

# 2022 IECA AUSTRALASIA ENVIRONMENTAL EXCELLENCE AWARDS

## Townsville City Council's Reef Assist and Weeds to Healthy Soils Initiative, including the On-Country Soil Erosion and Sediment Control Training



The Townsville City Council's (TCC) Reef Assist - Weeds to Healthy Soils project is funded through the Queensland Government's Reef Assist program and proudly delivered by TCC, in collaboration with its business partners. The project has activated 3 First Nations and 2 Not-for-Profit local businesses during Covid-19 and has now seen over 50 Townsville youth find meaningful careers in an emerging industry.

This is an unprecedented outcome that combines modern scientific approaches to Soil Erosion and Sediment Control with ancient scientific methods dating back 60,000 years. The program has applied strong soil science that brings together soil structure, chemistry AND biology in meaningful and commercially activating ways. Teams have converted more than 500 tonnes of weeds and challenging soils into restorative products that are now being used to heal country as part of extensive and innovative soil erosion and sediment control works. In addition to the program delivering meaningful careers and restoration of more than 5 hectares and 10,000 local provenance trees (many of which used indigenous soil biological processes and seed collected from country), it has also delivered World first training for 30 industry professionals (of which 18 were First Nations). This training was 'On-Country Soil Erosion and Sediment Control'

The On-Country Soil Erosion and Sediment Control training successfully delivered a completely unique yet geographically replicable experience. It offered a safe, inclusive, and experiential learning base for its attendees that not only expanded upon the best practice principals and techniques from IECA but exposed all participants to landscape and cultural insights only available when leaving the classroom and walking Country. Attendees were invited to both share and absorb integrated knowledge sets that bridge air, water, soil, vegetation, and people. The content delivery on Country took an empowering shift away from a teacher-pupil pedagogy and embraced a collaborative and adaptive approach.

As part of the Weeds to Healthy Soils initiative, TCC has collaboratively developed a range of Soil Erosion and Sediment Control products and services that have already shifted local contract models away from synthetic/virgin product lines to organic and waste derived product lines that apply both circular economy and ecological regeneration principals. The initiative has trademarked and open sourced both Living Bags™ and Living Bunds™ and Living Leaky Weirs™ that have since been integrated into existing training and ecological restoration practices.



