

Ministerial Statement of Expectations to the Great Barrier Reef Marine Park Authority

Environment and Water Portfolio

Issued by Senator the Hon Murray Watt on 1 October 2025

Ministerial Statement of Expectations

This Statement of Expectations outlines my expectations, as the Minister for the Environment and Water, for how the Great Barrier Reef Marine Park Authority (Reef Authority) will achieve its regulatory and marine park management objectives, carry out its regulatory functions and exercise its powers.

Overview

This Statement of Expectations forms part of the Australian Government's commitment to good and effective corporate governance and acknowledges the performance of regulatory functions as guided by the *Public Governance, Performance and Accountability Act 2013* (PGPA Act).

The Australian Government is committed to better protecting, restoring and managing our natural environment for the benefit of all Australians. The Reef Authority's world leading management of the Great Barrier Reef (Reef) is essential to maintaining the Outstanding Universal Value of this World Heritage listed icon.

The Reef Authority, as the lead regulatory agency under the *Great Barrier Reef Marine Park Act 1975* (Marine Park Act), plays a critical role in ensuring the long-term protection and conservation of the environment, biodiversity and World Heritage values of the Great Barrier Reef Region (Region).

I expect the Reef Authority to also deliver on other objects of the Marine Park Act and carry out its functions in accordance with other relevant environmental policy and legislation. This includes ensuring ecologically sustainable use of the Region, encouraging engagement in the protection and management of the Region, and assisting to meet Australia's international responsibilities for World Heritage.

The Reef Authority will deliver major projects for the Great Barrier Reef Marine Park, including the Great Barrier Reef Aquarium, in line with agreed budget and timelines, and established governance processes.

Administration of legislative and regulatory functions

This Statement covers the following legislative and regulatory functions undertaken by the Reef Authority:

- *Great Barrier Reef Marine Park Act 1975*
- *Great Barrier Reef Marine Park Regulations 1999*

- *Great Barrier Reef Marine Park (Environmental Management Charge-Excise) Act 1993*
- *Great Barrier Reef Marine Park (Environmental Management Charge-General) Act 1993*
- *Great Barrier Reef Marine Park Zoning Plan 2003*
- Plans of Management
 - Cairns Area Plan of Management 1998
 - Hinchinbrook Plan of Management 2004
 - Whitsundays Plan of Management 1998
 - Shoalwater Bay (Dugong) Plan of Management 1997

As the Accountable Authority of the Reef Authority, I expect the Chief Executive Officer of the agency to fulfil these management and regulatory functions in accordance with the requirements outlined in the Regulator Performance Resource Management Guide (RMG 128). This includes embedding the following best practice principles into regulatory functions and incorporating regulatory performance reporting into the agency's corporate plan and annual report, as required under the PGPA Act and the *Public Governance, Performance and Accountability Rule 2014* (PGPA Rule).

- Continuous improvement and building trust: regulators adopt a whole-of-system perspective, continuously improving performance, capability, and culture to build trust and confidence in Australia's regulatory settings.
- Risk based and data-driven: regulators manage risks proportionately, maintain essential safeguards, minimise regulatory burden, and leverage data and digital technology to support those they regulate to comply and grow.
- Collaboration and engagement: regulators are transparent and responsive communicators, implementing regulations in a modern and collaborative way

My expectations are further elaborated below.

Marine Park management in response to climate change

I expect the Reef Authority to use the management capabilities set out in its regulatory powers to address threats to the Reef including being responsive to the effects of climate change to protect and maintain its ecological values and assist Australia to meet international responsibilities. This includes:

- Continuing to rely on the latest and best available science to adapt management strategies to protect the Reef's resilience in response to a changing climate, including the coral bleaching events and increased storm event intensity, and other pressures.
- Working closely with the science and research community to assess, trial and facilitate emerging restoration and adaptation actions to support reef ecosystem resilience to the impacts of climate change.

Continuous improvement, building trust, collaboration and engagement

The Government expects all regulators to commit to continuous improvement in their processes, governance and capabilities, and identify and develop organisational values and a positive culture that supports best practice.

This expectation extends to broader organisational performance and values as these are essential to building trust in the administration of regulatory functions. I expect the Reef Authority to deliver organisational improvement and build trust by:

- Ensuring it attracts and retains the best and brightest people so it can continue to fulfill its important national role.
- Ensuring the Reef Authority meets its obligations under the Public Service Act and APS values.
- Working collaboratively across government in the delivery of its functions.
- Managing expenditure to ensure financial sustainability.
- Ensuring expenditure is managed efficiently, effectively and economically in accordance with finance law (including but not limited to the PGPA) and the Commonwealth resource management framework.
- Engaging with stakeholders in a transparent, meaningful and timely way.
- Being responsive to feedback in the delivery of its functions.

Whole-of-system stewardship across all regulatory functions and reforms

I expect the Reef Authority to engage closely and collaboratively across the Australian Government, provide technical and policy guidance, and support the broader portfolio and other relevant portfolios where required. This includes supporting the Government's policy objectives and priorities, including the environmental reform agenda and commitment to strong climate action.

I expect the Reef Authority to build and maintain trust with the Australian Government, the Australian community, and the international community – both in its role of protecting and managing the Reef and in meeting Australia's World Heritage responsibilities.

Traditional Owners have close and enduring connections to the Reef, and I expect the Reef Authority to partner with Traditional Owners to ensure equitable participation in governance and decision making for Sea Country, to protect and conserve biodiversity and Indigenous cultural values, and to promote sustainable use.

The Reef Authority will continue to work alongside government partners, Reef Traditional Owners, and other stakeholders to update and implement the Australian and Queensland governments' Reef 2050 Long-Term Sustainability Plan.

I expect the Reef Authority to continue to collaborate with the Queensland Government, as outlined in the Great Barrier Reef Intergovernmental Agreement, and in complementary regulatory arrangements to improve the effectiveness and delivery of joint Reef management programs.

Relationship with Minister

The Reef Authority plays an essential role in ensuring the Australian Government and I are well placed to respond promptly to challenges and opportunities arising from the administration of its regulatory functions. Accordingly, I expect the Reef Authority to provide accurate and timely technical and policy advice on significant issues relating to marine park management and existing regulatory functions and regulatory reforms.

Significant issues include matters where the government is accountable in Parliament, external environmental factors influencing the state of the Reef, including climate change, material operational or budgetary issues, and policy change or matters that represent high reputational risk to the Reef Authority.

As the responsible Minister, I will provide an enabling environment for the Reef Authority to consistently implement best regulatory practice by ensuring you are well informed of the Australian Government's policy direction and priorities

Transparency

I ask that this statement and your response be made available on the Reef Authority's website.