



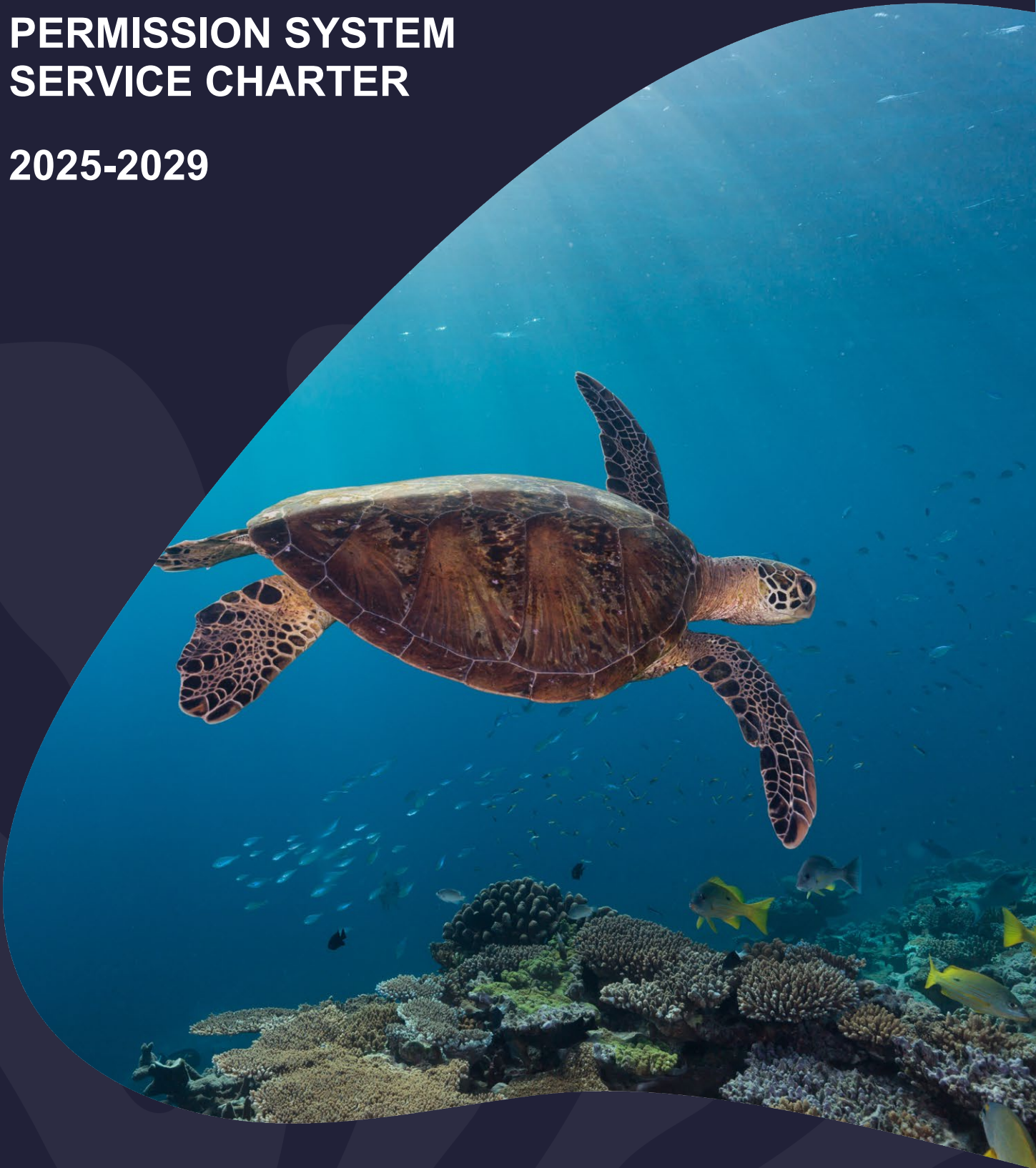
Australian Government  
Great Barrier Reef  
Marine Park Authority



Queensland  
Government

# PERMISSION SYSTEM SERVICE CHARTER

## 2025-2029



# Purpose

This service charter (the charter) outlines Great Barrier Reef Marine Park Authority (the Reef Authority) and the Department of the Environment, Tourism, Science and Innovation, through Queensland Parks and Wildlife Service (QPWS), commitments to implementing the permission system under the *Great Barrier Reef Marine Park Act 1975* and the *Marine Parks Act 2004* (the Marine Parks Acts).

This charter applies to all joint permission system processes, including post approval monitoring, auditing and compliance functions.

This charter complements the Service Charter for the Great Barrier Reef Marine Park Authority and works together with existing Memorandum of Understanding in place between the managing agencies and other parties.

## About us

The Reef Authority and QPWS (the managing agencies) operate a joint permission system for Great Barrier Reef Marine Park and the Great Barrier Reef Coast Marine Park (jointly known as the Marine Parks).

There is a long history of issuing joint Marine Parks permits by the managing agencies, which means that a single application typically results in a single assessment and, if granted, a single permit with one or more permissions, granted by both the Reef Authority and QPWS delegates. The joint permit represents most applications and decisions made by permit delegates. This commitment to joint and complementary management is underpinned by the [Great Barrier Reef Intergovernmental Agreement](#).

Our goal is the protection of the Marine Parks through the management of multiple-use activities. We achieve this through strategic planning, policy implementation, and administering the permission system. This includes impact assessment, setting conditions, auditing, and monitoring of compliance.

The managing agencies are responsible for the administration of permit applications, decisions and post decision conditional approvals, including compliance, under the following pieces of legislation:

- *Great Barrier Reef Marine Park Act 1975* (Cth);
- *Marine Parks Act 2004* (Qld);
- *Great Barrier Reef Marine Park (Environmental Management Charge-General) Act 1993* (Cth);
- *Great Barrier Reef Marine Park (Environmental Management Charge-Excise) Act 1993* (Cth);
- Great Barrier Reef Marine Park Regulations 2019 (Cth);
- Great Barrier Reef Marine Park Zoning Plan 2003 (Cth);
- Marine Parks Regulation 2017 (Qld)
- Marine Parks (Great Barrier Reef Coast) Zoning Plan 2004 (Qld);

QPWS also administers permits for activities on island protected areas (e.g., national parks) within the Great Barrier Reef World Heritage Area. Other sections of the managing agencies are also involved in providing technical or scientific advice to inform assessment and post-permit decisions.

# What you can expect from us

We are committed to:

- acting honestly, ethically and lawfully; applying natural justice and procedural fairness
- acting in accordance with the [APS Values and Code of Conduct](#) and [Queensland Public Service Code of Conduct](#).
- providing a transparent and professional environmental impact assessment process
- impartially applying relevant legislation, policies and guidelines
- respecting your privacy and meeting our obligations under the *Privacy Act 1988* (Cth) and *Information Privacy Act 2009* (Qld)
- being accountable for our actions
- providing clear, accurate and timely information about the managing agencies' policies, programs, processes and relevant legislation
- treating you respectfully and effectively responding to your needs
- replying to correspondence in a timely manner
- seeking ways to improve systems in the way we do business
- providing you with opportunities to provide feedback on our service

*Note: We cannot provide legal or financial advice. If you have concerns about your individual legal or financial position, you should seek independent professional advice.*

## Applicants, permission holders and their representatives

We will:

- provide you with information about the assessment process including the different assessment approaches, stages within the assessment process and any statutory timeframes.
- provide clear, up-front guidance on the information we require you to provide to enable us to assess your application. We will endeavour to request this information once only at the commencement of the relevant stage of the assessment process. However, if the information provided is insufficient to address our request, then further information will be required.
- provide you with up-to-date information about mutual obligations under the Marine Parks Acts, Great Barrier Reef Marine Park Regulations 2019, Great Barrier Reef Marine Park Zoning Plan 2003, Marine Parks (Great Barrier Reef Coast) Zoning Plan 2004, Queensland Marine Park Regulation 2017 and *Environment Protection and Biodiversity Conservation Act 1999* as it affects the Marine Parks.
- keep you informed about key decisions impacting the assessment of your application.
- write to you when we receive your application and provide you with relevant contact details for the managing agencies.
- ensure our staff members are appropriately trained to provide you with accurate and up-to-date information.
- apply the managing agencies' [Permission system policy](#) and [Risk assessment procedure](#) for all assessments and consider all other relevant policy documents as required.

- apply the best available scientific information to our decisions and, in accordance with the Marine Parks Acts, we apply the precautionary principle<sup>1</sup>.
- provide guidance on how to avoid, mitigate or offset relevant impacts on Marine Parks values using clear and plain language.
- provide accurate and up-to-date information to assist with the application process, where the information is not sensitive or classified.
- ensure that risk management measures adopted are, in priority order, set out to avoid, minimise, mitigate or offset to manage potential impacts to the environment.
- make decisions within statutory timeframes and within the service level standards set out in this charter.
- ensure our decisions are transparent and clearly articulated.
- regularly review and improve our guidance documents to keep them up to date.
- work with Commonwealth and State agencies to streamline assessment and approval requirements to the extent possible.

## Other partners

We work cooperatively with other Australian and Queensland Government departments including, but not limited to:

- Department of Climate Change Energy, the Environment and Water
- Department of Defence
- Parks Australia
- Australian Maritime Safety Authority
- Queensland Department of Primary Industries
- Maritime Safety Queensland

## Members of the public and other stakeholders

We will be **consultative and informative to:**

- provide you with information on how environmental impact assessments are conducted.
- provide you with the opportunity to comment on proposals through formal consultation processes, depending on the level of environmental assessment required. These include working with our Reef Advisory Committees, the Local Marine Advisory Committees and the public.
- ensure plans, policies and guidelines on Marine Park matters are easily accessible through the Reef Authority's website.
- demonstrate commitment to Memoranda of Understanding that are in place with stakeholders such as accredited research institutions and the Queensland Ports Association.

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<sup>1</sup> Precautionary principle: means the principle that lack of full scientific certainty should not be used as a reason for postponing a measure to prevent degradation of the environment where there are threats of serious or irreversible environmental damage.

## Our service level standards

We commit to the following service level standards for permit application, assessment and decision timeframes.

For application decisions (see information on assessment approaches [fact sheet](#))

- Routine assessment approaches:
  - Decision made on whether an application is properly made within 3 business days of receipt.
  - Written acknowledgement sent within 5 business days of receiving a properly made application<sup>2</sup>.
  - Decision notice will be given within 25 business days of the application being accepted as properly made.
- Tailored assessment approaches:
  - Decision made on whether an application is properly made within 10 business days of receipt.
  - Written acknowledgement sent within 5 business days from when a decision on a properly made application is made.
  - Decision notice will be given within 50 business days of the application being accepted as properly made.
  - If further information is required:
    - The first request for further information, if required, will be sent within 30 business days of an application being accepted as properly made.
    - Responses to requests for further information will be reviewed within 10 business days of receipt for suitability. Applicants will be notified in writing if their response to the further information request is suitable. Subsequent information requests may be issued if all information is not provided.
    - Decision notice will be given within 50 business days from the acknowledgment that all information that is required to complete the assessment is received.
  - If an applicant significantly modifies their application after submission—such as changes to proposed activities or locations—the assessment decision timeframes will be reset. For example, if a tailored assessment application is significantly modified, the decision timeframe will reset to 50 business days from the date all required information is received following the modification.

Other decisions (following legislative timeframes):

- Transfer decisions will be made within 20 business days of receiving a completed transfer application.
- Change of beneficial ownership decisions will be made within 20 business days after the managing agencies receives the notice.

The Reef Authority will publish on [our website](#) particulars of permissions granted, refused, suspended, reinstated, revoked pursuant to Section 237(1) of the Great Barrier Reef Marine Park Regulations 2019.

The Reef Authority will provide one reminder about expiring permits which will be sent to the primary contact. If a permit expires, you will not be able to operate in the Marine Park and will need to apply for a new permit.

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<sup>2</sup> A properly made application is one that contains enough information about the proposed activity to allow an assessment of potential impacts and determine the most appropriate risk management measures. The [checklists of application information](#) detail the information that must be submitted with an application. The application will generally not be accepted until all this information is provided.

For managing Environmental Management Charge (EMC) obligations, the Reef Authority will each quarter:

- Send reminders via email within two weeks of the due date for those permission holders that are yet to finalise their EMC obligations.
- Send notification of intention to suspend to those permission holders that have not complied with EMC obligations within two weeks of the EMC payment becoming due.
- Send notices of suspension to permission holders with outstanding EMC obligations within one month of the obligations becoming due.
- Issue late payment penalty notices to permission holders who paid their EMC obligations late. Notices will be sent within one month of the obligations becoming due.
- Ensure information regarding EMC obligations is easily accessible through the Reef Authority's website.
- Publish on our website aggregated visitation data to the Marine Park, twice yearly, 30 March for calendar year and 30 September for financial year.

Each financial year we will publish in the Reef Authority's Annual Report:

- the total number of permits and permissions in effect as at 30 June.
- the number of permit decisions made in each financial year.
- the number of Part 5 activities notified or directions granted.
- the number of allegations of permission non-compliance.
- the number of administration compliance actions taken for permission and EMC non-compliances.

## Your responsibilities

To ensure that we can provide you with the best service possible, we ask that you:

- Provide us with constructive feedback to help us improve our service.
- Treat our staff with respect and courtesy. Demanding, abusive, or aggressive behaviour will not be tolerated.
- Our staff are required to follow legislative and internal processes associated with the permission system. Please allow them time to respond to emails rather than sending multiple messages in quick succession.

## Applicants, permission holders and their representatives

Our expectations are that you will:

- engage with us early in the planning/scoping stages of your project so that guidance can be provided on avoiding, minimising, mitigating or offsetting relevant impacts on the Marine Parks.
- ensure your application is accompanied by all correct and up-to-date information and documents required at the time of lodgement. This includes providing, where required, comprehensive, accurate and complete information that clearly addresses potential impacts including any avoidance and mitigation measures for risks to Marine Parks values as well as any compliance certificates.
- provide us with requested information in a timely manner and let us know about any difficulties you are having in providing this information. We might be able to assist with a solution.
- provide us with advance notice of any request for information or assistance so we can plan how we might meet your request.

- If you wish to meet with us to discuss your proposal, provide us with sufficient time to prepare and ensure relevant staff are available (e.g. a minimum of two weeks' notice).
- provide your queries to us in writing ([assessments@gbrmpa.gov.au](mailto:assessments@gbrmpa.gov.au)). Include the reference number of your application if we have provided you with one.
- provide us details of changes in your circumstances (e.g. changes in company directors, changes in business operations and authorised contacts that may affect your application/permit) as soon as the changes occur.
- read and understand your obligations as outlined in your permit/s. If you are unclear about your obligations, email us in writing with your questions as early as possible.
- keep your contact details, and those of your authorised contacts, up to date.
- our preferred method is to use electronic communications through our secure service portals:
  - [Permits Online](#)
  - [EMC Online](#)
  - [Bookings Online](#)
- if applicable, pay your permit application assessment fee, by the due date (usually 21 days from the date of the invoice), otherwise the application will lapse.

## Commonwealth and State agencies

There are specific expectations and agreements negotiated between the Reef Authority and other agencies that are articulated via Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) and other agreements. We seek cooperative engagement with you to:

- facilitate a single entry point so that all projects that may require assessment under the *Environment Protection and Biodiversity Conservation Act 1999* are referred to the Department of Climate Change, Energy, the Environment and Water.
- work with us on bilateral assessments including notifying the agency at the earliest possibility if the bilateral agreement will, or is likely to, apply to a project requiring assessment under the Marine Park Acts.
- undertake joint site visits where requested by proponents/consultants and/or Queensland agencies.
- consult with us when setting conditions to ensure that those conditions can adequately address impacts on Marine Park matters, reducing duplication in conditions for proponents and avoiding inconsistencies.
- when necessary, update and improve MOUs, bilateral and other agreements to ensure their effectiveness.
- share relevant information with us as allowed under legislation.

## Members of the public and other stakeholder groups

When providing comment on proposals that may affect the Marine Parks:

- focus the comments on issues that relate specifically to Marine Parks matters associated with the application.
- quote the reference or permit number of the project and provide comments within specified timeframes to the specified recipient/address.
- provide as much specific and supporting information as you can to help us understand your concerns.

- assist us by reporting suspected permits-related non-compliance to [permitscompliance@gbmpa.gov.au](mailto:permitscompliance@gbmpa.gov.au).

## Client feedback

We are committed to continuous improvement in all aspects of our service. We would value your feedback and suggestions about:

- experiences you have had in dealing with our staff.
- the effectiveness of this charter.
- permission system information products developed by the agency.
- how we can improve our services to you.
- your level of satisfaction with the service you have received.

## Feedback on our service

Constructive feedback on our performance can help us improve our standards of service. You can provide this by:

- emailing your comments to [assessments@gbmpa.gov.au](mailto:assessments@gbmpa.gov.au).

From time to time, we may also seek feedback using anonymous surveys.

Please refer to the Service Charter for the Reef Authority for information on formal complaint procedures.

## Review and evaluation of this charter

We will review this charter to ensure that it remains relevant. Every year we evaluate our service delivery against the standards we have set in this service charter and report on our performance in the Reef Authority's Annual Report.

## Additional information

Additional information about the permission system can be found on our [website](#).



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