

Wednesday, April 19, 2017

## FUNDS FOR NATURAL ASSET ASSESSMENT

*\$40,000 made available to assess damage and seek assistance for repair and recovery post Tropical Cyclone Debbie.*

Reef Catchments has approved up to \$40,000 for a region-wide assessment of significant damage to natural assets caused by Tropical Cyclone Debbie.

Rob Cocco, CEO at Reef Catchments acknowledged our region has been battered and there are many members of the community who have been affected. “Landholders, the stewards of our land have a big job ahead of them. Coastal communities are dealing with severely changed conditions also.

“The bulk of the clean up has been completed and essential services have been restored, now is the time to assess damage to natural resources and plan any remediation works based on environmental value across the region.”

Aerial imagery provided by the Queensland Department of Natural Resources and Mines and further drone footage will be used to compile an overarching view of changes to the region.

Whitsunday Catchment Landcare and other local service providers are being engaged to ground truth initial observations and investigate the extent of the damage.

Peter Alden from Whitsunday Catchment Landcare, who began the assessment of Nelly Bay on Tuesday said, “The foreshore canopy has been smashed.”

“A lot of our rehabilitation sites are flooded and damaged. We work in the most vulnerable parts of the landscape which take most of the brunt in natural disasters, but we rely on volunteer support and government funding to do so.”

Reef Catchments will work closely with Whitsunday Regional Council, Mackay Regional Council and regional Landcare groups to gather data and assess priorities based on the environmental value.

The assessment will focus on the condition of wetlands, urban waterways and river systems also the condition of, coastal vegetation and profiles, distribution of marine debris and potential impacts on biodiversity including incursion of competing pests and weeds. Loss or changes to indigenous heritage sites will be considered and information relayed to the regional Traditional Owners Reference Group.

Once the extent of the damage is understood then funding opportunities for works can be further investigated.

ENDS

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