

2022 REEF CHAMPION AWARD WINNERS ANNOUNCED

The winners of the 2022 Reef Champion Awards have been announced, shining a light on farming, extension, traditional owners and community leaders who are working to reduce their impact on the Great Barrier Reef.

Innovative nitrogen reduction practices, dedicated approaches to extension, revegetation of farms and conservation of wetlands and native animal species were just some of the success stories honoured at the Awards dinner in Cairns this evening (Wednesday, 30 November).

The Awards, run by Queensland Farmers' Federation (QFF) with support from Prince's Trust Australia, Australian and Queensland governments, recognise the outstanding achievements of individuals and organisations working to improve the quality of water entering the iconic Great Barrier Reef.

QFF CEO Ms Jo Sheppard congratulated the winners and finalists and highlighted the importance of acknowledging the efforts of farmers and others working with the agricultural sector, traditional owners and local communities to safeguard the future of the Reef and coastal systems.

"The outstanding achievements of farmers, extension officers, traditional owners, and community members nominated for these awards is a testament to agriculture's commitment and achievements in improving water quality through practice change and innovation in Reef catchment areas," Ms Sheppard said.

"Critical to the success of these voluntary programs and actions is the strong partnership with the Australian and Queensland governments. It is only through working together that we can achieve mutually beneficial outcomes that will underpin a sustainable future for farmers, a globally competitive future for food security, stronger regional communities and good environmental outcomes."

"I would like to congratulate everyone who has participated in this year's Reef Champion Awards and thank them for the role they are playing in protecting our precious Great Barrier Reef," said the Australian Government Minister for the Environment and Water, Tanya Plibersek.

"Water quality is critical in protecting the reef, and the awards showcase some inspiring people contributing new ideas and making a real difference".

Minister for the Environment and the Great Barrier Reef Meaghan Scanlon congratulated the finalists and winners for their exceptional work to protect the Great Barrier Reef.

"These awards showcase the achievements of Queenslanders who are setting the benchmark for agricultural innovation to reduce run-off and delivering practical Reef projects," Ms Scanlon said.

"The work being undertaken by the farmers, advisers, traditional owners, and community groups shows what can be achieved if we work together. Through

these efforts and collaboration, we can transform the outlook for the Reef and ensure it can be protected now and into the future.”

The 2022 Reef Champion Award winners are:

Prince’s Trust Australia Environmental Leadership – Reef Sustainability Award

- **Tony Rossi**, Aloomba, for using his scientific skills on the farm; Tony was always interested in soil health, soil testing, developing precision agricultural techniques & regional environmental issues, & has become an advocate for demonstrating on-farm sustainable environmental practices to other farmers and industry.

Reef Nutrient Stewardship Champion Award

- **Denis Pozzebon**, Mt Kelly, for being a true champion and pioneer in precision nutrient management in the lower Burdekin. Denis was one of the first cane farmers who had his farm’s electromagnetic induction (EM) mapped into zones for nutritional programs. He continues to utilise these maps for targeted soil testing, nutrient planning and variable rate amelioration.

Reef Sediment Stewardship Champion Award

- **Fran and Damon Lyons**, Charters Towers, for taking over management of Basalt River Station in 2017; they took steps to improve land condition and resilience while increasing groundcover and available pasture. Modelling suggests that these management changes have saved around 1,950t of fine sediment annually.

Reef Conservation Champion Award

- **Jason Bradford**, Alligator Creek, for the installation of 8 off-stream watering points (OSWP) and approximately 6km of fence lines has played a pivotal role in reef conservation efforts on Jason Bradford’s property, improving the management practices of around 90ha of Sandringham wetlands.
- **Pacific Biotechnologies (Australia) Pty Ltd**, for developing a new standard of wastewater management and sustainable onshore aquaculture, removing large masses of effluent from the ecosystem before entering the Great Barrier Reef.

Reef Extension Officer Champion Award

- **Rebecca McHardie**, Mossman, for being a respected extension agronomist in the Mossman cane growing region. Having worked in the industry for seven years, she has been instrumental in designing and delivering grant programs and extension support to growers to improve productivity and reef water quality outcomes.

Reef Pesticide Stewardship Champion Award

- **Matt and Ben Abbott**, Mena Creek, for going one step further in pesticide management, using no synthetic chemicals and maintaining an organic certification covering their papaya and banana produce.

Reef Traditional Owner Group Champion Award

- **Dawul Wuru Aboriginal Corporation**, Through the Yirrganydji Land and Sea Ranger Program, all rangers employed are traditionally connected to Yirrganydji and take on the role for caring for country and improving water quality through clean ups on beaches and urban waterways, detection of biosecurity threats, compliance, blue carbon research, and mangrove and coral restoration activities.

Reef Community Champion Award

- **CQ Seagrass Regeneration Collective**, Rockhampton, for working together to restore or reinstate seagrass meadows. Seagrass meadows across the globe are becoming more fragmented or disappearing completely. To address this issue, Fitzroy Basin Association, CQUniversity Australia's Coastal Marine Ecosystems Research Centre (CMERC), Konomie Island Environmental Education Centre (KIEEC), First Nations Group Woppaburra TUMRA and members of the community are working together to restore or reinstate seagrass meadows.

Reef Traditional Owner Youth Champion Award

- **Ashlyn Skeene**, As a Yirrganydji Land and Sea Ranger, Ash has contributed to scientific research on blue carbon and co-benefits (including water quality), contributed to seagrass, bird, and fish surveys, and led large groups of community volunteers on remote beach clean-ups, taking direct action on plastics before they are washed out to sea.

Reef Youth Champion Award

- **Emma Parker**, Port Douglas, Emma, an NQ-based year 7 student, has been involved in a number of activities that relate to Marine Conservation and

raising public awareness, including bake sale fundraisers, beach clean-up activities and reef sustainability education efforts.

The Reef Champion Awards are funded by the Australian Government and the Queensland Government's Reef Water Quality Program.