

Great Barrier Reef

Australian Government Corporate PLAN



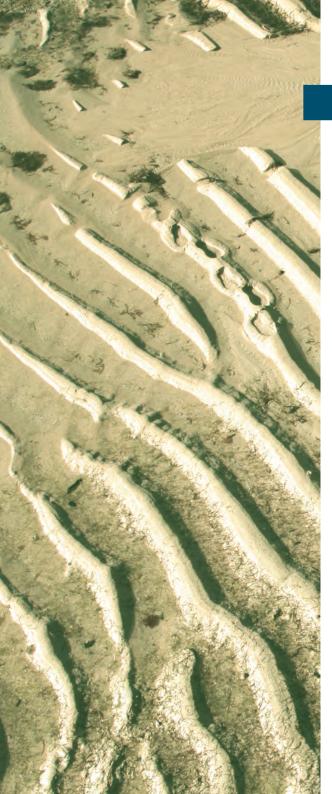


Corporate PLAN





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Contents

From the Chairman	1
THE GREAT BARRIER REEF MARINE PARK AUTHORITY Our vision Our mission Our goals Our values	2 2 3 3 4
OUR OPERATING ENVIRONMENT Our legislative environment Condition and trend of the Reef Factors influencing the Reef Reef 2050 Long-term Sustainability Plan World heritage Status Deregulation agenda	5 5 6 7 7
OUR APPROACH	8
OUR COMPREHENSIVE MANAGEMENT PROGRAM	9
 Strategy 1: Ensure the best available knowledge is captured and used to inform management decisions Strategy 2: Effective and efficient environmental regulation Strategy 3: Strengthen engagement 	10 12 14
OUR CAPABILITY	16
IMPLEMENTATION Risk management	17 17

FROM the Chairman



As an Australian statutory authority, the Great Barrier Reef Marine Park Authority's objective is the long-term protection of the Great Barrier Reef.

Rich in natural beauty, heritage, and social and economic values, this priceless ecosystem is valued by people around the world and is a great source of pride for Australians.

As the trustees of this natural wonder, we must ensure the Reef remains a healthy ecosystem for future generations — this means responding strongly to our recent assessments that show the system is under pressure.

For the past 40 years, our work in managing this vast expanse has been recognised as world-leading.

Critical to this has been its partnership approach, in working closely with government, Traditional Owners, scientists, reef industries and other stakeholders. This collaboration is more important now than ever.

This Corporate Plan identifies our key priorities for the next five years in responding to the challenge of improving the health and resilience of the Great Barrier Reef, while managing a multiple-use area. These priorities will shape the operation and direction of the agency into the future.

This plan is informed by the findings of the Outlook Report 2014 and the *Great Barrier Reef Region Strategic Assessment Report* which together form the largest-ever body of work about the Reef.

It will also operationalise our 25-year management plan outlined in the *Great Barrier Reef Region Strategic Assessment Program Report*.

This plan sits within the Great Barrier Reef Intergovernmental Agreement, which is a broader framework of cooperation between the Australian and Queensland governments that began in 1979 and was updated in 2009.

The agreement recognises the need for governments to work together to effectively address key pressures on the Reef, such as climate change impacts, catchment water quality and coastal development.

The overarching Reef 2050 Long-term Sustainability Plan, jointly developed by the Australian and Queensland governments, also charts the way forward for investment in Reef protection, and provides direction for the many organisations and individuals committed to improving the health of the Reef.

This Corporate Plan has been prepared for subsection 35 (1) of the *Public Governance, Performance and Accountability Act* 2013 and will be reviewed and updated each year to take account of new information, emerging issues and progress on implementing key initiatives.

A major review will be also undertaken every five years in line with the Authority's five-yearly Outlook Report.

Russell Reichelt Chairman

THE Great Barrier Reef MARINE PARK AUTHORITY

The Great Barrier Reef Marine Park Authority (the Authority) is an Australian Government statutory agency responsible for protecting and managing the environment, biodiversity and heritage values of the Great Barrier Reef Region.

We report to the Australian Government Minister for the Environment and advise the Minister on the management of the Great Barrier Reef Marine Park.

A healthy Great Barrier Reef for future generations

OUR vision

A healthy Great Barrier Reef for future generations.

The Great Barrier Reef is a special place that people value and rely upon.

It is a vast and remarkable tropical ecosystem that supports thousands of species.

The breathtaking beauty and extraordinary diversity of the Great Barrier Reef is a source of joy and awe to people around the world.

It is a place of inspiration, tranquility and excitement for millions of visitors each year who marvel at the world that unfolds below, and the marine creatures that depend on its habitats. It is home to great spectacles of nature each and every day, providing lasting memories for those who experience it.

The Reef's waters and its shores are home to vibrant, productive, innovative and diverse industries that drive coastal economies, and Indigenous connections that stem back tens of thousands of years. Its rich natural and cultural heritage supports a myriad of benefits which sustain human needs and wellbeing.

We are its trustees. It is incumbent upon all of us to ensure this natural wonder remains a healthy ecosystem — one that enriches the lives of future generations just as it does for us today.

breathtaking inspiring diverse productive remarkable

Corporate Plan 2015-2020



OUR mission

The long-term protection, ecologically sustainable use, understanding and enjoyment of the Great Barrier Reef for all Australians and the international community through the care and management of the Marine Park.

care understand enjoy

OUR goals

To achieve our mission and make our vision a reality, the Authority will focus its management on achieving four goals:

• Protect and restore the Reef's ecosystem health and biodiversity

Many of the values that underpin the Reef's health and biodiversity remain in good condition, but their condition is declining. Of particular concern is the condition of coral reefs and seagrass meadows — fundamental habitats in the Reef ecosystem. Having a healthy Great Barrier Reef into the future requires continued protection of all its natural values as well as restoration of those that have declined.

• Safeguard the Reef's heritage

From ongoing Indigenous cultural connections to a rich maritime history, the Great Barrier Reef's heritage values are an intrinsic part of the strong links that communities have to the Region. The future of these values is strongly intertwined with the health and resilience of the Reef itself.

• Ensure ecologically sustainable use and benefits for current and future generations

The Great Barrier Reef has long been a multiple-use area that supports industries and coastal communities — providing a wide range of benefits. Two important aspects of having a healthy Reef into the future will be ensuring that use of the ` Region is to a standard that reflects the area's global significance and fostering people's understanding, enjoyment and appreciation of the Reef and all its values.

Reduce cumulative impacts

The impacts affecting the Reef's values arise from a number of sources, both within the Region and beyond its boundaries. They are acting in combination to affect, sometimes seriously, the values of the Region. Achieving a healthy and resilient Reef into the future requires an explicit and concerted focus on reducing all impacts on the ecosystem.

To enable effective measurement of our success against our goals and to ensure we achieve our mission and vision, the Authority prepares a Great Barrier Reef Outlook Report every five years. This includes an assessment of the condition and trend of the Reef's values and an independent review of management effectiveness. This five-yearly

protect restore safeguard sustain reduce

3

assessment process acknowledges the lag time between implementation of actions and the result of these when operating in marine environments.

The performance of the Authority's management of the Reef, together with its partners, will ultimately be measured by the proportion of the Reef's values showing positive trends in condition, and improvements in management effectiveness, as reported in Outlook Reports.

OUR values

Guided by Australian Public Service Values and Code of Conduct, we will endeavour to foster a workplace culture that demonstrates:

leadership – lead by example, striving for innovation and excellence

integrity - act honestly and transparently and be accountable for our work

partnership — engage and collaborate respectfully with others so we are responsive and diligent.

leadership integrity partnership



OUR operating environment

OUR legislative environment

Our legislative operating environment is shaped by the *Great Barrier Reef Marine Park Act 1975*, the *Public Governance, Performance and Accountability Act 2013*, the *Public Service Act 1999*, the Great Barrier Reef Intergovernmental Agreement with the State of Queensland, and a range of memoranda of understanding.

The Great Barrier Reef Marine Park Act provides for the long-term protection and conservation of the environment, biodiversity and heritage values of the Region. It allows for ecologically sustainable use and encourages stakeholder engagement in protecting and managing the Region. The Act sets out our role and, through its objects, provides the fundamental basis for management of the Region.

Great Barrier Reef Marine Park Act 1975

Condition and trend of the Reef

The Authority's *Great Barrier Reef Outlook Report 2014* and *Strategic Assessment Report* found that, while the outstanding universal value of the World Heritage Area remains largely intact, the overall health of the Reef ecosystem, especially inshore in the southern two-thirds of the Region, has declined significantly. Habitats in the north, further offshore and in deeper water have been subject to fewer impacts.

Traditional Owners with connections to the Region maintain their cultural practices and customs. However, because Indigenous heritage values are closely tied to land and sea country, many have deteriorated as changes in the environment reverberate through their culture. Some historic heritage values such as historic shipwrecks and structures have been identified and recorded. They were assessed as being in good condition, though many will deteriorate with the passage of time.

The Great Barrier Reef retains the amazing natural beauty for which it is famous. However, its underwater health and aesthetic value has been reduced along its southern and inshore areas — largely as a result of declines in water quality, coral and seagrass.



Factors influencing THE REEF

A number of factors influence the condition of the Region's environment. These factors are affected by broadscale drivers of change.

The major threats to the future of the Reef are climate change, poor water quality from land-based runoff, impacts from coastal development and some remaining impacts from fishing. These factors have been driven by economic and population growth, particularly from within the Great Barrier Reef Region and adjacent catchments. Technological change has contributed to this growth but also brings significant potential to develop innovative new solutions to address the challenges facing the Reef.

Some of the challenges to addressing the threats to the Reef include:

- the spatial and longer temporal scale of threats facing the Great Barrier Reef
- the social biophysical and jurisdictional complexity of the Region and its management
- · the multiple and compounding effects of impacts
- the diversity of stakeholders and sometimes conflicting interests
- many of the key impacts affecting the health of the Reef originate from regions outside the Authority's jurisdiction.

climate change water quality runoff coastal development population growth

Reef 2050 LONG-TERM SUSTAINABILITY PLAN

The future actions of the Authority and all its partners in protecting and managing the Great Barrier Reef have been further strengthened and better coordinated by the Australian and Queensland government's Reef 2050 Long-term Sustainability Plan. It builds on the findings of the Outlook Report 2014 and the Comprehensive strategic assessment of the Great Barrier Reef World Heritage Area and adjacent coastal zone.

The plan sets clear outcomes and targets to guide investments and actions required to build Reef health and resilience.

Corporate Plan 2015–2020



World Heritage STATUS

In June 2015 the World Heritage Committee made a decision that the Great Barrier Reef would retain its World Heritage listing.

In making its decision, the Committee requested that Australia provide a progress report on implementation of the Reef 2050 Plan by December 2016, as well as an overall state of conservation report by December 2019. These reports should demonstrate effective and sustained protection of the Reef's outstanding universal value. The Authority's 2019 Outlook Report will be critical in reviewing progress towards Australia meeting its targets, including the Authority's contributions to delivery of these outcomes.

Deregulation AGENDA

The Australian Government recognises the impact that inefficient regulation can have on business and the community. As a result, the government has set a target to reduce the cost of regulation by \$1 billion each year.

A priority for the Authority will be to find opportunities to streamline our regulatory tools and processes while ensuring high standards are maintained for protecting biodiversity, heritage values and the environment and, in particular, matters of national environmental significance.

long-term multiple-use partnerships Traditional Owners stakeholders science

streamline regulation



OUR approach

The Great Barrier Reef Region is a multiple-use area, where biodiversity and heritage values are protected as well as the social and economic aspects of the environment.

The Australian and Queensland governments work in a long-term partnership to protect and manage the Region. The Field Management Program is a jointly-funded, cooperative partnership between the two governments. It undertakes operations and routine day-to-day management activities in the Marine Park, the adjacent Queensland Great Barrier Reef Coast Marine Park and on national park islands.

The Authority works in partnership with Traditional Owners on a range of sea country programs to conserve biodiversity and Indigenous heritage values, and promote sustainable use.

Management is also enhanced through partnerships and stewardship arrangements with Great Barrier Reef stakeholders, such as industry associations, scientists, local government and community groups.

Through a network of Reef Advisory Committees and Local Marine Advisory Committees, the Authority receives technical and stakeholder advice on a range of issues associated with the health, use and management of the Great Barrier Reef.

The Authority uses a number of tools to protect and manage the Region, including zoning plans, plans of management, permits, policies and strategies, formal agreements and site management arrangements. Various management approaches are employed including education, planning, environmental impact assessment, monitoring, stewardship programs and enforcement.

Within the Region, a number of activities are strictly prohibited by legislation (such as mining and oil drilling) and other activities are carefully managed according to the principles of ecologically sustainable use.

The Authority does not have direct management responsibilities for areas or activities outside the Marine Park, except in a few specific circumstances. However, it recognises the interconnectedness of the terrestrial and marine natural systems, and the significant effects that land-based activities can have on the Great Barrier Reef ecosystem. Consequently, the Authority actively works with those government departments, industries and communities whose actions have the potential to affect the marine ecosystem.

The dynamic and complex nature of the Great Barrier Reef ecosystem, the pace of change in factors affecting it, and improving knowledge about the ecosystem and its impacts means the Authority needs to be flexible and adaptive in its future management. To do this the Authority uses the best available information including scientific data, expert opinion and Traditional Owner and stakeholder knowledge to inform its decision making.

Decision making is consistent with attaining statutory objectives, positive outcomes for the health the Reef, protecting matters of national environmental significance, and the principles of ecologically sustainable use.

ecologically sustainable monitoring education land-based activities



OUR comprehensive management program

Through the *Great Barrier Reef Marine Park Act 1975*, the Authority has a clear and long-standing responsibility to protect and manage the Great Barrier Reef. Over the past three decades, the Authority has established a strong and comprehensive set of management arrangements to protect the Reef and adapted them in response to emerging issues and improved understanding.

The Authority's comprehensive management program builds on the strong foundational management arrangements already in place to protect biodiversity and heritage values and provide for ecologically sustainable use. We will continue these arrangements and, drawing on the recommendations of the *Strategic Assessment Report*, we have committed to adopting a suite of measures to strengthen management. The Authority's future actions to protect and manage the Great Barrier Reef will contribute to the delivery of the Australian and Queensland government's Reef 2050 Long-term Sustainability Plan.

Our comprehensive management program is built around three key strategies:

- ensure the best available knowledge is captured and used to inform management decisions
- deliver effective and efficient environmental regulation
- strengthen engagement

implement inform deliver strengthen efficient

STRATEGY 1

Ensure the best available knowledge is captured and used to inform management decisions

Every decision made in the pursuit of protecting the Reef needs to be underpinned by sound, reliable and timely knowledge. We will strive to reduce cumulative impacts by building a holistic understanding of ecological processes over different scales and time. This means accessing and capturing the best available science and up-to-date data from a network of science providers, both nationally and internationally.

Filling key information gaps through targeted research will be critical, while integrated modelling with predictive capacity will be needed to provide greater certainty about cause-and-effect relationships.

As we continually build our understanding to inform decision making, we will also draw on other forms of valuable information acquired over many years by those with strong social, cultural and economic connections to the Reef. This includes traditional ecological knowledge and information from the wider community.

The Authority will:

Implement a management approach based on clear outcomes for the future of the Reef's values and specific measurable targets to ensure actions are focused on the delivery of outcomes critical to the health of the Reef and restoration, maintenance and enhancement of the Region's values.

Establish an integrated monitoring and reporting program to measure performance against the outcomes and targets, and to guide adaptive management. The program will improve the connection between knowledge and management and support performance evaluation. At its highest level, the effectiveness of the management program will be evaluated through the statutory five-year Outlook Report cycle. The findings of each report will inform the Authority's five-yearly priorities and be the principal guide to adaptive management.

Better integrate knowledge into management by using information from the integrated monitoring and reporting program to inform management decisions.

Improve identification and understanding of the Region's values, including matters of national environment significance, through mapping, and improving communications of the Reef's values and the Authority's management.

Identify Indigenous heritage values, in collaboration with Traditional Owners, and implement an Indigenous knowledge management system to promote the use of traditional ecological knowledge and contribute to improved protection of Indigenous heritage values.

Develop a historic heritage database of places of historic significance to improve the identification and protection of historic heritage values.

Improve understanding of community benefits by working with partner agencies to implement a long-term socio-economic monitoring program to improve understanding and consideration of



community benefits derived from the environment in decision-making processes.

Improve alignment and coordination of research priorities identified in the strategic assessment and continue to encourage and support research and innovation that improves the sustainability of activities in the Region and reduces impacts on the Region's values.

Increase emphasis on the use of modelling to improve understanding of cause-and-effect relationships between drivers, activities, impacts and the Reef's values and the successive and combined effects of impacts on the Region's environment.

Performance outcome: Authority decisions and actions are informed by the best available knowledge and information and contribute to the attainment of outcomes for the Reef's values.

Performance measures:

- 1.1 Proportion of assessment grades and trends against the Regions values for which the level of confidence has increased as reported in each five yearly Great Barrier Reef Outlook Report.
- 1.2 Proportion of National Environment Science Programme funded projects that are addressing the Great Barrier Reef Marine Park Authority's science needs.
- 1.3 Proportion of Great Barrier Reef Marine Park Authority committees which have community/industry representation.

STRATEGY 2

2 Effective and efficient environmental regulation

The Authority is the primary environmental regulator for protecting the Great Barrier Reef Region. Our role is to set the standards necessary to achieve our goals and objectives, and provide certainty about where uses may occur, the types of activities allowed and the conditions under which activities may proceed.

We will continue to do this by using a combination of management tools and approaches including zoning plans, plans of management, permits, economic mechanisms, education, compliance and enforcement. The Authority adopts a risk-based approach when carrying out its regulatory functions.

We continue to look for opportunities to streamline and reduce regulatory burden, while maintaining the high environmental standards required to protect the Reef's outstanding universal value.

The Authority will:

Streamline, harmonise and enhance regulatory tools to reduce unnecessary burden, while maintaining strong levels of environmental protection, and enhance alignment with other similar or relevant Commonwealth and Queensland legislation^{*}.

Review and update plans of management to ensure they address issues specific to an area, species or community in greater detail than can be accomplished by the Reef-wide Zoning Plan.

Enhance alignment of its permission system with the *Environment Protection and Biodiversity Conservation Act 1999* assessment processes.

Develop offset guidelines and a net benefit policy, as part of the avoid-mitigate-offset hierarchy for managing impacts, to ensure all residual impacts from activities are addressed and additional measures are delivered to achieve net improvements to the condition of the Region's values.

Collaboratively **develop regionally based standards for ecosystem health** with partner agencies, local communities, the private sector and experts.

Continue to work with Traditional Owners through the implementation of **Traditional Use of Marine Resource Agreements** and cooperative management approaches, including agreements under 39ZA of the Great Barrier Reef Marine Park Act.

Improve compliance with zoning plans and other regulations, adopt more advanced surveillance technology, improve coordination of compliance activities and strengthen powers to deter repeat offending.

Improve shipping incident response capacity by working with other responsible agencies to implement the actions set out in the North-East Shipping Management Plan.

Strengthen guidelines to include new and revised standards for ecosystem health and develop new guidelines to complement existing arrangements. Create and revise guidelines to include cumulative



impact assessment guidelines, update and strengthen the Great Barrier Reef **water quality guidelines**, update the Great Barrier Reef hydrodynamic modelling guidelines for dredging and spoil disposal in the region, and develop a guideline on assessing and managing underwater noise impacts on species and the influence of shipping movements.

Improve certainty in specific areas about where activities may occur and under what conditions. This includes supporting the implementation of the Queensland Ports Strategy, including port master planning, and facilitating the development of a whole-of-government dredging and dredge material disposal policy for the World Heritage Area.

Strengthen protection of heritage values, including through updates to the Great Barrier Reef Marine Park Heritage Strategy to more comprehensively address natural, Indigenous and historic heritage and work with Traditional Owners to develop a comprehensive management framework to promote and coordinate the contributions of Traditional Owners to the management of the Great Barrier Reef, and to guide management of Indigenous heritage values in the Region.

Performance outcome: The impacts of human activity on the Great Barrier Reef are reduced through effective environmental regulation.

Performance measures:

- 2.1 Proportion of reported offences where a compliance action was taken.
- 2.2 Proportion of the Marine Park managed in accordance with an accredited Traditional Use of Marine Resources Agreement or an Indigenous Land Use Agreement.
- 2.3 Standard permits assessed within agreed timeframes**

*Additional performance measures relevant to this item are outlined in the Whole of Australian Government Regulator Performance Framework

**Agreed with permittees

STRATEGY 3 Strengthen engagement

We recognise that protecting the Great Barrier Reef requires local, national and international effort — we simply can't do it alone. Just as we share this natural asset, we must also share responsibility for its future. We will continue to work with Traditional Owners, the community, business, industry and government to influence best practice and find pragmatic solutions to achieve the primary goal of long-term protection of the Reef. By establishing ongoing and collaborative working relationships, we are able to instil a sense of collective stewardship. This approach creates a strong foundation for maintaining a balance between protecting the Reef, managing competing demands and supporting sustainable use.

The Authority will:

Implement a **Reef recovery program** that involves adopting regionalised and cooperative management approaches. This will support local communities and encourage cooperation between government agencies, the private sector and research institutions in implementing actions to protect and restore biodiversity hotspots and support sustainable use.

Implement the **crown-of-thorns-starfish control program** in partnership with the Association of Marine Park Tourism Operators.

Support **best practice and stewardship** by continuing to work with local government, volunteer groups, schools, tourism operators, fishers, farmers and graziers to strengthen activities aimed at encouraging best practices and innovative approaches; reducing impacts of activities; and improving sustainability.

Implement **education and community awareness programs** to inform visitors and the broader community about the Great Barrier Reef, its protection and management.

Continue **international engagement and capacity building** to share expertise, including best practices and success stories with Marine Park and world heritage managers facing similar challenges.

Improve our consultation arrangements by working with relevant agencies to adopt a more coordinated approach to community consultation **through the establishment of a peak Great Barrier Reef advisory group** made up of Traditional Owners, scientific, conservation and industry experts to provide high level advice on implementing the agency's comprehensive management program.

Strengthen and focus our partnership and engagement activities to **influence drivers and activities affecting the Region** to:

• promote awareness of the effects of a changing climate and to develop and implement climate change adaptation and Reef resilience measures



- improve catchment run-off, including actively promoting the uptake of improved land management practices, to more rapidly achieve Reef Plan targets
- highlight the importance of functioning coastal ecosystems to the health of the Reef and promote a whole of ecosystem approach to managing the Reef and its catchment
- improve governance, strategic planning and the environmental sustainability of port activities at a Reef-wide scale
- improve management of shipping within the Region, including through finalisation and implementation of the North-East Shipping Management Plan
- build on the significant progress made in achieving better sustainability in commercial fishing to further address the remaining risks, and ensure the sustainability of recreational fishing.

Performance outcome: Environmental outcomes for the Great Barrier Reef are improved through the communication and adoption of sustainable best practices.

Performance measures:

- 3.1 Number of participants within Great Barrier Reef Marine Park Authority stewardship programs [e.g. High Standard Tourism, Eye on the Reef, Reef Guardians, Sea Country Indigenous Partnerships]
- 3.2 Proportion of visitors to the Great Barrier Reef that use tourism operators which have been accredited as 'high standard operators'.
- 3.3 Proportion of visitors to Reef HQ Aquarium that participate in talks and tours that deliver key messages about risks to the Great Barrier Reef.
- 3.4 An improved understanding and appreciation of the Reef by users, visitors and residents, as measured by social research indicators.



OUR capability

The Authority's staff number 195 and our estimated budget for the 2015-16 year is \$52 million, including \$16.8 million for the Field Management Program funded jointly between the Australian and Queensland Governments.

To realise its goals, the Authority needs to remain a high-performing organisation that continuously adapts to changing priorities. This requires a high-quality workforce and working environment so the skills and competencies of its staff continue to foster innovation and improvement. The Authority's staff need to be supported in their role by integrated, efficient and effective administrative systems and modern, safe and sustainable infrastructure.

To improve the Authority's capability a number of measures will be introduced to the organisation's work program.

The Authority will:

Develop and implement a **human resource strategic plan** to attract, develop and retain professionals with the required specialist and inter-disciplinary skills to deliver its management program.

Improve knowledge management and administrative systems to support evidence-based decision making and promote transparency, accountability and information sharing.

Implement the Information, Communication, Technology Strategic Plan to support continuous improvement in computing platforms, networks, data storage and information analysis capabilities; and extend its communication reach through social media, interactive technologies, collaboration tools and web portals.

Provide **safe and secure work environments** and promote energy efficiency through the sustainable design of new facilities and investments in energy-efficient building systems and vessel fleets.

Implement the Corporate Governance Action Plan to facilitate an adaptive, efficient and effective internal environment and support the achievement of strategic priorities.



This five-year Corporate Plan is accompanied by the Authority's Annual Operating Plan (AOP) — both documents have a clear line of sight from vision to implementation.

While the Outlook Report measures and communicates our success against our longer term goals, the annual report details our performance each year by measuring and reporting the Authority's success in implementing the AOP against the performance measures contained in this document. This process gives the Authority the flexibility to manage and respond to emerging issues on a yearly basis.

Risk MANAGEMENT

The effective assessment and management of risk underpins the Authority's governance framework and is critical to the control environment for which the Accountable Authority (i.e., the Chairman) has responsibility under the *Public Governance, Performance and Accountability Act 2013*.

The agency peer-reviewed Outlook Report includes an assessment of risks to the ecosystems of the Great Barrier Reef region. This report and the associated independent assessment of management effectiveness provide the mechanisms by which management and the board strategically identify and assess risks to the region and to the way it is managed.

At a strategic level, actions to give effect to the management of these risks (where jurisdictionally applicable) are integrated into the Corporate Plan and subsequently given operational effect through the agency's Annual Operating Plan. In addition, and based on the outcomes of the Great Barrier Reef Outlook Report, the Science and Information Needs Strategy is developed to communicate (to the scientific community, research funding providers, and providers of monitoring and other relevant information) the scientific information needs of the agency, and aims to address identified knowledge gaps critical to management.

The identification, assessment and management of operational risks (or risks arising) is governed by the Commonwealth Risk Management Policy, informed by the principles and guidelines within the Australian risk management standard (AS/NZS ISO 31000:2009), and supported internally by guidelines, operational tools and associated training materials.

principles governance strategic opportunities



Australian Government

Great Barrier Reef Marine Park Authority

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