

Queensland REEF WATER QUALITY Program



Urban Water Stewardship Framework 2020–2021 round summary findings

About the Urban Water Stewardship Framework

The Urban Water Stewardship Framework (the framework) is supporting councils and the development and construction industry located in the Reef catchment, to evaluate their urban water management practices and identify opportunities for improvement.

The framework provides an evidence basis for councils to identify and prioritise areas they can invest in or change to achieve outcomes that are best practice or above. It also helps generate greater collaboration between councils and urban developers in terms of how they can act collectively to generate better water quality outcomes.

The framework was applied for the first time in 2020–2021 to 13 local government areas within the Great Barrier Reef catchments, spread across four Reef report card regions:

- [Wet Tropics Waterways](#)
- [Dry Tropics Partnership for Healthy Waters](#)
- [Mackay Whitsunday Isaac Healthy Rivers to Reef Partnership](#)
- [Gladstone Healthy Harbour Partnership](#)

The framework assessed water management practices and activities related to three main areas:



erosion and sediment control during the construction phase of urban development (Developing Urban component),



stormwater run-off treatment in established urban areas (Established Urban component),



operation and maintenance of sewage treatment plants (STP) and associated sewer networks (Point Source component).

The implementation of the framework was led by regional report card partnerships, with councils in each local government area providing management practice ratings as part of independently facilitated workshops.

The results for individual report card partnership regions have been released in report cards and management response reports:

- [Reef and Rivers by Reef and Rivers—Issue 1](#) (page 32)
- [Above and Beyond 2020–2021 \(adobe.com\)](#) (page 4)
- [Dry Tropics Partnership for Healthy Waters 2020 Management Response Report](#) (page 1)
- [Healthy Harbour, Healthy Future 2021](#) (page 3).

Participating councils have received reports on management practice levels recorded for their own local government areas.

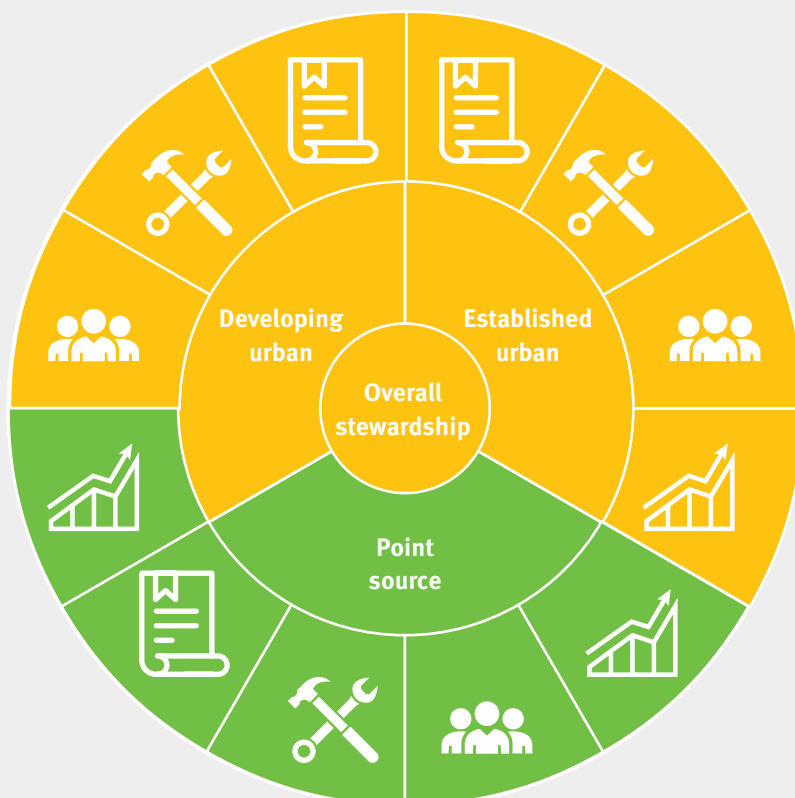
The reports highlight specific aspects that have been done well and areas that could be improved.

The combined results and key findings for the four participating Reef report card partnership regions are presented in **Diagram 1**.

Main results

- Across all local government areas within the four Reef report card partnership regions, the average level of practice across all management aspects in 2020–2021 was C-level. This indicates that urban water management is below best practice level and equates to a moderate to high level of risk to water quality.
- This outcome was driven by the on-average C-level result for the Developing Urban and Established Urban components. These correspond to erosion and sediment control during the construction phase and stormwater treatment during the post-construction phase.
- The average level of practice for the Point Source component, which relates to the operation and maintenance of sewage treatment plants and associated sewer networks, was B-level. This equates to current best practice and low to moderate risk to water quality.

Diagram 1



Key findings

- Even though the level of practice for the Developing Urban and Established Urban components could be better, some aspects linked to these components are being done well. **Councils are good at inspecting sites at appropriate times during the construction phase and requesting works be completed by those suitably qualified** as part of development approval conditions. **Councils are also good at managing their stormwater treatment assets and controlling erosion** during maintenance activities.
- **Management practice level improvement for Developing Urban and Established Urban components could be achieved** through using site-specific-based Erosion and Sediment Control Plans, more consistent compliance enforcement and better stormwater treatment infrastructure planning.
- **Whilst the average level practice for the Point Source component across all local government areas equated to current best practice, it is noted that some aspects were done at above the current best practice level (A-level) by a number of councils.** This included biosolid reuse, trade waste permitting, dry weather nutrient load management and use of early warning fault detection systems.
- **There are opportunities to further improve practice level for Point Source management activities** relating to catchment-based solutions for nutrient loads, sewer asset management, infrastructure planning, customer education programs and engagement in catchment water quality monitoring programs.

Where to next?

- A second round of framework assessment will commence in 2022–2023 and be expanded to include a fifth Reef report card partnership region: [Fitzroy Partnership for River Health](#). The Queensland Government will also investigate how the framework can be rolled out to Reef catchment councils outside the report card partnership regions and seek to pilot it in Southeast Queensland.
- The Queensland Government is evaluating the framework assessment data to better understand where improvements are needed and how to provide better-targeted support to address the influence of climate change, topography and population density on the way councils approach urban water management.
- The framework will form the basis of a new urban water management target for the Reef catchments and will be among several targets considered as part of the Reef 2050 Water Quality Improvement Plan 2023–2027 development process.
- The framework will undergo a formal review and updating process after the third round of assessment, which is scheduled for 2024–2025.