



The Hon Peter Garrett MP
Australian Minister for the
Environment, Heritage and the Arts

The Hon Tony Burke MP
Minister for Agriculture,
Fisheries and Forestry

J O I N T M E D I A R E L E A S E

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Farmers, regional communities and agricultural industry to the (reef) rescue

Agriculture, Fisheries and Forestry Minister Tony Burke today outlined the Australian Government's plan to work with farmers to improve the health of Australia's iconic Great Barrier Reef.

The joint announcement with Environment Minister Peter Garrett detailed how the Reef Rescue program would help farmers adopt and implement land management techniques to improve the quality of water entering the Great Barrier Reef.

“\$23 million will enable Queensland farmers, natural resource management regions and peak industry groups to work together to deliver land management practices essential to improving reef water quality in Terrain, Burdekin Dry Tropics, Mackay-Whitsunday, Fitzroy Basin, Burnett Mary and Cape York,” Mr Burke said.

Mr Garrett said the funding came from the \$200 million Reef Rescue program—part of the Government's \$2.25 billion Caring for our Country initiative.

“The fact that organisations such as AgForce, the Queensland Farmers' Federation, CANEGROWERS, Growcom, Queensland Dairyfarmers' Organisation, Cotton Australia, Natural Resource Management bodies along the reef coast and the World Wildlife Fund are combining their significant knowledge and resources to mount this large-scale, coordinated approach to protecting the Great Barrier Reef gives me real confidence,” Mr Garrett said.

Mr Burke said the sugar cane and tropical fruit industries had made significant advances in recent years to improve yields while reducing fertiliser and farm chemical use and their effects off-farm, especially in waterways.

“The cattle industry has also made advances in maintaining ground cover that is important for drought recovery as well as in minimising soil loss and sediment in rivers,” Mr Burke said.

“The Reef Rescue package is all about supporting farmers to build upon their successful efforts to date to reduce nutrients, chemicals and sediments leaving their lands.

“Results from earlier projects show that setting up buffer zones, improving fertiliser efficiency, strategic fencing and repairing riverbanks and wetlands reduces nutrient, sediment and chemical run-off from the land.

“With the fundamentals in place on-farm, we're now in a position to trial new technologies and land management techniques that may further improve water quality in the reef catchment.

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“To ensure that what we’re doing is working we’re also introducing a new coordinated catchment-wide water quality monitoring and reporting program,” Mr Burke added.

“Australians want to protect the Great Barrier Reef from the negative impacts of human activity and global climate change.

“The Reef Rescue package provides the funding to help protect the reef but this work would not be possible without the willing assistance of farmers, agricultural industries, local conservation and Indigenous groups, fishing and aquaculture industries—their work is fundamental to the success of Reef Rescue.”

Mr Garrett said taking action to protect the Great Barrier Reef and build a resilient environment in the face of climate change was a priority for the Rudd Labor Government.

“The reef is the largest living organism on our planet and celebrated both here in Australia and internationally for its stunning beauty and environmental significance,” Mr Garrett said.

“But we know that the reef is struggling with coral bleaching caused by global climate change and declining water quality, and today’s announcement is a major step forward in helping address those issues.

“Reducing the amount of nutrients, sediment and chemicals that flow from land-based activities onto the reef gives the reef a chance to regain its inbuilt natural resilience and ability to cope with other environmental pressures.”

The Australian Government is working with the Queensland Government to implement Reef Rescue. Reef Rescue funding will also research, develop and trial new land management technologies and apply better monitoring techniques to the Government’s reef investments. This work will build on the research and monitoring the Great Barrier Reef Marine Park Authority has conducted over many years.

Partnerships between Traditional Owners, reef stakeholders and communities will also be supported by Reef Rescue to deliver an enhanced Traditional Use of Marine Resource Agreement (TUMRA) program.

For more information visit www.nrm.gov.au

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