



Traditional Owner Heritage Assessment

Effective from 4 October 2017

Objective

To provide guidance on assessing impacts to Traditional Owner heritage values within the permission system.

Target audience

Primary: Great Barrier Reef Marine Park Authority officers assessing applications for permission.

Secondary: Groups and individuals applying for permission; interested members of the public.

Warning: These guidelines may contain images of deceased persons that may cause sadness and distress when viewed by some Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people or communities.

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Purpose

1. Permission decisions contribute to maintaining and enhancing the Traditional Owner heritage values of the Great Barrier Reef Marine Park (Marine Park).

Context

Description of the values

2. Over thousands of years, Traditional Owners have developed a strong bond with the Great Barrier Reef. This bond encompasses a range of cultural and spiritual connections with their land and sea country, which is deeply valued and treasured.
"The sea, its natural resources and our identity as Traditional Owners, are inseparable... Our ancestors have hunted and fished in this sea country since time immemorial..."¹
3. In this document, the term Traditional Owner refers to those of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander descent who have spiritual or cultural affiliations with a site or area in the Marine Park or as holders of native title with that site or area. Despite historical events of dispossession and displacement, many Traditional Owners have maintained connection to their land and sea country. There are more than 70 Traditional Owner clan groups along the Great Barrier Reef.
4. However, there were also many Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islanders who lost their direct connection to their land and sea country during and following European colonisation. Regardless, these individuals and families may continue to have interests in historic, spiritual or cultural values of the Great Barrier Reef Region. They may also have a personal connection through family history of with a place, including a mission or a massacre site. Also refer to the [Social value assessment guidelines](#) and the [Other places of historic significance assessment guidelines](#) when considering values of those not identified as Traditional Owners.
5. Areas of country belonging to a particular group are called **estates**. Many sea country estates, and all adjacent coastal estates, have been mapped to particular Traditional Owner groups who can be contacted for information about their heritage in particular areas. Applicants for Marine Park permits can identify the correct Traditional Owner contacts for their activity area by accessing the [Queensland Cultural Heritage Register and Database](#) or through the [Native Title Tribunal](#).
6. The [Great Barrier Reef Outlook Report 2014](#) (Outlook Report) defines Indigenous heritage value as the heritage values of significance to Indigenous people in accordance with their practices, observances, customs, traditions, beliefs or history.^{2,3}

7. For the [Great Barrier Reef Region Strategic Assessment: Strategic Assessment Report 2014](#) (Strategic Assessment) and the [Outlook Report](#), Traditional Owner heritage values were grouped into four broad components, which are used throughout these guidelines. The categories include tangible and non-tangible attributes which often overlap. The four components are:
- sacred sites, sites of particular significance and places important for cultural tradition
 - structures, technology, tools and archaeology
 - stories, songlines, totems and languages
 - cultural practices, observances, customs and lore.
8. Traditional Owner heritage values are connected to and inter-related with other types of heritage values and should be considered holistically. Trying to consider Traditional Owner heritage values on their own, without reference to related biodiversity, social, aesthetic, historic heritage and scientific values, risks overlooking cumulative impacts and incremental changes.⁴

EXAMPLE

A fish trap may be classified as a Traditional Owner structure, but through its maintenance for centuries it may also be a site of particular significance, a place important for cultural tradition, have stories associated with its use, and support cultural practices and customs.

Sacred sites, sites of particular significance and places important for cultural tradition

9. Sacred sites, sites of particular significance and places important for cultural tradition refer to place-based Traditional Owner heritage.
10. Sacred sites are places often relating to creation events, dreaming tracks or songlines travelled by spiritual beings during the creation period. These are most often taboo and not publically known.
11. Sites of particular significance include contemporary sites such as sites of protest, disquiet and historical significance. They also include historical usage sites, such as middens and fish traps, and land and sea boundaries which distinguish language groups.
12. Places important for cultural tradition include places important for resources, such as breeding grounds and fishing areas. Seasons, movements of animals and weather conditions can be used as signals and are often linked to stories and songlines.
13. Many of the sites in the Great Barrier Reef are now underwater, from thousands of years ago when sea levels were up to 130 metres lower than current levels.

EXAMPLES

Sacred sites may be creation or resting places for ancestral spirits, places that contain healing water and medicinal plants, burial grounds, traditional tracks of Indigenous peoples' movements or sites associated with special events.

The flowering of the kapok tree on Magnetic Island is a sign that it is time to fish for mackerel, thus the trees are important for cultural tradition to continue.

Traditional Owner structures, technology, tools and archaeology

14. Traditional Owner structures, technology, tools and archaeology refer to objects that were used for daily activities, such as hunting, cooking, collecting, boating and fishing.
15. Tools, implements and technologies reflect the geographic location of each group, the environmental resources at their disposal and their trading interactions with other groups.

EXAMPLES

Fish traps (including disturbed ones), middens, stone axes, cooking implements, baskets, shelters, pottery, quarries, sharpening rocks, cooking stones and shells, grinding grooves, stone chipping areas, trail markers, underwater structures (which were once above sea level), burial grounds, living areas, boundary markers, trees (evidence of historic woodlands), canoes, rock structures, rock art, scarred trees from bark removal.

Stories, songlines, totems and languages

- 16. Stories, songlines, and languages, as well as music and dance, are expressive social activities that are part of Traditional Owner heritage and identity and an integral aspect of ceremonies. These media are used to pass down cultural information, such as knowledge of the environment and the responsibility to maintain all living species, places or objects in a sustainable manner. They are used to teach, form part of people’s inheritance and are also for enjoyment.
- 17. A totem is a natural object (such as a plant, animal or physical force like wind) that is adopted as a family or clan’s spiritual emblem. Different clans are assigned different totems, and in some cases individuals are given personal totems at birth. Traditional Owners play an active role in managing their totem, both physically (such as by protecting its condition) and spiritually (such as by conducting ceremonies). Totems are closely linked to expressions in song, dance, music and on cultural implements.

EXAMPLE

The Yama (diamond stingray) is one of the totems of the Wuthathi tribe (Shelbourne Bay of Cape York), therefore an activity that may impact on this totem species within the Wuthathi sea country area would be of concern for the Traditional Owners.

Cultural practices, observances, customs and lore

- 18. Cultural practices, observances, customs and lore refer to systems and processes of lore or law, skills, folklore, rituals, religious beliefs and intellectual traditions, passed down from generation to generation.
- 19. These include traditional hunting, seasonal and cultural use of resources, and control of access to sea country.
- 20. In addition, plants and animals may hold significant cultural values. The most significant are referred to as ‘cultural keystone species’ for the fundamental role they play in certain Traditional Owner group’s cultural practices, including through diet, materials, medicine, totems and stories.

EXAMPLES

Interconnections with Traditional Owner heritage values

- 1. Hunting of green turtles (*Chelonia mydas*) and dugong (*Dugong dugon*) is an important cultural tradition of most Great Barrier Reef Traditional Owners. The values surrounding the hunting include the ceremony and authorisation process by elders prior to the hunt, the animals, the seagrass and ecosystem that supports them, the passing on of the skills and knowledge involved in the hunting itself, the hunting, and the dances and ceremonies associated with the feast.
- 2. Mandingalbay Yidinji Traditional Owners, like other coastal Aboriginal groups in the Cairns area, developed a wide range of technologies from local material for use in hunting, fighting, making substantial shelters, baskets, fish traps and tools. Well into the twentieth century, single outrigger canoes were used extensively for fishing, hunting and travelling.



Traditional hunting is provided for in Section 211 of the Native Title Act 1993.
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The dugong is a culturally significant animal in the lives and economies of Traditional Owner communities.
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3. Traditional Owners of the Whitsunday Islands, the Ngaro peoples, built sturdy three-piece bark canoes that were capable of open sea journeys. In examples such as the use of canoes, protection of heritage values would include protecting the trees providing the raw materials, the language and customs to pass on the knowledge, any archaeological artefacts like scar trees or fish traps, and potentially places such as songlines and fishing grounds used during the journeys.
4. The totem of the Woppaburra people is the 'Mugga Mugga' (humpback whale). Traditional Owner values would include the whales, their feeding grounds and migration routes, the songlines and stories associated with the totem, and potentially sacred sites associated with creation stories.



Welcome to Country by Woppaburra Traditional Owners of the Keppel Islands region
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Mugga Mugga is the language name and totem of the Woppaburra people.
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Importance to the Marine Park

21. The protection and conservation of their heritage values in the Marine Park is of great importance for Traditional Owners and other Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people, for the conservation of the Great Barrier Reef, and for national and international identity and heritage. Indigenous heritage is irreplaceable, and once lost or damaged can be lost to humankind.
22. Continuing traditions require intact Traditional Owner heritage values. Cultural connection is the key to preserving the connection between the past, present and future. It also establishes a firm sense of self, self-identity and importantly, a connection to place and kin.

Vital for Traditional Owner wellbeing

23. Access to Traditional Owner heritage is vital for Traditional Owner's spirituality, identity, health, culture and lore. Evidence of Traditional Owner sea country connection with the Great Barrier Reef goes back over 60,000 years. Today, Traditional Owner clans maintain ancient and contemporary cultural practices and customs and use and pass information and knowledge across generations.
24. The protection and conservation of Traditional Owner heritage is pivotal in maintaining their identity, health and wellbeing.² Social, cultural and economic benefits are derived from connection to country. Connection to culture increases self-esteem and health outcomes in Indigenous communities.⁵
25. Access to places and their objects are necessary to maintain Traditional Owner cultural practices and customs and fulfil obligations under lore. Stories, songs, dance, dress, art and language connect people to a place, clan group or time. They provide history, learning and perspective, and pass on both cultural and natural resource management knowledge.

Important for the environment

26. The protection and conservation of Indigenous heritage also has significant environmental benefits, as Traditional Owner practices are entwined with environmental management. Many sites of significance are areas of great importance for the conservation of biodiversity across land and sea country. The stewardship role played by Traditional Owners is for both protecting the spiritual connections between people and the earth and conserving biodiversity.
27. The traditional ecological knowledge held by Traditional Owner knowledge holders, gained through practices which have evolved over thousands of years, offers many lessons for protection and

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sustainable use of the Marine Park. Important skills and traditional ecological knowledge are passed down from one generation to the next through cultural practices and is internationally recognised under the United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples (2008). The Declaration recognises that Indigenous knowledge, cultures and traditional practices contributes to sustainable and equitable development and proper management of the environment.⁶

EXAMPLE

Traditional Owners controlling use of and access to sea country estates regulates resource use based on cultural practices and belief systems.

Important for Australia

28. Traditional Owner heritage is important to all Australia because of its historical and anthropological value. It forms part of a 'rich natural and cultural heritage that underpins our sense of place and national identity and makes a positive contribution to the nation's wellbeing'.⁷ Australia is home to one of the richest and oldest continuing cultures in the world.
29. The Great Barrier Reef formed in the presence of Indigenous people. Their heritage contains valuable knowledge over long time scales. Archaeological sites document past Traditional Owner use of the Great Barrier Reef and its islands and coast and show the connections between coastal and hinterland Indigenous people, such as trade links. Ancient rock art sites help chronicle the history and heritage of Indigenous people, while oral histories transferred through time deliver traditional knowledge and understanding about tools or technology, structures and archaeology sites.

EXAMPLE

Traditional Owner people follow the same seasonal patterns as their ancestors. The transfer of these skills and knowledge means different resources continue to be exploited at different times of the year. Seasonal and cultural use of marine resources and the opening or closing of harvesting seasons according to ecological events (for example, flowering of particular plants or the arrival of migratory bird species) continue to be practised by Great Barrier Reef Traditional Owners.

Important for humankind

30. Traditional Owner heritage of the Great Barrier Reef World Heritage Area is important to all humankind. The strong ongoing links between Traditional Owners and their sea country is one of the attributes recognised as contributing to the Outstanding Universal Value of the Great Barrier Reef as a World Heritage Area.
31. Natural sites held as sacred to people's spirituality are under threat across the world, being poorly understood and protected, and often ignored, affecting the fundamental rights of local cultures.⁸

Management

32. This section explains the most commonly used legislation, policies and management plans in managing Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander heritage. Also refer to the Policy – Environmental Impact Management – Permission System for a list of legislation, standards and policies used through the permission system.

Zoning and Legislation

33. Traditional Owner heritage values of the Marine Park are protected by both international ([Convention for the Protection of the World Cultural and Natural Heritage, 1972](#)) and national legislation ([Great Barrier Reef Marine Park Act 1975](#), [Environment Protection and Biodiversity Conservation Act 1999 \(EPBC Act\)](#) and [Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Heritage Protection Act 1984](#)).
34. The interaction of Traditional Owners with the natural environment contributes to the [Outstanding Universal Value of the World Heritage Listing of the Great Barrier Reef](#) under the World Heritage Convention 1972.² Australia is obligated to protect the Outstanding Universal Value of World Heritage listed places.
35. Low Island is listed on the [Commonwealth Heritage List](#) for its Indigenous heritage value. It has significance to Kuku Yalanji and Yiriganji as part of their dreamings. The Commonwealth Heritage List

is established through the *EPBC Act* and the Authority works in close partnership with the Traditional Owner groups to protect its Indigenous heritage value.

36. The [National Heritage List](#) established through the *EPBC Act* includes the same values as what has been described under the World Heritage listing.
37. The [Great Barrier Reef Marine Park Act 1975](#) (GBRMP Act) specifically includes providing for the long term protection and conservation of heritage values of the Great Barrier Reef Region in its main object. A secondary object of the GBRMP Act is to allow ecologically sustainable use of the Great Barrier Reef Region for purposes which include cultural activities and research in relation to cultural systems and value of the Great Barrier Reef Region.
38. [Traditional Use of Marine Resources Agreements](#) (TUMRAs) can be accredited by the Great Barrier Reef Marine Park Authority (the Authority) under the [Great Barrier Reef Marine Park Regulations 2019](#) (the Regulations) and the Great Barrier Reef Marine Park Zoning Plan 2003 (the Zoning Plan). TUMRAs describe how Traditional Owner groups partner with the Australian and Queensland governments to manage traditional use activities on their sea country. For more information refer to [Guidelines: Applications for permission \(Application guidelines\)](#) and [Guidelines: Permission assessment and decision \(Assessment guidelines\)](#).
39. Part 5 of the Zoning Plan allows certain traditional uses without the need for TUMRA accreditation or written permission from the Authority.
40. Traditional Owners may have specific rights under the [Native Title Act 1993](#) that override the need for the Authority's permission. See the section on *Native Title Notification* in the [Assessment guidelines](#) for information on how the Authority complies with Future Act Notice requirements in the Native Title Act.

Policy

41. The Authority's [Great Barrier Reef Marine Park Heritage Strategy 2005](#) (Heritage Strategy) outlines actions to identify assess and monitor the Marine Park's heritage values, including Indigenous heritage. This includes developing a heritage register and heritage management plans for individual sites.
42. The Authority has published the [Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Heritage Strategy](#) to improve the conservation and protection of cultural heritage values in the Marine Park, which is consistent with Objective 9 (to focus protection efforts on Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander heritage) of the [Australian Heritage Strategy 2015](#).
43. Complementary to these guidelines, are location specific guidelines that provide an overview of the Traditional Owner values of a specific group or clan and provide consultation details when consulting with relevant Traditional Owners. Impact assessment guidelines have been developed for the Woppaburra TUMRA area (which includes the Keppel islands) to establish location specific assessment guidelines (refer to the [Woppaburra Traditional Owner Assessment Guidelines](#)).
44. [Position statement on indigenous participation in tourism and its management](#) is relevant for tourism proposals.
45. The Australian Heritage Committee's [Ask First: a guide to respecting Indigenous heritage places and values \(2002\)](#)² stresses the importance of allowing the relevant Traditional Owners to determine the significance of values in accordance with their culture before agreeing to how heritage values should be managed. It is recommended Ask First guidelines are followed.
46. The Australian Department of the Environment and Energy's [Engage early – guidance for proponents on best practice Indigenous engagement for environmental assessments under the Environment Protection and Biodiversity Conservation Act 1999](#) (2016) is a useful short reference.⁶
47. [The Burra Charter: The Australia ICOMOS Charter for Places of Cultural Significance, 2013](#) provides best practice guidance on the conservation and management of cultural heritage places in Australia.

Management objectives

48. The joint Queensland and Commonwealth [Reef 2050 Long-term Sustainability Plan](#) (Reef 2050) responds to the challenges facing the Great Barrier Reef and presents actions to protect its values, health and resilience while allowing ecologically sustainable use. It addresses the findings of the [Outlook Report](#) and builds on the [Strategic Assessment](#). Reef 2050 specifically identifies the need to build capacity to involve Traditional Owners in cooperative management, including impact assessment.
49. The [Strategic Assessment](#) and the [Outlook Report](#) concluded that Indigenous heritage values in the Great Barrier Reef Region are in poor condition and deteriorating (refer to Table 1). Specifically, the [Outlook Report](#) found:
 - a. Traditional Owners with connections to the Great Barrier Reef are maintaining their cultural practices and customs.
 - b. Places of Traditional Owner heritage have not been systematically identified (so are unknown other than by the Traditional Owner knowledge holders) and many have deteriorated, especially around developed areas and on islands.
 - c. Some species of cultural significance are under pressure.
 - d. Story, language and songlines are being affected by activities in the Great Barrier Reef.

Table 1: Summary assessment of Indigenous heritage value condition, trend and overall management objective based on the [Outlook Report 2014](#) and the [Great Barrier Reef Region Strategic Assessment Report](#).

Value	Current condition	Trend	Management objective
Sacred sites, sites of particular significance and places important for cultural tradition	Poor	Deteriorating	Improve
Structures, technology, tools and archaeology	Poor	Deteriorating	Improve
Stories, songlines, totems and languages	Poor	Deteriorating	Improve
Cultural practices, observances, customs and lore	Good	Stable	Maintain

Common assessment considerations

50. Depending on the proposed activity and the assessment approach required, Traditional Owners may be consulted to provide advice on potential impacts to their values and identify suitable avoidance and mitigation measures that reduce the risk to their values. The following provides guidance on Traditional Owner consultation for each assessment approach:
 1. Routine – relevant matters are addressed through the Authority planning arrangements (such as site management plans and Plans of Management), which include exclusions and restrictions.
 2. Tailored – Traditional Owners may be consulted depending on the proposed activity, location, available information and identified risks to their values.
 3. Public Information Package – public consultation is required and consultation with key stakeholders, including Traditional Owners is recommended.
 4. Public Environment Report and Environmental Impact Statement – Terms of Reference describes consultation requirements, and is likely to recommend more extensive consultation with Traditional Owners and other stakeholders.
51. In the case of higher risk activities, Traditional Owners may also be involved in the developing a Traditional Owner Heritage Management Plan as part of an Environmental Management Plan (refer to [Assessment Guidelines](#)). In some cases Traditional Owners may be involved in designing related monitoring programs aimed to protect their values.
52. The values of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islanders who are not Traditional Owners will be considered through the assessment of potential impacts on social values from a proposed activity (refer to [social value assessment guidelines](#)). Also refer to '[Other places of historic significance](#)'.

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53. Determine if the Australian Heritage Commission guide 'Ask first' best practice approach in engaging with Traditional Owners has been followed. Determine if the significance of values in accordance with their culture has been described, and avoidance and mitigation measures identified, along with appropriate monitoring and management approaches.
54. Most information about Indigenous heritage is held by Traditional Owners. For intellectual property and cultural reasons, information may not be disclosed to government agencies and as such is not routinely recorded or held by the Authority. Information maintained by Traditional Owners may reside in knowledge keepers themselves, or within formal documentation systems managed by Traditional Owner groups. Release of knowledge must be through an authorisation process governed by Traditional Owners as the knowledge holders.
55. Traditional Owners have rights and interests in their heritage values and need to be involved in the assessment of activities that might impact on those values. Through membership in a descent group or clan, Traditional Owners have responsibility for caring for a particular area of country and are authorised to speak for their country and its heritage. **It is important during an assessment process in a particular area that the right people speak for the right country, otherwise any purported authority given may not be of any effect.** The [Queensland Cultural Heritage Register and Database](#) provides the authorised contacts for each coastal area. The [Native Title Tribunal](#) provides authorised contacts where determinations are in place or under consideration.
56. In addition, the Authority's website lists Traditional Owner partners who have an [accredited TUMRA](#) which clearly defines sea country boundaries. It also contains a list of Traditional Owner groups and their spatial affiliation to assist with contacts for more information. The regions provided in the information are based on broad areas and are an indication only where Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people assert rights and interests.
57. [Story place](#) is a the Authority's reference database that shares information and knowledge about Traditional Owners and their relationship with land and sea country in the Great Barrier Reef.

Links to other values

Biodiversity value

58. Maintaining and improving Traditional Owner heritage values is inherently connected to the biodiversity and health of the Great Barrier Reef habitats and ecosystems.
59. Impacts on biodiversity degrade and impact on Traditional Owner heritage values as biodiversity is fundamental to their connection to land and sea country.² Traditional Owners have custodial responsibilities as part of their lore which ties them to country, thereby ensuring the maintenance of spiritual, cultural, biological and other values of such sites.
60. Refer to each individual [value assessment guidelines](#) for more information.

Social values

61. Traditional Owners have long highlighted the benefits to their communities through their connections to sea country, access to Reef resources, employment and improved health outcomes.⁹ Traditional Owner heritage values align with broader social values and two main themes include community benefits (such as Traditional Owner wellbeing) and economic benefits (such as Traditional Owner use and dependency).
 - Traditional Owner wellbeing – affected by access; aesthetics; appreciation, understanding and enjoyment; human health; equity and empowerment.
 - Traditional Owner use and dependency – influenced by employment and income; access; aesthetics; personal connection; equity and empowerment.
62. Traditional Owners of the Great Barrier Reef, along with other Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islanders, have unique social needs and connections and are to be considered in any social impact assessments. Attributes of social value include (also refer to [Guidelines: Social value assessment in the permission system](#) for further information and examples):

- a. **aesthetics** which includes a sense of history, a sense of place, inspiration, spiritual connections, opportunities for learning, relaxation, recreation and escapism.¹⁰ A Traditional Owner's perspective on aesthetic values may also include cultural expressions such as storytelling, mythology, spirituality, literature, music/art, symbols of power, wealth.¹⁰ Impacts to aesthetics are likely to persist in the longer term, there are possible equity considerations where the impact may be evident for one or many generations. Aesthetics also influences human health and wellbeing.
- b. **human health** should consider opportunities for maintaining and enhancing those things that strengthen the physical and mental health of Indigenous people – for example, access to healthy food and the ability to maintain cultural traditions and strong connect to place.
- c. **employment and income** should consider opportunities for enhancing Traditional Owner involvement, such as through direct and indirect employment arising from the proposed project.
- d. **personal connection** should consider the unique personal connections that Traditional Owners have with their country and sea country and explore opportunities for removing barriers.
- e. **equity** contributes to Traditional Owner wellbeing and their use and dependency. Equity may be impacted by any use that might change the ability of others (current or future generations) to access, enjoy, appreciate and use of the Great Barrier Reef Marine Park. Equity may also be compromised if there are impacts to human health through the decline of ecosystem health or contamination of air, water or sediments.
- f. **empowerment** contributes to Traditional Owner wellbeing and their use and dependency. Empowerment is reflected in willingness to participate meaningfully in the protection and management of country. If empowerment is compromised it may have implications for Traditional Owner wellbeing.

63. Refer to [Guidelines: Social value assessment in the permission system](#) for more information.

Historic heritage value

64. Historic heritage relates to the occupation and use of an area since the arrival of Europeans and other migrants. It illustrates the way in which the many cultures of Australian people have modified, shaped and created the cultural environment.
65. Traditional Owners were severely impacted by colonisation, and many of their heritage values declined during and following that period in Australian history. Stories and sites associated with colonisation are reminders of this difficult time and link present generations to their ancestors. These sites may also be significant to other Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islanders through their own experiences, where the sites may be associated with a mission or a massacre site. The sites may also be significant to other Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islanders out of respect for Traditional Owners. Further, the stories and sites may also be significant to non-Indigenous people in that they provide an important avenue to increase the understanding of what occurred in Australia at that stage in history. Such sites of historic heritage value are also discussed in [other places of historic significance assessment guidelines](#) and [Woppaburra value assessment guidelines](#).
66. Indigenous Australians have served in the Australian armed forces in most conflicts since the start of last century, including World War I and II.¹¹ During World War II, large numbers of Australian and foreign forces were based throughout the Great Barrier Reef and interacted with Traditional Owners both positively and negatively.
67. More recent history also forms part of Indigenous heritage values, for example campaigns for Indigenous recognition and rights from 1960 onwards.
68. Refer to assessment guidelines on [World War II features and sites, historic voyages and shipwrecks](#), and [other places of historic significance](#).

Hazards

69. The Risk assessment procedure lists the most common potential hazards to the values of the Marine Park, as well as permission types able to be granted under the Zoning Plan. The hazards associated with permitted activities that are most likely to impact directly on Traditional Owner heritage value are listed in Table 2. Possible avoidance, mitigation and monitoring measures are discussed in the mitigation and monitoring section below.

Table 2: Summary of hazards, related permission types and possible impacts.

Hazard	Related permission types (generally)	Possible Impact (effect on value)
Acid sulphate soils	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Carrying out works (dredging, dumping of spoil, harbour works, reclamation) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Exposure of acid sulphate soils can have impact on biodiversity values and ecosystem health and thus impacts on Traditional Owner values, including their wellbeing and their use and dependency. Impacts on their social values, including aesthetics (environmental and experiential attributes), human health, appreciation and enjoyment, personal connection and equity.
Artificial light or change in natural light	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Operating a facility Research, other than limited impact research 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Artificial lights impair the visibility of stars and constellations in the night sky, causing impact to their cultural practices, observances, customs and lore, with flow on impacts to their spiritual connection and wellbeing. Changes to light may also impact on sites or artefacts. Night lighting for extended periods (including on vessels) may disorient or disrupt totem species or species of significance, for example nesting turtles and hatchlings, coral spawning. Impacts on their social values, including aesthetics (environmental and experiential attributes), human health, appreciation and enjoyment, personal connection, and equity.
Change in current or future human use pattern	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Operating a facility Conducting a tourist program Conducting a vessel or aircraft charter operation Conducting an education program 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Change in access and the presence of visitors may restrict or impede Traditional Owner use and dependency, with follow-on implications for their wellbeing. Increase pressure on both tangible (including sites and artefacts) and intangible (including stories, songlines, totems, cultural practices, observances, customs and lore) Traditional Owner values. Increase visitation and/or infrastructure may impact on aesthetics by changing the visual appearance underwater, at the water surface or aerially; change in the ambiance of an area by increasing noise and decreasing air quality. Impact on their social values, including personal connection, understanding, appreciation and enjoyment, and equity. Impact on aesthetics may change the beauty, naturalness, solitude, tranquillity, remoteness, for example. Increased access may result in positive impact on the public's understanding and appreciation of Traditional Owner values and provide Traditional Owners with avenues for economic benefit.

Hazard	Related permission types (generally)	Possible Impact (effect on value)
		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Some facilities may enhance Traditional Owner access to country, for example jetties or boat ramps, and therefore strengthen Traditional Owner values. Such benefits should be maximised while negative impacts avoided and minimised. When Traditional Owners and researchers share scientific and traditional ecological knowledge, research may have positive impacts on Traditional Owner values and can increase the overall understanding of the cultural and biodiversity values.
Change in hydrodynamics	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Carrying out works (dredging, dumping of spoil, harbour works, reclamation) Operating a facility 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Change in hydrodynamics through operating a facility (such as marina or breakwater) may cause sites or artefacts to be buried or eroded. Impacts on biodiversity values and ecosystem health results in impacts to Traditional Owner values. Impacts on their social values, including aesthetics (environmental and experiential attributes), appreciation and enjoyment, personal connection, and equity.
Change in ecological processes	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Carrying out works (dredging, dumping of spoil, harbour works, reclamation) Operating a facility Research, other than limited impact research 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Impact on biodiversity values and ecosystem health results in impacts to Traditional Owner values. Impacts on their social values, including aesthetics (environmental and experiential attributes), appreciation and enjoyment, personal connection, employment and income, and equity.
Change in noise	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Carrying out works (dredging, dumping of spoil, harbour works, reclamation) Operating a facility Conducting a vessel or aircraft charter operation 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Impacts on their social values, including aesthetics - noise pollution can alter experiential attributes such as beauty, naturalness, solitude, tranquillity, remoteness. Noise pollution can also impact human health, thus Traditional Owner wellbeing, as well as their use and dependency. Noise pollution can impact on other social values such as appreciation and enjoyment, personal connection, employment and income, and equity. Installing facilities, use of equipment or generators, idling vessels, high-speed vessels, low-flying aircraft, create underwater noise which may interrupt the natural behaviour of wildlife causing impacts to totem species or species of significance, as well as disturb Traditional Owners. Large numbers of people and crew create noise and disturbance, which may also have implications for wildlife and Traditional Owners.
Change in nutrients	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Carrying out works (dredging, dumping of spoil, harbour works, reclamation) Operating a facility Conducting an aquaculture operation 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Nutrients discharged through operating a facility can impact the health of receiving habitats and ecosystems and thus on Traditional Owner values. Change in nutrients can impact on the water quality locally and regionally and over short and long term timeframes, thus impact on Traditional Owner values.

Hazard	Related permission types (generally)	Possible Impact (effect on value)
		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Impacts on their social values, including aesthetics (environmental and experiential attributes), appreciation and enjoyment, personal connection, employment and income, and equity.
Change in salinity	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Operating a facility 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Impact on biodiversity and ecosystem health results in impacts to Traditional Owner values. Impacts on their social values, including aesthetics (environmental and experiential attributes).
Change in sea temperature	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Operating a facility 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Impact on biodiversity and ecosystem health results in impacts to Traditional Owner values. Impacts on their social values, including aesthetics (environmental and experiential attributes).
Change in sedimentation	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Carrying out works (dredging, dumping of spoil, harbour works, reclamation) Operating a facility 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Sediment moved intentionally (carrying out works or operating a facility) or unintentionally (vessels, change in hydrodynamics) can impact the health of receiving habitats and ecosystems and thus on Traditional Owner values. Change in sedimentation can impact on the water quality locally or regionally and over short and long term timeframes (through dispersion, resuspension or consolidation of sediment), thus impact on Traditional Owner values. In some cases, changes in sedimentation may result in sites or artefacts being buried or eroded. Impacts on their social values, including aesthetics (environmental and experiential attributes), appreciation and enjoyment, personal connection, employment and income, and equity.
Change in wind patterns	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Operating a facility 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> May impact on Traditional Owner values.
Contamination of air	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Carrying out works (dredging, dumping of spoil, harbour works, reclamation) Operating a facility 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Air contamination can have implications on human health, thus Traditional Owner wellbeing, as well as their use and dependency. Contamination of air can also affect wildlife and thus impact on Traditional Owner values. Impacts on aesthetics from air pollution can alter experiential attributes such as beauty, naturalness, solitude, tranquillity, remoteness. Further, air contamination may trigger negative sense responses through sight, smell and taste. Air pollution can impact on other social values, such appreciation and enjoyment, personal connection, employment and income, and equity.

Hazard	Related permission types (generally)	Possible Impact (effect on value)
Contamination of water or sediment	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Carrying out works (dredging, dumping of spoil, harbour works, reclamation) • Operating a facility • Conducting an aquaculture operation • Navigating a managed vessel, aircraft or ship • Research other than limited impact research 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Contamination of sediment or water can have implications on human health, thus Traditional Owner wellbeing, as well as their use and dependency. • Any degradation of the ecosystem health and function will impact on Traditional Owner values. • Impacts on other social values, including aesthetics (environmental and experiential attributes), appreciation and enjoyment, personal connection, employment and income, and equity.
Direct damage, removal or destruction of non-living things	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Carrying out works (dredging, dumping of spoil, harbour works, reclamation) • Operating a facility 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Damaging or removing an artefact could cause irreversible loss of known or unknown Traditional Owner heritage, both tangible (e.g. sites and artefacts) and intangible (e.g. stories, songlines, totems, cultural practices, observances, customs and lore) attributes. For example, impacts may occur when dredging a channel or installing a facility that interrupt a songline or storyline, or disturb an unknown submerged artefact or site. • Archaeological research may result in the handling or even the removal of artefacts, if they cannot be conserved in place. • Impacts on other social values, including aesthetics (environmental and experiential attributes), understanding, appreciation and enjoyment, personal connection, employment and income, and equity.
Direct death or removal of living things, including vessel strike	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Carrying out works (dredging, dumping of spoil, harbour works, reclamation) • Operating a facility • Fishing involving harvest fishery • Research other than limited impact research • Program to take animals or plants that pose a threat 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Intentional or unintentional death or removal of living things (including totem species or species of significance) may impact on cultural tradition, such as stories, songline, totems, cultural practices, observances, customs and lore. • Plants or non-sessile animals (such as corals or clams) are destroyed by propeller damage, trampling, or other physical disturbance by vessels, people or equipment. Handling or disturbance of wildlife may lead to death. • Impacts on biodiversity and ecosystem health results in impacts to Traditional Owner values. • Changes to seafloor at the immediate mooring site may provide longer term benefits by removing/limiting anchor damage in an area. • Impacts on social values, including aesthetics (environmental and experiential attributes), human health, understanding, appreciation and enjoyment, personal connection, employment and income, and equity.
Direct injury or disturbance of living things, including translocation	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Carrying out works (dredging, dumping of spoil, harbour works, reclamation) • Operating a facility • Fishing involving harvest fishery • Research other than limited impact research 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Impacts on biodiversity and ecosystem health results in impacts to Traditional Owner values. • Intentional or unintentional injury or disturbance to wildlife (including totem species or species of significance) may impact on cultural tradition, such as stories, songline, totems, cultural practices, observances, customs and lore. • Flow-on impacts are also likely, for example removing seagrass to construct a new harbour

Hazard	Related permission types (generally)	Possible Impact (effect on value)
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Program to take animals or plants that pose a threat 	<p>may impact local fish, turtle or dugong population on which the Traditional Owners relies.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Changes to seafloor at the immediate mooring site may provide longer term benefits by removing/limiting anchor damage in an area. Traditional Owners may have particular interest in the research and become directly involved in research and monitoring, for example research involving their totem species, to understand the population change and migratory patterns or monitoring of marine habitats. Refer to Guidelines: Managing Research in the Great Barrier Reef Marine Park. Impacts on social values, including aesthetics (environmental and experiential attributes), understanding, appreciation and enjoyment, personal connection, employment and income, and equity.
Exotic species or diseases	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Carrying out works (dredging, dumping of spoil, harbour works, reclamation) Conducting a tourist program Operating a facility Conducting a vessel or charter operation Research other than limited impact research Program to take animals or plants that pose a threat 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Impacts on totem species or species of significance impacts Traditional Owner values. Impacts on biodiversity and ecosystem health results in impacts to Traditional Owner values. Impacts on social values, including aesthetics (environmental and experiential attributes), human health, understanding, appreciation and enjoyment, personal connection, employment and income, and equity.
Marine debris	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Conducting a tourist program Operating a facility Conducting a vessel or charter operation Navigating a managed vessel, aircraft or ship Research other than limited impact research 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Packaging or waste released into the ocean causes marine debris in Traditional Owner land and sea country. Entanglement of wildlife, including totem species and species of significance to Traditional Owners. Ingestion by wildlife, including totem species and species of significance to Traditional Owners. Bioaccumulation of plastics in the food chain causing human health implications and thus impacts on Traditional Owner wellbeing and use and dependency. Impacts on other social values, including aesthetics (environmental and experiential attributes), understanding, appreciation and enjoyment, personal connection, employment and income, and equity.

Mitigation and monitoring

70. The Authority expects that proponents will involve Traditional Owners from an early stage in identifying potential impacts and evaluating possible ways to avoid or mitigate these impacts.

EXAMPLE

Some possible avoidance and mitigation measures might include:

- a. consulting Traditional Owners to determine areas of significance and seek their advice on appropriate avoidance and mitigation measures. Some measures may involve agreeing on exclusion zones or times with Traditional Owners to protect significant sites or to avoid disrupting cultural practices
- b. researching historical documents and other publications to identify significant sites
- c. conducting a pre-disturbance cultural heritage survey
- d. maximising opportunities for Traditional Owner employment
- e. designing facilities to improve Traditional Owner access to country while avoiding significant sites
- f. educating people about Traditional Owner heritage values, for example through signage or educational and training materials for tour guides, and acknowledging Traditional Owner's names of sites (including the names of dive sites) or animals.

71. If applicable (refer to [Application Guidelines – pre-application information](#)), detailed cultural heritage surveys may need to be conducted and recorded by an appropriately qualified person, which examines the proposed footprint area and buffer of the activity, prior to submitting a Marine Parks permit application. If applicable (refer to [Assessment Guidelines – Management Plans](#)), the applicant is to provide an Environmental Management Plan, which includes a Traditional Owner Heritage Management Plan (written in consultation with the Traditional Owners) and it may be required at the time of application.
72. The Authority encourages applicants to invite Traditional Owners to participate in research and monitoring activities and recognise their contribution in any relevant reports or publications (refer to [Guidelines: Managing Research in the Great Barrier Reef Marine Park](#)).
73. Traditional Owner heritage value monitoring standards are being established through the [Reef Integrated Monitoring and Reporting Program](#). Where the Authority standards have not yet been established, applicants should use best available knowledge, founded on consultation with Traditional Owners, to propose how changes to their values will be monitored.

Consequence

77. Consequences are to be determined on a case-by-case basis in consultation with Traditional Owners, guided by the Authority's [Risk assessment procedure](#).

Assessment information

78. Additional information may be required depending on the type of activity. This is outlined based on the assessment approach. Refer to the Application guidelines for more information on how assessment approaches are determined.
79. The following information may be required to inform an assessment and decision:
- a. evidence of consultation with relevant Traditional Owners
 - b. evidence that relevant Traditional Owners have been actively involved in identifying their heritage places and values
 - c. any special management requirements and considerations that have been identified through consultation with relevant Traditional Owners
 - d. all stakeholders have met to identify constraints on managing heritage places and values
 - e. results of research or surveys
 - f. an environmental management plan which includes a Traditional Owner heritage management plan
 - g. other Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people who are not Traditional Owners may have their interests considered through the assessment of social and historic heritage values.

Implementation

80. These guidelines will be reviewed and updated if required at least every three (3) years.
81. The Permission System Policy and other guidelines are available which provide further detail on how the Authority assesses, decides and manages specific aspects of the permission system and the application process.
82. For actions that are wholly or partially outside the Marine Parks, the Authority will continue to liaise with the Commonwealth Department responsible for the EPBC Act. Where a bilateral agreement exists between the Australian Government and the Queensland Government, depending on the terms of the agreement the Commonwealth Department's role may be delivered by the Queensland Government. The Authority will work with both levels of government according to agreed procedures, such as a Memorandum of Understanding, to provide advice on matters that may affect the Great Barrier Reef.

Definitions

Refer to the [Permission System Policy](#) for a list of general definitions relating to the permission system.

Archaeology

The study of the material traces of the human past.¹²

Country

In Aboriginal English, a person's land, sea, sky, rivers, sites, seasons, plants and animals; place of heritage, belonging and spirituality; is called 'Country'.¹²

Culture

The accepted and traditionally patterned ways of behaving and a set of common understandings shared by members of a group or community. Includes land, language, ways of living and working artistic expression, relationships and identity.¹²

Dreaming

A western term used to describe the Aboriginal spirituality system. The Dreaming encompasses all the cultural values, laws and knowledge which is passed down through song, dance, painting and storytelling to each generation. Each language group has their own term to describe their belief system.¹²

Elder

Highly respected Aboriginal people held in esteem by their communities for their wisdom, cultural knowledge and community service. They are responsible for making decisions within the community.¹²

Estate

An area of country belonging to a particular Indigenous group.

Indigenous

Native to a place or area, originating in and characterising a particular region or country.¹² Refers to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples or cultures of Australia.

Kinship

Traditional kinship relations continue to play a role in contemporary Aboriginal (and Torres Strait Islander) communities. While Australian family life often centres on the nuclear family made up of parents and children, Aboriginal (and Torres Strait Islander) family life includes grandparents, aunts, uncles, cousins, second cousins and the mob.¹²

Lore

Handed down by the Creation Ancestors and upheld by Aboriginal communities for thousands of generations, Law (Lore) includes the accepted and traditionally patterned ways of behaving and shared understandings relating to land, language, ways of living, kinship, relationships and identity.¹²

Mission

Areas originally set up and governed by different religious denomination for Aboriginal people to live.¹²

Songlines

A songline is a track across the land, sky or sea following a journey of a Creation Ancestor. Songlines are recorded in Creation stories, songs, paintings and dance. A knowledgeable person is able to navigate across the land by repeating the words of the songs describing the location of landmarks, waterholes, and other natural phenomena. By singing the songs in the appropriate sequence, Indigenous people could navigate vast distances. Australia contains an extensive system of songlines, many which pass through multiple Aboriginal countries.¹²

Totem

Means a natural object that is adopted as a family or clan's spiritual emblem.

Traditional Owner group

Has the meaning given by the Great Barrier Reef Marine Park Regulations 2019.

Supporting information

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10. Context Pty Ltd 2013, *Defining the aesthetic values of the Great Barrier Reef*, Department of Sustainability, Environment, Water, Population and Communities, Canberra.
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Further information

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