

30 May 2016 | [Sponsorships](#) <sup>[1]</sup>

## **Sir Richard Branson launches Greening Australia and Virgin Australia partnership to help restore the Great Barrier Reef** <sup>[2]</sup>



Greening Australia and Virgin Australia today joined forces to launch a powerful new initiative to reduce soil erosion and help restore water quality on Australia's Great Barrier Reef.

Virgin Australia has entered into a three year partnership with Greening Australia, who today launched a new project, Reef Aid, which will reduce damage to the Reef as a result of soil erosion and subsequent poor water quality. Greening Australia has launched a public appeal to raise \$10 million over the next three years for the first stage of the estimated \$100 million major restoration project. The Australian Government Reef Trust will match private contributions dollar for dollar up to \$2 million.

Virgin Group founder and passionate environmentalist, Sir Richard Branson, joined the Chairman of Greening Australia, Gordon Davis, to launch the partnership and call on all Australians to get behind Reef Aid and help save one of Australia's most precious icons.

Sir Richard Branson said: “I have long been passionate about the health of the ocean, having spent many hours in and amongst its waves, particularly in Australia.

“Like me, Virgin Australia is passionate about doing what we can to help save one of the most complex and beautiful natural systems on earth, the Great Barrier Reef.

“Virgin Australia’s partnership with Greening Australia will make a real difference at halting soil erosion onto the Reef and improving water quality, but we also need your help.”

On 8 June, Virgin Australia will mark World Oceans Day by fundraising at its major ports while pilots will raise awareness of the issue with on-board announcements on flights over the Great Barrier Reef.

Chairman of Greening Australia, Mr Davis said over the last 150 years land clearance had created deep eroding gullies – some over 10 meters deep – in the Great Barrier Reef catchments.

“When it rains, plumes of sediment, pesticides and nutrients flow from land onto the Reef, choking fish and coral, creating algal blooms and weakening the marine ecosystem,” Mr Davis said.

“Landholders are doing their best, but once it starts raining it’s impossible to stop the gullies eroding and sediment rushing onto the Reef.

“The restoration work will involve reshaping and re-vegetating gullies to stop the sediment at the source, as well as rebuilding coastal wetlands that act as kidneys, filtering out sediment before it reaches the Reef.

“With roughly 10 thousand hectares to be repaired, it’s a huge job that will take many years. Virgin Australia, together with the Australian Government and others, have thrown their weight behind the effort and now we need the rest of Australia to help out.”

To retain its world heritage status and meet the targets set in the Australian Government’s Reef 2050 Plan, the amount of sediment flowing onto the Great Barrier Reef must be reduced by 50 per cent by 2025. Reef Aid will make a significant contribution to this target.

“It’s been scientifically proven that the restoration techniques we intend to use can reduce the sediment being released from the eroding gullies by up to 75 per cent,” Mr Davis said.

As the Official Airline of Greening Australia, Virgin Australia has made a three year commitment to support awareness and fundraising for Reef Aid such as:

- Flights to help scientists, field experts and volunteers working on Reef Aid;
- International media hosting and education;
- Ongoing coverage on Virgin Australia’s social media channels, in the Virgin Australia in-flight magazine and app *Voyeur*, on Virgin Australia’s In-Flight Entertainment System and to the six million members of Velocity Frequent Flyer;
- ‘Hands on’ support from Virgin Australia staff as part of the Coastal Wetland team volunteering group.

To donate or learn more, the public are encouraged to visit [www.greeningaustralia.org.au](http://www.greeningaustralia.org.au) [3]

and to use #reefaid on social media to pledge their support.

## Key Facts

- Every year 1.4 million tonnes of fine sediment along with trapped agricultural chemicals and fertilisers pour into the Great Barrier Reef due to erosion from over clearing in the Great Barrier Reef Catchment.
- More than two million domestic and international visitors visit the Great Barrier Reef every year who contribute \$5.2 billion to the Australian economy and support the employment of 68,000 people.
- Virgin Australia operates 500 flights per week to and from Great Barrier Reef gateway destinations including Bundaberg, Cairns, Gladstone, Hamilton Island, Mackay, Townsville, Proserpine (Whitsunday Coast) and Rockhampton.
- Virgin Australia was the first airline in the world to establish a government-certified airline carbon offset program in 2007.
- Together with alliance partner Air New Zealand, Virgin Australia is currently investigating options for locally produced aviation biofuel, with a Request for Information issued to the market in March 2016.

Tweet [4]

- Download Images [5]

© Virgin Australia Airlines Pty Ltd.  
ABN 36 090 670 965

- 
- 
- 

Terms of Use  
Privacy  
Conditions of Carriage

---

**Source URL:** <https://newsroom.virginaustralia.com/release/sir-richard-branson-launches-greening-australia-and-virgin-australia-partnership-help>

## Links

[1] <https://newsroom.virginaustralia.com/news/81>

[2] <https://newsroom.virginaustralia.com/release/sir-richard-branson-launches-greening-australia-and-virgin-australia-partnership-help>

[3] <http://www.greeningaustralia.org.au>

[4] <http://twitter.com/share>

[5] <https://newsroom.virginaustralia.com/gallery/download/769>