

REEF JOINT FIELD MANAGEMENT PROGRAM ANNUAL BUSINESS PLAN SUMMARY 2023–24

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The Reef Joint Field Management Program (Program) is responsible for the planning and delivery of in-field activities and operations within the Great Barrier Reef World Heritage Area (World Heritage Area). This encompasses Commonwealth and state marine parks, as well as island protected areas including national parks and Commonwealth islands.

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

This Annual Business Plan Summary outlines the activities and priority projects the Program will undertake in 2023–24 to protect the World Heritage Area from threats, build resilience for marine habitats, islands and species, strengthen partnerships with Traditional Owners and support ecotourism opportunities.

PROGRAM BUDGET

The *Great Barrier Reef Intergovernmental Agreement 2015* (the Agreement) sets out the Australian and Queensland governments' commitment to a joint 50:50 funding of the Program. The Program's anticipated funds for 2023–24 are \$40,892,138. The Program will also oversee around \$14 million in funding from other sources on behalf of the Reef Authority and Queensland Parks and Wildlife Service.

PROGRAM PRIORITIES

The Program operates under five priorities to deliver nine outcomes identified in the Agreement and mitigate threats to the World Heritage Area. In recognition of the increasing partnership activities with Traditional Owners, relevant activities and priority projects are consolidated into one section 'Working with Traditional Owners' to recognise this important work.

FIVE JOINT FIELD MANAGEMENT PROGRAM PRIORITIES



WORKING WITH
FIRST NATIONS
PEOPLE



PROGRAM
INPUTS

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 **WORKING WITH TRADITIONAL OWNERS**
- 8 **INCREASING EFFECTIVENESS**
- 9 **INCIDENT RESPONSE**

REEF 2050 VISION



PROGRAM PRIORITIES



DELIVERING CONSERVATION ACTIONS

The Program delivers conservation actions to protect and recover important natural and heritage values, including coral reefs, seagrass meadows, mangrove forests, coral cays, continental islands, wetlands, 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 reef and island condition 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 TRADITIONAL OWNERS

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 several inputs to deliver the five Program priorities and work with Traditional Owners, including funding, staff, vessels, work bases, training and technology.

EXPECTED OUTPUTS

- Planned burns and hazard reduction reduces bushfire risk, protects property and promotes healthy vegetation.
- Pest management reduces threats to islands and species.
- Moorings and reef protection markers maintained.
- Condition and trend of historic heritage assessed.

- Reef surveys inform reef health awareness and management.
- Crown-of-thorns starfish surveillance identifies outbreak extent and severity and informs control efforts.
- Understanding of island condition and trend improves.
- Seabird and shorebird surveys monitor population trends.
- Emerging island threats identified.
- Understanding of turtle nesting and foraging sites improves.

- Risk-based response to incidents.
- In-field assessment of the extent and severity of damage from maritime incidents.

- Timely risk-based assessment and administration of the joint permission system.
- Community stewardship and involvement in field management delivery.
- Connecting and engaging with World Heritage Area users.
- Maintained visitor infrastructure.

- Compliance patrols by the Program and partners deter and detect illegal activity.
- Compliance effort corresponds with risk and threat assessments for recreational fishing.
- Marine parks permit conditions are followed.
- Educate the community and industry about World Heritage Area rules and responsibilities.
- Indigenous Compliance Ranger Inspectors are embedded into Program compliance delivery.

- Joint management of national parks (Cape York Peninsula Aboriginal Land).
- Traditional Use of Marine Resources Agreements (TUMRA) are implemented.
- Traditional Owners are involved in field delivery.

- Training needs identified for the Program.
- Strong safety culture.
- Operate across the entire World Heritage Area.
- Financial management well-planned and delivered.

 DELIVERING CONSERVATION ACTIONS 	 CHECKING FOR CHANGE 	 RESPONDING TO INCIDENTS 	 WELCOMING PEOPLE 	 UPHOLDING COMPLIANCE 
ACTIVITIES <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Maintain and expand moorings and reef protection markers and make no-anchoring areas enforceable. Support development of Country-based planning activities by Traditional Owners. Deliver the priority burn programs and enhance fire management. Implement biosecurity principles including quarantine and surveillance into field management activities. Deliver the priority pest program. Implement the Raine Island Recovery Project Phase 2. Collaborate with the Great Barrier Reef Foundation to implement reef and island recovery projects. Address gaps in management of key seabird breeding sites. Develop an implementation plan for the Queensland Marine Turtle Conservation Strategy 2021. Support a review of the draft <i>Queensland Marine Mammal Conservation Strategy</i>. Support implementation of the <i>Raine Island Indigenous Cultural Heritage Plan 2018</i>. Together with Traditional Owners implement management actions to protect Indigenous heritage. Implement heritage management plans for Commonwealth islands. Maintain and support island historic heritage. Consider accreditation of the Commonwealth Cairns and Hinchinbrook plans of management for the adjacent state Great Barrier Reef Coast Marine Park. Support implementation of the Reef Authority's Policy and Planning Roadmap. PRIORITY PROJECTS <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Great Barrier Reef island intervention and rehabilitation. The Island Arks project that began in 2020–21 will continue. Restoration of the natural values of the ex-resort lease on Wild Duck Island will commence in 2023–24. Project planning will also commence in 2023–24 for restoration of the St Bees Island and Long Island lease areas acquired in 2022–23. Continued implementation of the <i>Lady Elliot Island Ecosystem Resilience Plan 2020</i>. 	ACTIVITIES <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Deliver Reef Health Impact Surveys. Deliver crown-of-thorns starfish surveys. Undertake sub-tidal seagrass surveys. Undertake biosecurity surveillance using Island Watch surveys. Review pest surveillance notification processes. Undertake Health Checks of priority island national parks. Monitor the success of planned burn and pest projects. Address gaps identified in values assessments and thematic strategies. Develop an island monitoring strategy with Parks Australia for the Coral Sea Marine Park. Use technology solutions in island and species monitoring programs. Implement the <i>Coastal Bird Monitoring Plan 2023–2028</i>. Continue to use acoustic monitors for key species within Capricornia Cays National Park. Deliver the <i>Coastal Bird Monitoring and Information Strategy: Seabirds 2015–2020</i>. Deliver or support delivery of Island, Marine and Megafauna projects. Review the population status of flatback turtles, consistent with the <i>Queensland Marine Turtle Conservation Strategy 2021–2031</i>. Collect data on marine wildlife strandings to inform management. Undertake necropsies of marine animals to inform species management. Provide vessel and logistical support for underwater historic heritage surveys by partners. Undertake health checks of historic heritage on Commonwealth and national park islands. Provide information for the <i>Great Barrier Reef Outlook Report 2024</i>. PRIORITY PROJECTS <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Reef 2050 Integrated Monitoring and Reporting Program (RIMReP) knowledge gaps, in which the Program is leading work in three areas: seabird monitoring, island habitat monitoring and biosecurity surveillance and monitoring tools. Great Barrier Reef Green Turtle Research Program. 	ACTIVITIES <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Protect, prepare, respond and recover from bushfires. Respond if marine animal strandings exceed thresholds. Support delivery of the <i>North-East Shipping Management Plan 2014</i>, <i>National Plan for Maritime Environmental Emergencies 2020</i> and Serious Maritime Incidents Project. Investigate improved data-sharing and interoperability with partners. PREPARE <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Maintain an Incident Management Framework for the World Heritage Area with systems, plans, procedures and equipment and respond accordingly. Develop standard operating procedures and operationalise systems for site assessment of damage following vessel grounding in-situ and as an advanced stage trial benthic monitoring technology solutions. Build capacity within the Program to undertake the roles and functions of incident response. Redefine and coordinate the pre-summer workshop to inform preparedness and response. Maintain situational awareness of reef health using established systems. RESPOND <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Assess maritime incident risk and damage. Facilitate removal of vessels that pose a risk to environment or heritage values. Assist incident response led by partners including foreshore assessment of oil spills. Respond to high priority mammal strandings. Support marine pest response. Undertake site assessments of damage following maritime incidents. Assess severity and extent of damage following environmental incidents. RECOVER <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Coordinate damage mitigation or rehabilitation of key sites. Prioritise reopening key visitor sites. 	ACTIVITIES <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Provide a strong visible presence across the World Heritage Area and engage with visitors. Undertake risk-based complementary environmental assessment, regulation and administration of permits, leases, agreements and authorities. Continue the 'Be pest-free' campaign. Develop a framework for management of strandings volunteers. Engage a Turtle Volunteer Coordinator to maintain their involvement in the strandings program. Develop an interpretive plan to replace outdated interpretive signs on Low Isles. Deliver new island visitor infrastructure and maintain existing infrastructure. Update and implement the five-year capital investment program. Develop and implement the Program's <i>Communication Plan 2023–24</i>. Attend advisory committee meetings. Educate the community and industry using a range of communication methods. Support the campground host volunteer program. PRIORITY PROJECTS <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Multi-day trails development. Transforming permissions management, policies and legislation. 	ACTIVITIES AWARENESS AND EDUCATION <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Evolve the <i>Recreational Fishing Communications Strategy</i>. Deter illegal activity and encourage behavioural change and stewardship. Increase awareness on finding marine parks zoning information. Undertake education and field audit inspections. Improve standardisation of campaign performance measures to track awareness of campaigns. Increase community and industry reporting by encouraging advocacy and stewardship. PLANNING, EXECUTING AND REPORTING <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Support uptake and operation of the Compliance Planning Tool. Deliver dedicated compliance vessel and aircraft patrols with partners. Undertake targeted compliance in response to illegal activity. Support aerial surveillance by Maritime Border Command. Use vessel tracking to promote voluntary compliance, inform compliance activities and identify offences. Support surveillance and compliance activities by Indigenous ranger groups. Conduct special operations targeting high risk offenders, issues and activities. Update compliance strategic risk assessment and review threat/response assessments quarterly. Review and update the Compliance Management Investigation Procedures. Supervise authorised activities with the potential to cause harm to ensure compliance. INTELLIGENCE <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Identify trends and emerging issues through regular analysis. Investigate the impact and effectiveness of the Program's compliance activities. INVESTIGATIONS AND COMPLIANCE ACTIONS <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Investigate offences and deliver appropriate actions to deter illegal activity. Prepare high-quality briefs of evidence and manage effective relationships with the Commonwealth Director of Public Prosecutions and the DESI litigation section. PRIORITY PROJECTS <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Enhancing compliance through vessel monitoring. Regulator amendments to the Penalty Infringement Notice Scheme.
 WORKING WITH TRADITIONAL OWNERS   PROGRAM INPUTS 				
<div> <div> ACTIVITIES <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Participate in negotiations for <i>Cape York Heritage Act 2007</i> outcomes. Jointly manage National Park Cape York Peninsula Aboriginal Land with Traditional Owners. Assist TUMRA implementation. Implement Indigenous Land Use Agreements. Support Indigenous Protected Areas. Work with traditional knowledge holders to investigate illegal hunting. Assist Traditional Owners to implement existing and develop new TUMRA plans. Encourage reporting and work with traditional knowledge holders to investigate suspected illegal activities. Provide work placements for Traditional Owners. Maintain existing and develop new fee-for-service arrangements. Support Indigenous Land and Sea Country rangers to gain qualifications. </div> <div> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Support Gidarjil Development Corporation to implement priority actions under their Sea Country Business Strategy 2019–2025. Provide ongoing mentoring for Indigenous rangers that received compliance and incident response training. Expand and encourage use of the Field Reporting System by Indigenous ranger groups. Together with Traditional Owners identify Indigenous cultural heritage values. Work with Traditional Owners to incorporate language names in Program work. Facilitate the alignment of business with Traditional Owners across the agencies. Collaborate with partner agencies working with Traditional Owners. Improve staff cultural awareness. Partner with Traditional Owners through the cultural heritage permit referral program. </div> <div> PRIORITY PROJECTS <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Supporting Indigenous Land and Sea rangers. </div> </div> <div> ACTIVITIES <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Undertake quarterly reviews of workplace health and safety risk register, as well as incident and hazard reports to identify trends and inform Program initiatives. Implement the Learning Management System. Improve safety of field staff through participating in Operational Foundations training. Deliver an Environmental Site Supervisor training package. Maintain and improve management infrastructure. Maintain a safe and efficient vessel fleet. Review deployment schedules for the Program's large vessels. Develop QWildlife Strandings app. Support improvements to the Eye on the Reef app. Maintain Memoranda of Understanding and Deeds of Agreement with the Queensland Department of Agriculture and Fisheries. Convene governance groups to review, evaluate and prioritise Program activities. </div> <div> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Contribute to the DESI <i>Carbon Neutral Parks 2025 Program</i> and the Reef Authority's <i>Sustainability Strategy 2023–24</i>. PRIORITY PROJECTS <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Integrated compliance management system. Technology transformation. Health and safety. Refining governance of Program priority areas. </div>				