Gladstone
Healthy Harbour
Partnership



2026 GLADSTONE HARBOUR REPORT CARD

Independently monitoring
& reporting on the health of
Gladstone Harbour

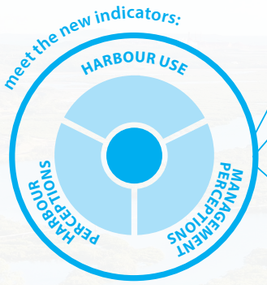
Healthy Harbour, Healthy Future

TAKE A PEEK AT THE

NEW SOCIAL AND CULTURAL INDICATORS *coming in 2027*

A new social and cultural monitoring framework has been developed using responses from the Human Dimensions Waterway Survey. The framework includes 52 new indicators that measure the benefits, values and perceptions people associate with Gladstone Harbour. Designed to better reflect community views and track change over time, the first results will be reported in 2027.

SOCIAL

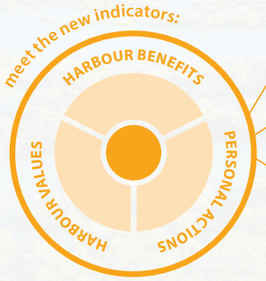


HARBOUR USE
How do people use and enjoy the harbour and surrounding waterways?

PERCEPTIONS OF THE HARBOUR
How healthy do you believe the harbour's ecosystems and marine life are?
What environmental issues are you concerned about?
What do you view as long-term threats to the harbour?

PERCEPTIONS OF MANAGEMENT
How confident are people in the management of the harbour and its resources?

CULTURAL



HARBOUR BENEFITS
How does the harbour contribute to people's lives, wellbeing and sense of place?

HARBOUR VALUES
What aspects of the harbour do people value most and want protected for future generations?

PERSONAL ACTIONS
How do people help care for and protect the harbour environment?
Do people feel they can make a positive difference to the future of the harbour?



TRADITIONAL OWNERS IN THE *Gladstone region*

The Gladstone region is home to the **Bailai, Gurang, Gooreng Gooreng and Taribelang Bunda Peoples,** who continue to care for Country and maintain strong cultural connections to the region's lands and waters.

As Traditional Owners, they play an important role in protecting cultural heritage, managing land and sea Country, and supporting community wellbeing.

REPORT CARD MONITORING

The 2026 Gladstone Harbour Report Card provides the latest snapshot of harbour health, drawing on data collected from July 2025 to June 2026. Environmental indicators were updated across the report card, with the exception of Mangroves. Economic Performance and Economic Stimulus were also reassessed, while Economic Value and Social and Cultural results were based on the most recent available assessments.

ENVIRONMENTAL RESULTS



unchanged

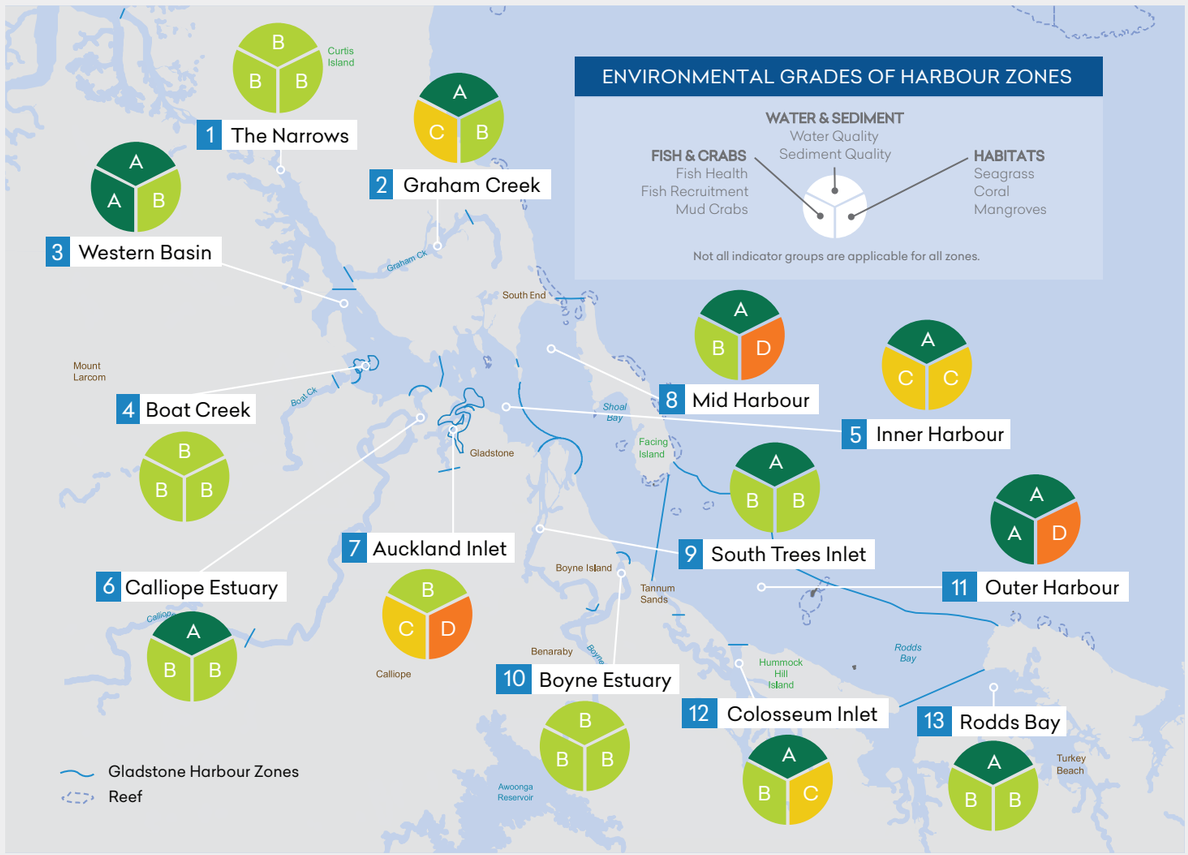
high confidence

ENVIRONMENTAL	SCORE	GRADE
OVERALL ENVIRONMENTAL	0.68	B
WATER AND SEDIMENT QUALITY	0.87	A
• Water quality	0.78	B
• Dissolved metals	0.98	A
• Nutrients	0.53	C
• Physicochemical	0.84	B
• Sediment quality	0.96	A
HABITATS	0.52	C
• Seagrass	0.78	B
• Coral	0.14	E
• Mangroves	0.63	C
FISH AND CRABS	0.65	B
• Fish health	0.87	A
• Fish recruitment	0.58	C
• Mud crab	0.51	C

Water and Sediment Quality results remained stable in 2026. Compared with 2025, scores for the dissolved metals and physicochemical water quality indicators were similar, while the nutrient indicator score declined.

Habitats condition remained similar overall to 2025, with lower Seagrass scores offset by small improvements in Coral scores. Overall, Seagrass remained generally healthy, while Corals continue to be in poor condition.

Fish and Crabs recorded a lower result than last year, mainly due to declines in Fish recruitment. However, fluctuations in Fish recruitment are expected as part of natural population variability. There were small declines in Fish health and Mud crab scores.



For more detailed information see Technical Report 2026 and Fact Sheets available at www.ghhp.org.au

SOCIAL RESULTS



uses previous results

medium confidence

Social results remain unchanged from the 2025 Report Card, with the next assessment due in 2027.

CULTURAL RESULTS



uses previous results

medium confidence

Cultural results remain unchanged from the 2025 Report Card, with the next assessment due in 2027.

ECONOMIC RESULTS



unchanged

high confidence

Economic retained a Good (B) grade in 2026.

Economic Performance maintained a Very Good (A) grade due to high Shipping (0.84) and Tourism (0.90) scores. The Commercial fishing score improved to 0.46, the highest score since 2016. Economic Stimulus retained a Satisfactory (C) grade and scored (0.51), an increase owing to improved Employment score (0.36). Economic Value results are carried over from the last assessment in 2022.

GRADING, CONFIDENCE & TRENDS

The Gladstone Harbour Report Card uses 107 measures to assess the harbour's Environmental, Social, Economic and Cultural health. Results are graded from A to E and reviewed by an Independent Science Panel for confidence and reliability. Changes from the previous report card are reported as improved, declined, unchanged or carried over.

GRADING SYSTEM

- A Very Good (0.85–1.00)
- B Good (0.65–0.84)
- C Satisfactory (0.50–0.64)
- D Poor (0.25–0.49)
- E Very Poor (0.00–0.24)

CONFIDENCE

low → high

CHANGE (2025 - 2026)

- improved
- declined
- unchanged
- uses previous results

litter AND MARINE DEBRIS

WHO

Australian Marine Debris Initiative, collected by volunteers through Tangaroa Blue Foundation clean-up projects.

WHAT

Litter pressure – total litter collected today compared to 10-year historic baseline.

WHEN

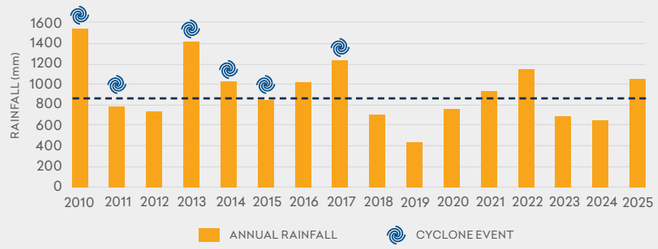
Collections occurred between July 2024 – June 2025.

GHHP acknowledges the Australian Marine Debris Initiative®, Tangaroa Blue Foundation®, the community organisations, and individuals involved in the collection and the provision of data used in this report. This includes ReefClean which is funded by the Australian Government's Reef Trust and delivered by Tangaroa Blue Foundation in partnership with Reef Check Australia, Capricornia Catchments, Eco Barge Clean Seas, OceanWatch Australia, South Cape York Catchments and Australian Microplastics Assessment Project.

RESULTS AND HIGHLIGHTS



RAINFALL RECORDED AT GLADSTONE AIRPORT



RAINFALL

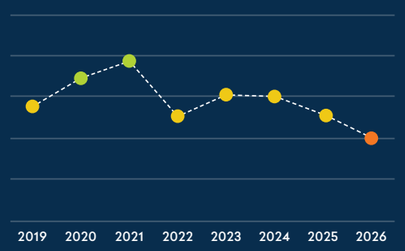
Weather and climate play an important role in the health of Gladstone Harbour. Heavy rainfall and river flows can affect water quality by reducing water clarity and changing nutrient and salinity levels. Since 2010, the region has experienced several major weather events, including influence from six tropical cyclones, alongside years of both wetter and drier conditions. In the monitoring period, annual rainfall was slightly above the long-term average.

stories BEHIND THE grades

A CLOSER LOOK AT HARBOUR NUTRIENTS

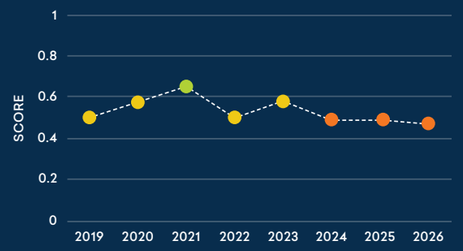
Strong overall Water quality results can mask contrasting trends within individual indicators. Although Water quality received a Good (B) grade, both chlorophyll-a and total nitrogen have declined from their historical highs, with chlorophyll-a reaching its lowest recorded score in 2026. Continued monitoring will help determine whether these patterns represent natural variability or the early signs of longer-term change in harbour water quality.

CHLOROPHYLL-A



Chlorophyll-a provides a measure of microscopic algae in the water. Higher levels can indicate that more nutrients are available, which may increase the risk of algal blooms and affect water quality and ecosystem health over time.

TOTAL NITROGEN



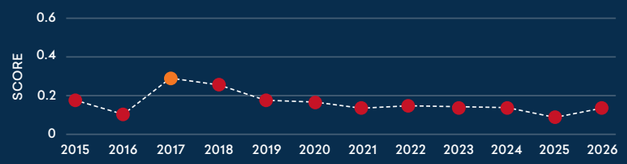
Total nitrogen measures the amount of nitrogen available in the water and provides an indication of nutrient conditions. Nitrogen is a natural and essential nutrient, but elevated levels can promote excessive algal growth, potentially affecting water quality and ecosystem health.

CORAL RECOVERY: CHALLENGES AND OPPORTUNITIES

Coral condition in Gladstone Harbour has remained Very Poor (E) for more than a decade, with only limited recovery since the major declines following the 2013 flood event. Coral cover and juvenile density remain low and many reefs continue to be dominated by macroalgae. While conditions improved slightly in 2026, coral communities remain well below historical levels, indicating slow recovery and ongoing environmental pressures.

To support recovery, several restoration and research projects are underway. These include coral transplantation and macroalgae removal trials led by Gladstone Ports Corporation, alongside research by CQUniversity, the University of Technology Sydney and Monsoon Aquatics to better understand coral resilience and identify effective restoration strategies.

CORAL HEALTH TRENDS





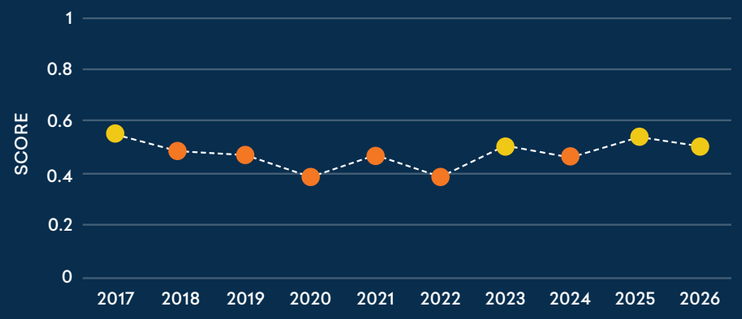
learn more
2025-27 CORAL RESTORATION PROJECT

CELEBRATING A DECADE OF MUD CRAB MONITORING



The Gladstone Harbour mud crab monitoring program is the longest-running of its kind in Australia and provides important insight into long-term population trends. While abundance has varied naturally over time, recent years have seen a recovery in catch rates following a period of lower abundance. Population structure has remained relatively consistent, although female-biased sex ratios continue to be observed across much of the harbour. More recently, an increase in rust lesions has been detected, highlighting the importance of ongoing monitoring. Overall, the long-term record suggests mud crab populations remain resilient, with no evidence of major changes over time.

MUD CRAB TRENDS



GHHP: A YEAR IN REVIEW

23 Partner organisations

18 school and community events

45 meetings and working groups

500 report cards printed

17 Partner stories in Above & Below

14 science project reports published

1540 social media followers

216 social media posts

551 Harbour Heroes newsletter subscribers

5835 unique website visitors

5 new videos launched

SCIENTIFIC ACHIEVEMENTS

5269 fish caught and released to monitor fish recruitment

1760 images of fish assessed

197 mud crabs caught and released

14 seagrass meadows assessed



ACKNOWLEDGEMENT OF COUNTRY

The Gladstone Healthy Harbour Partnership acknowledges the Traditional Owners of the land and sea in the Port Curtis Coral Coast region, the Bailai, Gurang, Gooreng Gooreng and Taribelang Bunda Peoples and pays respect to Elders past, present and emerging.

The Gladstone Healthy Harbour Partnership (consisting of the following partners) monitors and reports on the health of Gladstone Harbour. This annual Report Card has been prepared by an Independent Science Panel for the Partnership.

Australian Government · Australian Institute of Marine Science · Australia Pacific LNG · ConocoPhillips · Boyne Smelters · CORALWATCH · CQG Consulting A BECA Company · CQUniversity Australia · fba · Gidarjil Development Centre · Gladstone Airport Corporation · Gladstone Ports Corporation · Gladstone Regional Council · nrg · ORICA · Port Curtis Coral Coast Trust Ltd · QGC · Queensland Government · Queensland Alumina Limited · QER Queensland Energy Resources · Rio Tinto · Santos GLNG · SEA LINK Travel Group · WICET Wiggins Island Coal Export Terminal

For more information or resources please contact:

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