



Australian Government

Great Barrier Reef  
Marine Park Authority

# GREAT BARRIER REEF Outlook Report 2019

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## HERITAGE

Human-induced climate change is challenging the integrity of the World Heritage Area; its size is becoming a less effective buffer against broadscale impacts.

While the current impacts and changes from disturbances are minor on an evolutionary scale, they are unprecedented and will be long-lasting.

### What the Outlook Report 2019 says about heritage

The Great Barrier Reef is a World Heritage Area that is recognised throughout the world for its outstanding universal value. Its aesthetic beauty and marine biodiversity are the foundation for this heritage — its natural values. Within this amazing marine environment there are also important indigenous and historic heritage values.



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### World and national heritage values

The assessments of world and national heritage values are combined. This is because the Region's national heritage listing is based on its recognition as a world heritage property — meaning its national heritage values reflect its world heritage values.

The Great Barrier Reef remains whole and intact and maintains many of the elements that make up its outstanding universal value, as recognised in its world heritage listing.

The world and national heritage component of the Region's heritage values is considered *good*, borderline with *poor*. This is due to the condition of some key world heritage attributes being *good*

borderline *poor* and habitats for the conservation of biodiversity deteriorating to *poor*.

The Region remains a globally outstanding example of an ecosystem that has evolved over millennia. The natural beauty of most of the Region remains, however, its underwater aesthetic value has declined in some areas. External pressures, predominantly climate change, are affecting the property's integrity.

### Indigenous heritage values

More than 70 Traditional Owner clan groups maintain connection to sea country within the Region. While Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples have some common heritage values, there are also many unique expressions of heritage for each group. These include:

- Cultural practices, observances, customs and lore comprised of intangible features, such as rituals, religious beliefs and intellectual traditions, passed down from generation to generation
- Sacred sites, sites of particular significance and places of cultural tradition are tangible aspects of the Region's Indigenous heritage
- Expressive social activities, such as stories, songlines, totems and languages, as well as music and dance
- Indigenous structures, technology, tools and archaeology.

The Outlook Report concludes that places of Indigenous heritage values have not been systematically identified and many have deteriorated, especially around developed areas and on islands. Some species of cultural significance are under pressure. Story, language and songlines are being affected by activities in the Region.

Find out more – [www.gbrmpa.gov.au](http://www.gbrmpa.gov.au)



## HERITAGE

### Historic heritage

Historic heritage values relate to how the Region has been occupied and used since European and other migrants arrived. By its very nature, historic heritage will continue to evolve, representing the flow of history and changing community perceptions.

Historic heritage values in the Region include:

- Historic voyages and shipwrecks, including the significant discovery in late 2018 of the *Martha Ridgway* shipwreck
- Historic lightstations associated with shipping and navigational history through the Region
- World War II features and sites
- Other places of historic significance, including sites where historic events occurred (for example, Ellison Reef, a pivotal location in the modern fight for protection of the Reef).

The Outlook Report 2019 concludes there is good understanding and recording of some aspects of historic heritage in the Region. Heritage values are being maintained or restored at heritage-listed lightstations. Most other places of historic significance are poorly recorded and their condition is not well understood.

### Other heritage values — social, aesthetic, scientific

The Reef has social significance nationally and internationally, demonstrated by continued global interest in its protection. The perception of significance varies according to societal attitudes, as well as an individual's personal perspectives and their relationship to the Reef.

The Reef's aesthetic value — its great natural beauty — is evident from above, at water level or on the ground, and below the water. The Region's natural beauty is generally intact, however,

several disturbances have diminished some of the Region's aesthetic heritage values.

The scientific heritage value of the Reef encompasses human knowledge of the land and sea. The long history of Traditional Owners living on, and researchers studying, the Reef is significant. The Reef's prominence in long-term scientific studies continues to increase.

### Effectiveness of management for heritage

Independent reviewers found recognition of the Region's heritage value has improved over the past four years, especially in relation to Indigenous heritage values. Knowledge of the Region's historic heritage remains patchy.



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For traditional use of marine resources, the management effectiveness grade for the 'context' element of the assessment framework has declined from *very good* to *good*. This decrease is due to the challenges of understanding threats, impacts and current status of the relevant values in times of rapid change, particularly due to the impacts of cyclones and climate change for example, especially coral bleaching.