

# REEF JOINT FIELD MANAGEMENT PROGRAM BUSINESS STRATEGY SUMMARY 2023 TO 2027

## EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The Reef Joint Field Management Program (the Program) plans and delivers field operations within the Great Barrier Reef World Heritage Area (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 (Reef 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, Traditional Owners, 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, Traditional Owners, researchers, stakeholders and the community will make a difference to the long-term outlook.

## PROGRAM BUDGET

The *Great Barrier Reef Intergovernmental Agreement 2015* sets out the Australian and Queensland governments' commitment to joint 50:50 funding for the Program. The Program is now consolidating after a significant five-year expansion. Joint annual base funding is now over \$38 million. The Program is also charged to oversee funding from other sources on behalf of the Reef Authority and Department of Environment and Science. These funds vary, with a forecast \$3–10 million annually across the next three years from other sources.

## PROGRAM PRIORITIES

The Business Strategy is framed around five Program priorities and two overarching activities, 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 *Great Barrier Reef Blueprint for Resilience 2017* initiatives and *Reef 2050 Long-Term Sustainability Plan 2021–25* (Reef 2050 Plan) actions.



## FIVE PROGRAM PRIORITIES



### 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.



### 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 the condition of these critical habitats and the extent of existing or emerging threats.



### 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.



### 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.



### 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.



### WORKING WITH FIRST NATIONS PEOPLES

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



### PROGRAM INPUTS

The Program requires a number of inputs to deliver the five Program priorities and work with Traditional Owners, including funding, staffing, vessels, partnerships, work bases, training and technology.

## OUTCOMES

- Healthy resilient islands and species
- Values-based planning guides island management
- The condition of seabird breeding and foraging sites is maintained or improved
- Rehabilitation projects improve habitat and species recovery
- Built historic heritage endures for future generations

- Contemporary understanding of reef health informs evidence-based management
- Condition and trend of key island values informs management
- Seabird and shorebird monitoring informs management

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

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

- Reducing the threat illegal activity poses to the World Heritage Area
- Vessel monitoring data 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

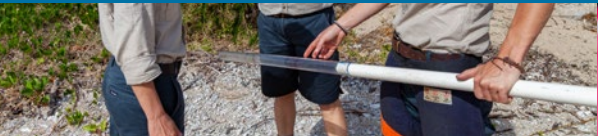
- Joint management of national parks (Cape York Peninsula Aboriginal Land) extends to planning, delivery and reporting
- Traditional Owners are involved in field management delivery

- Strong safety culture with a safe, fit-for-purpose vessel fleet to reach the entire World Heritage Area
- Comprehensive financial planning and management
- Collaborative reporting captures delivery of field management activity by the Program and partners
- Technology solutions are implemented in standard field operations and enhances efficient collection and use of data



STRATEGIC DIRECTIONS

DELIVERING CONSERVATION ACTIONS



- Deliver reef rehabilitation trials and support others undertaking trials
- Maintain the network of public moorings and reef protection markers
- Integrate the Values Based Management Framework into management of islands
- Support implementation of the Reef Authority’s Policy and Planning Strategic Roadmap and joint marine park policy and planning
- Strengthen biosecurity measures, enhance pest and fire management and eradicate pests where possible to maintain island habitats
- Build island habitat and species resilience to climate change through adaptive management and intervention
- Ensure new island acquisitions have remediation activities completed
- Protect and recover island habitats including turtle nesting and seabird and shorebird roosting and nesting sites
- Support implementation of the *Raine Island Indigenous Cultural Heritage Plan*
- Assess the adequacy of protection and management of seabird foraging areas
- Collaborate to identify and implement new reef and island rehabilitation projects
- Protect and where appropriate restore island historic heritage
- Support underwater cultural heritage activities by partners

CHECKING FOR CHANGE



- Implement monitoring work required by the Reef 2050 Plan’s objectives and goals where the Program is responsible for delivering
- Support the Crown-of-Thorns Starfish Control Program through surveillance and maintaining situational awareness
- Implement improvements to monitoring and biosecurity recommended by the Reef 2050 Integrated Monitoring and Reporting Program’s projects
- Incorporate evaluations of the success of planned burns and pest programs into improved management
- Implement the revised Coastal Bird Monitoring and Information System utilising new tools and processes to improve efficiency and accuracy of results
- Improve knowledge and understanding of marine animal stranding trends and causes
- Support monitoring of key species across the World Heritage Area
- Establish ongoing arrangements to support Parks Australia’s management of the Coral Sea Marine Park
- Provide vessel and logistical support for monitoring of cultural sites by Traditional Owners

RESPONDING TO INCIDENTS



- PREPARE**
- Ensure the Program is well prepared to detect and respond to incidents
  - Build capability with Land and Sea Ranger groups to enable them to report on and respond to maritime incidents in their Sea Country
  - 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
  - Assist partners and community groups on oiled wildlife response

WELCOMING PEOPLE



- Provide an increased 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
- Streamline permissions management and undertake risk-based environmental assessment, regulation and administration
- 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 Traditional Owners 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 encourage best practice behaviours and voluntary compliance
- Foster community and industry stewardships

UPHOLDING COMPLIANCE



- 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 procedure, 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 PEOPLES



- Support implementation of the *Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Heritage Strategy for the Great Barrier Reef Marine Park and Gurra Gurra Framework 2020–2026*
- Support Traditional Use of Marine Resource Agreement (TUMRA) development and implementation
- Increase involvement of Traditional Owners in field management and planning
- Support Traditional Owners and Land and Sea Rangers with compliance and incident response on their Land and Sea Country
- Implement the *Traditional Owner Partnerships Strategy 2021–2026*
- Expand the delivery of field activities by Traditional Owners and Land and Sea Rangers
- Improve knowledge and understanding of Indigenous heritage and threats together with Traditional Owners
- Support Traditional Owners to lead or assist with monitoring, protection and restoration of Indigenous heritage
- Collaborate with partner agencies offering similar programs to empower Traditional Owners
- Share established systems and processes with Land and Sea Rangers and TUMRA groups to build capacity and increase knowledge

PROGRAM INPUTS

- Provide a safe, supportive, rewarding workplace and fit-for-purpose management infrastructure
- 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 Land and Sea Rangers and 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’s Carbon Neutral Parks 2025 Program and the Reef Authority’s Sustainability Strategy

- 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 complement field management priorities
- Implement the *Technology Transformation Program Strategy 2021–2025*
- 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, Outlook Report and Reef 2050 Plan reporting

