

GBR Urban Technology and Innovation Fund

Wastewater Grant Program Briefing Session
July 2026



Australian Government



Queensland Government

Background

This program is a response to:

- The infrastructure cliff for wastewater infrastructure
- Increasing cost of infrastructure
- Economic burden for local and state government

Healthy Reef requires Healthy Communities:

- Wastewater treatment needs to be economically sustainable



Program objectives

- Contribute to rapid Reef water quality improvement
- Increase the range of effective and affordable wastewater management solutions available in the marketplace
- Increase marketplace knowledge and uptake of these



Seeking Innovation

- Concepts that are advanced in their development
 - On-ground trials at operational scale
 - Commercialisation assistance for relatively new to market wastewater management solutions struggling for traction
- Solutions can be new treatment systems or adjustments to existing ones, so long as they satisfy effectiveness and affordability criteria
- Solutions can include receiving water *in situ* nutrient removal



Focus on nitrogen removal

- Dissolved inorganic nitrogen (DIN) is the nutrient form with the biggest impact on Reef ecosystems
- Wastewater discharges have a relatively high percentage of DIN
- There are DIN load reduction targets in the Reef 2050 Plan for the Reef and end of catchments
- Solutions that reduce DIN but also reduce other pollutants will be viewed favourably



Grant application structure

- Tier 1 – applications for on-ground trials (grants up to \$4 million (GST excl) per project)
- Tier 2 – commercialisation of relatively new to market treatment systems (grants up to \$200,000 (GST excl) per project)

Note:

- Tier 1 project applications also require an outline of early-stage commercialisation steps (i.e. evaluation has a marketability aspect)
- Tier 1 project applications require a minimum cash contribution at least double the funding amount sought.



Eligible applicants

- Program outcomes are for the benefit of local government, but main innovators are in the private or research organisation sector
- NRM organisations are coordinating new Regional Water Quality Strategy delivery, so may have an interest (can auspice as the contract lead)
- Expectation is that local government involvement is to auspice Tier 1 projects (e.g. contract lead and/or trial site hosting)



Eligible Tier 1 project locations

- All projects must be within the GBR catchment (see Guidelines)
- There is an expectation that successful trial solutions remain in place and keep functioning beyond the life of the grant
- Priority urban catchments have been identified within the broader GBR catchment – while it is not mandatory for trial sites to be in these, they will be viewed favourably



Eligible Tier 2 project locations

- Must be based on a concept with a demonstration site within the GBR catchment (see Guidelines)
- Premise is that this demonstrates the concept can be effective within the GBR catchment

Note: There is an expectation that demonstration site(s) can be visited and promoted (need local government permissions)



Application Process

- Submitted via the online portal: **SmartyGrants**
- Choose the right application form (guidance is provided).
- Grant Applications close 17 August 2026.
 - Tier 1 project applicants need to quickly line up trial host.
- FAQs are available.
- Answers to questions here will be shared.
- Any further questions should be directed to:
OfficeoftheGBR@detsi.qld.gov.au.



Key aspects of applications

Tier 1 applications

- Concept design only for Tier 1 applications. Detailed design is required as part of the Project Plan once contracted.

Tier 2 applications

- Details will be required on the strategy for amplifying the commercialisation of the product over what is already being done.

NOTE: Benchmarks for effectiveness and affordability outlined in the Guidelines (see links to studies)



Notification and contracting

- All successful applicants will be notified in writing from the Minister
- Public acknowledgement and contract negotiation will commence following Ministerial announcements
 - 1 January 2027 deadline for contract execution
 - 1 March 2027 deadline for project activity commencement
 - All Tier 1 projects must be completed within three years of contract execution (includes operational monitoring)
 - All Tier 2 projects must be completed within two years of contract execution



Project activities

See Guidelines for eligible activities and expenses, but allow for:

- Six-monthly progress reporting including financial acquittals
- Presentation on progress to the Program Steering Committee at least twice during the life of the project
- Allow for coordinating DETSI site visits/inspections at least once per year
- The development of project case study information and other project communications (inc. time for DETSI review of these)



END

