



Australian Government

Great Barrier Reef
Marine Park Authority



Reef
Authority

CORPORATE PLAN 2025–26



Statement of preparation

I, Josh Thomas, as the accountable authority of the Great Barrier Reef Marine Park Authority, present the *Reef Authority's Corporate Plan 2025–26*, which covers the reporting periods of 2025–29, as required under paragraph 35(1)(b) of the *Public Governance, Performance and Accountability Act 2013*. The plan is prepared in accordance with the Public Governance, Performance and Accountability Rule 2014.

The Marine Park Authority Board has endorsed the plan, as it is responsible for implementing the *Great Barrier Reef Marine Park Act 1975*.

Josh Thomas

Chief Executive Officer

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Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander readers are advised this publication may contain names and images of deceased persons.

The Reef Authority acknowledges the expertise, wisdom, and enduring connections that have informed the guardianship of the Reef for millennia. We pay our respects to the Traditional Owners as the first managers of this Land and Sea Country, and value their traditional knowledge which continues to inform the current management and stewardship of the Reef for future generations.





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Chairperson's opening statement



2025 marks 50 years since the *Great Barrier Reef Marine Park Act 1975* came into effect — watershed legislation that both established the world's largest protected marine ecosystem and listed the Great Barrier Reef Marine Park Authority as its custodian. In this milestone year, it's timely to reflect on how far we've come in managing pressures on the Great Barrier Reef (the Reef) in a rapidly changing environment.

Created out of a desire to protect this incredible marine area in response to concern over mineral and oil exploration, establishing formal boundaries for a Marine Park and designating an agency to lead Marine Park management were important initial safeguards to ensure the Reef was, and could be, protected for future generations.

It enabled protection of this World Heritage-listed icon and brought a stronger focus to the marine environment — with studies on the diverse habitats and species — along with a deeper understanding of cultural and heritage values, Traditional Owner aspirations, direct and indirect uses, and Reef dependent industries and communities.

It also enabled the creation of enduring frameworks including permits and site-specific management plans for multiple uses, and landmark protections such as the expanded network of no-take marine national park zones (green zones) that increased from five to 33 per cent in 2004.

To this day, these foundational management activities remain critical in the mix of our management tools.

However, like all coral reefs around the world, the Great Barrier Reef is impacted by the effects of climate change resulting from rising greenhouse gas emissions. Over the past decade, and recently, there have been a range of impacts to the Reef — coral bleaching, cyclones, pollution, declining water quality, flooding, and outbreaks of coral-eating crown-of-thorns starfish.

Building Reef resilience in a variety of ways is critical, as is immediate local, national, and global efforts to reduce greenhouse gas emissions. The management of the Reef must continue to evolve in a timely manner, and this will require innovative approaches based on expertise and evidence.

The Reef Authority's forward work program reflects the critical components of modern Marine Park management and Reef protection — a mix of in-field activities, regulation, adaptation, and fostering an expansive network of Reef partners and stakeholders.

In a contemporary setting, in-water restoration and new technologies sit alongside direct and foundational actions. These include a well-established field management program, and Reef interventions such as protecting coral from crown-of-thorns starfish outbreaks.

Importantly, these efforts are in partnership with Traditional Owners, government, and those who live and work along the Reef, and are complemented by broader education and engagement efforts, and community support.

We remain committed to continuous improvement through building and strengthening our management actions, adapting proactively to a changing environment, and safeguarding the Reef for future generations through delivering strong and strategic Marine Park management.

Dr Ian Poiner
Chairperson

Chief Executive Officer's foreword



It is an immense privilege to lead a global effort to protect and manage the Great Barrier Reef, with our organisation focusing all our resources on the greatest threats to the ecosystem.

Our key publications — *The Great Barrier Reef Outlook Report 2024* and the *Reef snapshot 2024–25* — highlight the Reef's health is variable, with both improvement and deterioration in key areas. Prolonged exposure to above average water temperatures (marine heatwaves) over the recent summer caused widespread coral bleaching. Record rainfall in the Northern and Central regions resulted in widespread flooding, causing coral bleaching and coral mortality on some inshore reefs.

The increasingly frequent pressures from climate change and chronic impacts like pollution, sedimentation and illegal fishing are undermining the Reef's resilience and its ability to recover. Our management approach relies on understanding the Reef and then investing our resources in the right areas, concentrating our efforts where they are needed most to support the Reef's resilience.

Against this changing and challenging backdrop, we are prioritising our in-field presence to enforce the Zoning Plan, protecting coral by suppressing coral-eating crown-of-thorns starfish, continually improving our regulatory settings, supporting marine conservation internationally, facilitating new conservation solutions with partners, and evolving our management of the Marine Park through the development of a new Southern Plan of Management.

For 2025–26 we have established three key activities (strategic objectives):

- **Protect** the Reef through in-field activities and regulation to safeguard its unique environment while allowing ecologically sustainable use.

- **Foster** a culture of Reef stewardship through strong partnerships, strategic engagement, and education programs.
- **Adapt** our management to protect the Reef's resilience in response to a changing climate and other pressures.

These key activities (strategic objectives) are supported by an annual operating plan which identifies delivery initiatives to guide the implementation of our work. Our corporate enabling services are critical to implementation excellence and for supporting our team to be an Australian Public Service leader in reducing our environmental footprint, in line with the Australian Government's Net Zero APS 2030 target.

We remain focused on continuing to use the best available science and draw on Traditional knowledge to inform and enhance our management and make evidence-based decisions. Our partnerships with Reef Traditional Owners focus on keeping heritage strong, safe, and healthy. This year we celebrate 20 years of enduring partnerships through Traditional Use of Marine Park Resources Agreements, and we continue to progress co-management through these agreements and other streams of work.

The Reef Authority is also delivering the Great Barrier Reef Aquarium — Australia's National Education Centre for the Reef. With work well underway, this iconic facility will be another stage for the Reef Authority's education programs which positively engage thousands of school children, researchers, and the wider local, national, and international community in marine conservation.

Building on our 50-years of Marine Park management, we remain focused on this important work to protect and manage this iconic World Heritage Area, now and for the future.

I am pleased to present our Corporate Plan for 2025–26.

Josh Thomas
Chief Executive Officer

Corporate Plan on a page 2025–26

Reef Authority

Vision

A healthy Great Barrier Reef for future generations.

Purpose | Outcome Statement in Portfolio Budget Statement (PBS)

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 development of the Marine Park.

Program 1.1

Protects and manages the environment, biodiversity, and heritage values of the Great Barrier Reef Region, and ensures the ecologically sustainable use and benefits of the Great Barrier Reef Marine Park for current and future generations.

Commonwealth Regulator Performance

Ministerial Statement of Expectations and Regulator Statement of Intent

Principles of regulator best practice:

- Continuous improvement and best practice
- Risk based and data driven
- Collaboration and engagement

Our key activities (strategic objectives)*

Key activity 1:

Protect the Reef through in-field activities and regulation to safeguard its unique environment while allowing ecologically sustainable use.

Key activity 2:

Adapt our management to protect the Reef's resilience in response to a changing climate and other pressures.

Key activity 3:

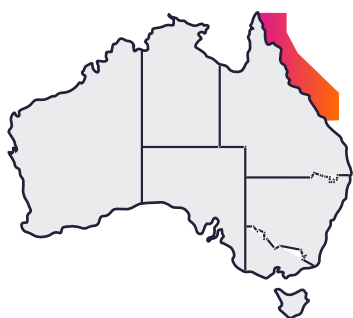
Foster a culture of Reef stewardship through strong partnerships, strategic engagement, and education programs.

To achieve our purpose, our key activities are operationalised through an annual operating plan (page 26).

Performance measures and annual performance statements

Performance measures, including targets, are set out in this plan for the required reporting period (from page 31). Annual performance statements, included in our Annual Report, provide an analysis on the agency's performance in achieving its purpose for the reporting year — providing results for the targets in the PBS and Corporate Plan.

**As outlined in the Portfolio Budget Statement 2025–26, our key activities have been updated for 2025–26 and the respective reporting periods in which this Corporate Plan covers (2025–29).*



The Great Barrier Reef at a glance



Contributes billions each year to the Australian economy



Supports tens of thousands of full-time jobs



1,294,782+ catchment residents



2300km long
344,400 square kilometres



Roughly the same size as Italy



Sea Country home for 70 Traditional Owner groups

Multiple use Marine Park



Traditional use of marine resources



Commercial marine tourism



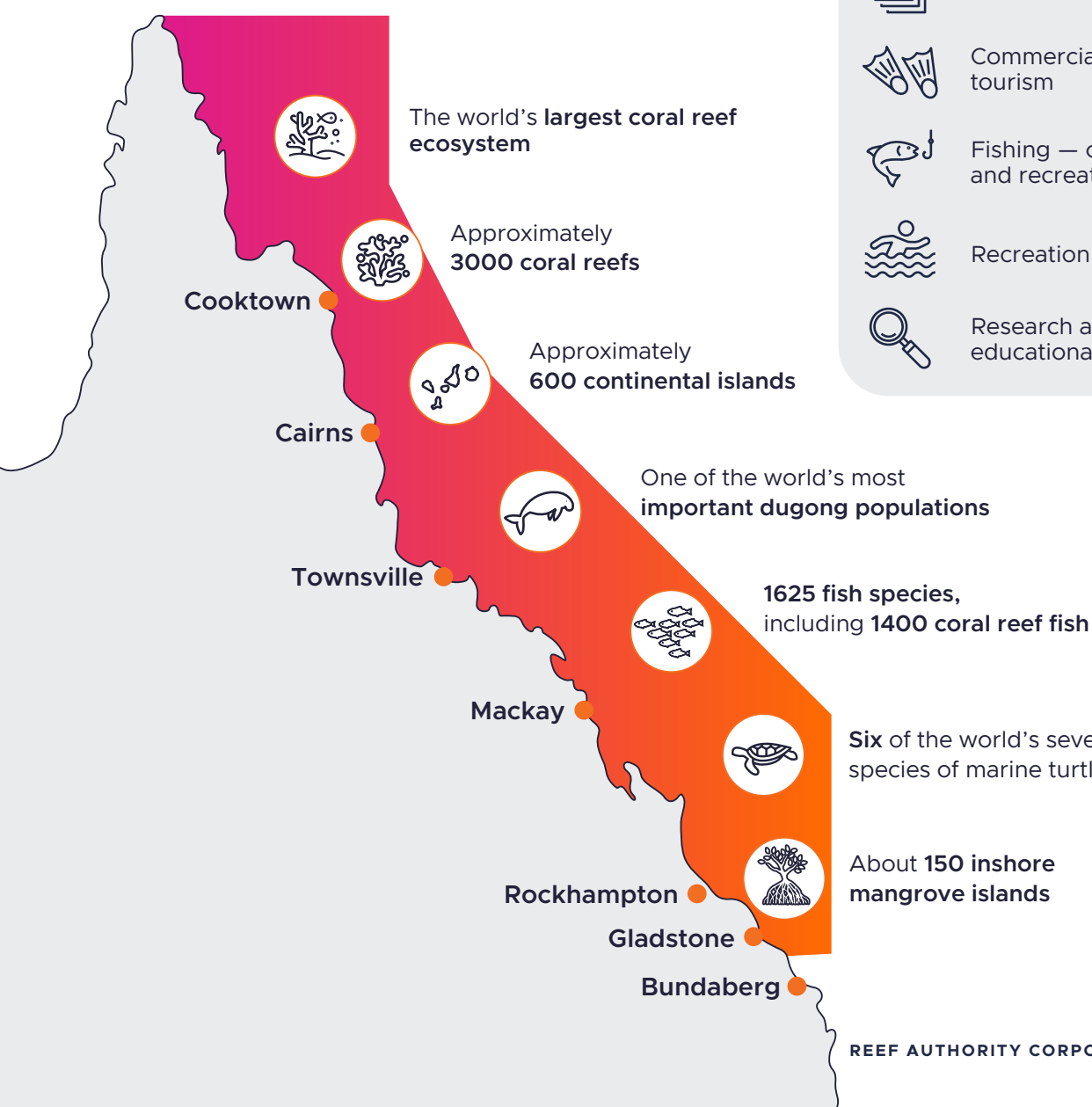
Fishing — commercial and recreational



Recreation



Research and educational activities



Our role and values

Our role

The Great Barrier Reef (the Reef) is one of nature's most extraordinary wonders — World Heritage-listed, visible from space, breathtakingly beautiful, and profoundly significant to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples.

On 20 June 1975, the Great Barrier Reef Marine Park Authority (Reef Authority) was established under the *Great Barrier Reef Marine Park Act 1975* (Marine Park Act). This year marks 50 years of world-leading Marine Park management.

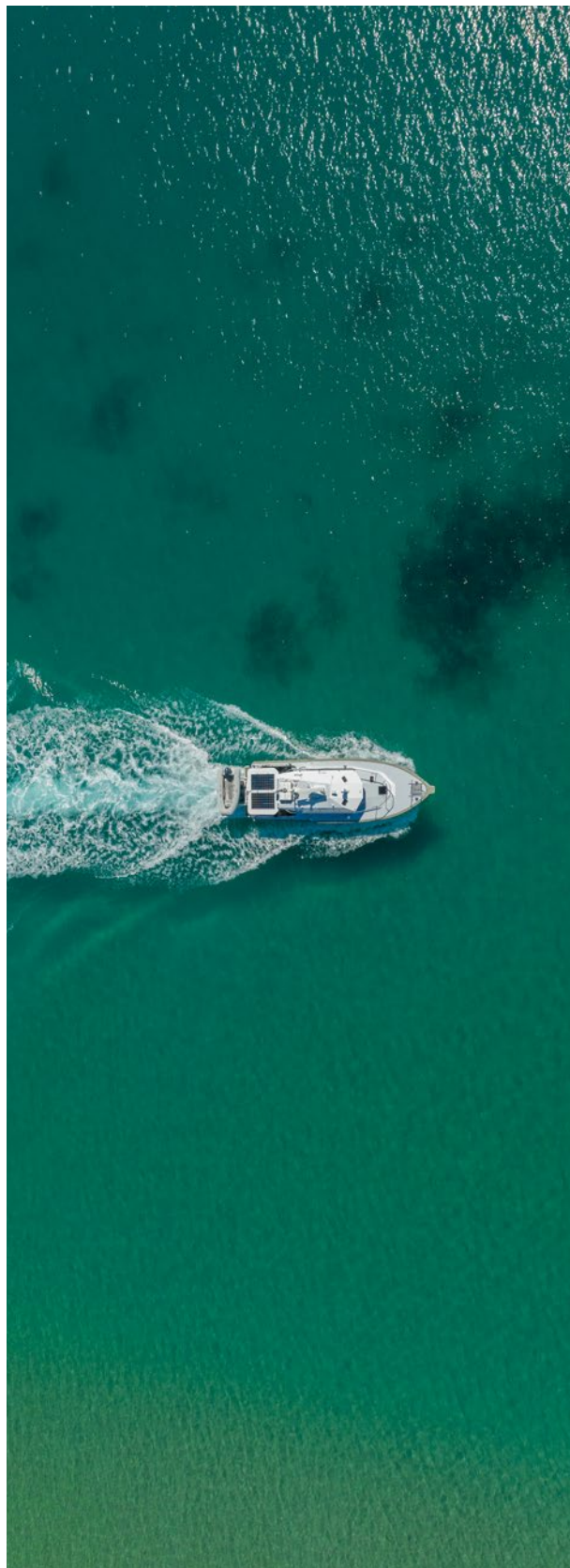
The Reef Authority is a non-corporate Commonwealth statutory authority under the Marine Park Act. As a regulator, we are responsible for protecting and managing the environment, biodiversity, and heritage values of the Great Barrier Reef Region (the Region).

The agency is governed by the Great Barrier Reef Marine Park Board (the Board) who have oversight functions as set out in section 7 of the Marine Park Act. The Board consists of seven members, including a part-time chairperson, five part-time members, and the Chief Executive Officer (accountable authority) of the Reef Authority.

As a portfolio agency of the Department of Climate Change, Energy, the Environment and Water, we advise the Australian Minister for the Environment and Water on a range of matters relevant to protecting and managing the Great Barrier Reef.

The organisation is guided by Traditional knowledge and draws upon the latest science to deliver innovative approaches to protecting the Great Barrier Reef for future generations. Partnerships with Traditional Owners have strengthened stewardship and embedded cultural knowledge in our work. We also work in partnership with research organisations, government agencies, regional industries, educational institutions and local communities to fulfil our purpose.

Our work includes day-to-day management such as in-water conservation and upholding compliance; development and implementation of policies, plans, and programs to protect biodiversity; building capacity through partnerships and education; and synthesising knowledge to guide innovation, adaptive management, and ecologically sustainable use.



Our core values

In delivering our work, we uphold the Australian Public Service (APS) values — impartial, committed to service, accountable, respectful, ethical and stewardship, and adhere to the APS Employment Principles, and the APS Code of Conduct. Together, the values, principles and code of conduct ensures integrity, accountability, and professionalism across our workforce and contributes to upholding public trust and maintaining good governance.

An agreed set of Reef Authority values and behaviours complements the APS values. These values guide the way we work and are embedded through a multifaceted program for staff including leadership support and development.

Staff in our Culture Champions Network are passionate about positive change in the workplace and working with others to further embed our culture.

Our leadership group continues to support the Culture Champions Network in their work and with staff more generally. These combined initiatives support connectivity across the agency and deliver on our shared purpose with impact.



Reconciliation Action Plan

We are committed to meaningful and respectful relationships with First Nations peoples of the Great Barrier Reef and are proud of the agreements and partnerships we have established to protect and to manage Sea Country together.

Our Innovate Reconciliation Action Plan (RAP), endorsed by Reconciliation Australia, outlines our vision for reconciliation which is:

“Australia’s First Nations peoples are guiding and participating in the management and protection of Australia’s oceans and marine habitats”.

The Innovate RAP focuses on continued development and strengthening of our relationships with First Nations peoples, engaging staff and stakeholders in reconciliation, and developing and piloting innovative strategies that empower First Nations peoples.

To ensure accountability and implementation, we established a Reconciliation Action Plan Implementation Group. This group plays a central role in coordinating with staff and embedding RAP commitments across our annual work programs.

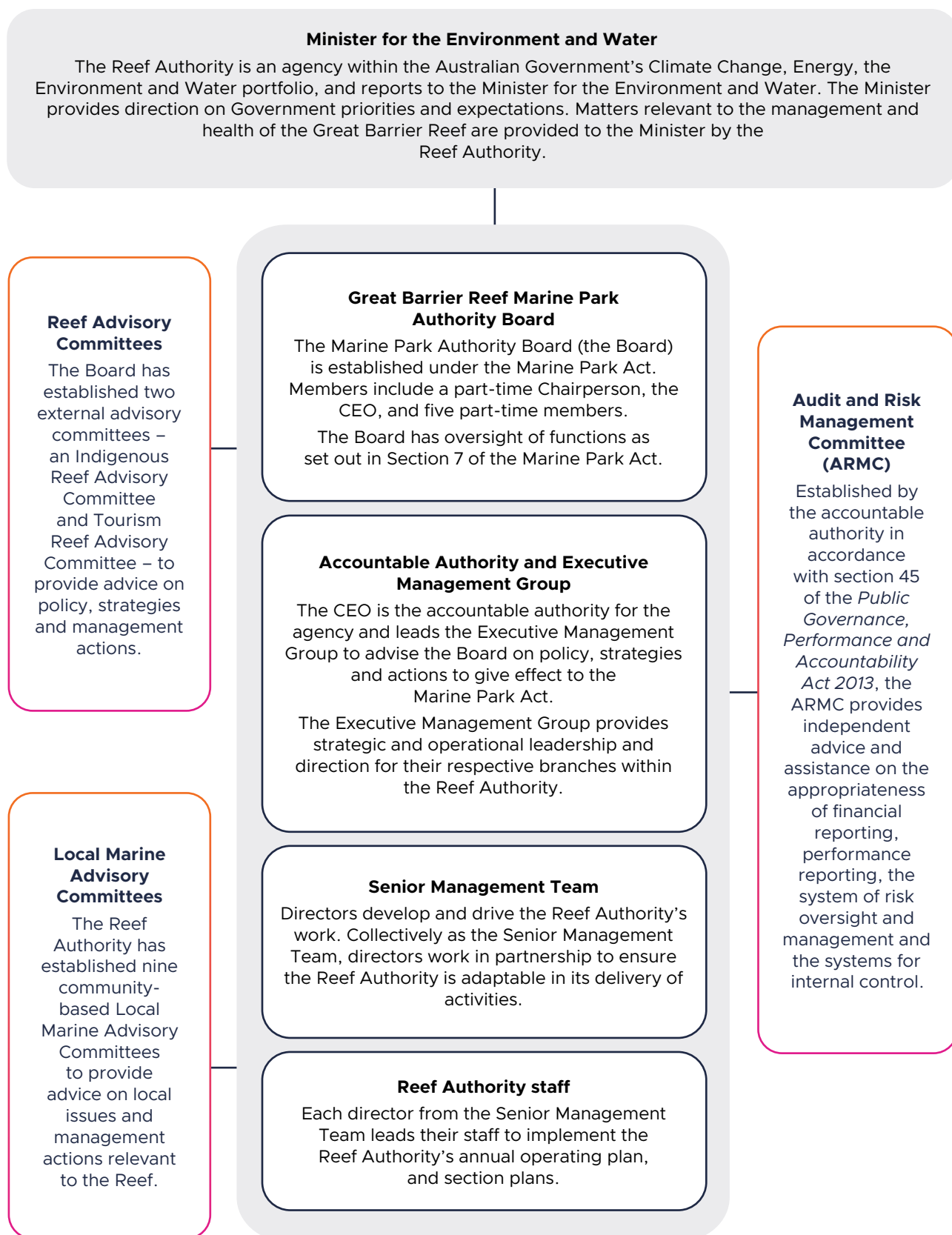
The RAP also includes actions and deliverables that support organisational change and contribute to delivering on the *Closing the Gap* priority reforms.

Through this work, the Reef Authority is actively progressing the five dimensions of reconciliation — which are race relations, equality and equity, institutional integrity, unity, and historical acceptance — by embedding new and innovative approaches through our Innovate RAP and building on our Reflect Reconciliation Action Plan achievements.



Our operating environment

Governance framework



Legislation

The way we manage and protect the Marine Park is guided by our legislative suite, plans, and policies. Our approach to best practice regulation is based on the three principles of the Commonwealth Regulator Performance framework — which includes continuous improvement and building trust, risk-based and data-driven, and collaboration and engagement (outlined further on page 31).

Legislation relating to the Marine Park

The main object of the Marine Park Act is to provide for the long-term protection and conservation of the environment, biodiversity, and heritage values of the Region.

The other objects of the Marine Park Act are to allow ecological sustainable use of the Region, encourage engagement in the protection and management of the Region, and assist in meeting Australia's international responsibilities for world heritage so far as consistent with the main object of the Act.

To achieve the objects, the Marine Park Act:

- provides for the establishment, control, care, and development of the Marine Park
- establishes the Reef Authority and outlines its role and functions
- provides for the *Great Barrier Reef Marine Park Zoning Plan 2003*, and plans of management
- regulates the Marine Park, including through a permissions system and through the *Great Barrier Reef Marine Park Regulations 2019*
- facilitates partnerships with Traditional Owners in management of marine resources, including through Traditional Use of Marine Resources Agreements (TUMRAs)
- facilitates a collaborative approach to management of the Great Barrier Reef World Heritage Area with the Queensland Government, through the Great Barrier Reef Intergovernmental Agreement and its establishment of the Reef Joint Field Management Program (Field Management Program).

Additionally, there is a vast array of other Commonwealth and State legislation that applies to the Region and governs how we manage the Reef. This ranges from national environmental law frameworks, and Native Title and cultural heritage legislation, to the relevant criminal codes and crimes legislation.

Organisational legislation relevant to the Reef Authority

Primary legislation relevant to the Reef Authority, as an entity, includes the following Acts (and the supporting legislation and associated instruments):

- *Archives Act 1983*
- *National Anti-Corruption Commission Act 2022*
- *Privacy Act 1988*
- *Public Service Act 1999*
- *Public Interest Disclosure Act 2013*
- *Fair Work Act 2009*
- *Freedom of Information Act 1982*
- *Public Governance, Performance and Accountability Act 2013*
- *Work Health and Safety Act 2011*

Subsidiaries

The Reef Authority has no subsidiaries.



Our capability

Our leading Marine Park management — underpinned by a highly capable, and dedicated workforce — is effectively supported by a range of enabling and critical corporate functions which cut across our entire delivery. These include finance, legal, people services, technology and digital services, governance, communication, and property services.

These enabling services are critical for delivering against our key activities (strategic objectives) and priority outcomes for the long-term protection of the Reef.

The Reef Authority is committed to building an integrated, inclusive and high-performing culture. We are building a future-focused workforce, one that is flexible and adaptive, to ensure we are an agile and responsive organisation to meet both current and future needs.

People and workforce planning

Our workforce comprises Australian Public Service (APS) employees engaged under the *Public Service Act 1999* and includes natural resource managers, regulators, compliance officers, community educators, government advisors, data analysts, scientists, and corporate professionals.

As part of staff engagement, the *Great Barrier Reef Marine Park Authority Enterprise Agreement 2024–2027* outlines terms and conditions of employment for non-SES employees of the Reef Authority.

The Reef Authority's *Strategic Workforce Plan 2021–26* focuses on our commitment for investing in our people and strengthening capabilities to meet future workforce needs. It identifies our challenges and a series of actions to align us with the public service ethos, and seeks to position us as a high performing organisation.

The plan builds on the five key elements of the APS Strategic Workforce Plan and aims to align our skills as a workforce to be:

- Agile, collaborative, responsive, and able to navigate complexity
- Skilled, knowledgeable, and committed to life-long learning
- Maximising data and technology and digital engagement

- Professional, engaged, and committed to integrity
- Citizen-centred in approach, inclusive, and representational of our diverse communities.

The Reef Authority remains committed to attracting, developing, supporting and retaining First Nations employees.

We invest in staff development in a variety of ways; one of which includes through a dedicated learning management system. This system provides staff with access to a diverse range of courses to enhance their skills or develop new skills.

Through our annual performance and development agreement process there is a shared understanding of expectations, deliverables, behaviours and goals for our staff, and opportunities for development and growth are identified.

APS Strategic Commissioning Framework

In 2025–26, the Reef Authority will continue working to bring core work in-house in line with the APS Strategic Commissioning Framework. We expect our targets for 2025–26 to continue to focus on reduced outsourcing of the following job families: Accounting and Finance; and ICT and Digital Solutions.

Staffing statistics

Headcount



Current as at
30 June 2025
235

Staffing allocation



Proposed
2025–26
272

Gender



Men
34.04%

Women
65.96%

First Nations people



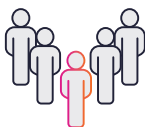
8.09%

Identify with a disability



1.70%

Executive roles



Men
13.62%

Women
21.70%

Employees



Employees
under 30
9.75%



Employees
over 55
17.80%



Average age
of employees
46

Retention



Over 10 years
of service
26.69%



Average years
of service
7.41

Flexibility



Full-time
90.64%

Part-time
9.36%

Work, health, and safety

The Reef Authority is committed to the safety and wellbeing of our staff. We continue to further improve our Work, Health and Safety (WHS) processes. This enables us to be more responsive to safety incidents and risk management matters.

Under the banner of 'Safety by Choice, Not by Chance' we proactively address emerging safety issues. We actively engage staff, contractors, and internal and external stakeholders to improve how safety is applied in the workplace through regular communication, training, audits and streamlined reporting. Improved reporting allows us to monitor and evaluate WHS metrics for relevant stakeholders and, in turn, inform subsequent decision-making and address emergent issues.

We have deployed comprehensive and increasingly robust WHS management and administration systems (such as the implementation of an interim WHS Reporting System allowing for online incident reporting and management across the Reef Authority). A commercial off-the-shelf WHS information management and reporting system will be rolled out in 2025–26.

Dive operations remain subject to extensive oversight to mitigate risks. The Reef Authority remains engaged with partner agencies, contractors, regulators, and commercial interests to ensure safety is embedded in all underwater activities. The WHS team works cooperatively with the Field Operations Health and Safety Manager to ensure best practice is applied at every opportunity across Reef Authority field activities.

Financial sustainability and asset management

A lifecycle approach is used to manage assets, and is underpinned by a strategic management plan, to maximise operational efficiency and generate greater return on investment.

The Reef Authority's written down values of major asset categories include \$6.994 million in buildings, \$3.767 million in capital works in progress, \$3.225 million in plant and equipment, and \$5.950 million in leasehold improvements.

The Reef Authority continues to promote financial sustainability and lift the financial maturity of the organisation. This is being achieved through contemporary financial management systems, support, and reporting; business and technology improvements; and education and training.

Environmental sustainability and Net Zero by 2030 target

We are strongly committed to the environment and sustainability. Our *Sustainability Strategy 2024–27* aligns with the Australian Public Service Net Zero by 2030 target and (*Net Zero in Government Operations Strategy*) and identifies four key focus areas:

- Strategy, governance, and reporting
- Clean energy and clean air
- Circular economy
- Nature positive.

Our Sustainability Strategy empowers staff to take a well-considered approach to the use of resources and embed our approach into our organisational culture.

Under the strategy we continue to implement pollution prevention practices, reduce emissions, and efficiently use resources to meet specified targets using recognised government methods. Our efforts demonstrate our commitment and assist in positioning the Reef Authority as a role model for others to follow.

Our sustainable procurement framework further enables emission reduction using government purchasing, building on previous reduction initiatives like renewable electricity and electric vehicles.

We continue to set and work toward achieving our targets and report on our progress annually to align with the Department of Finance's Climate Action in Government Operations and the Department of Climate Change, Energy, Environment and Water, Environmentally Sustainable Procurement Policy (ESP Policy).

The strategy is reviewed annually to ensure specific targets and actions align with the APS Net Zero commitments. As required by the Department of Finance under the Climate Action in Government Operations, the Reef Authority updates its Emissions Reduction Plan annually which is made available on the Reef Authority website.

Infrastructure

Our workplaces

The Reef Authority's main office is in Townsville, Queensland. Our office design delivers a functional working space in the smallest possible footprint. It was designed to encourage and support efficient ways of working and includes sustainable use of equipment and assets, with low emissions and low waste to landfill.

The Reef Authority received a Green Building Council of Australia's '6 Green Star Interiors' certification (which is considered a world leading standard) rating for the fitout of our Townsville Office.

Our staff are also based in other Queensland locations — including Cairns, Airlie Beach, Mackay, Yeppoon, Gladstone — and Canberra. These locations support our in-field presence and our connections with communities, Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples, government agencies, non-government organisations, industry, science and research bodies, and education facilities.

Great Barrier Reef Aquarium

The Reef Authority remains committed to deliver the Australian Government's National Education Centre for the Great Barrier Reef, which is on track to open in 2029, or earlier if feasible.

With funding now secured, the redeveloped facility will be a world-class attraction, recognised nationally and internationally for excellence in tropical coral reef education. The Great Barrier Reef Aquarium will continue to offer people of all ages and abilities the opportunity to access and experience the world's largest living coral reef exhibit on land. It will also highlight a co-design partnership with the Gurambilbarra Wulgurukaba Traditional Owners and feature Marine Park management initiatives that educate visitors on the importance of protecting the Reef for future generations.

Vessels

The Field Management Program — jointly managed by the Australian and Queensland governments — is essential for delivering the Reef Authority's key in-field operations, including conservation actions, monitoring, incident response, engaging with Great Barrier Reef World Heritage Area users, and upholding compliance. The vessel fleet facilitates the program's collaboration and work on-country with Traditional Owners.

Vessel capability is managed through the program's five-year business strategy. This process ensures field officers have the capacity to be in the field at the place, time, and durations necessary to deliver activities that make the most difference to protecting and managing the Reef.

The program maintains a vessel fleet of 21 vessels, and the composition of the fleet has changed to support the program's delivery of field activities across the World Heritage Area, guided by the five-year vessel replacement program.

Consistent work across many years has been undertaken to achieve a safe, fit-for-purpose vessel fleet capable of operating across the World Heritage Area, particularly in remote locations. The program now has four vessels over 17 metres: two 24-metre long-range patrol vessels, a 17-metre catamaran to support in-water operations and maintenance of public moorings and incident response, and a new 20-metre high-speed landing barge to support island infrastructure and maintenance projects.

The fleet composition ensures rangers can undertake a broad range of activities simultaneously and strategically, and can be mobilised quickly and tactically to respond to emerging issues or major environment events such as maritime emergencies, tropical cyclones and associated impacts, and coral bleaching events.

Information communications technology

Strategy

The Reef Authority is implementing our ICT Strategy — which considers the agency's Corporate Plan and other government initiatives — to enable our agency to increase our digital services capability over the next six years.

The Reef Authority uses ongoing staff, contractors, and commercial providers to deliver these services. The ICT Strategy will position the Reef Authority to deliver these services with some fundamental principles in mind such as:

- get the basics right
- set a clear direction
- smart partnering
- accelerate innovation.

The Reef Authority is targeting the move to, and use of, cloud-based services — providing the building blocks to build modern, reliable and secure ICT services. This allows us to consider Artificial Intelligence technologies and advanced analytics to accelerate innovation in Marine Park management.

These capabilities are essential to further the Australian Government's public data agenda, and to further the use of data resources in national and international collaborative research, and educational initiatives in which the Reef Authority is involved.

We adhere to mandated whole-of-government standards and services when the opportunity arises for replacement, or choice of product and service.

The Reef Authority is safeguarding the digital assets by partnering with whole-of-government initiatives to improve our security posture to meet the current cyber threat landscape. We continue to lift our cyber security literacy through all-staff mandatory training and a continual adherence to the Australian Government's cyber security Essential Eight Maturity Model.

Co-investment

The Reef Authority maintains a current Memorandum of Understanding with the Queensland Government under the Field Management Program. The Reef Authority provides shared information technology systems and services to ensure continued business operations with our partners in the management of the Marine Park.



Collaboration and Cooperation

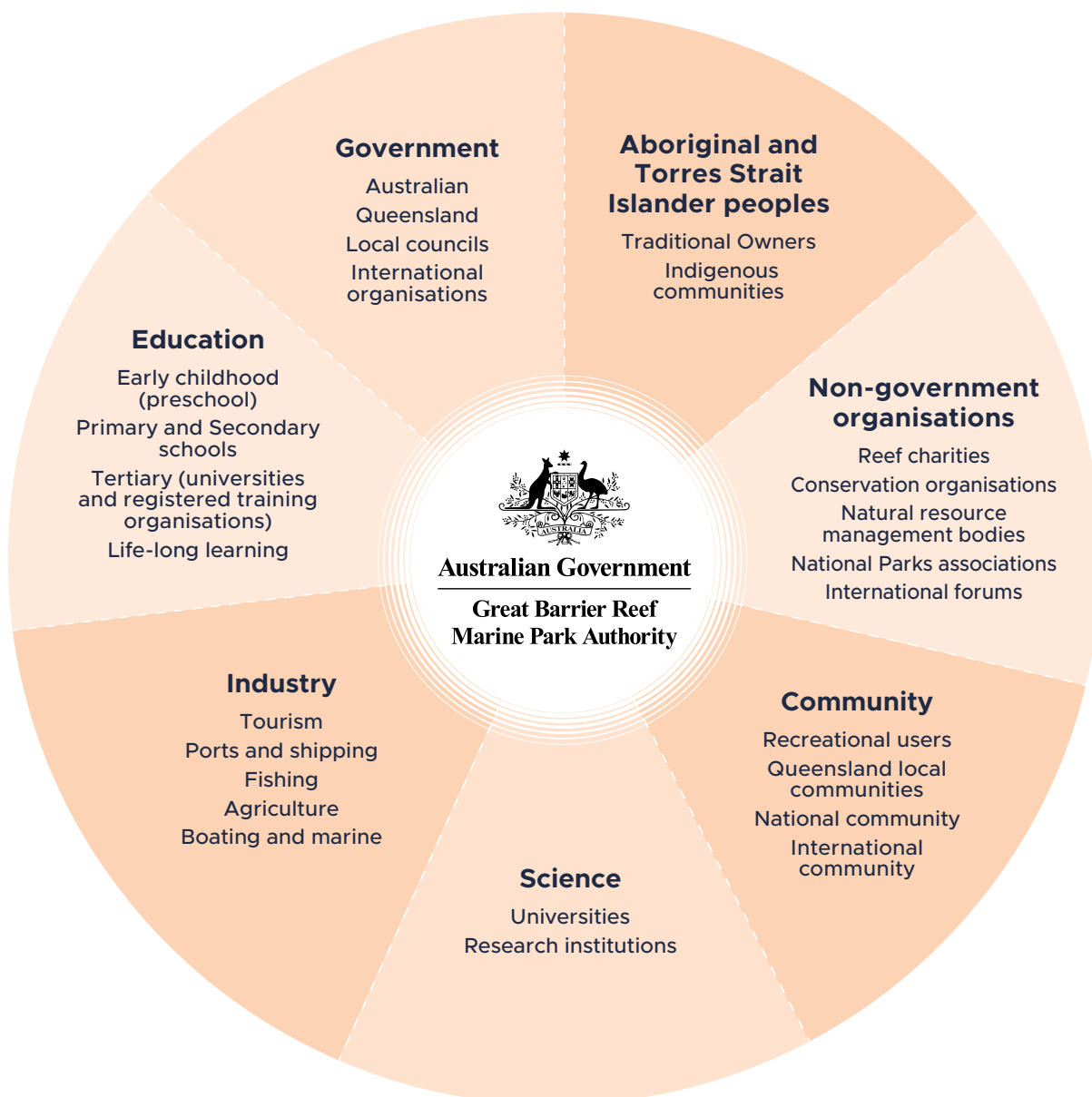
Partners and stakeholders

As a regulator managing an area bigger than the size of Italy, we collaborate, partner and cooperate with a wide range of partners and stakeholders to achieve our purpose.

The Reef Authority is proud to partner with Traditional Owners, Australian and Queensland government agencies, non-government organisations, science institutions, industry, community organisations, and educational institutions to provide world-leading Marine Park management.

We have a range of agreements with organisations as well as Memorandums of Understanding (MoU) which articulate the mutually agreed expectations for cooperation or information sharing. An MoU allows each partner to make the most of the other's specialist skills, knowledge or jurisdiction.

Communication with our partners and stakeholders about Reef management activities and timely advice about the health of the Reef is a core focus for the Reef Authority. Information is shared through multiple channels including our advisory committees, face-to-face engagement with partners and stakeholders, briefings, and via mainstream media, digital media platforms, and key publications.



Commonwealth, state and local governments

We provide information, advice and work alongside a range of Commonwealth, state and local governments. Through this cooperation and collaboration, we draw on the latest science and information available to enhance our understanding of current Reef conditions and apply this information for management purposes.

As a portfolio agency of the Department of Climate Change, Energy, the Environment and Water (DCCEEW), we advise the Australian Minister for the Environment and Water on a range of matters relevant to protecting and managing the Great Barrier Reef. This includes our role in developing and delivering the joint Australian and Queensland governments *Reef 2050 Long-Term Sustainability Plan* (Reef 2050 Plan), and broader policy matters.

We have a Master Services Agreement with the Australian Institute of Marine Science. We partner and collaborate with the Commonwealth Scientific and Industrial Research Organisation; Bureau of Meteorology; Australian Maritime Safety Authority; Director of National Parks; and Australian Fisheries Management Authority.

Additionally, we work with other Commonwealth departments and regulators across a range of portfolios to ensure we are delivering the best outcomes for the Reef and adhering to governance requirements as a Commonwealth agency.

The *Intergovernmental Agreement on the Great Barrier Reef 2024* sets out how the Australian and Queensland governments work together to protect the Great Barrier Reef. The current agreement continues long-standing collaborative arrangements and recognises both governments need to focus efforts on building resilience, preserving biodiversity and reducing the threats that are impacting the health of Great Barrier Reef ecosystems. Through this agreement we cooperatively and strategically plan, fund, and deliver an integrated Field Management Program.

Working closely with Tourism and Events Queensland we collaborate to deliver our Master Reef Guide Program, which is a globally visible program. As part of our broader management and through delivery of the Reef 2050 Plan, we work with the Department of Environment, Science, Tourism and Innovation; Queensland Department of Primary Industries (Queensland Fisheries); and Department of Transport and Main Roads.

At a Great Barrier Reef catchment community level, we work with local governments, particularly through our Reef Guardian Council Program.

Advisory Committees

The Board, through the Reef Authority, receives advice from two committees — an Indigenous Reef Advisory Committee, and a Tourism Reef Advisory Committee. The Reef Authority's Marine Park management is also supported at a local level by voluntary community-based Local Marine Advisory Committees.

Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples

Our partnering approach with Traditional Owners is evolving to support the Reef Authority to align to “Priority Reform One – Formal partnerships with shared decision making” under the Australian Government's *Closing the Gap* Implementation Plan. This approach to partnering, that is embedded in the Reef Authority's Co-management Principles, will assist the Reef Authority to support increasing co-management of the Reef with Traditional Owners. Shared responsibilities for stewardship of Sea Country recognises Traditional Owners' enduring connection to the Reef and their leadership, rights, and knowledge.

We are engaging with the Great Barrier Reef Traditional Owner (ReefTO) Taskforce as part of our broader Reef management, and through intersections with delivery of the Reef 2050 Plan.

Ten accredited Traditional Use of Marine Resources Agreements (TUMRAs) cover 43 per cent of the Great Barrier Reef coastline. TUMRAs provide a unique and valuable opportunity for Traditional Owner groups, who hold a spiritual connection and Cultural Authority to speak for Sea Country, to partner with the Reef Authority and the Department of Environment, Science, Tourism and Innovation (DETSI). In addition, a number of Traditional Owner groups are being supported to undertake Sea Country Values mapping activities to care for Sea Country.

We are working closely with four Traditional Owner groups of the southern Great Barrier Reef to co-develop a Southern Plan of Management.

Permit application assessments include cultural referrals to improve understanding of potential impacts of an activity on cultural heritage values. Agreements to provide referral advice are in place with the Woppaburra, Giringun, Mandubarra, and Wuthathi Traditional Owners.

Science and tertiary education

Research and science institutions — with a particular focus on the Great Barrier Reef — provide important evidence-based information for how we manage the Reef.

We collaborate with a range of universities across Australia; this information and knowledge deepens our understanding of the Reef and the current pressures on the ecosystem, and provides an opportunity for support and collaborate on innovative solutions for Reef protection and management.

Education

Educating, collaborating, and working in partnership is a critical component in protecting the Reef for future generations and enhancing Reef resilience. The Reef Authority offers an extensive range of educational resources and programs including our Reef Guardian Schools program, Virtual Learning Experiences and through our Reef Education portal. Our Reef Guardian Schools program is a global initiative that encourages teachers and students to take actions that help protect the Great Barrier Reef and its connected ecosystem.

Industry

We partner with the Queensland Ports Association to strategically improve coordination with associated port activity within or adjacent to the Great Barrier Reef Marine Park.

The Association of Marine Park Tourism Operators is the peak body for marine tourism on the Reef and partners with the Reef Authority to enable programs that support research, tourism development, training, and environmental sustainability. This also includes delivery of the Master Reef Guide program.

Through contractual agreements, we work with a range of tourism operators to effectively deliver the Tourism Reef Protection Initiative.

Ecotourism Australia and EarthCheck provide independent (external) certification as part of our High Standard Tourism Operator program.

International

Our expertise in Marine Protected area management, regulation and compliance, education and engagement is recognised globally.

We engage internationally with partners through various international committees and forums, as well as host visiting delegations, to share our knowledge, support capacity building and collaborate on coral reef management and protection.

We provide technical expertise to the Department of Climate Change, Energy, the Environment and Water, and the Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade for engagements with the World Heritage Centre, and the International Union for the Conservation of Nature.

As part of the International Coral Reef Initiative we continue to share Australia's expertise in Marine Protected Area management with our key partners from around the globe, helping to protect coral reefs for this generation and generations to come. We also seek to learn from the experiences of member countries facing similar challenges at local scales.

Non-government organisations

We provide in-kind support, skills interchange, cooperative research, and other forms of collaboration to the Great Barrier Reef Foundation. We also work closely with the Reef and Rainforest Research Centre.

Influences affecting our operating environment

Our operating environment continues to be influenced by a range of factors within the marine environment and more broadly from economic and global shifts, regulatory changes, societal changes, technological advancements, and geographical considerations.

In 2024–25 the Great Barrier Reef was exposed to a combination of pressures — above average water temperatures, flood plumes, and ongoing crown-of-thorns starfish outbreaks. Prolonged exposure to higher-than-average water temperatures caused widespread coral bleaching. Concurrently, record rainfall in the Northern and Central regions generated extensive floods that caused coral bleaching and mortality on some inshore reefs.

The 2024–25 coral bleaching event is the sixth since 2016 and, while less extensive than the 2023–24 event, it is the second time the Reef has experienced consecutive widespread coral bleaching events. For the Reef, and reefs around the world, rising sea surface temperatures and increasingly frequent and severe disturbances jeopardise future ecosystem recovery.

The 2024 Outlook Report stated that climate change presents the greatest risk to the Reef's values and its effects are projected to become more frequent, severe and widespread. Sea surface temperatures continue to increase in line with climate change trajectories. Added to this are the impacts of coastal development and land-based runoff.

The health of the Great Barrier Reef is subject to intense international and domestic scrutiny and is regularly held out as an example of the impact of climate change on ecosystems. Globally, coral reefs are under pressure from the impacts of climate change. The Reef Authority is recognised as a global leader in Marine Protected Area and coral reef management, and our management of the Reef is frequently used as a case study in ocean conservation globally. Our management is at the forefront, delivering response and targeted actions to support the Reef's resilience and recovery.

In addition to environmental impacts, climate change impacts on people are broad-ranging from health impacts due to heatwaves and air quality, to changes in jobs and livelihoods and the ability to live and work in certain places that may be impacted by rising sea levels or extreme weather.

The Australian Government is reforming Australia's national environmental law — the *Environment Protection and Biodiversity Conservation Act 1999* (EPBC Act). This will see national environmental law strengthened and streamlined and the Reef Authority will continue to engage with the reform work to ensure complementarity with Marine Park legislation.

Worldwide, growing community awareness and activism around climate change is increasing pressure on all levels of government and institutions to act. Global cooperation across various industries and sectors is required to mitigate the effects of climate change. Limiting warming to 1.5 degrees Celsius would deliver the best possible outcome for the Reef and communities that depend on it.

Society's shift to digital platforms is transforming how people access, share, and interpret information about the Reef. This creates opportunities and challenges, particularly around misinformation and polarisation. Inaccurate or sensationalised content can distort public perception and undermine trust and credibility.

Technology plays a crucial role in improving understanding of the Reef and its management. Remotely sensed satellite data, machine learning, artificial intelligence, robotics, drones, advanced data analytics and modelling tools can predict and monitor impacts on the Reef.

Ongoing technological development — including AI and other development with a focus on solving specific social, economic or environmental problems — has the potential to drive change in our understanding, management and use of the Reef, and reduce environmental impacts.

Our approach to planning and reporting

Planning approach

When setting the Reef Authority's strategic direction and developing programs or strategies, we consider and are responsive to:

- government and ministerial plans, priorities, and direction
- Ministerial Statement of Expectations and Regulator Statement of Intent
- the Marine Park Act and other relevant legislation
- key external influences
- the needs of responsible Reef users
- future capability needs of the Reef Authority
- key partnership strategies, and
- research and information to inform evidence-based decision making.

Key Strategies

The **Reef 2050 Long-Term Sustainability Plan (Reef 2050 Plan)** provides a strategic framework for the Australian and Queensland governments to work together to protect the Great Barrier Reef. It is also further supported by the *Reef 2050 Traditional Owner Implementation Plan*.

The **Great Barrier Reef Blueprint for Climate Resilience and Adaptation (Blueprint 2030)** guides how we adapt our management under a changing climate. It pushes us to innovate and evolve so we can continue to strengthen the Reef's resilience and remain global leaders in Marine Park management.

Great Barrier Reef Outlook reports (Outlook reports) are provided to the Minister every five years and contain a comprehensive assessment of the health, use, risks, resilience, current management, values, and long-term outlook for the Great Barrier Reef Region.

Our **Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Heritage Strategy for the Great Barrier Reef Marine Park** is our long-term strategy to strengthen the protection of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Reef heritage. The strategy sets out how we can work in partnership with Traditional Owners to combine their thousands of years' expertise in Reef management with modern Marine Park management tools to help keep Sea Country heritage strong, safe and healthy.

Our **Innovate Reconciliation Action Plan (RAP)**, endorsed by Reconciliation Australia, outlines our



vision for reconciliation and focuses on continued development and strengthening of our relationships with First Nations peoples, engaging staff and stakeholders in reconciliation, and developing and piloting innovative strategies that empower First Nations peoples.

The **Portfolio Budget Statement (PBS)** and the Corporate Plan complement each other to provide a consistent performance framework, with the aim of a clear line-of-sight from vision to key activities and outcomes. The PBS informs Members of Parliament and the public of the proposed allocations of resources for government outcomes by entities within the portfolio.

The **Corporate Plan** outlines the Reef Authority's purpose, key activities, and performance criteria against intended targets for the year in the context of a four-year strategic planning cycle.

Our internal **annual operating plan** includes 17 targeted delivery initiatives which are key focuses for the agency to deliver or make significant progress in the 2025–26 reporting period. It is supported by consistent and transparent reporting. The targeted delivery initiatives are supported by our critical foundational and corporate services which enable the work to be delivered successfully. The annual operating plan is one core component of our work, with section plans and internal strategies also guiding the agency's work program.

Annual reports inform Parliament and other stakeholders of our performance in relation to the PBS and Corporate Plan.

Achieving our purpose

Key activities (strategic objectives) and delivery initiatives

As part of our commitment to continuous improvement and maturing our strategic corporate planning, we refined our key activities (strategic objectives) for 2025–26. The key activities drive our delivery in order to achieve our purpose.

Our strategic focus is centred on Reef management and protection and this is operationalised through our key activities and supported by 17 delivery initiatives as outlined in our annual operating plan. Supporting delivering are our critical corporate enabling services.

In addition to our delivery initiatives outlined in the annual operating plan below, the agency uses section plans and other key internal strategies to guide the delivery of our work.

KEY ACTIVITIES	DELIVERY INITIATIVES
1 Protect the Reef through in-field activities and regulation to safeguard its unique environment while allowing ecologically sustainable use.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Deliver the Crown-of-thorns Starfish Control Program to protect coral habitats. • Deliver key priorities in the Reef Joint Field Management Program, ensuring a strong in-field presence. • Support compliance of recreational and commercial fishing in the Marine Park through the Reef Joint Field Management Program and engagement activities. • Enhance regulatory best practice improvement through incremental reform. • Deliver the permissions system in accordance with the service charter. • Implement our Sustainability Strategy's annual initiatives, which contribute to minimising our environmental impact.
2 Adapt our management to protect the Reef's resilience in response to a changing climate and other pressures.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Support the deployment of demonstrated effective Reef rehabilitation techniques and test the efficacy and viability of new intervention technologies that may support the Reef's resilience. • Strengthen knowledge acquisition, data governance, and decision-support tool capabilities, in collaboration with our partners, to enhance our understanding, facilitate knowledge exchange, and support decision-making for better conservation outcomes. • Progress the Southern Plan of Management to safeguard the values of the Marine Park. • Work with our partners in government and industry to ensure the coral harvest fishery and other fisheries support Reef resilience in response to a changing climate and other pressures. • Collaborate with Reef management stakeholders to review and update the <i>Reef 2050 Long-term Sustainability Plan</i>. • Trial and, where beneficial, operationalise new technologies to improve conservation or compliance outcomes.
3 Foster a culture of Reef stewardship through strong partnerships, strategic engagement, and education programs.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Lead year-round reporting on Reef health to understand and communicate the state of the ecosystem and inform decision-making. • Develop local, national and international relationships and networks that engender Reef stewardship actions, support capacity building and education programs. • Deliver the Traditional Use of Marine Resources Agreements (TUMRA) and support Sea Country values mapping with Traditional Owner partners. • Build the Reef Authority's capacity to progress the development and implementation of a co-management roadmap. • Continue the redevelopment of the Great Barrier Reef Aquarium through staged capital works and business development.

Managing our risks

As the lead managers for the Great Barrier Reef Marine Park, we are committed to fostering an active approach to risk management, contributing to the resilience and sustainability of the Reef.

We maintain a robust and comprehensive risk management framework, in accordance with the *Public Governance Performance and Accountability Act 2013* (PGPA Act) and the Commonwealth Risk Management Policy.

Our risk management framework is built on clear risk ownership, integration with Reef Authority objectives, and adaptability to emerging challenges to the Reef. Consistent with the Australian Government's Climate Risk and Opportunity Management Program, we recognise the importance of integrating climate-related risks into our strategic and operational risk practices. By embedding climate risk assessments into planning and governance, we strengthen our ability to anticipate, prepare for, and adapt how we manage the Reef in a changing climate.

We are committed to applying a risk-informed approach to our strategy and operations, aligned with ISO 31000:2018 Risk Management Guidelines and supported by robust governance mechanisms. To enable active risk identification, assessment and management, we maintain a strong risk culture and empower staff with the tools and insights to make risk-based informed decisions.

Our approach is supplemented by overarching governance, ensuring alignment with regulatory requirements and best practice. Our Board provides oversight of our strategic risks and our Audit and Risk Management Committee has oversight of our risk framework and practices.

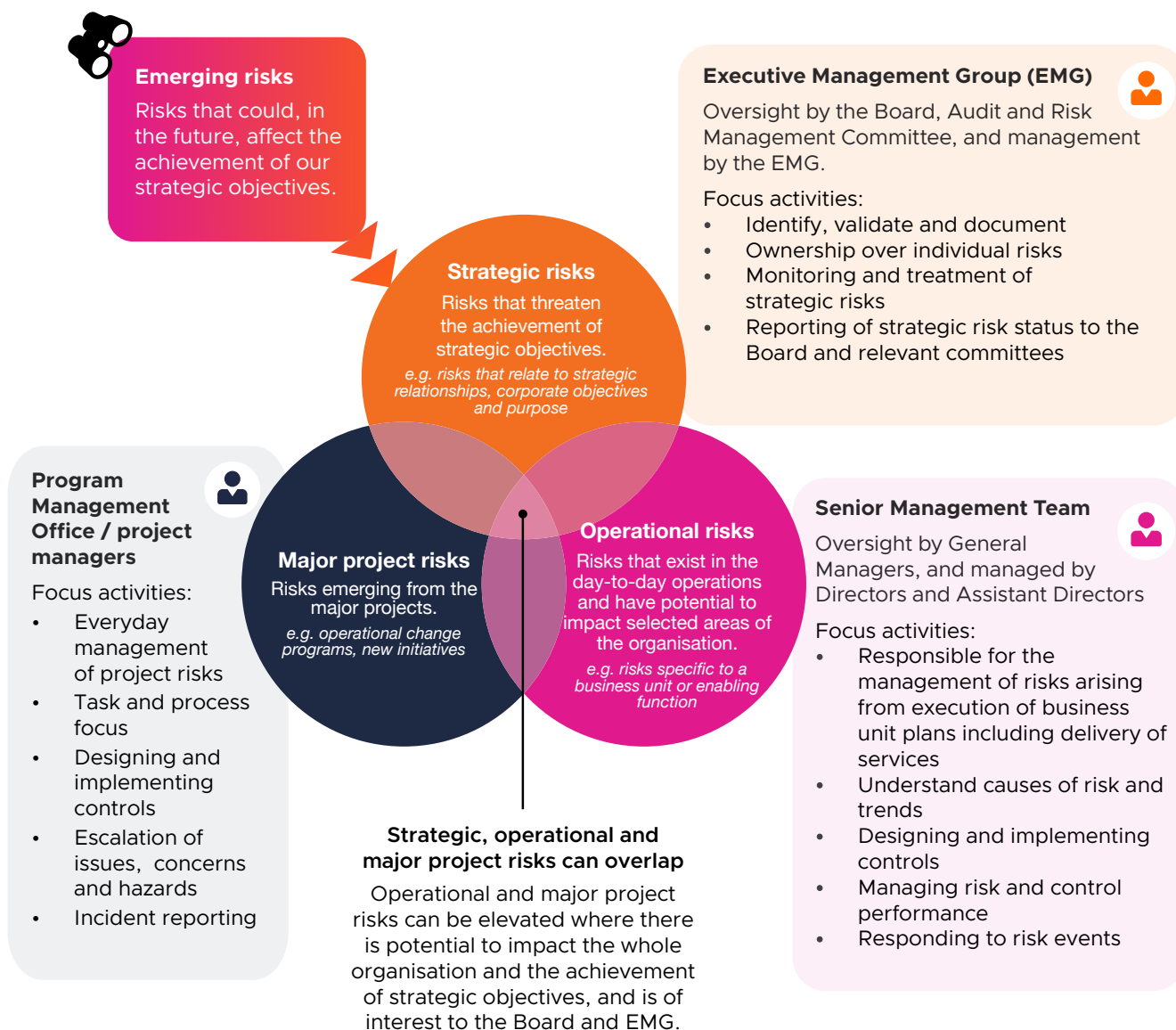
In managing risk, we adopt key principles including accountability, oversight of our strategic, operational, and project risks, and consider emerging risks.

The Reef Authority works together with the Australian National Audit Office (ANAO) for independent oversight of compliance, financial and operational performance. Our internal audit program provides assurance across our business processes and performance, and our compliance with relevant statutory requirements under the PGPA Act. Our audit program is informed by our risk profile.

The Reef Authority is also committed to maintaining the highest ethical standards and continue to actively support the *National Anti-Corruption Commission Act 2022* through robust policies, transparent practices and ongoing staff training. By fostering a culture of integrity, we ensure compliance with relevant regulations and promote accountability at all levels.



Overview of the Reef Authority's risk profiles



Executive Management Group



Senior Management Team



Program Management Office/project managers



Governance

- Public Governance, Performance and Accountability Act 2013 (s16)
- Commonwealth Risk Management Policy
- Accountable Authority Instructions and the Great Barrier Reef Marine Park Authority Risk Management Policy
- Framework evaluation, assurance and improvement



Process

- Great Barrier Reef Marine Park Authority Risk Management Framework Guideline
- Process/project specific risk assessments (e.g. fraud, security, safety, compliance)
- Risk reporting and escalation
- Incident/near miss investigation



Tools

- Great Barrier Reef Marine Park Authority Strategic and Operational Risk Registers
- Risk assessment and management templates
- Hazard, incident and near miss reporting forms/templates
- Control assurance process
- DCCEEW Climate Risk and Opportunity Management Program resources

Strategic risks and mitigation

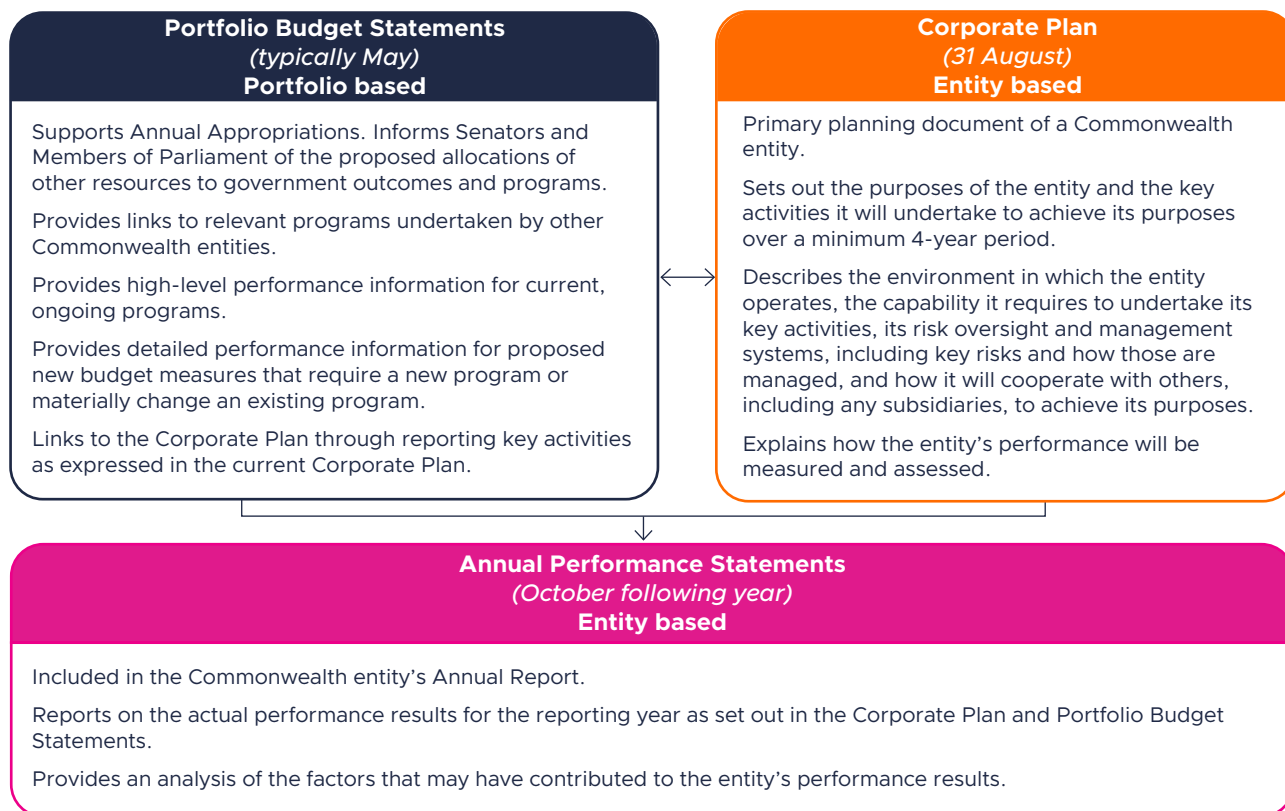
Risk and description	Significant mitigation strategies and controls
<p>1 Reef-wide or regional-scale environmental event(s), including climate change impacts.</p> <p>Inability to anticipate and respond to potential impacts of a catastrophic, system-wide event or the incremental and increasing impact of a series of events, leading to the collapse of the ecosystem across significant regions of the Reef.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Ongoing in-field management programs —including for crown-of-thorns starfish control, marine monitoring, and Reef health — and incident reporting for early detection and timely interventions. • Our policies and processes support effective and appropriate use of the Marine Park, including the <i>Great Barrier Reef Marine Park Zoning Plan 2003</i> and through our permissions system. • Collaboration with partners, stakeholders, and communities to address threats, minimise damage, raise awareness, and promote education for Reef protection.
<p>2 Business challenged due to extraneous events.</p> <p>Unable to respond to various threats including global events (such as pandemics, warfare, tourism fluctuations) impacting operations and finances, challenges in adapting to funding variations for Reef programs, and significant changes with external partners that impact our core obligations and programs.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Our business continuity plan and corporate services enabling framework is in place and includes financial planning, annual operating plans, performance planning and reporting. • Business planning, review processes, and periodic reporting occurs in the Field Management Program and the Reef Education and Engagement Implementation Plan 2021–2025. • The Great Barrier Reef Intergovernmental Agreement defines joint arrangements between the Australian and Queensland governments. This enhanced coordination provides increased stability and supports long-term strategic planning to better anticipate and respond to future risks.
<p>3 Reef Authority priorities or direction out of step with community expectation.</p> <p>Unable to align its priorities and direction for the Marine Park with global community expectations, resulting in scrutiny from various stakeholders including government (Federal and State), the public, non-government organisations, and other interested stakeholders.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Engagement and activities are delivered under the <i>Reef 2050 Long-Term Sustainability Plan</i> and the <i>Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Heritage Strategy</i>. • Engagement with stakeholders — technical, industry and community advisory groups — which provide expert insights, local knowledge, and feedback to inform planning and decision-making. • A dynamic, multi-channel communication strategy is implemented that fosters two-way engagement, ensuring transparency, public trust, and responsiveness to emerging concerns. Insights from inter-government and scientific agencies, published reports, recognised forums, social media and local networks is used to ensure our actions are well-informed and aligned with community expectations.

Risk and description	Significant mitigation strategies and controls
<p>4 Unable to adapt to evolving aspirations of Traditional Owners.</p> <p>Unable to implement policy and legislation to meet the expectations of Traditional Owners within legislative frameworks.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Ongoing engagement with Traditional Owners — through Traditional Owner advisory groups and other consultative forums — to facilitate dialogue, enabling our adaptive response to evolving needs and priorities, while building trust. • Through Traditional Use of Marine Resources Agreements (TUMRAs), Traditional Owners work in partnership with the Australian and Queensland governments to manage Sea Country. Each TUMRA steering committee makes cultural decisions and manages the individual agreement. TUMRAs are in place for over 43 per cent of the Marine Park. • We have sustained dialogue, engagement and activities delivered under the <i>Reef 2050 Traditional Owner Implementation Plan</i> and <i>Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Heritage Strategy</i> to keep heritage strong, safe and healthy.
<p>5 Compromised technical capability and innovation culture reducing effective Marine Park Management.</p> <p>Inability to adapt and evolve in an innovative way to ensure informed decision making and service delivery.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Continual development and adaption of our information technology strategic planning, transformation, systems, and assets. • Investment in innovative knowledge management and decision support tools. • We partner with AIMS, CSIRO and the Queensland Government to develop decision support capability under the Reef 2050 Integrated Monitoring and Reporting Program. • Continued maturity uplift in alignment with the Commonwealth Protective Security Policy Framework.
<p>6 Reef Authority is not engaged and strategically influencing the direction of activities that impact the Reef.</p> <p>Reef Authority operations are uncoordinated, reactive, short-term, and irrelevant with limited capacity to mitigate strategic threats to the Reef.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Implementation of a cross-departmental strategy to foster collaboration, aligning efforts that effectively shape strategic direction and policy making. • We identify, prioritise, and engage key stakeholders at ministerial, agency, and community levels to shape policy, secure influence, and build trusted relationships. • Delivery of high-impact and strategically-relevant initiatives such as TUMRAs and Reef 2050 that showcase leadership, generate significant environmental and cultural outcomes, and strengthen the Reef Authority's position as the principal manager of the Marine Park.
<p>7 The Reef Authority's decisions unintentionally amplify the threats to the Great Barrier Reef.</p> <p>Reef Authority policies, decisions and operational activities, such as those relating to novel Reef interventions, amplify climate change impacts and/or negatively impact the values of the Reef.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Policies, processes and management of Reef activity permits support effective and appropriate use of the Marine Park. • Collaboration with research and industry partners to develop Reef restoration tools that are safe and effective. • Our Sustainability Strategy includes actions like a 6 Green Star certification rating for our head office building, National Australian Built Environment Rating System (NABERS) ratings for buildings generation or purchase of renewable electricity, a zero or low emissions vehicle fleet, waste management plans to minimise waste to landfill.

Performance reporting framework

Commonwealth Performance Framework

At a corporate and operational level, the Reef Authority has an integrated planning and reporting approach that continues to evolve and mature over time. Our approach incorporates the Commonwealth Performance Framework.



Commonwealth Regulator Performance

Our approach to best practice regulation is based on the following three principles of Commonwealth Regulator Performance:

- 1. Continuous improvement and building trust:** ensuring the Reef Authority takes a whole-of-system perspective and is committed to improving performance, capability and culture — to build the public's trust and confidence in our protection, management and regulation of the Reef.
- 2. Risk-based and data-driven:** managing risks proportionately and maintaining essential safeguards, while minimising regulatory burden and leveraging reliable data and digital technology to support Marine Park users to comply and grow.

- 3. Collaboration and engagement:** implementing regulations in a modern and collaborative way through transparent and responsive communications, including regularly engaging with stakeholders, seeking feedback where appropriate, providing guidance and information that is relevant, clear and concise.

Statement of Expectations and Statement of Intent

In 2025–26, the Reef Authority will adhere to the requirements of publishing on our website a Ministerial Statement of Expectations and responding Statement of Intent.

Measuring our performance

Our performance measures outlined in the Portfolio Budget Statements and our Corporate Plan reflect the outcomes our key activities are intended to achieve. The measures are set to support the measuring and assessment of the agency's performance in achieving our purpose for the 2025–26 reporting period, and four-outward years.

Our structure for measuring performance against our key activities includes:

- **Performance measure** – set criteria used to track progress towards delivering against our key activities
- **Targets** – specific targets (intended results) for each performance measure
- **Rationale** – provides an explanation on why measuring this performance is important
- **Methodology** – outlines how the performance criteria is measured
- **Data sources** – the information used as evidence for reporting on our performance
- **Tolerances** – used to evaluate the achievement (further explained below)

The Reef Authority continues to review and monitor its performance in line with the principles of the Commonwealth Regulator Performance framework.

Targets and composite measures

Targets against individual performance measures are identified, and a 'tolerance' rating scale is set to evaluate the achievement for each performance measure, where reasonable. It's important to note targets can be affected by a variety of influences, including operational changes (management) and environmental (natural).

The overarching tolerance scale uses three criteria headings to give an overall rating for composite measures as set out below.

Rating: Management actions	Symbol
Achieved	✓
Partially achieved	○
Not achieved	✗

Linking to the PBS performance information

Under the 2025–26 PBS, our outcome is:

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 development of the Marine Park.

Our program is:

Protects and manages the environment, biodiversity, and heritage values of the Great Barrier Reef Region, and ensures the ecologically sustainable use and benefits of the Great Barrier Reef Marine Park for current and future generations.

Our key activities outlined in the PBS align with those listed in this Corporate Plan (page 26).

The performance information identified in the 2025–26 PBS is below.

The outcome statement in the PBS is the same as the Reef Authority's purpose statement (on page 8 of this plan).

Performance measures	Planned performance results
1. Crown-of-thorns starfish densities are at sustainable levels in the cull sites on targeted reefs that are actioned for surveillance and culling operations.	75%
2. Proportion of Reef Joint Field Management Program Annual Business Plan targets achieved or with significant progress in 2025–26.	85%
3. Participants in Reef Authority education and engagement programs are taking actions that support the Reef's long-term protection.	85%

Our performance measures

Key activity 1:

Protect the Reef through in-field activities and regulation to safeguard its unique environment while allowing ecologically sustainable use.

Performance Measure 1.1	Targets			
	2025–26	2026–27	2027–28	2028–29
Probability that coral trout biomass in Marine Park green zones exceeds that of General Use blue zones, as an indicator for Reef health.	95 per cent probability that coral trout biomass in green zones exceeds that of blue zones.	Maintain at 95 per cent or above		

Tolerances

Tolerances not applied for this measure

Rationale

The difference in coral trout biomass in Marine Park no-take green zones compared to take/General Use blue zones is one indicator of the environmental benefits of Marine Park zoning and Reef health. This measure (and target) may be impacted year-to-year by external factors, including cyclones and coral bleaching. The probability measure is reported because it is consistently available across all survey years since the Reefs re-zoning in 2004.

Methodology and data source

The AIMS Long-Term Monitoring Program (LTMP) surveys between 80 and 130 reefs in northern, central, and southern areas of the Marine Park for coral trout biomass and other aspects of coral reef health. Previously undertaken every second year, this data is now available yearly following the release of the AIMS LTMP annual report. The intent is to track the likelihood that coral trout biomass is higher in no-take zones. More detailed comparison information is being evaluated in partnership with AIMS for future reporting metrics. It is important to note that data may not be available at the time of reporting and therefore may be reported outside of reporting timeframes (or be for a reporting period that does not neatly align with the annual performance reporting framework as it's dependent on the monitoring timeframe and publishing of results).

Data is collected from the AIMS LTMP database.

Performance Measure 1.2		Targets			
		2025–26	2026–27	2027–28	2028–29
(a)	Number of dedicated compliance days completed in the Marine Park.	1000 days	Reach or exceed result from previous year		
(b)	Number of offences detected in the Marine Park.	Maintain the decreasing five-year trend	Maintain the decreasing five-year trend		
(c)	Number of high and very high-risk offences detected in the Marine Park.	Decreasing	Decreasing		

Tolerances		
Achieved	Partially achieved	Not achieved
(a)(b) Targets are met	At least one target is met or partially met	No targets are met, or partially met
(c) Tolerances not applied for this measure.		

Rationale

Individual targets have been set to measure different elements of the Compliance Program. Collectively they support part of the performance narrative on the Program.

- (a) Dedicated compliance days in the Great Barrier Reef, undertaken by the Field Management Program, is a way to assess and ensure effectiveness of management efforts in protecting the ecosystem and enforcing Marine Park zoning rules. The target result will fluctuate as there are factors and variables influencing annual results including business continuity needs, prioritisation of program resourcing and variability in weather. Delivery of compliance days is further guided by continuous improvement of compliance planning, patrol effectiveness, changes in patrol priorities, technological advancements, and promotion (through communication channels) of Marine Park rules and regulations.
- (b) The number of offences in the Marine Park is used to evaluate the level of voluntary compliance with Commonwealth and State legislation designed to protect the Great Barrier Reef and inform effective enforcement and management strategies.
- (c) The number of high and very-high risk offences in the Marine Park is used to evaluate the level of voluntary compliance with the Marine Park zoning rules to inform effective enforcement and management strategies. This measure is aimed at providing insight on the level and trend of serious environmental offending that is more likely to result in, or has the potential to cause, significant harm to the values of the Great Barrier Reef World Heritage Area.

Both (b) and (c) use a risk-based, intelligence-driven approach — using a range of compliance tools — to monitor activities in the Marine Park and promote voluntary compliance. Offence data is highly variable from one year to the next. The level of use, and the number and focus of monitoring operations influence the type and quantity of offences detected.

Methodology and data source

- (a) The data is taken from the planned compliance schedules, undertaken quarterly by the Compliance Operation Group, which is part of the Field Management Program and includes representatives from the Reef Authority, Queensland Parks and Wildlife Services, and Queensland Boating and Fisheries Patrol. The scheduling is informed through the compliance risk framework, analysis of intelligence, and compliance data, and reviewing the performance of previous quarterly compliance activities against the set objectives.

Data is collected through the Field Reporting System (FRS), which is a digital platform that is used by the Field Management Program to record field activities, including compliance patrolling in the Great Barrier Reef World Heritage Area. The FRS allows for in-field capture of incident reporting, public contacts, sightings (use), and intelligence collection. The system is a primary source of business intelligence for the Field Management Program.

- (b) (c) The narrative regarding the status of compliance in the Great Barrier Reef World Heritage Area is developed throughout the year. Long-term trend (5+years) information is provided in broader performance reporting to strengthen program analysis and support strategic planning. Overall, the annual targets are 'decreasing' as part of longer-term trend targets. Additionally, data and analysis of non-compliance is provided. This allows for a measure of the level of threats posed to the values of the Great Barrier Reef World Heritage Area and the performance of the compliance program's efforts to mitigate. As part of our compliance reporting, we also track the number of high and very high-risk offences detected in the Marine Park. The criteria for what are considered high and very high-risk is set through the annual Compliance Risk Plan. Tracking this on an annual basis provides valuable information for the compliance program and provides visibility on the significance of the offences reported on each year.

Data is collected and stored through the Field Management Program's compliance management system (database) and the Permits Compliance database. The data is analysed each quarter and reported through the Compliance Quarterly Report. The high and very-high risk offence types are defined within the Annual Compliance Risk Assessment which is updated each financial year.

Performance Measure 1.3		Targets			
	2025–26	2026–27	2027–28	2028–29	
Permit applications, for activities in the Marine Park requiring a permission, are decided in accordance with the service charter.	95 per cent of routine and 80 per cent of tailored assessment decision notices are in accordance with the Permission Service Charter.	Maintain or increase based on previous year's result			

Tolerances		
Achieved	Partially achieved	Not achieved
Targets are met	At least one target is met or partially met	No targets are met or partially met

Rationale

Our delivery standards for assessing and deciding on permit applications, against our Service Charter, is a way to assess our commitment to timely responses to customer and stakeholder requests.

Methodology and data source

Data on permit decisions is analysed to determine performance against the Service Charter standards. Data is obtained from the Reef Management System permit assessment and decision data.

Performance Measure 1.4		Targets			
	2025–26	2026–27	2027–28	2028–29	
Environmental Management Charge, paid by visitors on commercial vessels, is received in accordance with the Great Barrier Reef Regulations.	99 per cent of Environmental Management Charge (EMC) monies owed are received each quarter.	Maintain or increase based on previous year's result			

Tolerances		
Achieved	Partially achieved	Not achieved
Target (99 per cent) is met	Result is between 90–98 per cent	Result is 89 per cent or below

Rationale

Measuring EMC payment demonstrates the level of compliance with the Australian Government legislative charges.

Methodology and data source

Data from our financial management system is used to determine the amount received each quarter. Data is obtained from EMC logbooks and payment/reconciliation data.

Key activity 2:

Adapt our management to protect the Reef's resilience in response to a changing climate and other pressures.

Performance Measure 2.1	Targets			
	2025–26	2026–27	2027–28	2028–29
Crown-of-thorns starfish (COTS) densities are at sustainable levels on targeted reefs that are actioned for surveillance and culling operations.	75 per cent of crown-of-thorns starfish densities are at sustainable levels on targeted reefs that are actioned for surveillance and culling operations	Maintain at 75 per cent or above as per criteria		

Tolerances		
Achieved	Partially achieved	Not achieved
Target (75 per cent) is met	Result is between 67–74 per cent	Result is 66 per cent or below

Rationale

The Crown-of-thorns Starfish (COTS) Control Program monitors and protects coral and supports the Reef's resilience by systematically suppressing starfish outbreaks to ecologically sustainable levels across hundreds of reefs. Target reefs are assigned annually via a data-driven and consultative reef prioritisation process that is informed by the best available science, field intelligence, model predications, Traditional Owner knowledge, and tourism industry information. The reef prioritisation process ensures the COTS Control Program surveillance and cull effort is assigned and targeted to achieve safe, effective and efficient operations that deliver broadscale coral protection outcomes. The target represents the percentage cull site on actioned reefs in which COTS are at sustainable levels. It is an appropriate metric for assessing the efficacy of the Program in protecting coral reef habitat from COTS predation.

Methodology and data source

Analysed through routine COTS Control Program reporting. Current program capacity is approximately 150 target reefs which can be actioned each year to suppress COTS numbers to sustainable levels. Each target reef is spatially partitioned in cull sites (~10 ha each). COTS culling effort is directed to cull sites based on information from manta tow survey data.

Data sources include COTS culling data, Reef Health Impact Survey (RHIS) data, and Manta Tow surveillance data collected by the COTS program and stored in the Eye on the Reef database.

Performance Measure 2.2		Targets			
		2025–26	2026–27	2027–28	2028–29
Enhance spatial management of the southern Great Barrier Reef through the development of the Southern Plan of Management.	(a)	Sea County values mapping with four Traditional Owner groups that incorporate Traditional Owner's cultural values and aspirations, and the threats to these values are prepared to 80 per cent completion.	Target will be set based on project plan activities for the financial year		
	(b)	Twenty-one species and focused area assessments with management strategies that protect Marine Park values while providing sustainable use are drafted.			

Tolerances		
Achieved	Partially achieved	Not achieved
Targets are met	At least one target is met, or partially met	No targets are met, or partially met

Rationale

A Southern Plan of Management which is being developed in partnership with Traditional Owner groups and in collaboration with Queensland Parks and Wildlife Services for 42 per cent of the Marine Park, seeks to protect and conserve Marine Park values while supporting ecologically sustainable use. This measure considers our modernised approach to spatial planning taking into consideration co-management and adaptive management principles to ensure they are embedded in project governance, decision-making, and implementation.

Methodology and data source

This is an annual assessment of our delivered project milestones to determine the progress of our spatial management planning for the Southern area of the Great Barrier Reef.

Data is obtained from project plans and associated timelines, and a Microsoft Azure DevOps planning and reporting tool.

Performance Measure 2.3		Targets			
		2025–26	2026–27	2027–28	2028–29
Reduce Reef Authority reportable direct and indirect greenhouse gas emissions					
(a) Scope 1 – direct emissions	(a)(b) Decrease reportable net emissions (less than 2024–25 for Scope 1 and 2) or maintain at net zero (once achieved)	(a)(b) Decrease reportable net emissions from previous year (Scope 1 and 2) or maintain at net zero once achieved			
(b) Scope 2 – indirect emissions					
(c) Scope 3 – other reportable indirect emissions	(c) Improve Scope 3 tracking and establish mechanisms to decrease reportable Scope 3 emissions	(c) Improve Scope 3 tracking annually and establish mechanisms to decrease reportable Scope 3 emissions			

Tolerances

Achieved	Partially achieved	Not achieved
Targets are met	At least one target is met, or partially met	No targets are met or partially met

Rationale

Reducing Reef Authority greenhouse gas emissions demonstrates progress towards net zero emissions in Reef Authority operations by 2030, as outlined in the *Reef Authority's Sustainability Strategy 2024–27*, *Emission Reduction Plan*, and broader net zero commitments outlined in the Australian Government's – *Net Zero in Government Operations Strategy*.

Methodology and data source

- (a) (b) The National Greenhouse Accounts (NGA) Factors provided by DCCEEW are used to estimate greenhouse gas emissions for Scope 1 emissions (direct emissions occurring from on-site burning of fuels), and Scope 2 emissions (indirect emissions from the generation of purchased electricity).

Note: for the hardest to abate emissions, carbon offsets may be used to achieve net zero whilst feasible alternatives to non-renewable fuels are established.

- (c) To calculate Scope 3 (all other indirect emissions occurring upstream and downstream in the value chain of the entity) emissions, factors from either NGA or other nationally recognised methods will be used to assess greenhouse gas emissions. Any alternative method suggested by DCCEEW will be adopted once guidance becomes available.

Data source is the annual emissions data calculations.

Performance Measure 2.4		Targets		
	2025–26	2026–27	2027–28	2028–29
Cumulative number of citations from the <i>2019 Great Barrier Reef Outlook Report</i> onwards.	520	Increase		

Tolerances		
Achieved	Partially achieved	Not achieved
Target is met	Result is within five per cent of the target	Not applicable

Rationale
Citations of the Great Barrier Reef Outlook Report, the Reef Authority’s key report series on Reef health and management, is a way to assess the utility and influence of the series.

Methodology and data source
The Google Scholar online tool is used to extract the citation count number, which includes citations from a wide range of scholarly publications; essentially, any publication that is considered academically relevant and indexed by Google Scholar. Citation counts (since publication) for each edition is to be collected and collated.. Only editions for which citation counts are readily available are included.

Key activity 3:

Foster a culture of Reef stewardship through strong partnerships, strategic engagement, and education programs.

Performance Measure 3.1	Targets			
	2025–26	2026–27	2027–28	2028–29
Participants in the Reef Authority's education and engagement programs are taking actions to support the Reef's long-term protection.	85 per cent of participants surveyed report they are taking actions to protect the Reef.	Maintain at or above 85 per cent as per criteria		

Tolerances		
Achieved	Partially achieved	Not achieved
Target (85 per cent) is met	Result is between 70–84 per cent	Result is 69 per cent or lower

Rationale

If the Reef Authority has worked effectively with Reef Guardians, tourism, and Local Marine Advisory Committee partners, they will demonstrate caring for the Reef, learning about the Reef, implementing actions that address risks to the Reef, and sharing their knowledge and actions with others. This measure assesses the extent to which our Reef Guardians, tourism, and community partners take stewardship action and is important for evaluating the effectiveness of our flagship programs; particularly in how the programs influence inter-generational change through education, support local government actions to reduce threats to the Reef, build capacity of the tourism industry to respond to impacts and share the values of the World Heritage with visitors, and involve local communities in Reef protection.

Methodology and data source

An impact tracker and targeted surveys is used to determine results across the four criteria – Care, Learn, Act, Share. The result is a weighted average of results across survey participant groups. A standardised evaluation criteria is used to determine the level of stewardship following involvement in Reef Authority programs including the High Standard Tourism Operator Program, Reef Guardian Schools, Reef Guardian Councils, Master Reef Guides, Eye on the Reef, Virtual Learning Experiences, and Local Marine Advisory Committees.

Data is sourced from annual stakeholder survey results which are achieved via the Care – Learn – Act – Share = Stewardship (C.L.A.S=S) Monitoring, Evaluation and Reporting Tool.

Performance Measure 3.2		Targets		
	2025–26	2026–27	2027–28	2028–29
Reef Authority online communication tool usage for:				
(a) Websites (engaged sessions)	(a) 295,500 engaged sessions	Maintain or increase based on previous year’s results		
(b) Social media channels (organic reach)	(b) 8,000,000 organic reach			
Tolerances				
Achieved	Partially achieved	Not achieved		
Targets are met	At least one target is met or partially met	No targets are met or partially met		
Rationale				
(a) Understanding how many users are accessing the information on our website, informs our communication planning.				
(b) Information on social media organic reach across our social channels is used to understand reach and demographics and inform our communication planning.				
Methodology and data source				
(a) Google Analytics is used to measure the average number of engaged sessions (an engaged session includes the number of sessions that lasted longer than 10 seconds, or had a conversion event, or had two or more screen or page views) on key websites including: www.gbrmpa.gov.au, https://reefknowledgesystem.gbrmpa.gov.au/, www.greatbarrierreefaquarium.au, https://www.reefed.edu.au/				
(b) Social platform and external social media analytics tools are used to measure the total organic reach for social media platforms including LinkedIn, X (formerly Twitter), Facebook and Instagram.				

Performance Measure 3.3		Targets		
	2025–26	2026–27	2027–28	2028–29
Improved trust level sentiment score.	8 points or over	Maintain 8 points or over		

Tolerances		
Achieved	Partially achieved	Not achieved
Result is 8 points or over	Result is 7 points or over	Result is equal to or less than 6 points

Rationale

Understanding public and stakeholder sentiment towards the Reef and its management is used to inform our communication and engagement approaches.

A representative portion of the Australian Census population enables us to gauge the level of trust sentiment stakeholders have in relation to the Reef Authority.

Methodology and data source

An annual market research survey is sent to more than 1000 participants, comprising a representative sample of the Australian census population. The survey is conducted by an external research consultancy targeting participants aged 18 years and older. All data is de-identified and rigorous quality assurance processes are followed. The sentiment scores range from 0 = low trust sentiment, to 10 = high trust sentiment.

Performance Measure 3.4		Targets		
	2025–26	2026–27	2027–28	2028–29
Number of Traditional Owner groups with formal partnerships in place.	Maintain	Maintain or increase		

Tolerances

Achieved	Partially achieved	Not achieved
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Tolerances not applied for this measure

Rationale

The number of formal partnerships demonstrate our commitment to supporting and working with Great Barrier Reef Traditional Owners. Formal partnerships are those with documented arrangements between Traditional Owners and the Reef Authority for the management of Sea Country within the Marine Park.

Methodology and data source

The cumulative number of documented agreements for Traditional Use of Marine Resources Agreements, delivery of field activity by Land Indigenous Ranger Groups, the Southern Plan of Management, research projects and partnerships through the Reef Joint Field Management Program.

Data is obtained from an internal inventory list which includes the number of documented agreements between the agency and Traditional Owners.

Performance Measure 3.5		Targets			
	2025–26	2026–27	2027–28	2028–29	
Percentage of Marine Park coastline covered by Traditional Use of Marine Resources Agreements.	43 per cent	Maintain or increase			

Tolerances		
Achieved	Partially achieved	Not achieved

Tolerances not applied for this measure

Rationale

The spatial extent of Traditional Use of Marine Resources Agreements (TUMRAs) shows the portion of the Marine Park with collaborative conservation efforts.

Methodology and data source

The percentage of the Marine Park coastline at low water covered by accredited Traditional Use of Marine Resources Agreements (as mapped in accreditation documentation).

Data is obtained from an internal inventory list on Traditional Use of Marine Resources Agreements in place and their area of coverage against proportion of coastline.

Appendices

Appendix A

As part of the Reef Authority's commitment to continuous improvement, the agency reviewed its key activities and performance measures in preparation of this *Corporate Plan 2025–26*. Our key activities remain consistent with those presented in the PBS 2025–26 and our performance measures remain largely consistent with last year, however some have been remapped to align with key activities.

The process included consultation internally with senior leaders and subject matter experts, strategic advice from the Board, and feedback from the Audit and Risk Management Committee.

This Corporate Plan includes 13 performance measures for the reporting periods 2025–29. A summary of the changes is in the below table.

Performance measures 2024–25	Changes made	Rationale for changes (for 2025–26)
1.1 Probability that coral trout biomass in Marine Park green zones exceeds that of General Use blue zones, as an indicator for Reef health.	Amended	Editorial changes made to supporting criteria for clarity.
1.2 (a) Number of dedicated compliance days in the Marine Park. (b) Number of offences detected in the Marine Park. (c) Number of high and very high-risk offences detected in the Marine Park.	Amended	Editorial changes made to supporting criteria for clarity.
1.3 Permit applications, for activities in the Marine Park requiring a permission, are decided in accordance with the service charter.	New	Listed as a future measure in 2024–25 (2.4), this measure is established for 2025–26 with some changes to measure and supporting criteria to strengthen the measure.
1.4 Environmental Management Charge, paid by visitors on commercial vessels, is received in accordance with the Great Barrier Reef Regulations.	New	This measure is established for 2025–26 to support our regulatory reporting.
2.1 Crown-of-thorns starfish densities are at sustainable levels on targeted reefs that are actioned for surveillance and culling operations.	Amended	Editorial changes made to improve measure wording, and to supporting criteria for clarity. This includes a minor amendment from the PBS 2025–26 which was: <i>Crown-of-thorns starfish densities are at sustainable levels in the cull sites on targeted reefs.</i>
2.2 Enhance spatial management of the southern Great Barrier Reef through the development of the Southern Plan of Management.	New	New performance measure.
2.3 Reduce Reef Authority direct and indirect greenhouse gas emissions.	Amended	Editorial changes made to supporting criteria for clarity.
2.4 Cumulative number of citations from the <i>2019 Great Barrier Reef Outlook Report</i> .	New	Listed as a future measure in 2024–25 this measure is established for 2025–26 with some changes to measure and supporting criteria to strengthen measure.
3.1 Participants in Reef Authority education and engagement programs are taking actions that support the Reef's long-term protection.	Amended	Minor editorial changes to supporting criteria for clarity, and clarification of methodology.

Performance measures 2024–25	Changes made	Rationale for changes (for 2025–26)
3.2 Reef Authority online communication tool usage. (a) Websites (b) Social media channels	Amended	Minor editorial changes to rationale to improve clarity.
3.4 Number of Traditional Owner groups with formal partnerships in place.	Amended	Changes made to measure methodology (including broadening the definition of formal partnerships) to better reflect the breadth and depth of our work in this space. Editorial changes made to supporting criteria to improve clarity.
Corporate Plan 2024-25		
1.1 Reef Authority policies, strategies, and position statements that effectively address the High or Very High risks identified in the latest Outlook Report.	Removed	Removed
4.1 Improvement in our employee engagement score.	Removed	Removed
4.2 Percentage variance of the Reef Authority budget.	Removed	Removed

Appendix B

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