

Measuring Effectiveness of Lasting Behaviour Change



Funded by the Australian Government's National Environmental Science Program (NESP)



Social Marketing @ Griffith undertook a comprehensive three-year assessment of programs designed to reshape farming practices to enhance water quality. This three-year project aimed to provide an evaluation of ten projects nominated by the Australian and Queensland governments.

The research project undertook a range of research activities that included assessing program effectiveness, identifying challenges, and evaluating cost-effectiveness. This project aligned with the Reef 2050 Water Quality Improvement Plan's (WQIP) recommendations to enhance water quality around the Great Barrier Reef (GBR) World Heritage Area and nearby catchments.

Employing a mixed methods approach, including social assessment methods, evidence reviews and cost-effectiveness assessments, the project delved into the complex dynamics of behaviour change and contextual influences within the farming community. The team analysed nine initiatives targeting reduced nitrogen, pesticide, and sediment levels in waterways flowing into the GBR. Data from over 500 sources, encompassing interviews, surveys, workshops, and observations, were used alongside secondary data from 200 surveys and 6,000 records.

The research identified over 200 factors influencing engagement and behavioural change, categorised into seven groups. The presence of enabling factors fosters engagement, while their absence poses barriers. Realist evaluation methods are recommended for comprehensive assessment. Eleven barriers to practice change were identified, stressing the importance of their removal for successful projects. The project provided data

emphasising the importance of continuing cost-effective nitrogen and pesticide reduction methods and learning from past experiences.

The project underscores a comprehensive approach and recognises the importance of including on-ground stakeholders in planning, decision-making and solution implementation. Shared responsibility through monitoring and evaluation is vital, supported by introducing key performance indicators for funded stakeholders. This project contributed efforts to assist in progressing Reef 2050 WQIP objectives

[Click here](#) to read the final report and scientific papers.

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highlighting the importance of addressing these to improve water quality.

