



Cook Shire Council

Reef Guardian Council Action Plan

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Reef Guardian Council program

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.

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.

Action plans

This Action Plan records the diversity of council actions and projects that help address the key threats to the Reef. It aligns with Queensland and Australian Government objectives to improve the long-term outlook for the Reef. It may also be used to record potential future priority projects or actions that may benefit the Reef but may only be possible through funding or capacity building.

Examples of actions are provided in Table 1 of the Reef Guardian Council program Terms of Reference, however the program empowers councils to drive change and deliver innovative solutions to help the Reef by identifying other actions beyond those provided.

Endorsement

The council recognises the importance of the Reef Guardian Council partnership and values the contributions made by elected members, staff and

Period of Action Plan: 2024-2028

Endorsed: 27/01/2026

Council signatory



Climate change

(Reef 2050 Work Area 1: Limit the impacts of climate change)

Action	Description	Project Status	Partnerships	Financial/Resource Commitment	Responsible department/position
Decommissioning of fire extinguishers, gas cylinders and refrigerant gas containing white goods	Collecting gas from the end of life white goods (fridges, freezers and air conditioners) and gas cylinders, to ensure these harmful ozone depleting gases are properly recycled or disposed of. Processing fire extinguishers in a manner where dry chemicals contained within are properly recovered and disposed.	In progress, ongoing	N/A	Council Budget	Infrastructure
Solar Infrastructure at Council Facilities	Constructed solar infrastructure at the Annan Water Treatment Plant and Council Administration Building	Completed		External Funding	Growth & Livability

Future project opportunities

Project Name	Description	Financial / Resource Requirements
Industrial food waste composting	When food waste is landfilled, and it rots, it produces methane which is 28 times more potent than CO ₂ . The food home composting has been identified as a 2028 target in the Regional Resource Recovery Plan. Home composting doesn't tackle the industrial food waste coming from our food venues, supermarket and the hospital. An industrial food composter that converts food waste into a nutrient rich soil in 24 hours is explored as a solution to tackle the food waste issue in Cooktown and surrounds.	Reliant on external funding.
Climate impact education trailer	Equip a trailer with educational material and interactive displays that can be moved around the Shire to various events to educate groups and the community on climate impacts and how people can limit their impacts on the environment.	Reliant on external funding.

Solar Infrastructure at Council Facilities	Installation of solar infrastructure in car parks at Councils Depot and the Cooktown Events Centre facility.	Reliant on external funding.
Electric Car Charging Stations	Identify options, including the potential to collaborate with local businesses, for the provision of Electric Car Charging Stations in Lakeland and Cooktown	Reliant on external funding.

Coastal development (including head water catchments)

(Reef 2050 Work Area 2: Reduce the impacts from land-based activities and Work Area 5: Protect, rehabilitate and restore)

Action	Description	Project Status	Partnerships	Financial/Resource Commitment	Responsible department/position
Coastal Hazard Adaption Strategy (CHAS)	<p>The Coastal Hazard Adaption Strategy (CHAS) program has been initiated by LGAQ through the Queensland Local Government Coast Hazard Adaptation Program (QCoast2100). A CHAS is the product of a series of studies that seek to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Identify coast hazard areas Understand vulnerabilities and risks to a range of assets Engage with the community to understand their preferred approached to adaptation <p>Determine the costs, priorities and timeframes for their implementation</p>	Ongoing	Local Government Association Queensland (LGAQ) Department Environment and Science (DES)	Council Budget and reliant on external funding	Growth & Livability
Environmental Monitoring Plan of the Endeavour River	The old Cooktown landfill and historic Cooktown Sanitary depot are located upstream and uphill from the Endeavour River. An environmental monitoring plan has been established to monitor the impacts of historic landfill activities on groundwater and the adjacent river system.	Ongoing	Cape York Water Partnerships	Council Budget	Infrastructure
Rehabilitation of Laura and Ayton landfill	Landfilling activities at Laura landfill ceased in 2006. The facility has since been operating on and off as a manned waste transfer station. Laura landfill is situated	Planned	Department Environment, Science and Innovation	External Funding	Infrastructure

	<p>approximately 150m away from the Laura River (less in the wet season). We are in the process of reviewing the landfill rehabilitation plan for the site. The future use of the old landfill would continue being a waste transfer station. Rehabilitation of the landfill would stop any water infiltration into the landfill from the rainfall and reduce the impact this contamination has on the groundwater and surrounding waterways. Landfilling activities at Ayton landfill ceased in the early 2000s. The facility has since been operating as a manned waste transfer station. Ayton township relies on groundwater as drinking water and the site is situated closely to the sensitive receptors with water ultimately being released at the GBR.</p> <p>We are in the process of reviewing the landfill rehabilitation plan for the site. The future use of the old landfill would continue being a waste transfer station. Rehabilitation of the landfill would stop any water infiltration into the landfill from the rainfall and reduce the impact this contamination has on the groundwater and surrounding waterways.</p>				
<p>Establishing a new Waste Transfer Station at Portland Roads.</p>	<p>Portland Roads is a small community situated in the National Park of Iron Range. A vast number of tourists are hosted by the community every year. Currently, Portland Roads doesn't have a proper waste facility. It is proposed to equip the new facility with a skip bin for transport of general waste and the regulated waste storage shed. The new storage shed will ensure that the regulated waste is contained in a manner that reduces environmental harm including any runoff into</p>	<p>Planned</p>	<p>Department Environment, Science and Innovation</p>	<p>Council Budget/ External Funding</p>	<p>Infrastructure</p>

	the ground water. Skip bin will restrict native wildlife accessing the waste and ensure that the waste is contained at the facility.				
Construction of regulated waste storage and resource recovery area at the Cooktown Waste Transfer Station	All regulated waste must be stored in a bunded undercover area to ensure all runoff is captured. The proposed shed would provide room for sufficient storage, and reduce the risk of environmental harm from storm water runoff and waste leaching directly into the groundwater. The shed would be further fitted with resource recovery areas.	Planned	Department Environment, Science and Innovation	External Funding	Infrastructure
Restoration of Scenic Rim Walking Trail	This project aims to counteract the negative impacts of climate change and land-based run off through preservation of vegetation while enabling access to the areas walking trail. The revitalised trail will not only offer a stunning outdoor experience but also serve as an educational platform, shedding light on the importance of sustainable land management and the delicate balance between human activity and nature.	In progress		External funding received	Infrastructure

Future project opportunities

Project Name	Description	Financial / Resource Requirements
Solar powered compactors for regional areas	Every year we host tens of thousands of visitors who visit Cape York. The distance between communities and the waste management facilities is hundreds of kilometers. Those facilities often only operate a few hours a week and are unable to meet the demands of tourists. The waste from the tourists is an ongoing issue. Council is exploring opportunities for the installation of solar powered skip bins that operate on a user pays system. This would enable the Council to operate a facility during the daylight hours.	Reliant on external funding

Recycled Water Infrastructure STP	This project is to build the required infrastructure to allow for the use of recycled water at a specific location within Cooktown. The aim is to reduce the amount of treated effluent that goes into the Endeavour River.	Reliant on external funding
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Land-based run-off

(Reef 2050 Work Area 3: Reduce the impacts from land-based activities and Work Area 5: Protect, rehabilitate and restore)

Action	Description	Project Status	Partnerships	Financial/Resource Commitment	Responsible department/position
Oaky Creek Road Sediment Control Project	Erosion control roadworks at 6 segments on Oaky Creek Road. The road segments are in the Annan River Catchment and have been selected as target sites for the works as they are known to be major sources of fine sediment delivered into the Great Barrier Reef lagoon each year.	Complete	South Cape York Catchments	External Funding	Infrastructure
Oaky Creek Road Vegetation Project	Treatment of native regrowth and invasive plants along the entire length of Oaky Creek Rd and Percy Rd using targeted herbicide application rather than grading. In addition, excess silt to be removed using a backhoe rather than grader. This is designed to continue the trials conducted by South Cape York Catchments and further reduce soil disturbance and associated sediment run-off.	In progress	N/A	External funding	Growth and Livability
Re-development Plan of the Cooktown landfill	We are reviewing the rehabilitation plan of the Cooktown landfill to assess the possibility of redeveloping it into a waste transfer station. The outcome of the project may provide an alternative to moving the waste transfer station activities to a new site.	In progress	N/A	Council Budget	Infrastructure
High Bio-Mass Grass Management Strategy	Implementation of a catchment wide program to manage the distribution and spread of high bio-mass grasses within the Annan-Endeavour Catchment.	Ongoing	Biosecurity Queensland, FNQROC	Council Budget and External Funding	Growth and Livability

Mt Tully Gravel Pit Remediation	Assessment and implementation of effective sediment reduction methods to reduce sediment laden run-off from the Mt Tully gravel pit. The project requires detailed mapping of the site in the first year to develop appropriate solutions for sediment control. This will be followed by application of the identified solutions in years 2 and 3. It is intended that this project serve as a pilot program for rehabilitation of additional sites across the Annan-Endeavour Catchment.	Completed	N/A	External Funding	Growth and Livability and Infrastructure
Annan and Endeavour River Catchment Road Upgrade Project	The project will include bitumen sealing kerb to kerb on problematic town roads that have unsealed shoulders. During the wet season gravel and debris from the unsealed shoulders, travels into drains and then onto the reef environment. Roads completed to date include Home Rule Rd, May St, Howard St, Helen St, Kimberley St, Furneaux St, Adams St.	In progress	N/A	External funding	Infrastructure
Bio-pass Sewerage Detention Tank Project	The project is to increase the volume of the holding tank at the Cooktown Sewerage Treatment Plant, to reduce the volume of untreated sewage being pumped to the river. During rainfall events, infiltration occurs into the sewerage network. The Cooktown STP has a by-pass valve that opens when the flow is above 45L/sec to redirect water to a holding tank, however the holding tank does not hold much volume and when full will overflow to the effluent pump station which is then pumped to the river.	Completed	N/A	External Funding	Infrastructure
Feral pig management using modern trapping techniques	Council has an active trapping program to reduce feral pig activity in the Annan-Endeavour Catchment. However, the feral pig traps currently used by Council are based on an old design (four panel cage	Planned		External funding	Growth and Livability

	<p>traps) and are largely ineffectual when compared to contemporary traps that integrate modern technology/research. Remote sensor/trigger traps and passive net traps are used by other local governments and agencies. These traps consistently capture and remove more feral pigs per trap set. If applied within the Annan-Endeavour Catchment consequent reductions in wetland disturbances and associated run-off within reef catchments would be expected. This program would require purchase of one remote sensor/trigger trap and one passive net trap.</p>				
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Future project opportunities

Project Name	Description	Financial / Resource Requirements
Progression of New Cooktown Waste Transfer Facility	The 2018 CSC Waste Reduction and Recycling Plan (WRRP) recognises that a new waste facility for Cooktown is necessary. As well as a new purpose built waste transfer facility, the site also seeks to accommodate suitable facilities for a dog pound, impounded vehicle storage and works crew storage area to greatly improve the current provisions for these functions.	Reliant on external funding
Sediment Reduction Program	Re-profiling and placing rock in high risk drains within Cooktown and surrounding communities. During the wet season gravel and debris from the nearby roads, travels into drains, heavily eroding them due to the high velocity of water. The runoff then goes onto the reef environment.	Reliant on external funding
Firebreak Erosion Control Works	Repairs to bare earth firebreaks throughout the Cook Shire to significantly reduce sediment runoff. Repair works to include but not limited to installation of whoaboys, rock sheeting high runoff areas, rock armoring creek crossings and repairing washouts with appropriate control methods.	Reliant on external funding

Impacts from water-based activities

(Reef 2050 Work Area 4: Reduce the impacts from water-based activities)

Action	Description	Project Status	Partnerships	Financial/Resource Commitment	Responsible department/position
Remote recreational area Toilet Facility	Installation of a public toilet facility nearby the and close to camping sites. The facility will provide a sanitary bathroom for people that are fishing and camping in the area and will also help reduce litter of toilet paper and human waste. Link to camping strategy	In progress	N/A	External Funding	Growth and Livability

Future project opportunities

Project Name	Description	Financial / Resource Requirements
Recreational Camping Toilet Facilities	Installation of a toilet facilities nearby well utilized recreational camping areas such as Cockatoo Creek, Marina Plains and Port Stewart camping areas and repairs to access tracks ensuring sediment runoff is reduced facilities can be serviced to reduce environmental impacts from human waste.	Reliant on external funding.

Conserve historic and cultural heritage

(Reef 2050 Work Area 5: Protect, rehabilitate and restore and Enabler A: Collaboration and partnerships)

Action	Description	Project Status	Partnerships	Financial/Resource Commitment	Responsible department/position
School Holiday Virtual Reef Adventures	April and September virtual reef adventure programs held at various libraries in the Shire. The aim is to educate children on the reef, activities include reef related crafts, story times and movies.	Ongoing	First 5 Forever and Reef Guardian Councils Program	Council budget & External Funding	Growth and Livability
Composting Workshops	Educating residents on composting to reduce CO ₂ emissions. Activities will include worm farming and composting workshops to encourage residents to reuse their food waste in their own gardens before sending to landfill.	Ongoing	N/A	Council budget	Growth and Livability
Growing partnerships with affiliated organisations to support Reef health	Investigate and develop new partnerships with community organisations, individuals, and industry and government agencies. This includes Reef Guardian schools, community groups and participation in LMAC meetings. Support GBRMPA in education and awareness activities and encourage both individuals and industry to develop and implement best practice sustainable recreational boating and fishing practices as well as commercial fishing practices.	Ongoing	GBRMPA LMAC members Reef Guardian Schools Commercial fisheries	Council budget	Growth and Livability
Invasive Weed Identification and Mapping	The Gardens engages with local schools and youth groups in identifying and mapping invasive weed species, contributing to the preservation of native flora and maintaining the botanical integrity of the area.	Ongoing	South Cape York Catchments, Cooktown State School and Holy Spirit College	Council Budget & External Funding	Infrastructure
Environmental Based Playgroup	In partnership with the Cook Shire Library, the Botanic Gardens host an environment-based	Ongoing	First 5 Forever Program	Council Budget & External Funding	Infrastructure and Growth and Livability

	playgroup, introducing young children to the environmental based play.				
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Future project opportunities

Project Name	Description	Financial / Resource Requirements
Recycled Trash Art	Collaborating with the community to collect waste to then create a community art piece that has a reef theme. The project will educate residents on the effects of incorrect waste disposal on marine life. The artwork could be installed in a community space or on a public building to further promote the message.	Council Budget & External Funding