

REEF JOINT FIELD MANAGEMENT PROGRAM

# BUSINESS STRATEGY 2021-25

## SUMMARY

### EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The Reef Joint Field Management Program (Program) plans and delivers field operations within the Great Barrier Reef World Heritage Area. This includes Commonwealth and State marine parks (plus Commonwealth Islands Zones) and island protected areas such as national parks.

The Program is delivered jointly by the Great Barrier Reef Marine Park Authority and Queensland Parks and Wildlife Service – part of the Queensland Department of Environment and Science. There are also established and evolving collaborative arrangements with allied government agencies, First Nations people, research institutions, industry and the community to work together to protect the World Heritage Area.

The World Heritage Area is an international icon under pressure. The *Outlook Report 2019* identified that while the World Heritage Area's outstanding universal value remains whole, its integrity is challenged and deteriorating. Actions taken now by the Program, other managers, First Nations people, researchers, stakeholders and the community will make a difference to the long-term outlook.

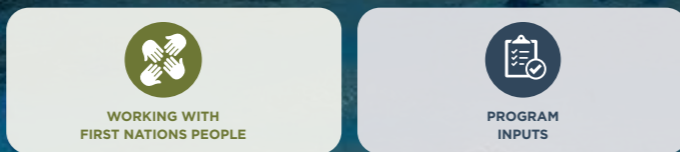
### PROGRAM BUDGET

The Great Barrier Reef Intergovernmental Agreement sets out the Australian and Queensland governments' commitment to joint 50:50 funding for the Program. The Program is currently undergoing a significant five-year expansion. By 2021-22 the Program will have more than doubled, with joint base funding increasing to over \$38 million. The Program is also charged to oversight funding from other sources on behalf of the Authority and the Department of Environment and Science. These funds vary, with a forecast \$12-21 million annually across the next three years from other sources.

### PROGRAM PRIORITIES

The Business Strategy is framed around five Program priorities, how they contribute to the protection of World Heritage Area values, and mitigate threats to these values. The five priorities deliver the nine outcomes the Intergovernmental Agreement directs the Program to achieve together with *Reef Blueprint* initiatives, and *Reef 2050 Long-Term Sustainability Plan* actions.

#### FIVE REEF JOINT FIELD MANAGEMENT PROGRAM PRIORITIES



#### NINE INTERGOVERNMENTAL AGREEMENT OUTCOMES

- 1 PROTECT OUTSTANDING UNIVERSAL VALUE
- 2 PROTECT VULNERABLE SPECIES AND HABITATS
- 3 EFFECTIVE COMPLIANCE
- 4 EFFECTIVE PERMITTING
- 5 ECOLOGICALLY SUSTAINABLE USE
- 6 UNDERSTANDING AND ENJOYMENT
- 7 TRADITIONAL OWNER ENGAGEMENT
- 8 INCREASING EFFECTIVENESS
- 9 INCIDENT RESPONSE

#### REEF 2050 VISION

### FIVE PROGRAM PRIORITIES

### EXPECTED OUTCOMES



#### DELIVERING CONSERVATION ACTIONS

The Program delivers conservation actions to protect and recover important values, including coral reefs, seagrass meadows, mangrove forests, coral cays, continental islands, threatened species and cultural heritage.

- Healthy resilient islands and species
- Raine Island improves as a viable green turtle rookery
- Values based planning guides island management
- Public moorings and reef protection markers protect fringing reef
- Protection and management of seabird breeding and foraging sites maintains or improves the condition of the sites
- Restoration projects improve habitat and species recovery
- Built historic heritage endures for future generations



#### CHECKING FOR CHANGE

Knowing the condition of values is fundamental to effective management. The Program checks for change on islands and in the water to monitor reef and island condition and the extent of existing or emerging threats.

- Reef health assessments inform understanding of reef health and management
- Condition and trend of key island values informs management
- Seabird and shorebird monitoring informs management



#### RESPONDING TO INCIDENTS

The Program responds to a wide range of incidents including ship and vessel groundings, oil and other pollution spills, wildfires, coral bleaching and disease, island and marine pests, stranded marine animals and severe weather events like cyclones.

- A well-established incident management framework guides efficient and effective incident response
- Risks from maritime incidents informs vessel and ship management
- Shift from threat mitigation to rehabilitation of damaged sites
- Consequences for causing environmental harm promote responsible vessel and ship operations
- Marine strandings data informs species management



#### WELCOMING PEOPLE

Improving community understanding of values and threats, fostering responsible behaviour, providing visitor facilities and risk-based permissions management is critical to ecologically sustainable use and good visitor experiences.

- Visible on-water and on-island presence and engagement with visitors across the World Heritage Area
- Expanded network of world-class visitor opportunities that support recreational users and the tourism industry
- Community volunteers contribute to field activities
- Sustainable use of the World Heritage Area with significant impacts offset



#### UPHOLDING COMPLIANCE

The Program is the principal driver and coordinator of environmental compliance in the World Heritage Area. Risk-focused, well planned and intelligence-driven patrols are delivered to deter and detect illegal activity.

- Reducing the threat illegal activity poses to the World Heritage Area
- Vessel tracking improves commercial fishing compliance
- Reductions in permissions related non-compliance
- Indigenous Rangers are active partners in World Heritage Area compliance
- Industry and the community are aware of the rules and behave responsibly



#### WORKING WITH FIRST NATIONS PEOPLE

The Program is actively seeking to strengthen partnerships with First Nations people to plan, deliver and report on field management activities across the World Heritage Area and fill gaps where relationships are emerging.

- Joint management of National Parks (Cape York Peninsula Aboriginal Land) extends to planning, delivery and reporting
- First Nations people are part of field management delivery



#### PROGRAM INPUTS

The Program requires a number of inputs to deliver the five Program priorities and work with First Nations people, including funding, staff, vessels, partnerships, workbases, training, and technology.

- Strong safety culture with a safe fit-for-purpose vessel fleet to reach the entire World Heritage Area
- Improvements in technology and data management inform reporting and management
- Comprehensive financial planning and management
- Collaborative reporting captures delivery of field management activity by the Program and partners
- Expand Program capacity to operate across the entire World Heritage Area and deliver more days at sea
- Technology enhances efficient collection and use of data

## DELIVERING CONSERVATION ACTIONS



### STRATEGIC DIRECTIONS

- Deliver fire programs to mitigate risk of wildfires and maintain island habitats
- Deliver reef restoration trials and support others undertaking trials
- Maintain and expand the public mooring and reef protection marker network
- Review vulnerability assessments for key species and develop conservation actions
- Integrate the values based management framework into management of islands
- Support implementation of the Authority's Policy and Planning Strategic Roadmap and joint marine park policy and planning
- Strengthen biosecurity measures and enhance pest management
- Expand the island protected area network
- Protect and recover island habitats including seabird roosting and nesting and turtle nesting
- Assess the adequacy of protection and management of seabird foraging areas
- Identify, support and sometimes lead higher level intervention projects to halt species or habitat decline including Raine Island Recovery and the Great Barrier Reef Foundation's Reef and Islands Initiative
- Protect and where appropriate restore island historic heritage
- Support underwater heritage activities by partners

## CHECKING FOR CHANGE



### STRATEGIC DIRECTIONS

- Improve knowledge and understanding of marine habitats, islands, species, threats and recovery following impacts
- Undertake surveillance for crown-of-thorns starfish to assess outbreak severity and extent, and guide control activities
- Implement improvements into delivery of future reef health assessments
- Evaluate the success of planned burns and pest programs
- Undertake a five year review of the Coastal Bird Monitoring and Information Strategy – Seabirds 2015-20
- Improve knowledge and understanding of marine animal stranding trends and causes
- Provide support to Coral Sea Marine Park island and species monitoring
- Provide vessel and logistical support for monitoring by partners

## RESPONDING TO INCIDENTS



### STRATEGIC DIRECTIONS

#### PREPARE

- Ensure the Program is well prepared to detect and respond to incidents

#### PLAN

- Maintain situational awareness of reef health, including climate-related risks

#### RESPOND

- Assess damage following incidents and reduce further harm
- Support incident response lead by other agencies

#### RECOVER

- Increase active intervention to enable recovery of damaged sites
- Collaborate with other agencies and industry to establish a framework and funding for rapid in-field response to maritime incidents
- Align maritime incident response with other National and State response arrangements
- Investigate improved interoperability and sharing of incident data with partners
- Support the North-East Shipping Management Group, Serious Maritime Incidents Project and War on Wrecks Taskforce
- Respond to high priority marine mammal strandings
- Initiate incident response if the number of strandings exceeds species thresholds of potential concern
- Collaborate with partners and community groups on oiled wildlife response

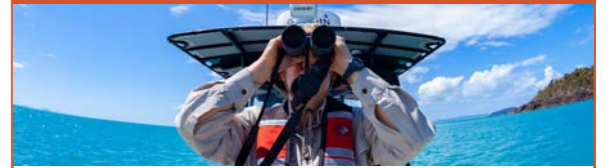
## WELCOMING PEOPLE



### STRATEGIC DIRECTIONS

- Provide an increased ranger and officer field presence and maximise engagement with park users
- Provide safe visitor facilities that support the tourism industry and recreational users
- Maintain a rolling five year visitor infrastructure investment program
- Undertake risk-based environmental assessment, regulation and administration
- Streamline permissions management to be more efficient, effective and risk-based
- Promote greater engagement with World Heritage Area permittees to increase awareness, compliance, collaboration and stewardship
- Support the revival of abandoned or underutilised resorts
- Maintain or increase the involvement of volunteer groups, the community and First Nations people in marine animal strandings
- Embrace new opportunities to work with more volunteers to expand monitoring capability
- Encourage adaptive re-use of historic heritage
- Develop a communication strategy to guide education, communication and stewardship
- Improve people's understanding of World Heritage Area values and threats, and encouraging best practice behaviours and voluntary compliance

## UPHOLDING COMPLIANCE



### STRATEGIC DIRECTIONS

#### AWARENESS and EDUCATION

- Increase voluntary compliance and reduce deliberate illegal activity
- Encourage community and industry stewardships

#### PLANNING, EXECUTING AND REPORTING

- Increase cooperative, multi-agency compliance patrols to deter and detect illegal activity
- Minimise impacts from permitted use through permissions compliance

#### INTELLIGENCE

- Expand use of innovative intelligence to inform delivery of compliance activities
- Investigate the impact and effectiveness of compliance

#### INVESTIGATIONS AND COMPLIANCE ACTIONS

- Provide offenders with a fair and transparent investigation, and direct prosecutions at deliberate systemic illegal activity
- Utilise available legislation to deter illegal activity and investigate legislative changes to improve efficiencies

## WORKING WITH FIRST NATIONS PEOPLE



### STRATEGIC DIRECTIONS

- Jointly manage National Park (Cape York Peninsula Aboriginal Land) with First Nations people
- Implement Indigenous Land Use Agreements
- Support implementation of the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Heritage Strategy for the Great Barrier Reef
- Support Traditional Use of Marine Resource Agreement (TUMRA) development and implementation
- Support land and sea country planning
- Support First Nations people and Land and Sea Rangers with compliance of their land and sea country
- Develop and implement an Indigenous Engagement Strategy
- Increase involvement of First Nations people in field management
- Improve knowledge and understanding of Indigenous heritage and threats together with First Nations people
- Support First Nations people to lead or assist with monitoring, protection and restoration of Indigenous heritage
- Collaborate with partner agencies offering similar programs to empower First Nations people
- Share established systems and processes with Land and Sea Rangers and TUMRA groups to build capacity and increase knowledge

## PROGRAM INPUTS

### STRATEGIC DIRECTIONS

- Expand to 189 Program-funded staff
- Provide a safe, supportive, rewarding workplace
- Equip field officers with a clear understanding of issues and key messages
- Develop and implement a rolling five year training program for staff and volunteers
- Build partnerships and work with third parties (including contractors) to expand field delivery
- Support staff in transitioning from being deliverers to enabling delivery by others
- Collaborate with Australian and international partners on island, reef and species recovery
- Utilise Reef Trust Offsets and Curtis Island Environmental Management Precinct funding to deliver field management activities that offset approvals for Liquid Natural Gas projects
- Contribute to the Department of Environment and Science Carbon Neutral Parks 2025 Program
- Maintain a vessel deployment and rostering system and a rolling five year vessel replacement program
- Utilise Reef Trust funding for island restoration and National Heritage Trust and Reef 2050 funding for turtle research
- Pursue funding partnerships for projects that compliment field management priorities
- Develop and implement a rolling five year electronic system improvement program and technology improvement program including drones
- Record data in relevant electronic systems
- Collaborate with electronic navigation providers to promote readily accessible marine parks zoning information
- Contribute to other government reporting, including the State of the Parks Report, the Outlook Report and Reef 2050 Plan reporting