



Making Water Work in the Rockhampton region

Project reference: A.7.2122010 Achieving reef water quality requirements in new agricultural developments

Applications close 5pm AEST Friday 2 September 2022

Background

With major economic and social challenges and opportunities shaping the future of Queensland's regional communities, the Rockhampton Regional Council (RRC), the Queensland Government (DAF and DES) and the Cooperative Research Centre for Developing Northern Australia (CRCNA) have been working together to maximise the future sustainable development opportunities emerging from available water resources in the Lower Fitzroy Basin. Early stages of this work culminated in the development of a broad **Making Water Work Business Case** (see Appendix 1). This business case represents the Rockhampton region's wider integrated approach to maximising the economic, social, environmental and cultural value from the new Rookwood Weir development and other available sources of water.

Key stakeholders with an interest in this Business Case have formalised collaborative governance arrangements through the *Making Water Work Governance Group* that oversees this work, chaired by Advance Rockhampton in partnership with the CRCNA Chief Scientist and DAF. Justification for shared investment between CRCNA, DAF and RRC in progressing this business case includes:

- The need to deliver high value water security in the region
- The opportunity to unlock significant unmet agriculture export and domestic demands
- The potential to explore many new jobs from new agricultural development, food manufacturing and export of agricultural products and materials
- The existence of important agricultural and pastoral development opportunities in the Rockhampton Regional Council area and the Lower Fitzroy
- A growing policy and consumer pressure for a more circular and value rich agricultural economy, particularly in the Great Barrier Reef lagoon.

Five key scoping jobs have been identified and resourced to help progress this broader **Making Water Work Business Case** within the Rockhampton Regional Council area within the context of the Lower Fitzroy basin. These include:

1. Defining a supply chain and development precincts vision
2. Visionary land use planning to facilitate development precincts
3. Mobilising strong Water Governance Arrangements
4. Integrating Nutrient, Waste and Energy Streams in Agricultural Development
5. **Achieving reef water quality requirements in new agricultural development**

This EOI applies to the fifth of these scoping jobs, but it is intended that all five scoping jobs are released and delivered in an integrated way. The successful proponent/s will be provided with reports / information from Scoping Projects 1, 2, 3 and 4 and will be provided with a liaison for each additional Scoping Project to assist with knowledge transfer.

The job

The Australian and Queensland Government's [Reef 2050 Long-Term Sustainability Plan](#) sets a clear strategy for improving water quality outcomes for the Great Barrier Reef (GBR) World Heritage area. In this context, the Queensland Government introduced a Bill to Parliament in February 2019 to strengthen existing GBR protection regulations. The proposed regulations under the *Environmental Protection (GBR Protection Measures) and Other Legislation Amendment Bill 2019* reduce water pollution (nutrients and sediment) from agricultural and industrial land uses entering GBR waters while maintaining productivity and profitability through improved land management. The new legislation supports the staged roll-out of strengthened reef protection regulations to apply to all commercially produced sugarcane, bananas, horticulture, grains and grazing as well as direct sources of pollution from industrial land uses (for example, sewage and water treatment plants, aquaculture or intensive animal industries etc.) across all GBR regions. This, for the first time, will include requirements to ensure new agricultural development does not contribute further to declines in the quality of waters running into the GBR lagoon. This has major significance for any new agricultural development in the Rockhampton region.

While there has been major progress in improving existing practices in the Fitzroy Basin, there has to date been no cohesive attempt to conceptualise and design how new agricultural development will meet the 'no net increase' in pollution requirements. This detailed thinking is better managed through an area-based approach, rather than leaving every new farming enterprise to design a no net decline approach property by property. Additionally, some actions are better planned as at multi-property (e.g. combined water reuse) or sub-catchment scale (sub-catchment monitoring).

In this Scoping Project, the proponent is required to undertake the following activities:

Achieving Reef Water Quality Requirements in New Agricultural Developments		
1	Collaborative governance	Informed by the emerging Development Precincts Vision being established in Scoping Project 1 , explore the challenges facing new development opportunities in achieving the required reef water quality outcomes. Mobilise a strong, evidence-based collaborative alliance between industry, governments, researchers and regional NRMs to co-design an approach to achieve these GBR water quality requirements. Align this effort with Scoping Projects 1, 2 and 4.
2	System design	Co-design a Rockhampton Regional Council-wide conceptual model that determines how the area will be able to demonstrate that it can achieve the expansion of agriculture while maintaining or improving GBR water quality and terrestrial carbon outcomes. This approach should consider including the application of minimum standards (e.g. the Rookwood Weir Land Management Codes of Practice) for new practices, new approaches to on farm water, nutrient capture and treatment, sub-regional water capture and treatment, and linkages between water and energy use and local ecosystem market trading. As the region is working towards the development precinct approaches for agricultural growth, consideration should also be given to the establishment of area-based pollution baselines.



3	Work program and Negotiating implementation	Support the Making Water Work Governance Group to develop a costed and sequenced program of works to enable implementation of the most appropriate model for achieving shared agricultural growth and GBR outcomes.
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Expectation of proponent and selection criteria

CRCNA, DAF and the Rockhampton Regional Council have the following expectations of respondents to or proponents of this EOI:

- Demonstration that the lead proponent has strong partnerships in place to deliver on the required activities
- An expected timeframe for completion within 2 years
- While matching investment is not essential, additional cash and in-kind contributions by proponents and their partners will be viewed favourably
- A strong track record across the skills required to achieve the objectives of the EOI.

Core selection criteria for the assessment of this EOI will include:

- Capacity to deliver on the core scope of the project outlined above;
- Clear demonstration of the partnership capacities required to partner with key relevant stakeholders in the Rockhampton and Lower Fitzroy region;
- Demonstrated extensive knowledge and application of Reef protection regulations, water quality programs and extension in Great Barrier Reef regions
- A clearly outlined pathway to impact arising from this scoping phase work.

Timelines and process

This is an open EOI process, but proponents are expected to communicate with the CRCNA before progressing towards submission (see contacts below). Proponents should note:

- **Applications close 5pm AEST Friday 2 September 2022**
- Responses should be provided by filling in the required brief EOI form for this subproject.
- That the EOI Selection Panel will involve CRCNA, DAF and RRC
- Successful proponents will be required to complete a full CRCNA project form for this subproject before progressing to contract.



Key contacts for information relating to this EOI

Strategic EOI advice	Administrative advice
Allan Dale (CRCNA Chief Scientist)	Carla Keith (CRCNA General Manager)
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