



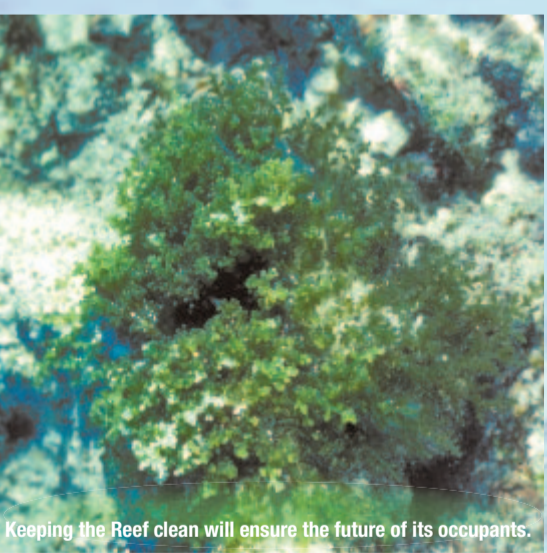
reef beat
river to reef



The Great Barrier Reef.



A crucial habitat.



Keeping the Reef clean will ensure the future of its occupants.



The seabed is alive with plants and creatures.

It's all connected!
It's all connected!

IF you're a person on a cattle property on a hot dry day in inland Queensland, the last thing to enter your mind could very well be the beauty and health of the Great Barrier Reef.

However, you may not realise that some of the things we do on the land, even in the outback, can impact on the Reef and its seagrass, coral and mangrove habitats.

All of our land and marine environments and habitats are linked, so what we do in one place can damage or help another place.

That's why communities, industries, governments and scientists are working together on ways to reduce the effects of our activities on the Great Barrier Reef.

IN THE PAST

European settlers came to Australia, they cleared large areas of the land to make room for towns to be built, for cattle to graze and for crops to grow.

When vegetation is removed and heavy rain falls, a lot of the good topsoil and its natural nutrients are washed away into rivers, creeks and out to sea. Without vegetation in these areas, there is nothing to hold the soil together, so more nutrients and sediments are discharged to our waterways and the Great Barrier Reef.

With the establishment of many towns and cities along the coast, more nutrients and other pollutants and rubbish including plastic bags have found their way into the environment.

In some areas, chemicals and nutrients that are used in homes and to help grow crops also wash into the rivers and out into the Great Barrier Reef.

Many farmers and city dwellers are now thinking of new ways to reduce their impacts on the Great Barrier Reef.

PROTECTING IMPORTANT HABITATS

If we want to protect our magnificent Great Barrier Reef, we need to look after all the habitats within and surrounding it.

The primary habitats to think about are wetlands, mangroves, seagrass areas and soft bottom inter-reefal areas.

Mangroves are important to the life of the Great Barrier Reef because they can act as nurseries for baby fish and prawns that later grow up and move out to the reefs.

They are also home to a large range of bird life and they act as a buffer between the land and the sea.

Seagrasses are also nursery areas and are where the endangered dugongs find their food. Some sea turtles also depend on seagrass for their meals.

These areas are where we find animals like seahorses and pipefish.

Other habitats most people don't think about are the soft bottom inter-reefal areas.

They're called soft bottomed because they have mud or sand on the seafloor. These areas are where fishers catch prawns.

Inter-reefal areas are also home to an incredibly diverse group of animals and plants.

DOING YOUR BIT TO LOOK AFTER IT!

If we act carelessly and pollute our land and streams we can damage our Great Barrier Reef, seagrasses and mangroves beyond repair.

We have to be very careful about how we dispose of rubbish and other toxic materials and how we use our land.

One of the things we can do is to always be mindful about what we put into our drains and sewers.

Even washing your car in the street or driveway can result in detergents entering our waterways and every time you pour something down the sink, it may end up reaching the Great Barrier Reef.

