

NICK DAMETTO
Member for Hinchinbrook



MEDIA RELEASE

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\$2.4 million secured for River Trust

HINCHINBROOK farmers battling riverbank erosion issues will have some relief after the State and Federal governments allocated \$2.4 million to the Herbert River Improvement Trust (HRIT).

Hinchinbrook MP Nick Dametto said the funding, provided under the joint Commonwealth-State Disaster Recovery Funding Arrangements (DRFA), would help deliver much needed works for landholders in the Herbert River District who have been battling with erosion for some time.

"Multiple flood events over the years have eroded the banks of the Herbert River and other tributaries, as well as encroaching onto farms. Farmers are continuously being blamed by the State Labor Government for soil runoff, but I've always argued that most of the soil erosion that occurs along the Herbert River catchment is contributed by eroding river banks during major floods. With this funding boost, the Trust will be able to do more extensive rectification and riverbank protection works in order to play a vital part in the reduction of future erosion," Mr Dametto said.

"From looking at historical records and talking to landholders, the evidence shows that over time, what could be described as tens of football fields of soil have washed into the river and out to sea over the years. That's why this sort of funding was urgently needed and I thank the State and Federal governments for their assistance with this."

HRIT chairman Arthur Bosworth said the funding was a "huge shot in the arm" for the Herbert River District.

"We've had projects that we would otherwise have never been able to do without this funding but now we have the best chance that we've had in my time on the Trust's board to do them," he said.

"We don't get an opportunity like this that often. We've certainly been the best served compared to any other river trust in the state. We've managed to secure more funding for jobs in our shire and that is going to be a huge bonus to the shire."

Mr Bosworth said the Trust had not received a similar amount of funding for a decade and it would be put to good use.

"We have a policy that we only employ locals and that money will be spread around contractors that we engage to work for the Trust," he said.

"The Trust see ourselves as essentially a community service and we want to get the best outcomes we can for the people of Hinchinbrook."

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The funding boost follows a lean year for the HRIT after the State Government previously cut \$300,000 from the State Council of River Trusts Queensland (SCRTQ), which allocates funding to river trusts across state.

The move meant the SCRTQ was left with a funding pool of only \$300,000 for its river trusts in the 2019-20 financial year, forcing them to allocate a fixed amount of only about \$36,000 to the HRIT.

The HRIT conducts works across the Herbert River District, including in Stone River, Cattle Creek, Frances Creek, Ripple Creek, Seymour River, Crystal Creek and the Herbert River itself.

It also plays a valuable role in cleaning out and repairing river and creek systems after heavy flooding in order to ensure minimal stream erosion.

The HRIT is jointly funded by Hinchinbrook Shire Council, the State Government and adjoining landowners, with occasional access to Federal funding.

Mr Dametto said he was glad the State and Federal governments had "come to their senses and realised the importance of properly funding the Trust".

"I'd like to thank Environment Minister the Honourable Leeanne Enoch, the Department of Environment and Science, Natural Resources Minister the Honourable Dr Anthony Lynham and the Department of Natural Resources, Mines and Energy for helping to deliver this funding to the Trust, as well as the Federal Government," he said.

"It is vital our local river systems are adequately maintained and the government should continue to provide sufficient funding to the HRIT in order to do this. The State should accept some responsibility for maintaining what is effectively a natural asset under their jurisdiction."

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Photo caption

Hinchinbrook MP Nick Dametto on the banks of the Herbert River.

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Media Enquiries

Michael Serenc – 0423 108 848