



MEDIA RELEASE

The Hon Peter Garrett MP

Minister for Environment Protection, Heritage and the Arts

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FUNDING BOOST TO IMPROVE THE RESILIENCE OF THE GREAT BARRIER REEF

Townsville's Reef HQ Aquarium is set to benefit from a \$4 million funding injection announced as part of the \$12 million investment through the Budget to improve the resilience of the Great Barrier Reef.

Environment Protection Minister Peter Garrett toured Reef HQ Aquarium in Townsville today to see first hand how the funds will be used to facilitate a major infrastructure upgrade in the 22 year old facility.

"Reef HQ Aquarium has been the National Education Centre for the Great Barrier Reef for over 20 years and we want to see it continue this vital role for many years to come.

" Because of its location in tropical north Queensland and the inherent infrastructure stresses of salt water aquariums, the facility requires attention to ensure its operational effectiveness and longevity.

"This \$4 million investment will support a major infrastructure upgrade over two years that will ensure the provision of world's best practice in aquarium life support systems and improved resilience for the world's largest living captive reef environment," Mr Garrett said.

The project includes a new filtration system that utilises the latest technology and will enhance water quality in the tanks, extensive engineering works to strengthen the floor to enable additional displays and exhibits, a new function space and new research infrastructure to ensure Reef HQ can continue to build on their provision of cutting edge research in collaboration with academic institutions and industry.

Mr Garrett said the \$4 million initiative is in addition to \$3.8 million over two years for Improving the Outlook of the Great Barrier Reef and \$4.2 million over two years to ensure the Great Barrier Reef Marine Park Authority can effectively deliver on the Australian Government's obligations under the Great Barrier Reef Marine Park Authority Act 1975.

"The \$3.8 million initiative to Improve the Outlook for the Great Barrier Reef will provide funding to expand the highly successful Reef Guardian stewardship program.

"The funds will be used to strengthen the existing Reef Guardian Schools and Reef Guardian Council programs to ensure their longer term sustainability and to expand the Reef Guardian program to provide opportunities for farmers and fishers.

"As we're doing through the Reef Rescue program, these programs will help drive the voluntary adoption of environmentally sustainable best practices," Mr Garrett said.

The initiative also includes funding for the improvement of knowledge management systems that will provide opportunities to share and build knowledge to achieve critical environmental outcomes for the reef.

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