



TOURISM INDUSTRY ACTIVATION AND REEF PROTECTION INITIATIVE | HIGHLIGHTS



Australian Government
Great Barrier Reef
Marine Park Authority

Funded by the Australian Government through the COVID-19 Relief and Recovery Fund to support regions, communities, and industry sectors severely affected by the coronavirus crisis.

GREAT BARRIER REEF TOURISM INDUSTRY BOOST A SPLASHING SUCCESS

Seventeen marine tourism operators along the Great Barrier Reef have undertaken site stewardship and conservation activities as part of the Great Barrier Reef Marine Park Authority's (the Authority's) Tourism Industry Activation and Reef Protection Initiative (the initiative).

The Australian Government's \$3.2 million investment supported existing frontline jobs in the Reef tourism industry, while simultaneously helping monitor and maintain high-value tourism sites along the Reef.

Tourism operators were contracted to conduct a number of activities including:

- In-water Reef Health and Impact Surveys (RHIS) to monitor coral condition and the Reef's composition, primarily from reef tourism sites, and upload the data to the Authority's Eye on the Reef system. The Eye on the Reef monitoring and assessment program enables anyone who visits the Great Barrier Reef to contribute to its long-term protection.
- Reef intervention and conservation activities under existing Marine Park permits (such as coral gardening, macro-algae removal and controlling the population of coral-eating crown-of-thorns starfish).

- Capturing real-time imagery of the Reef and operational activities for use in developing education and communication materials to inform people about the beauty of the Reef and the need for its protection.

The scale of this data collection from tourism operators is the first of its kind. As the Reef stretches approximately 2300km in length, and covers an area of 344,400km², this initiative provided an opportunity for widespread data collection. As the lead management agency for the Great Barrier Reef, the Authority uses data collected from surveys to track Reef health and recovery after disturbances such as mass bleaching, crown-of-thorns starfish outbreaks and other impacts. The data provided helps the Authority to gain an understanding of the bigger picture, which helps inform management of the Reef and enables prioritisation of activities.

"Through this very intensive program, this important work helped support and improve reef resilience. The environmental information collected in turn helps the Reef Authority make important management decisions within the marine park." **Doug Baird, Environment and Compliance Manager, Quicksilver Group**

SECURING TOURISM JOBS

The marine tourism industry is a key partner in the protection and management of the Great Barrier Reef. The sector continues to face a number of challenges due to the ongoing impacts of the COVID-19 pandemic.

The initiative aimed to provide a degree of business continuity for tourism operations and surety to front-line tourism jobs through the provision of monitoring, conservation and education services for the Authority at high value tourism sites. The investment supported 4,815 employment days.

The Authority will continue to support the tourism industry as we shift through the recovery phases from the pandemic and to ensure Reef tourism sites are well maintained and ready to welcome new guests when travel restrictions ease.

ENRICHING TOURISM EXPERIENCES

The Great Barrier Reef makes up about 10 per cent of the world's coral reef ecosystems, and is one of the most beautiful and complex natural systems on Earth.

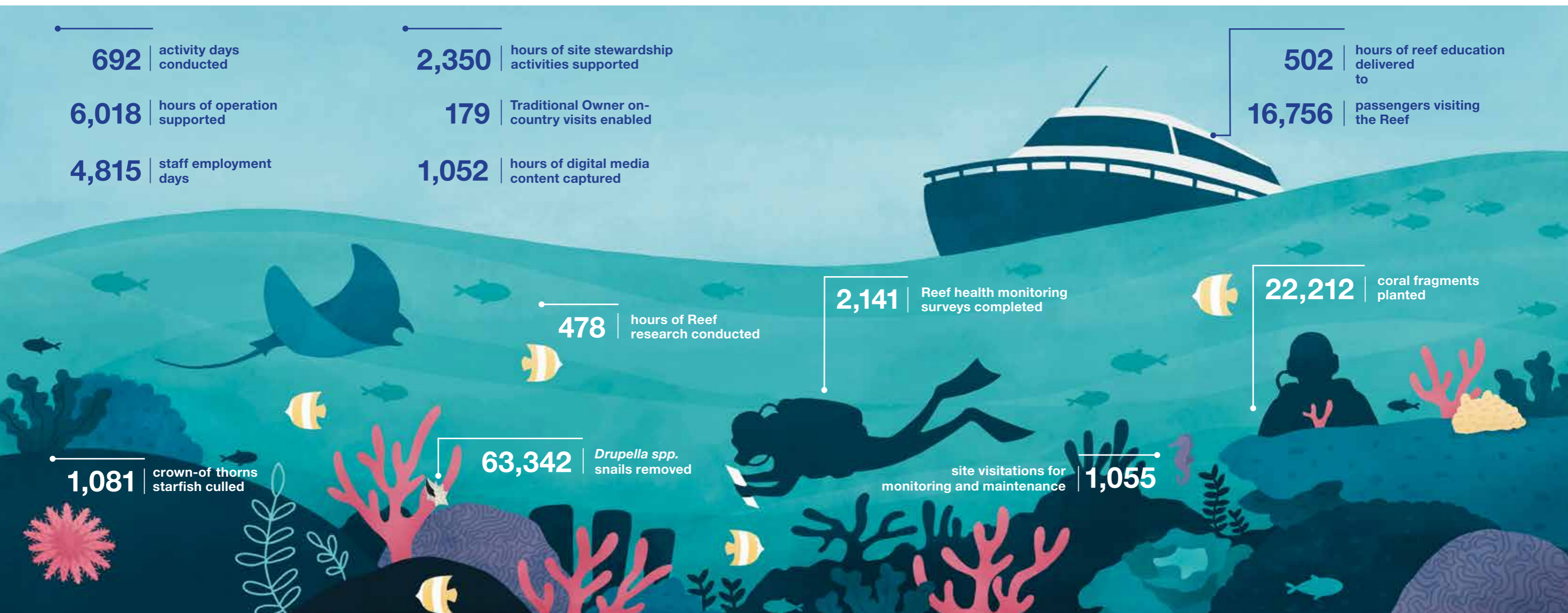
The Reef is facing a range of pressures — and we can all play a role in protecting it for the future. The Authority encourages visitors

to enjoy the many aspects of the Reef, in a responsible and 'reef friendly' way.

Tourism operators play a vital role in educating visitors on responsible ways to enjoy activities within the Marine Park. They help enhance visitor experiences of the Reef and play an important role in protecting the amazing biodiversity that supports their industry.

This initiative provided tourism operators with an opportunity to encourage their guests to take part in some of the conservation activities during their Reef visit, helping to enrich visitor experience of this spectacular ecosystem. Through communicating ecological processes to tourists, it increases awareness in the wider community of the threats to the Reef and leads the way to inspiring visitors to take action to protect the Reef.

"Not only did this initiative provide vital information to reef authorities, it was a great opportunity for our team to dive deeper into the wonders of our fringing reefs! By providing more in-depth knowledge and research opportunities to our crew, we're excited to be able to further pass on this knowledge and information to our guests."
Jan Claxton, Owner/Operator, Ocean Rafting



SHARING THE LOVE AND PROTECTION OF THE REEF WITH THE WORLD

DIGITAL PROJECT EXPOSURE REACHING OVER 1.5 MILLION PEOPLE



This initiative highlights the important work tourism operators undertake to ensure key tourism sites are properly maintained.

See the Reef - Love the Reef - Protect the Reef

