



Statement of Intent from the Great Barrier Reef Marine Park Authority to the Minister for the Environment and Water, Senator the Hon Murray Watt.

28 November 2025

This Statement of Intent responds to the Ministerial Statement of Expectations provided to the Great Barrier Reef Marine Park Authority (Reef Authority) by the Minister for the Environment and Water on 1 October 2025 in relation to government policies and objectives relevant to the agency and its priorities, guided by *Regulator Performance Resource Management Guide 128* (RMG 128).

This Statement of Intent identifies how the Reef Authority will deliver on expectations to achieve its marine park management objectives, undertake its regulatory functions and exercise its powers appropriately.

Administration of legislation and policy frameworks

The Reef Authority is established under the *Great Barrier Reef Marine Park Act 1975* (Marine Park Act) and is the lead regulatory agency to provide for the long-term protection and conservation of the environment, biodiversity, and World Heritage values of the Great Barrier Reef Region (the Region).

Climate change is the most serious and pervasive threat to the Great Barrier Reef (Reef) — a threat common to coral reefs globally. The Reef Authority continues to adapt its management to protect the Reef's resilience in response to a changing climate, as well as in response to Crown-of-thorns starfish (COTS) outbreaks, poor water quality and other pressures negatively impacting the biodiversity and other values of the Region.

The Reef Authority is a non-corporate Commonwealth entity within the portfolio of Climate Change, Energy, the Environment and Water. The Reef Authority reports to the Minister for the Environment and Water with accurate and timely advice on significant issues relating to its regulatory and marine park management responsibilities.

For the Region, the Reef Authority administers the Marine Park Act, the *Great Barrier Reef Marine Park Regulations 2019* and a suite of other legislation to ensure ecologically sustainable use, encourage engagement in protection and management, and assist Australia to meet its international responsibilities for World Heritage.

The Reef Authority operates under the Australian and Queensland governments' *Great Barrier Reef Intergovernmental Agreement 2024* and will continue to uphold its collaborative intent in support of a well-managed Region, including a joint program of field management.

The Reef Authority will continue to work alongside government partners, Traditional Owners and other stakeholders to support the review and implementation of the *Reef 2050 Long-Term Sustainability Plan*.

Additional regulatory responsibilities under the *Public Governance, Performance and Accountability Act 2013* and the *Public Service Act 1999* include responsible, transparent stewardship of people and public resources. The Reef Authority remains committed to supporting its people and building capability to protect the Reef.

Managing significant public infrastructure

The Reef Authority is committed to redeveloping the Great Barrier Reef Aquarium to enable people of all ages and ability to experience a living tropical reef on land. The Reef Authority will actively engage with local stakeholders and the community to keep them informed of the

project's progress. The Aquarium project is currently on-track and scheduled to reopen in 2029 or sooner.

The Reef Authority is the responsible Commonwealth entity for 21 islands in the Region and has shared responsibilities together with the Queensland Government in relation to the management of 21 jointly funded marine vessels, technical equipment, sheds and other installations supporting Marine Park operations. The Reef Authority will continue managing these assets in a manner that supports the highest level of work health and safety for our people, and the efficient delivery of conservation and compliance activities in the Region.

Marine Park management in response to climate change and other threats

The Reef Authority will continue to work collaboratively with government and non-government organisations, tertiary education and research institutions, industry and Traditional Owners, to:

- Report on the health of the Region using the best available information and science.
- Educate the wider community about sustainability and conservation action in the Region.
- Adapt our in-field management activities in the context of cumulative impacts on the Reef (for example, adjusting the COTS Control Program's prioritisation of certain reefs as the climate changes).
- Respond to changes in the ecosystem by appropriately evolving our in-field management activities and by supporting, where appropriate, our stakeholders to adapt to environmental change, including extreme weather events.
- Facilitate emerging marine ecosystem restoration and adaptation actions that may support Reef ecosystem resilience to the impacts of climate change.
- Extend our knowledge to others, supporting Australian leadership in marine protection.

Supporting productivity

The Reef Authority recognises its regulatory role directly affects marine tourism operators, commercial and recreational fishers, port operations, Traditional Owners, researchers, the Queensland Government and local communities. Strong Marine Park management supports a healthier reef, strong tourism visitation, business certainty, and sometimes exclusivity of use for commercial enterprise. The Reef Authority is committed to reducing and removing unnecessary regulatory requirements while maintaining world class conservation standards on the Reef.

Recent regulatory improvements include: enhancements to the Eye on the Reef App to support responsible practices by Marine Park users; regulatory amendments to complement the Queensland Government gillnet ban; and trialling autonomous drones to improve surveillance in the Marine Park. Future priorities include:

- streamlining permit conditions to improve compliance with standards and reduce complexity for Marine Park users
- improvements to Marine Park policies and guidelines that reduce complexity and administrative burden for all parties
- supporting the marine tourism industry with environmental stewardship programs that improve commercial outcomes and enhance Australia's reputation as a world-class tourism destination
- investigating the use of artificial intelligence for rapid synthesis of information to improve responsiveness to changes on the Reef and community needs.

Continuous improvement, building trust, collaboration and engagement

The Reef Authority's regulatory responsibilities and strategic objectives are delivered in accordance with the following principles as outlined in RMG 128:

1. **Continuous improvement and building trust:** the Reef Authority is committed to building staff capability, including through dedicated training for field management staff, and to continuously improving performance, capability and workplace culture, to build public trust and confidence in its protection, management and regulation of the Reef.
2. **Risk-based and data-driven decision making:** the Reef Authority will manage risks proportionately and maintain essential safeguards. It will manage expenditure to ensure financial sustainability in the delivery of its functions.
3. **Collaboration and engagement:** the Reef Authority will carry out its regulatory functions in a transparent, meaningful and timely way, including responsive communications, engaging with stakeholders, seeking feedback where appropriate, and providing guidance and information that is relevant, clear and concise.

Regulator performance reporting will be incorporated into corporate planning and annual reporting processes.

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

The Reef Authority will continue to protect the Reef through in-field activities and regulation to safeguard its unique environment while allowing ecologically sustainable use.

A range of management strategies, including the world-leading *Great Barrier Reef Marine Park Zoning Plan 2003* (Zoning Plan), are foundational for conservation and management of the Marine Park. The Zoning Plan provides for a range of recreational, commercial and research opportunities, and for the continuation of traditional activities.

The continued strong joint management arrangements — together with the Queensland Government through the Reef Joint Field Management Program — deliver practical, on-ground marine and island national park management, engagement, and compliance activities across the Australian and Queensland marine parks.

The Reef Authority will continue to deliver coral habitat protection through the COTS Control Program, which suppresses and protects coral from outbreaks of the coral-eating starfish.

Traditional Use of Marine Resource Agreements (TUMRAs) — Traditional Owner-led agreements for managing Sea Country — will be a continuing focus for the Reef Authority and essential to keep First Nations heritage strong, safe and healthy.

The Reef Authority will continue developing planning arrangements, including a new Southern Plan of Management, to enhance conservation and sustainable use in the Region.

The Reef Authority fosters a culture of Reef stewardship through strong partnerships, strategic engagement, and education programs. Reef Guardian Councils, Reef Guardian Schools, the Tourism Reef Protection Initiative, High Standard Tourism Operators and Master Reef Guides deliver local and regional actions through education and engagement with Reef industries, local governments and the community.

The Reef Authority will continue to support the Government's policy objectives and priorities, including environmental reforms, continued action on climate change, and to meet its international responsibilities for World Heritage. It will do this in a manner that engages diverse Australian communities in the ongoing protection of the Great Barrier Reef.