



The Great Barrier Reef: vast, beautiful, under pressure

See the Reef. Love the Reef. Protect the Reef.

The Great Barrier Reef is a **global icon** and an integral part of Australia's national identity. The Great Barrier Reef is a **vast** and **spectacular** ecosystem and one of the most complex natural systems on Earth. This World Heritage Area with outstanding universal value is an **economic powerhouse**, contributing \$6.4 billion to Australia's national economy as well as some 64,000 jobs. As the **world's largest coral reef ecosystem**, it is bigger in size than Italy, and spans 2300 kilometres of Australia's north east coast. It comprises almost 3000 individual reefs, about 10 per cent of the world's coral reefs.

However, the Great Barrier Reef, like all coral reefs globally, is **under pressure** and **actions taken now** will matter.

Health and threats to the Great Barrier Reef

The Great Barrier Reef's natural beauty, and natural phenomena endure, but they are showing signs of deterioration and are under increasing pressure from cumulative impacts above and below the water. The evidence-based, independently-reviewed, Great Barrier Reef **Outlook Report 2019** highlights the urgent need for our continued and accelerated action to improve the long-term outlook for the Great Barrier Reef. Without this, the **continued outlook** for the Great Barrier Reef will continue to remain **very poor**.

As identified in the report, the **greatest threat** to the Reef is **climate change**. The other main threats are associated with **coastal development, land-based run-off**, and threats from **direct human use** of the Reef (such as illegal fishing).

Our **position statements** on climate change, coastal ecosystems and marine debris encourage immediate, medium and long-term action for these key threats to the Reef.



Who is the Great Barrier Reef Marine Park Authority?

The Great Barrier Reef Marine Park Authority has been providing **world-leading** marine park management since 1975. We are a **strong, efficient** and **agile** natural resource regulator entrusted by Australia with the responsibility of managing the natural wonder that is the Marine Park.

Our management is guided by the *Great Barrier Reef Marine Park Act 1975* and the **best available science** to **protect values, reduce threats**, and **improve** the **current and long-term outlook** for the Reef and the communities that depend on it.

We work together with other Australian and Queensland government agencies, industry, community organisations, and individuals to help achieve our vision of, **a healthy Great Barrier Reef for future generations**.

Securing the future of the Great Barrier Reef

The Reef remains one of the **best-managed** marine ecosystems in the world and science is central to our management.

The Great Barrier Reef received **world heritage status in 1981**, the first coral reef ecosystem in the world to have this distinction. It was inscribed by the World Heritage Committee for its 'outstanding universal value'.

The Australian and Queensland governments' **Reef 2050 Long-Term Sustainability Plan** provides a guiding framework for securing the future of the Great Barrier Reef. It outlines key management actions being taken to reduce threats to the Reef. Underpinning the Reef 2050 Plan, is the development of a world class monitoring and reporting system to inform adaptive management.

The **Great Barrier Reef Marine Park Zoning Plan 2003** and related legislation are the foundation of our resilience-based management approach. Zoning to protect biodiversity and regulate activities has been in place since 1981. Since 2004, some 33 per cent of the entire marine park is in highly protected zones. Plans of management and our permissions system provide for ecologically-sustainable multiple-use of the Reef.

Critical to the Reef's future is our delivery of in field actions aimed at protecting and maintaining well-functioning marine and island ecosystems. Our **Reef Joint Field Management Program**, delivered collaboratively with the Queensland Parks and Wildlife Service, ensures an on water presence within the Reef.



Partnerships

Establishing **effective** and **meaningful partnerships** with **Traditional Owners** is essential to protect cultural and heritage values, conserve biodiversity and enhance the resilience of the Great Barrier Reef. The Authority is working in partnership with Traditional Owner groups to develop sea country management arrangements including **Traditional Use of Marine Resources Agreements** (TUMRAs). The nine existing TUMRAs have been co-designed and co-managed by the Traditional Owners, the Authority and the Department of Environment and Science. The **Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Heritage Strategy for the Great Barrier Reef Marine Park** outlines how the Authority will work with Traditional Owners to help keep the Indigenous heritage values of the Great Barrier Reef Marine Park strong, safe and healthy. The strategy is a significant step in honouring the knowledge and value of Traditional Owner connections to the Great Barrier Reef and sets a path for greater co-management of the Reef.

The Great Barrier Reef tourism industry, including through the **Master Reef Guides** program, plays a vital role in presenting the values of the World Heritage Area to millions of visitors annually.

Through targeted education and stewardship programs, including our national educational centre, **Reef HQ Aquarium**, the Authority ensures the community and stakeholders have a clear understanding of the value of the Great Barrier Reef, the threats to its sustainable future and their role in protecting it.

Our **Reef Guardian** program, and **Local Marine Advisory Committees** help facilitate education programs with schools, and actions with regional councils and fishers, and the community to help protect the Reef.

Global collaboration is imperative for the health of the Reef. The Authority is committed to sharing our expertise and success stories and promoting leading practice coral reef management with our international partners. Australia is currently joint secretariat of the **International Coral Reef Initiative**, an informal partnership between nations and organisations that strives to preserve coral reefs and associated ecosystems around the world.

Actions taken now will matter

Given the extensive size of the Great Barrier Reef Region, its **condition is variable**. Many areas continue to support beautiful corals and abundant marine life and the Reef **remains an extraordinary experience** for visitors.

The Reef has shown the **ability to recover** from impacts, if disturbance-free periods are long-enough.

Mitigating threats like climate change and poor water quality, coupled with resilience-based management, are essential to boosting Reef health so it can recover from major disturbances.

Sea temperature increase and extremes, such as marine heat waves, are the most immediate threats to the Reef as a whole and pose the highest risk. The **strongest and fastest possible global action on climate change is critical**, and **everyone** can contribute and **make a difference**.

While the challenge is big, it is achievable. As acknowledged in the Reef blueprint for resilience, ***‘Together we can secure the future of the Great Barrier Reef, but we need to try harder, do more, and act now’***.

Think globally, act locally – every effort, no matter how small, collectively matters.

Be it in your home or business, all actions matter. Visit gbrmpa.gov.au for steps you can take.

See the Reef. Love the Reef. Protect the Reef

The Reef is facing unprecedented pressures, yet its astounding beauty continues to inspire visitors from around the world. The Authority encourages people to come and experience the Great Barrier Reef, be inspired by its beauty and to take actions to protect it for future generations to enjoy.

Understand Reef protection rules and follow them

Measures like zoning (access restrictions), permits, no anchoring areas and extraction limits, are there to protect the Reef for the long-term. Adopting a ‘protect your patch’ approach and making the most of user-friendly tools like the Eye on the Reef app and public moorings, will help you help the Reef.