

Media are welcome to attend the AARES annual conference at the Grand Chancellor Hotel Brisbane. Please contact [Cathy Reade](#) 0413 575 934 to arrange interviews or to register to attend. The conference program is [here](#), with Australian and international specialists making over 200 presentations across a broad range of energy, agriculture, development and environment issues.

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THE ECONOMICS OF IMPROVING WATER QUALITY FOR THE GREAT BARRIER REEF: How do we get more landholders on board?

The Great Barrier Reef (GBR) is the focus of substantial effort to improve its protection and resilience, with a particular focus on the water quality impacts of agriculture and other land uses. While farmers and landholders have adopted some better practices, more work is needed to support greater landholder involvement and improved approaches for them to adopt. Economics can provide these solutions.

John Rolfe, Professor of Regional Economic Development in the School of Business and Law at Central Queensland University will be addressing new innovation and concepts and improved approaches to better manage the GBR at *Meeting the Challenges of Transition to a Sustainable Future*, the Australasian Agricultural and Resource Economics Society (AARES) Conference, 11-14 February in Brisbane. AARES is the pre-eminent society promoting research relevant to Australasia in agricultural, environmental, food, and resource economics and agribusiness.

“Dealing with water quality alone isn’t enough to protect the reef, but it is an essential ingredient in making it more resilient,” said Prof Rolfe.

“The Australian and Queensland Governments have committed huge resources to protecting and improving the Great Barrier Reef. We know that we must have landholders involved in efforts to improve water quality. Under the current GBR water quality improvement plan the target is that 90% of landholders will have adopted better management practices. So far, the adoption rates are well below this target. Banana growers demonstrate the highest uptake of best management practices at 65%, with grains, grazing, horticulture and sugarcane growers lagging behind.”

“We can improve on current arrangements through the economic evaluation of some existing practises including sugarcane management; the use of automated furrow irrigations systems in the Burdekin; the adoption of leucaena and other pasture legumes, and a cost-benefit analysis of sediment reduction from alternative road maintenance scenarios for unsealed roads,” he said.

“Innovative funding tools to support higher adoption of management practices, and how climate change will impact current economic scenarios are also on the agenda as future options to address improved water quality in better management of the Great Barrier Reef,” he concluded.