Background

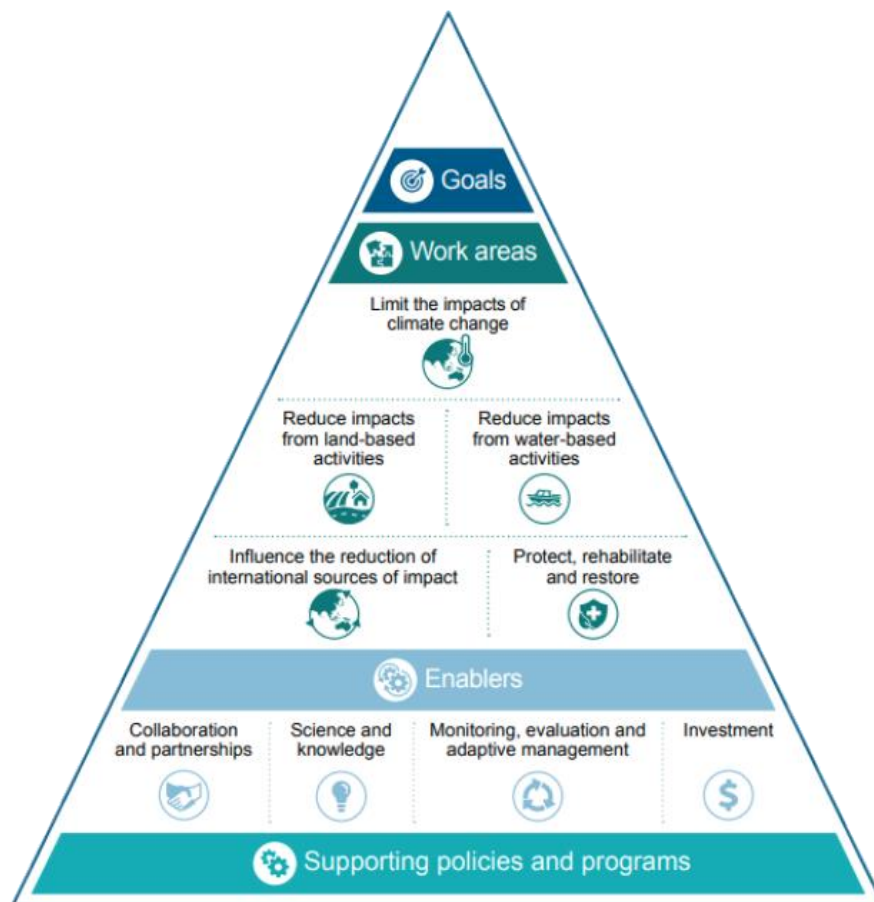
The Reef Guardians program is the Great Barrier Reef Marine Park Authority's (Reef Authority) most widely recognised stewardship and education program. The Reef Guardians program works with schools and councils to engage with and influence stewardship in the wider community. These activities are a component of the Reef Authority's investment in on-ground stewardship actions that address the five-year Outlook Report findings.

The Reef Guardian Council program (program) is a partnership between local government and the Reef Authority which recognises that local and regional approaches are central to protecting and managing the Reef and the communities it supports.

The program was first launched in 2007 and has grown to include a network of council's covering an area of over 300 000 square kilometres and a population of more than one million people.

The [Great Barrier Reef Marine Park Act 1975](#) (GBRMP Act) guides the Reef Authority's management of the Reef to protect values, reduce threats, and improve the current and long-term outlook for the Reef and the communities that depend on it. An objective of the GBRMP Act is to encourage engagement in the protection and management of the Great Barrier Reef Region by interested persons and groups, including local governments, communities, and Indigenous persons (S2A(2)(b)).

Through voluntary actions and statutory responsibilities, Reef Guardian Councils deliver many activities that support the objectives of the GBRMP Act and also align with the Reef 2050 Long-Term Sustainability Plan. They address the key threats to the Reef, as outlined in the Outlook Report, that fall outside of the Reef Authority's jurisdiction.



*Outcomes Framework – what will be delivered under the Reef 2050 Plan*

The Reef Authority and Reef Guardian Councils have collaboratively developed these Terms of Reference (ToR). These ToR form part of the Memoranda of Understanding (MoU) which the Reef Authority enters into with each individual Reef Guardian Council.

### REEF GUARDIAN COUNCIL VISION

*A local government alliance to address the key threats to the Great Barrier Reef through collaboration, education and targeted action.*

## 2. Purpose and principles

The purpose of the program is to encourage local government engagement in the protection and management of the Great Barrier Reef Region (in line with 2A(2)(b) of the GBRMP Act).

The program is underpinned by three key principles. These are guided by the strategic priorities established by the corporate plans of individual councils and the Reef Authority's strategic priorities.

### Continuous improvement

- Encourage continuous improvement in addressing key threats to the Reef by action planning, sharing best practices and supporting their uptake.

### Empowering communities

- Encourage Reef stewardship in communities through education, sharing of knowledge, collaboration and supporting actions that address the key threats to the Reef.

### Support and advocacy

- Support and build capacity for local government to take action to address the key threats to the Reef
- Promote positive outcomes and advocate for further action through the Reef Guardian Council platform.

## 3. Outcomes

Reef Guardian Councils and the Reef Authority are committed to achieving the following outcomes to address the key threats to the Reef under the program:

- Delivering on-ground actions
- Empowering people to be part of the solution
- Fostering innovation and change
- Providing information to increase awareness of the Reef's values, threats and actions that can be taken to protect the Reef.

## 4. Program governance and operation

## 4.1. Role of the Reef Guardian Councils

Reef Guardian Councils:

- Undertake actions, as identified in a Reef Guardian Council Action Plan that address the key threats to the Reef
- Work collaboratively with each other, the Reef Authority and key partners to improve outcomes and harness the power of the collective to deliver actions to address the key threats to the Reef
- Wherever possible integrate the program across business units, in corporate culture and decision-making
- Actively participate in the Executive Committee and Working Group
- Are encouraged to participate on Local Marine Advisory Committees and similar committees as far as practicable to promote Reef Guardian Council messaging.

## 4.2. Reef Guardian Council Action Plans

A Reef Guardian Council Action Plan will be developed and adopted (either separately or identified within other existing council plans to avoid duplication) by each council as a tool to identify the current and future actions they are taking to improve the health of the Reef.

Action plans help each council track continuous improvements in their activities.

The preference is for four-year plans that may include annual review. Recognising each council's capacities and operations are different, councils may choose to complete action plans for a shorter timeframe if necessary.

Action plans can be developed using a standard template provided by the Reef Authority or through a process and report devised by each council.

Actions must address the key threats to the Reef, as identified in the Outlook Report: climate change, coastal development, land-based run-off and direct use, and also provide actions to manage and protect the heritage values of the Reef. Taking action to address the key threats also aligns with the Reef 2050 Plan.

Actions are scalable reflecting the council's financial or technical capacity to contribute. Examples of actions are provided in Table 1, however the program empowers councils to drive change and deliver innovative solutions to help the Reef by identifying other actions beyond those provided. In addition, action plans may also include future or potential projects that would contribute to the protection of the Reef but are reliant on funding or support to be achieved. As a voluntary stewardship program, the actions proposed are not regulated or monitored for compliance with timeframes – the actions identified are voluntary and show the ongoing commitment that Reef Guardian Councils make to help address the key threats to the Reef.

The action plans must be provided to the Reef Authority by 30 June (if reviewed annually) to promote the program and enable reporting.



Table 1: Reef Guardian Council example actions

Climate change	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Adopt a climate change policy and / or emissions reduction target</li> <li>• Corporate emissions inventory / profile / reduction plan / reporting</li> <li>• Increased use of renewable energy sources</li> <li>• Buildings / facilities emissions reduction</li> <li>• Fleet emissions reduction</li> <li>• Landfill management emissions reduction</li> <li>• Emissions offsets</li> <li>• Climate change adaptation / resilience planning</li> <li>• Circular economy initiatives – innovative waste diversion and re-use</li> <li>• Climate change education / mitigation and / or adaptation initiatives for the wider community</li> </ul>
Coastal development (including head water catchments)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Land use planning provides the framework to ensure appropriate development occurs and the impacts on the local environment and Reef catchment are managed eg: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Encourage protection of habitat and ecological connectivity and restoration of terrestrial and aquatic ecosystems</li> <li>- Avoid development within areas of environmental significance</li> <li>- Allow coastal processes to occur naturally</li> <li>- Ensure that development takes into account the predicted changes in sea level rise as consequence of climate change</li> </ul> </li> <li>• Review and investigate opportunities for improvement of hydrology and connectivity of mangroves and coastal wetlands</li> <li>• Remediation of artificial barriers to water flow, including fish passages</li> <li>• Install mitigation measures for artificial light and noise pollution</li> <li>• Offer water / energy saving incentives</li> <li>• Install cycle / walkways to promote active transport options</li> <li>• Waste and recycling initiatives / education program</li> <li>• Adopt single-use plastic free policy for all council events and venues</li> <li>• Best practice management of Council Coastal Reserves and community education</li> <li>• Litter and illegal dumping compliance</li> </ul>

Land-based run- off	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Water Sensitive Urban Design or Integrated Catchment Management principles for more rural Councils</li> <li>• Minimise the impact of discharge from council infrastructure</li> <li>• Implement stormwater management activities</li> <li>• Reduce land-based contribution to marine debris</li> <li>• Council regulatory services investigate water pollution incidents</li> <li>• Development approvals, operational works permits do not authorise increased sediment runoff, nutrient and pesticide runoff</li> <li>• Council capital and operational work programs do not increase sediment runoff, nutrient and pesticide runoff</li> <li>• Erosion and sediment control capacity building, monitoring and compliance programs</li> <li>• Council's road network is continuously improved to reduce sediment and nutrient runoff, and litter over time</li> <li>• Public education program for water conservation and catchment awareness</li> <li>• Support community marine debris clean-ups and source reduction workshops</li> <li>• Monitor water quality in waterways</li> <li>• Pest management to prevent, monitor and manage</li> </ul>
Impacts from water-based activities	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Identify, protect and promote important fish and coastal habitats</li> <li>• Support / develop programs to promote sustainable recreational fishing activities in schools and the broader community</li> <li>• Develop a Recreational Fishing Strategy / plan</li> <li>• Promote responsible boating and fishing practices</li> <li>• Support the development of a voluntary code of conduct for recreational fishers</li> <li>• Support fish surveys and community monitoring</li> <li>• Share responsible Reef practice messaging across council channels</li> </ul>

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Support community and industry partnerships working to improve Reef health</li> <li>• Ensure new recreational fishing infrastructure is appropriately planned and prioritised</li> </ul>
Conserve historic and cultural heritage	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Identify, protect and manage: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- cultural heritage sites</li> <li>- contemporary cultural heritage connections</li> <li>- social and cultural (place) values</li> <li>- aesthetic values that contribute to community pride in, and connection to, the Reef</li> </ul> </li> <li>• Install interpretative materials to celebrate and share cultural heritage information</li> <li>• Integrate Traditional Owner knowledge and input into development assessment involving sea country (guidance can be found in the Reef Authority's <a href="#">Traditional Owner Heritage Assessment Guideline</a>)</li> <li>• Integrate historic heritage considerations into development assessment involving Reef heritage values (guidance can be found in the <a href="#">Reef Authority's Historic Heritage Assessment guidelines and Social Value Assessment Guidelines</a>)</li> <li>• Support / develop programs to promote Traditional Owner heritage</li> <li>• Support Traditional Owner projects to improve Reef health and / or manage cultural Reef values</li> <li>• Support Traditional Owner social and economic outcomes through programs and partnerships</li> <li>• Undertake or support cultural heritage awareness / education / celebration programs – art, public appreciation, research in relation to the natural, social, economic and cultural systems</li> <li>• Valuing and maintaining historic and cultural information about the Reef</li> </ul>

### 4.3. Role of Reef Authority

The Reef Authority:

- Coordinate overall management of the Reef Guardian Council program
- Brief Reef Guardian Council officers and incoming elected members, at the beginning of each local government term, on the program
- Provide relevant Reef related information and resources to Reef Guardian Councils



- Organise meetings of the Executive Committee and Working Group, providing secretariat support, maintaining records and circulating agendas, papers and minutes
- Provide travel assistance where necessary for attendance at Reef Guardian Council program engagements
- Lead the development of a communication and engagement strategy, to help promote the actions being undertaken, for joint implementation with councils
- Provide program communication collateral for implementation by councils
- Promote the positive actions taken by Reef Guardian Councils in the media and social media, in particular empowering councils to use their channels to promote their work
- Advocate for greater support for Reef Guardian Councils to achieve positive outcomes for the Reef
- Provide guidance on the use of Reef Guardian branding
- Support at least one engagement opportunity per council per year
- Develop a capacity building strategy and support capacity building opportunities for council staff to encourage innovation and the uptake of best practices to address the key threats to the Reef
- Seek to have Reef Guardians Councils represented on the Reef 2050 Advisory Committee
- Support Reef Guardian Councils to obtain external funding to undertake further actions.

#### 4.4. Executive Committee

The Reef Guardian Council Executive Committee provides a forum for executive representatives of the Reef Guardian Councils and the Reef Authority to discuss strategic issues and opportunities. The role of the committee and its members are to:

- promote the Reef Guardian Council program and values within council, including across all relevant branches and teams
- provide a united voice for local governments in the Reef catchment in advocating for action and external funding that will improve the outlook of the Reef
- share information and advice on issues that affect the Reef
- seek opportunities for councils to build their capacity and collaborate to find solutions to relevant Reef threats
- seek alignment between local government and Reef Authority priorities to maximise environmental outcomes for the Reef
- champion the uptake of Reef Guardian practices in their own council in relation to climate change, coastal development, land-based runoff, direct use and the protection of heritage values of the Reef and
- promote values of the program and actions Reef Guardian Councils are taking to the wider community.

#### Executive Committee members

The core membership of the Reef Guardian Council Executive Committee is:

- Mayors / Deputy Mayors / Chief Executive Officers / Councillors / General Managers – two representatives from each Reef Guardian Council

- General Manager, Strategic Policy and Partnerships Branch, the Reef Authority
- Director, Reef Education and Engagement, the Reef Authority
- Program Manager, Reef Guardian Councils, the Reef Authority
- A representative of Local Government Association of Queensland.

Councils nominate two representatives for the Executive Committee, with an expectation that at least one nominated representative, or their proxy, attend each meeting.

From time to time, the Executive Committee may invite affiliated associations to participate in or inform Committee meetings. Invitees may include but may not be limited to the following examples:

- Australian Government e.g. Department of Climate Change, Energy, the Environment and Water
- First Nations groups and organisations
- Queensland Government e.g. lead agencies for environment, natural resources and biosecurity
- Great Barrier Reef Foundation, Reef Catchment bodies, Natural Resource Management Groups and / or NRM Regions Queensland
- Reef Urban Stormwater Management Group
- River Improvement Trusts
- Institute of Public Works Engineering Australasia.

### Executive Committee Chair and Deputy Chair

The committee will elect a Chair and deputy chair (from two different councils) for the four-year local government term.

Voting will take place out-of-session with a call for nominations following the local government elections, with two votes allocated to each Reef Guardian Council.

The Chair and Deputy Chair will divide the responsibilities of:

- providing a key liaison point with the Reef Authority
- providing a united voice for local governments in the Reef catchment in advocating for action and external funding that will improve the outlook of the Reef
- chairing committee meetings including ensuring:
  - agenda items align with the Committee's purpose and the terms of reference
  - meetings address each agenda item
  - each member is given the opportunity to contribute
  - discussions are kept to time and within the boundaries of the agenda item business
  - all attendees comply with the terms of reference
  - reviewing final minutes, communiques and reports
- representing Reef Guardian Councils through external communications, forums and in the media.

At times the committee may wish to formally raise an issue through the chairs writing to a third party such as a government agency. Draft letters should be provided to committee members for

approval at least one week before the proposed distribution date. If no response is received within one week, the letter is deemed to be approved.

Any member representing the committee at another forum must first be endorsed to do so by the committee. Comments made on behalf of the committee must be the view of the committee as a whole, not an individual's view.

### Executive Committee meetings

The Executive Committee will meet as required, but at least twice per year with one meeting being in person. Opportunities to meet via MS Teams between annual meetings will be considered when needs arise.

Joint meetings with the Working Group are supported when needs arise or opportunity allows, including in conjunction with the annual Executive Committee meeting.

The Reef Authority will cover reasonable costs associated with travel for committee meetings (airfare, taxi, and accommodation), provided that prior written approval of the Reef Authority is obtained before incurring such costs, and copies of invoices are provided to the Reef Authority.

Meeting agendas will be prepared by the Reef Authority, in consultation with the co-chairs and the committee, and circulated to members at least one week prior to the meeting.

Key participants may be invited to participate in meetings to support specific priorities and functions of the Executive Committee. They must be nominated and supported by the committee.

Proxies may be permitted where approved through the Reef Guardian Council team (and are to be of a similar seniority to the member).

Decisions and negotiations will be through consensus, recognising the legitimate interests and diverse views of the members.

Resulting actions, responsible persons and due dates will be recorded and distributed within four weeks of the meeting.

The committee meeting minutes or records of decisions will be provided to the Reef Guardian Council Working Group through the secretariat.

### Executive Committee subgroups

The committee may establish subgroups to support various committee roles, functions or activities as needed.

In establishing a group, the committee will identify the group's desired outcomes, reporting responsibilities and membership.

Additional participants may be invited to provide further input to the committee through participation in these groups.

Subgroups will meet at intervals as agreed by the committee.

Subgroups will report to the committee by providing meeting minutes or records of decisions via the secretariat.

## 4.5. Working Group

The Reef Guardian Council Working Group provides a forum for technical and operational staff from the councils and the Reef Authority to share their expertise, build capacity and discuss matters to be raised at the Executive Committee meetings. Council staff nominated to join the



Working Group are generally the officers who are responsible for action planning within their council.

The roles of the Working Group and its members are to:

- champion the values of the program within council, including across all branches and teams
- facilitate the uptake of best practice in their own council in relation to climate change, coastal development, land-based runoff, direct use and the protection of heritage values of the Reef
- share best practices and innovations between Reef Guardian Councils
- champion Reef stewardship in the wider community
- seek alignment between local government and Reef Authority priorities to maximise environmental outcomes for the Reef
- provide information and advice to the Executive Committee
- seek opportunities for councils to build their capacity and collaborate to find solutions to relevant Reef threats.

### Working Group members

The core membership of the Reef Guardian Council Working Group is:

- Two nominated officers from each of the Reef Guardian Councils
- Reef Guardian Council Program Manager, and Reef Guardian Council program team members, from the Reef Authority

Councils nominate two representatives for the Working Group, with an expectation that at least one nominated representative, or their proxy, attend at least two meetings per year.

From time to time, the Working Group may invite affiliated associations to participate in or inform Committee meetings. Invitees may include but may not be limited to the following examples:

- Australian Government e.g. Department of Climate Change, Energy, the Environment and Water
- First Nations groups and organisations
- Queensland Government e.g. lead agencies for environment, natural resources and biosecurity
- Great Barrier Reef Foundation Reef Catchment bodies, Natural Resource Management Groups and / or NRM Regions Queensland
- Reef Urban Stormwater Management Group
- River Improvement Trusts
- Institute of Public Works Engineering Australasia.

### Working Group meetings

The Working Group will meet up to four times per year, with a mix of in person and virtual meetings (where necessary), and regional hub and Reef wide working group meetings.

Joint meetings with the Reef Guardian Council Executive Committee are supported when needs arise or opportunity allows, including in conjunction with the annual Executive Committee meeting.

The Reef Authority will cover reasonable costs associated with travel for Working Group meetings (airfare, taxi, and accommodation) provided that prior written approval of the Reef Authority is

obtained before incurring such costs, and where applicable copies of invoices are provided to the Reef Authority.

Meeting agendas will be prepared by the Reef Authority, in consultation with members, and circulated to members at least one week prior to the meeting.

Other participants may be invited to participate in meetings to support specific priorities and functions of the Working Group. Their attendance must be nominated and supported by the Working Group.

The Reef Authority's Reef Guardian Council Program Manager will chair the meetings.

Decisions and negotiations will be through consensus, recognising the legitimate interests and diverse views of the members.

Resulting actions, responsible persons and due dates will be recorded.

The Working Group will report to the Reef Guardian Council Executive Committee by providing meeting summaries, meeting minutes or records of decisions.

### Working Group subgroups

The Working Group may establish subgroups to support various roles, functions or activities, as needed.

In establishing a group, the Working Group will identify the subgroup's desired outcomes, reporting responsibilities and membership.

Additional participants may be invited to provide further input to the Working Group through participation in these groups.

Subgroups will meet at intervals as agreed by the Working Group.

The subgroups will report to the Working Group by providing meeting minutes or records of decisions via the secretariat.

## 4.6. First Nations Councils and communities

There are a number of First Nations Councils (Aboriginal Shire Councils) within the Great Barrier Reef Catchment, and a number of rural local governments that include, and support, First Nations communities.

First Nations Councils have specific additional functions to other local governments because of the need to manage land trusts and particular changes when they were established as indigenous councils (Dedekorkut Howes 2017). Functions can include providing a breadth of services to the community beyond the responsibilities of other councils e.g. community care, centrelink and other services, childcare, housing, and the management of Deed Of Grant In Trust (DOGIT) activities. Often the rates base for these councils is negligible or considerably less than that of other councils in the Catchment, as are the staffing and resources.

To better enable First Nations Council's to participate in the Reef Guardian Council program, and to support those rural council's that include First Nations communities, additional support for First Nations involvement in the program will include (but is not limited to):

- The Reef Authority providing updates and/or attending relevant forums to share information e.g. Torres Cape Indigenous Councils Alliance meetings, Local Government Managers Australia Indigenous Council CEOs conference, Aboriginal Shire Council Technical Working Group meetings (facilitated through the Department of Seniors, Disability Services and

Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Partnerships)

- Assisting in the development of the First Nations Councils Reef Guardian Councils action plans and annual reporting
- Supporting a combined Reef Guardian Councils and Reef Guardian Schools visit per year, per council
- Helping enable the delivery of Virtual Reef Adventures to First Nations communities through relevant organisations e.g. Prescribed Body Corporate groups, Land and Sea Country Ranger Groups, Reef Guardian Schools
- Sharing Reef Authority messaging through the Remote Area Network's Black Star radio program to remote communities.

## 4.7. Role of Local Government Association of Queensland

The Local Government Association of Queensland, in their role as member of the Reef Guardian Council Executive Committee:

- assist the Reef Guardian Councils to identify and undertake annual actions that improve the health of the Great Barrier Reef
- work collaboratively with the Reef Guardian Councils and the Authority, to improve outcomes and harness the power of the collective for Reef stewardship actions
- nominate a representative to the Executive Committee (preferably of a similar level to the council representatives) and attend at least one meeting a year
- share case studies that publicise the positive actions that the Reef Guardian Councils are taking to protect the Great Barrier Reef, as well as promoting the broader program
  - seek to have Reef Guardians Councils represented, by the Chair or deputy Chair of the Executive Committee, on the Reef 2050 Advisory Committee
- progress the delivery of Reef Guardian Councils' resolutions that are resolved at the LGAQ Annual Conference.
- provide opportunity for the Reef Authority and Reef Guardian Councils to present at LGAQ facilitated events, meeting and forums, including but not limited to:
  - The LGAQ Coastal Leaders Forum
  - The LGAQ NRM Forums
  - Relevant LGAQ Advisory/Reference Group meetings.
- invite Reef Authority access to LGAQ communication platforms that promote communication/information sharing amongst Queensland councils.
  - collaborate with the Reef Authority and Reef Guardian Councils to seek funding for Reef protection initiatives
- invite Reef Authority access to LGAQ communication platforms that promote communication/information sharing amongst Queensland councils.
- provide quarterly reports on relevant conferences, projects, initiatives, information, progress on Reef related LGAQ Annual Conference resolutions etc. that can be used for sharing with the Reef Guardian Council network, including at meetings.

## 5. Communications

### 5.1. Reef Guardian Council brand

Being a Reef Guardian Council distinguishes councils that are committed to improved Reef health by adopting sustainable behaviors, best practices and encouraging stewardship actions relevant to the protection of the Reef. It symbolises a collective platform from which councils advocate for Reef protection. The aim of the brand is to instill trust within the broader community.

The Reef Authority and Reef Guardian Councils must use their best endeavours to uphold the values and achieve the intended purpose of the program to ensure the program is not brought into disrepute. Councils participating in the program are encouraged to use the trademarked graphic Reef Guardian Councils element (the Trademark), developed by the Reef Authority, to promote their involvement through materials, websites, and other channels. The licence agreement that provides for the use of the Trademark by Reef Guardian Councils is attached to the memorandum of understanding that is entered into with each Reef Guardian Council.

Each proposed use of the Trademark must be consistent with the licence agreement.

Should the Trademark change in the future, Councils may be requested to enter into a new licence agreement.

### 5.2. Media and social media

#### Council generated news releases

Press, radio, television and social media are channels to raise the profile of the program itself and the local actions being taken to address Reef threats, encourage Reef stewardship in catchment communities, and provide comment on relevant issues.

When Reef Guardian Councils are promoting local initiatives and events which benefit the Reef, they are encouraged to link them to the Reef Guardian Council program.

Councils are encouraged to supply draft media releases to the Reef Authority for comment and co-promotion at least two days in advance ([media@gbrmpa.gov.au](mailto:media@gbrmpa.gov.au)). The media release should be consistent with the program vision, goals and purpose, and if possible include the following wording:

[Name of council] is part of the Great Barrier Reef Marine Park Authority's Reef Guardian Council program, which involves X councils along the Queensland coast working to support a healthy and resilient Reef through local government and community actions.

The Reef Authority's communication team should be advised in advance of any social media content ([digital@gbrmpa.gov.au](mailto:digital@gbrmpa.gov.au)). The Reef Authority's social media accounts can also be tagged in the posts to allow for sharing.

Draft media releases from the Executive Committee should be provided to members for approval at least one week before the proposed distribution date. If no response is received within one week, the release can be taken to be approved.

#### Spokespeople

The Executive Committee Chair, Deputy Chair, and Program Manager, are the designated spokespeople for program media opportunities. This does not prevent members from expressing their views or representing their organisation's views independently of the program, nor individual Reef Guardian Councils raising the profile of their actions to address Reef threats.



Comments should not be made to the media regarding the program – especially regarding management or policy matters – without the unanimous support of the Executive Committee.

### Reef Guardian Council communications network

The Reef Authority recognises the powerful connection to the over the 1,000,000 constituents in the Reef catchment, and the wider national and international community the Reef Guardian Councils have through their engagement and communications activities.

To raise the profile of the program itself and the local actions being taken to address Reef threats, encourage Reef stewardship in catchment communities, and share Reef messaging:

- The Reef Guardian Councils will nominate communications officer(s) as contacts for promotion of the program and council actions
- The Reef Authority will include the Reef Guardian Council communications contacts in relevant communications contacts lists such as Summer Reef health communications network, media contacts list
- The Reef Authority will invite the Reef Guardian Council communications contacts to relevant updates and meetings, and include them in relevant media releases and communications opportunities.

### Authority generated news releases

On occasion, the Reef Authority staff will assist in drafting and disseminating media releases where it primarily relates the Reef Authority's work with the Councils. For example, new councils joining the program, key outcomes or whole-of-Reef related stories. These will be provided to the relevant council(s) for comment.

## 6. Reporting

A quarterly update of Reef Guardian Council actions will be provided by each council as a tool to promote the positive actions they are taking to improve the health of the Reef, and to share knowledge and ideas. Quarterly reports will be provided in April, July, September and January.

The Executive Committee members will provide a short update of key highlights from their respective council at at least one Executive Committee meeting per year.

Each council will submit a short annual update on the progress of initiatives identified in their action plans in September each year. The Reef Authority will compile thematic reports to showcase the actions Reef Guardian Councils are taking to help the Reef. Each Reef Guardian Council will contribute information to the report.

Where appropriate information gathered through reporting e.g. thematic reports will be provided to the Reef 2050 Reef Advisory Committee for their consideration.

## 7. Measuring success

Reef Guardian Councils undertake actions that address key threats to the Reef and protect heritage values (refer section 4).

The Reef Authority supports at least one Reef Guardian Council engagement opportunity per council per year.

A major professional development / networking opportunity is offered by the Reef Authority to Reef Guardian Council officers to encourage innovation and the uptake of best practices per year.

Quarterly reports are provided, and the Executive Committee members provide a short update of key highlights from their respective council at at least one Executive Committee meeting per year.

Each council submit a short update on the progress of initiatives identified in their action plans in September each year.

Thematic reports are produced to celebrate council actions.

The Reef Authority will support and encourage the promotion of Reef Guardian Councils actions across the Reef Authority's communication channels.

## **8. Variation or termination of engagement**

Refer to section 11 of the Memorandum of Understanding.

## **9. Review**

The terms of reference will be reviewed following the release of the five-yearly Outlook Report and before the beginning of each local government term.

