



Australian Government

Great Barrier Reef  
Marine Park Authority

# GREAT BARRIER REEF Outlook Report 2019

© Matt Cumock

## OVERVIEW OF THE GREAT BARRIER REEF OUTLOOK REPORT 2019

### About the report

The Great Barrier Reef Outlook Report 2019 provides an overview of the condition of the Region's ecosystem and heritage values, use, influencing factors, management effectiveness, resilience, and risks to its future. The 2019 report is the third in the comprehensive series.

The report is required under section 54 of the *Great Barrier Reef Marine Park Act 1975* and aims to provide a regular and reliable means of assessing Reef health and management in an accountable and transparent way. It covers the Great Barrier Reef Region, which extends from the tip of Cape York in far north Queensland to past Lady Elliot Island in southern Queensland. The report does not contain recommendations about future protection or management initiatives.

### Findings

The findings of this report indicate that, without local, national and global action on the greatest threats, the overall outlook for the Great Barrier Reef's ecosystem will remain very poor, with continuing consequences for its heritage values.

### Report development

The Great Barrier Reef Marine Park Authority (Marine Park Authority) prepared the report using evidence from a number of Australian and Queensland government agencies, researchers from a range of institutions, and industry data-holders and Traditional Owners.

The outcomes of an expert workshop involving more than 30 scientists and other stakeholders, contributed to the assessments of biodiversity, ecosystem health and heritage values. The outcomes also informed the assessment of the forward-looking risk and resilience chapters.

Five independent experts specialising in protected area management evaluation and governance assessed the effectiveness of the existing protection and management

arrangements. This independent assessment forms the basis of Chapter 7.

Four expert reviewers, appointed by the Australian Minister for the Environment, independently reviewed the draft Outlook Report. These reviewers are recognised national and international experts with biophysical, heritage and/or socio-economic expertise.

### Assessment topics

The Outlook Report looks back over the last five years and collates a Region-wide assessment of the current condition of the Reef's ecosystem and heritage values. The report is structured around nine assessments required by legislation, with each assessment forming a chapter of the report.

As well as providing grades for biodiversity, ecosystem health and heritage values the report assesses benefits and impacts from commercial and non-commercial uses that occur within and adjacent to the Region. Factors that influence the Region (but do not occur in the Region), are also considered and assessed. These chapters combine to inform an assessment of resilience, risks and the long-term outlook for the Region.

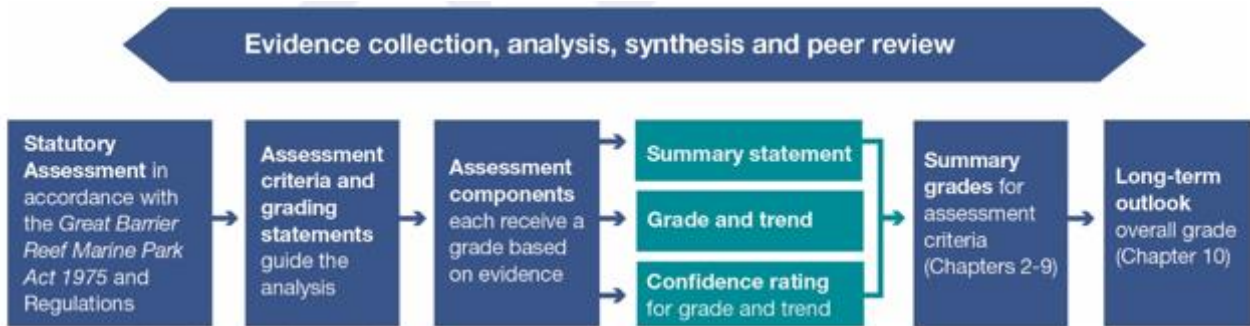
### Evidence used

The Outlook Report is based on evidence derived from existing research and information. The reporting period generally includes data from January 2014 to December 2018 and, where possible, compares it with historical trends.

Published peer-reviewed literature from technical experts is prioritised over other forms of evidence. Long-term data sets and statistics from government-managed entities (for example, Australian Maritime Safety Authority) are integral to the analyses in several chapters. Consultant reports may also be considered as part of the available evidence, but do not hold as much weight (particularly if not peer-reviewed).



Assessment approach to determine final grades



## Assessment grades

A series of grading statements standardise the allocation of grades for each criterion and all components examined in an assessment. A four-point grading scale has been used since 2009 and is continued in this report for consistency; an example is shown to the right. There is no option for 'moderate', so a decision is required about whether a component is in a positive or negative state. Each grade also receives a trend and a confidence rating in the evidence. The trend reflects how a component has changed over the past five years.

Chapters relating to factors influencing the Region's values, risks and long-term outlook contain forward-looking assessments. In these chapters, trends in criteria and components are forecast for the next five years and beyond.

## How the Outlook Report will be used

The Outlook Report plays a significant role in informing Australia's reports to the World Heritage Committee addressing the property's world heritage status. Findings drive adaptive management and directly influence the Marine Park Authority's future work program. It will also inform the review of the Reef 2050 Plan and be used to identify key information gaps and research and monitoring needs.

Grades for criteria are informed by grades for components

Grade and trend 2019	Confidence		Criterion and component summaries
	Grade	Trend	
↓	Not determined		Habitats to support species: Overall, habitats are assessed as...
↔	●	●	Islands: Summary of condition and trend...
⊖	●	●	Seagrass meadows: Summary of condition and trend...
↔	●	●	Mangrove forests: Summary of condition and trend...

Grading statements – habitats to support species			
<span style="color: green;">■</span> <b>Very good</b> All major habitats are...	<span style="color: yellow;">■</span> <b>Good</b> There is some habitat loss...	<span style="color: orange;">■</span> <b>Poor</b> Habitat loss, degradation or alteration...	<span style="color: red;">■</span> <b>Very poor</b> There is widespread habitat loss...
Trend since last report		Confidence	
↑ Improved	↔ Stable	● Adequate high-quality evidence and high level of consensus	○ Limited evidence or limited consensus
↓ Deteriorated	– No consistent trend	● Limited evidence or limited consensus	○ Inferred, very limited evidence