



## **TOWNSVILLE DRY TROPICS REPORT CARD SUGGESTS 'GOOD' WATER QUALITY GRADES**

### **MEDIA RELEASE**

**28<sup>th</sup> June 2021**

The 2019-2020 annual Waterway Report Card, released by the Townsville Dry Tropics Partnership for Healthy Waters assessed Townsville's water quality as being in a 'good' condition.

The Report Card provides a snapshot of the condition of our waterways against indicators of water quality, freshwater fish and habitat from Crystal Creek to Alligator Creek.

It also reports on coral reef and seagrass condition within the inshore and offshore marine environments.

Diane Tarte, the chair of the Dry Tropics Partnership for Healthy Waters, the results, but also knows there is still work to be done.

"As the biggest urban community on the doorstep to the Great Barrier Reef, it is important that we play our role in protecting the Reef," Ms Tarte said.

"The annual report cards are developed to communicate easily understood information on the health of our waterways to the Townsville community. The report card is designed to highlight areas that are in a good condition, as well as those areas in need of improvement.

"The results of the report card indicate that most freshwater and estuarine waterways have 'good' water quality, although specific areas require improvement. Water quality within the Black and Ross freshwater basins scored 'good' or 'very good' for 12 of the 13 rivers and creeks sampled. Bohle River was the exception, with the river being in a poor condition due to high concentrations of nutrients within the river."

Most estuaries were in a 'good' or 'very good' condition with respect to water quality. However, Louisa Creek estuary had high total phosphorus concentrations and low dissolved oxygen levels, well outside the recommended healthy water quality objectives.

For the first time, the Report Card includes data on freshwater fish communities. The number of native and pest species were recorded within 20 creeks in Townsville, with the Ross and Black basins scoring 'moderate' and 'good' respectively. Of note, there was high variability within the creeks and rivers around Townsville, with fish communities generally improving as the creeks were further away from the urban centre.

Cleveland Bay and Halifax Bay achieved a 'good' grade for water quality, which was an improvement from 'moderate' in 2018-19. This suggests water quality is recovering from the impacts of the 2019 monsoon event.

Data from the report card indicates that the 2019 monsoon event impacted the seagrass meadows within Cleveland Bay which were in a 'moderate' condition, and a decline from the 2018-19 scores. However, surveys from early 2020 suggest the seagrass meadows are showing further recovery following the monsoon event.



Monitoring at inshore reefs around Magnetic Island, Cleveland Bay and the Palm Island group including Halifax Bay found that inshore coral communities were in a 'moderate' condition. During the 2020 summer, corals were impacted by the third mass bleaching event to occur within five years.

Townsville Mayor Jenny Hill believes the results are proof of the good work being done across the Townsville community to encourage healthy water practices.

"It is good to see that the water quality throughout the city is improving following the effects of the monsoon in 2019, but there is still work to be done in those areas that are scoring less favorably," Cr Hill said.

"Council is responding to these Water Quality Report Card results by developing a range of initiatives to improve water quality throughout the city.

"This work and the cross-collaboration between organisations will be pivotal in continuing to improve the results on the report card and protecting our local waterways and the inshore Great Barrier Reef Marine Park."

Port of Townsville Chief Executive Officer Raneë Crosby said the Report Card shows the benefits of partnerships to making a real difference towards the health of our waterways.

"The Port of Townsville is proud to have been a part of the Partnership since the pilot Report Card and it is highly encouraging to see the first management response report 'Working Together for Healthier Waterways' showcasing partner initiatives, as well as additional partners coming on board," said Ms Crosby.

"We are extremely mindful of our location in the Great Barrier Reef World Heritage Area and have undertaken environmental monitoring for more than two decades. The Report Card and Partnership provide an opportunity to combine the targeted knowledge of individual groups to understand the whole catchment, identify important priorities for the waterways in our region, and collaborate on meaningful initiatives."

This year the Partnership also released a Management Response Report to capture management practices and initiatives that were undertaken by partners during 2019-2020 to improve waterway health.

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### **About the Dry Tropics Partnership**

Launched in 2019, the Townsville Dry Tropics Partnership is a collaboration between community, industry, science, and government in the Townsville region. The Partnership is one of five regional partnerships within the Great Barrier Reef catchment that produce an annual report card. The report cards are designed to inform the community on the condition of waterways and the marine environment. The Partnership also uses the Report Card as a



tool to highlight waterways in a poor condition to guide future management planning and investment towards improving these waterways.

Data for the 2020 Report Card is drawn from a range of monitoring programs undertaken by our partners. Most of the data was collected between July 2019 and June 2020.

For more information and to download the full Report Card, visit [drytropicshealthywaters.org.au](http://drytropicshealthywaters.org.au).