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Mackay 'paves the way' in environmental innovation

Reef Catchments has partnered with Mackay Regional Council to pave the way in environmental innovation, with forty-one (41) litter baskets set to be installed in the pavements and streets of the Mackay City Centre and outlying suburbs.

Located at stormwater drainage points, the litter traps will dramatically reduce levels of rubbish and organic matter entering our waterways and the marine environment.

Reef Catchments coasts and biodiversity coordinator, Stefanie Wabnik, said the traps would benefit both the environment and the community.

"This is an exciting initiative from Mackay Regional Council and Reef Catchments to help protect Mackay's waterways, river and Coast from pollution," she said.

"Reef Catchments is pleased to be able to fund the litter traps through the Australian Government Reef Programme, as part of a wider Urban System Repair project for Mackay.

"These traps will capture litter generated in urban areas, for example shopping areas, that is otherwise washed or blown into stormwater drainage systems, leading to the accumulation of non-biodegradable litter on our Coast.

"By installing these traps, we are helping secure the future health of our beaches, waterways and marine environment, including the adjacent Great Barrier Reef."

The traps are designed to retain pollutants at entry points to the drainage network. Litter that would otherwise flow into our waterways as stormwater runoff is instead captured in a filter mesh liner in a basket fitted below the road invert.

Importantly, the baskets also feature an overflow mechanism that reduces the risk of roadside ponding and flooding in rainfall events.

Ms Wabnik said the traps would target the identified 'Top 10' street pollution items for the Mackay region.

"We are expecting to see a major reduction in debris entering Mackay's water system, primarily soft plastics like wrappers, food packaging and plastic bags, alongside cigarette butts. Other targets include foil and aluminium cans, bottle tops and lids and plastic drink bottles," she said.

"This kind of litter, left unchecked, has the potential to damage and disrupt our valuable aquatic ecosystems and water supply."

The 41 new baskets are expected to capture around 1 cubic metre of litter each quarter.

This project is a joint initiative of Reef Catchments and Mackay Regional Council, through funding from the Australian Government Reef Programme.

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