



Media release

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Good management reduces flood impact on reef

Good land management has helped prevent more than 75,000 tonnes of sediment being washed into the ocean by recent flooding.

CEO of the Fitzroy Basin Association Inc (FBA), Suzie Christensen, said flood water gushing through the Fitzroy River catchment highlighted the importance of sustainable land use by local landholders.

“Landholders are reducing annual average sediment loads delivered to waterways by about 75,000 tonnes, and we’re on target to cumulatively reduce sediment entering waterways by 4.1 million tonnes over ten years,” she said.

“The FBA worked with more than 200 landholders last year to improve land management to prevent sediment run-off into the Great Barrier Reef lagoon.

“The Fitzroy Basin is the largest river system draining to the east coast of Australia, with 20 850km of waterways all leading to the reef lagoon.

“The effect of this flood would have been worse if landholders weren’t already taking steps to reduce impact on the land by retaining ground cover and using best practice farming techniques.”

Ms Christensen got a bird’s eye view of the large volumes of soil that had been removed by recent flooding on a flight over the region this week.

“Floods of this magnitude cause an exponential increase in erosion where poor land management practices have been implemented and the effects were clear to see,” she said.

“In particular where land practices had allowed the ground to be disturbed such as some mining on floodplains and some areas cleared for cropping and grazing.”

Ms Christensen said the flood water plume into the Great Barrier Reef Lagoon would have consequences for the reef ecosystem.

“The flood waters are flushing sediment, fertilisers, pesticides, herbicides and other run-off several kilometres out onto the reef.

“The delicate balance of the reef ecosystem is upset by changes in water quality, and the thick cloud of sediment will also block sunlight and prevent coral from photosynthesizing.”

Ms Christensen said the flood event showed how vital it was to plan for the sustainable use of our natural resources.

“We’ve seen the benefit of forward-planning and preparation by the councils and emergency services in limiting the impact of flooding on our local communities,” she said.

“The same kind of benefits can be realised for the environment. Good planning and management in farming and mining operations can minimise the environmental impact.”

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