

COMMUNITY PROJECT

Corals for reefs

Background

Coral reefs are ecologically, structurally, recreationally, and aesthetically important ecosystems, responsible for coastal protection and habitat for 25% of all marine life. The Great Barrier Reef represents approximately 10% of the world's coral reefs.

The region targeted by the Townsville Community Action Plan is home to a diversity and abundance of coral reefs in both nearshore and offshore waters, but these reefs have declined over the past 30 years due to pressures that include pollution, sedimentation, eutrophication (nutrient pollution), and invasive species outbreaks — factors which are compounded by the greatest threat facing the broader Great Barrier Reef — climate change.

In the Townsville region, several small reef restoration projects have been completed by community, universities, and government, including seaweed removal, crown-of-thorns-starfish (COTS) removal, and coral transplantation.

There is interest in exploring opportunities for the community to support assisted coral recovery efforts, noting that corals must only be planted in areas that are identified as requiring restoration work (e.g., sites with cyclone damage or strong bleaching impacts). Reports and records of this damage could be used to identify potential sites for restoration.



KEY ACTIONS on project roadmap

- ✓ Identify and engage with local coral scientists
- ✓ Identify and engage with local community groups
- ✓ Identify local schools and Traditional Owner groups with relevant in-water WHS documentation
- ✓ Secure equipment and resources to access identified reefs
- ✓ Deliver biodiversity training and support Traditional Owner delivery of cultural education workshops
- ✓ Support coral planting excursions and biodiversity audits





Outcomes

- Increased coral biodiversity and reef habitat
- Increased biodiversity reporting in region
- Increased stewardship for local environment
- Increased community awareness about cultural connection to sea country

Potential partners for project delivery

Local schools (Southern Cross Catholic College, St Patricks College, for example), North Queensland Conservation Council (NQCC), Australian Institute of Marine Science (AIMS), James Cook University (JCU), Great Barrier Reef Marine Park Authority, Reef Ecologic, Reef Check Australia, local tourism companies (e.g., Adrenaline Dive, Remote Area Dive, Pleasure Divers, AquaScene).

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Community values directly protected

- Coral health
- Marine animals
- Marine water quality



