



Australian Government  
Great Barrier Reef  
Marine Park Authority

2015–16

# Land and Sea Country Partnerships

## Annual Report summary

The Great Barrier Reef is one of the natural wonders of the world, a National Heritage site and World Heritage Area, famous for its beauty and amazing biodiversity. It is a significant part of Australia's national identity. The Great Barrier Reef formed in the presence of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples. Traditional Owners have recognised the outstanding value of the Great Barrier Reef since it first formed 8000 to 12,000 years ago. Traditional Owners have cared for, protected and used the Reef's resources sustainably by exercising a system of rights and responsibilities known as 'cultural authority.' As the Reef's custodians, they maintain long-standing cultural association with this evolving marine ecosystem and we work in partnership with them to manage and protect it.

### Partnering with Traditional Owners

There are more than 70 Traditional Owner groups with connections to sea country between Bundaberg and the eastern Torres Strait Islands. Traditional hunting and fishing, ceremonies, stories and other sea country activities occur in the Marine Park.

Through the Great Barrier Reef Marine Park Authority's Land and Sea Country Partnerships Program we work with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples to manage and care for their sea country and ensure sustainable use of the region through Traditional Use of Marine Resources Agreements.

These agreements describe how each group will manage their marine resources and their roles in compliance activities and monitoring environmental conditions. Under these agreements Traditional Owner groups:

- Develop sustainable hunting management systems
- Undertake cultural heritage activities
- Monitor the health of species and habitats
- Participate in compliance patrols and training
- Advise Reef managers on strategies to strengthen Reef protection and management.



Traditional artwork by Patricia Galvin,  
Shenoa Sultana and Henry Epong Jr

# Land and Sea Country Partnerships Program

The Authority's Indigenous Partnerships Section is supported by 18 dedicated staff based in Townsville and Cairns. It delivers a strong Indigenous engagement program across the Great Barrier Reef catchment that builds understanding and consideration of the varying Traditional Owner values and Reef connections.

The Land and Sea Country Partnerships Program empowers sea country managers through involvement in policy development and sponsorship opportunities. It enforces sea country management initiatives with strengthened Indigenous compliance, liaison and training. It also engages and strengthens communication with Traditional Owners through the Indigenous Reef Advisory Committee, on-country meetings, joint patrols, policy development and knowledge sharing.

## 2015-16 key outcomes

- Legislative protection increased under a new Traditional Use of Marine Resources Agreement taking total reach to a record 24.6 per cent of the Marine Park coastline.
- 81 Traditional Owners (the highest on record) received compliance training and are now better equipped to report non-compliant activities in the Marine Park.
- Increased engagement with more than 560 Traditional Owners strengthened management partnerships.
- 44 Traditional Owners and/or Indigenous rangers participated in marine park patrols with enforcement agencies.
- Traditional Owners removed more than two tonnes of marine debris from islands and beaches and logged important data to help target and stop the source of the rubbish.
- More than 70 youth took part in junior ranger programs with Traditional Owners and now have greater connection to the Reef, Traditional knowledge and marine career possibilities.
- The Great Barrier Reef Marine Park Authority's coral bleaching response was enhanced through Traditional Owners input, knowledge and remote location surveys.
- Under the Gunggandji Traditional Use of Marine Resources Agreement, Traditional Owners have agreed to implement no-take of turtle and dugong around Green Island, Michaelmas Cay and Fitzroy Island.
- A new online training package was introduced that ensures Indigenous communities are better skilled as first responders to marine animal strandings – this is important in remote locations.



**COMPLIANCE IS A KEY PART OF EVERY TRADITIONAL USE OF MARINE RESOURCES AGREEMENT.**



2015-16 HIGHLIGHTS

## Working with Yarrabah Traditional Owners

The Gunggandji Traditional Use of Marine Resources Agreement was jointly accredited by the Australian and Queensland governments on 28 June 2016. The agreement was developed by the Gunggandji Traditional Owners of the Yarrabah Region with support from the Great Barrier Reef Marine Park Authority and Queensland Government and covers three key areas: Green Island, Michaelmas Cay and Fitzroy Island. Under the agreement no hunting of turtle or dugong will occur in these areas.

## Enhancing sea country management



In May 2016 more than 70 Traditional Owners from 16 groups, marine managers and other government representatives attended the Giringun Sea Country Forum. Cultural values and traditional knowledge about sea country, Traditional Use of Marine Resources Agreement awareness, compliance activities and training were discussed.

## Reconnecting with sea country

Forty-seven saltwater Woppaburra Traditional Owners met on North Keppel Island with government partners and scientists to help inform, educate, and build stronger partnerships for sea country management in the Keppel Islands region of the Marine Park. For some participants this was the first time they stepped onto their sea country.

## Junior rangers are the future



Junior ranger programs provided opportunities for Indigenous and non-Indigenous students to connect with country and learn from local Traditional Owners. In 2015-16 junior rangers learnt about turtle rehabilitation work, marine life, marine career pathways, and local Indigenous culture. These activities inspire kids to be the Reef protectors of the future.

## Community education and engagement



With our support local Traditional Owners delivered a week-long 'Reef Dreaming' school holiday program at Reef HQ Aquarium in Townsville reaching almost 4500 people and raising awareness of the importance of cultural connections and values of the Great Barrier Reef. The Indigenous Partnerships team also coordinated an information booth at Celebrate the Reef community day in October 2015, attended by more than 2000 people. This was an excellent opportunity to engage with the community and raise awareness of program activities including Traditional Use of Marine Resources Agreements and the Indigenous Compliance Program.



# 70+

distinct Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Traditional Owner clan groups



We met with  
**569**  
Traditional Owners

### Traditional Use of Marine Resources Agreements

- 8 accredited
- 17 tribal groups
- 54+ public education signs
- 45,207 square kilometres of Reef covered by Traditional Agreements
- 2 new agreements under development



### Girringun Sea Country Forum (Mission Beach)

- 70+ Traditional Owners
- 16 Groups
- 7 Reef managers
- Setting the future for sea country management

## 4500 people reached



through *Reef Dreaming* holiday program at Reef HQ Aquarium, the National Education Centre for the Great Barrier Reef

## 10 year anniversary



of the first Traditional Use of Marine Resources Agreement – with Girringun Traditional Owners



# 70+

youth participated in junior ranger programs on country with Traditional Owners



Nearly a quarter of the Great Barrier Reef Marine Park coastline is covered by Traditional Use of Marine Resources Agreements and an Indigenous Land Use Agreement

# 3

Indigenous Reef Advisory Committee meetings

### Indigenous compliance training and patrols

- 81 Traditional Owners received compliance training
- 31 compliance patrols involving 44 Traditional Owners
- More eyes and ears on the ground – better witnesses and intelligence



### Engagement in the field by region

- Far Northern Region 24%
- Northern Region 19%
- Central Region 42%
- Southern Region 15%

The Land and Sea Country Partnerships Program is delivered by the Great Barrier Reef Marine Park Authority with funding support through the Australian Government's Reef Programme.

### Further information

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#LoveTheReef