



Australian Government

Great Barrier Reef
Marine Park Authority



Queensland
Government

REEF JOINT FIELD MANAGEMENT PROGRAM

ANNUAL REPORT





Ranger and Reef Authority officer at Keppel Bay Islands National Park—unified in Reef conservation. © Queensland Government

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The Great Barrier Reef World Heritage Area (World Heritage Area), the world’s largest coral reef ecosystem, is renowned for its extraordinary biodiversity and interconnectedness. Covering 348,000 km², it includes over 2,900 reefs and 1,050 islands, holding immense environmental, cultural, social and economic value, both locally and globally.

The Reef Joint Field Management Program (the Program) plays a crucial role in protecting this iconic natural wonder from growing pressures and safeguarding the World Heritage Area for future generations. Operating under the *Reef 2050 Long-Term Sustainability Plan*, the Program manages the Commonwealth Great Barrier Reef Marine Park, the state Great Barrier Reef Coast Marine Park and various island protected areas, including Commonwealth and national park sites.

It is jointly delivered by the Great Barrier Reef Marine Park Authority (Reef Authority) and the Queensland Parks and Wildlife Service (QPWS), a division of the Department of Environment, Science and Innovation (DESI). The Program represents a model of collaborative excellence between the Australian and Queensland governments and relies on vital partnerships with Traditional Owners, other government agencies, research institutions, industry stakeholders and the wider community.

This report details the Program’s achievements in addressing threats and enhancing the resilience of species, habitats and ecosystems across the World Heritage Area. It reports on progress in implementing the Program’s *Annual Business Plan 2023–24* through a range of activities, including conservation actions, monitoring changes, responding to incidents, welcoming visitors and upholding compliance. Highlights of this year’s Program include increased collaboration with Indigenous Land and Sea Rangers to manage Sea Country across the Reef, significantly increasing the island protected area estate, protecting key species with pest eradication programs, enhancing visitor experiences with new infrastructure and boosting compliance with innovative technologies, such as drones and vessel monitoring systems.

The Program’s collaborative approach, dedication to innovation and effective threat mitigation, earned it the Prime Minister’s Award for Excellence in Public Sector Management multiple times. This year, the Program also won a Queensland Premier’s Award for Excellence in the ‘Protecting our liveability and environment’ category for maintaining the highest levels of biosecurity to safeguard Queensland’s island protected areas. Additionally, the World Heritage Centre and Advisory Bodies reaffirmed the Program’s crucial role in safeguarding the World Heritage Area, recognising its continued efforts in protecting this globally significant site.

Established by the ‘Emerald Agreement’ in 1979 and reinforced by the *Great Barrier Reef Intergovernmental Agreement 2015*, the Program has evolved significantly over 45 years. From managing the 12,000 km² Capricornia section with a small team, it has grown to 178 officers overseeing 348,000 km² of marine parks, 470 island national parks and Commonwealth islands.

Despite the Program’s successes, the Great Barrier Reef (the Reef), like reefs around the world, continues to face challenges, particularly from climate change. Following a widespread coral bleaching event in early 2024, UNESCO’s draft decision on the Reef’s State of Conservation acknowledged the Program’s efforts and called for sustained adaptation programs and increased funding for innovation.

This report describes the highlights of the Program over the last year and summarises some of the priority projects that are critical to protecting the Reef’s ecosystems and other values. Some statistics below may differ from those in the Reef Authority’s *Corporate Report 2023–24* and DESI’s *Annual Report 2023–24* due to differences in data extraction and validation timing.



Palfrey Island, part of Lizard Island National Park.
© Queensland Government

2023–24 FINANCE SUMMARY

The Australian and Queensland governments allocated funding of \$41,550,274 through the Program's Annual Business Plan 2023–24 and carryover funds to deliver field activities across the World Heritage Area.

At the start of 2023–24, the Reef Authority held funds of \$2,223,230 from the previous year's carryover and QPWS held funds of \$431,118. The Australian and Queensland governments contributed appropriation funding of \$19,059,069 and \$19,218,069 respectively in 2023–24.

Additional revenue of \$618,788 was received by the Program in 2023–24, including \$260,000 from the Reef Authority for additional crown-of-thorns starfish (COTS) surveys and \$358,788 from the sale of vessels, plant and equipment, permit and licence fees, rent received for Dungeness premises, hire of Low Isles research accommodation, and reimbursements and refunds.

The Program's expenditure of \$39,394,510 was within 5.2% of the budget allocation of \$41,550,274. This is an improvement from the 6.7% variation in 2022–23.

At the end of 2023–24, QPWS held funds of \$1,055,370 and the Reef Authority held funds of \$1,100,394 on behalf of the Program.

The Program also received funding from other sources that contributed to field delivery in 2023–24, including:

- offset funding for Queensland and Australian government approvals associated with Curtis Island Liquid Natural Gas projects.
- Curtis Island Environmental Management Precinct.
- Australian Government Ocean Leadership Package funding for the Raine Island Recovery Project.
- Australian Government funding for the Great Barrier Reef Green Turtle Research Program.
- Queensland Government funding for Green Island Recreation Area Management, the Reef Management Technology Initiative and joint management of National Parks (Cape York Peninsula Aboriginal Land).
- Australian Government Reef Trust funding for summer Reef health assessments, Restoration of Reef Islands project, Reef Islands Rehabilitation project and Reef 2025 Integrated Monitoring and Reporting (RIMReP) knowledge gaps project.
- Queensland Government Reef Package funding for Whitsunday Island walking tracks, Island Ark acquisitions and Reef Trails project.

ACHIEVEMENTS IN BRIEF



WORKING WITH TRADITIONAL OWNERS

MANAGING COUNTRY TOGETHER

First Nations peoples spent **958 person-days** on Program vessels (491 by Traditional Owners not employed by the Program).

STRENGTHENING PARTNERSHIPS

Formal fee-for-service arrangements in place with **4 Indigenous Land** and **Sea Ranger** groups.

BUILDING SKILLS

Trained **16 Indigenous Land** and **Sea Rangers** from **6 Traditional Owner** groups in dive qualifications.



RESPONDING TO INCIDENTS

ASSISTING REMOTE REEF COMMUNITIES

Staff and vessels assisted **Wujal Wujal** and **Cape Tribulation** in recovery work after **Tropical Cyclone Jasper**.

ASSESSING REEF HEALTH

Aerial surveys of **1,080 reefs** to assess the summer coral bleaching event.

PROTECTING HABITAT

Managed risks associated with **123 maritime events**, including **38 groundings** and **25 sinkings**, down from **152 events** in 2022–23.



DELIVERING CONSERVATION ACTIONS

INCREASING ISLAND PROTECTED AREA ESTATE

Gazetted **147 new islands** and **1,473 ha** as protected area through the Island Arks project.

IMPROVING MANAGEMENT EFFECTIVENESS

Exceeded the VBMF Roadmap target, with **78% assessed** (target: 30%). Now guiding island management: **55 key values** and levels-of-service assessments; **29 pest**, **28 fire** and **17 monitoring and research strategies**.

PROTECTING FLATBACK TURTLES

Eradication of deer from **Wild Duck Island**, the largest flatback rookery on the Australian east coast.

ENHANCING VISITOR EXPERIENCE

A new lookout at **Orpheus Island**, campground upgrade at Chance Bay on **Whitsunday Island** and upgraded campground, day-use area and trail shelters at **Curtis Island**.

ENGAGING WITH WORLD HERITAGE AREA USERS

2,497 contacts with users while on patrol—**96% of these visitors** had access to zoning information, an **increase from 91%** in 2022–23.

INFORMING THE COMMUNITY

236 social media posts, achieving an estimated reach of **6.74 million**, and **21 joint media releases** resulting in **18,200 media mentions**.



CHECKING FOR CHANGE

SURVEILLING OUTBREAKS

Over **50 days** of dedicated COTS monitoring activity and **334 in-water surveys** delivered across **63 reefs** covering **449 km of reef** margin.

WATCHING ISLANDS

Health checks of key values conducted on **8 island national parks** and **131 Island Watch surveys** completed.

MONITORING IMPACTS

1,134 Reef Health Impact Surveys (RHIS) delivered across **150 reefs**, including **297 surveys** during the summer coral bleaching event.



UPHOLDING COMPLIANCE

PROTECTING THE REEF

Delivered a record **1,149 dedicated compliance days** to deter illegal activity—including **1,014 vessel**, **62 land** and **73 aerial days**.

UNDERSTANDING REEF USE

4,064 downloads of the Eye on the Reef app; **52,000 views** of the landing webpage by **5,600** unique users.

IMPOSING CONSEQUENCES FOR ENVIRONMENTAL HARM

35 court prosecutions, **25 infringement notices**, **5 caution notices**, **403 advisory letters**.



A ranger conducts a controlled
burn for conservation.
© Queensland Government

HIGHLIGHTS AND PROJECT OUTCOMES



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.

HIGHLIGHTS

- Protected coral reefs from anchor damage by finalising the \$2.5 million Reef Trails project—the four-year project funded by the Queensland Government Reef Package installed 94 new public moorings and 30 new reef protection markers in high visitation locations across the Reef (see map 8 for location of moorings and reef protection markers).
- Managed island national parks based on evidence and evaluation with 78% of exceptional and very high level of service parks now having key values and levels of service assessments completed, well above the required Values-Based Management Framework (VBMF) Roadmap target of 30% in 2023–24 key values and levels of service assessments were completed for Orpheus Island and Swain Reefs national parks and drafts were progressed for Lizard Island and Hope Islands national parks.
- Implemented Phase 2 of the Raine Island Recovery Project with Wuthathi and Meriam Nation peoples—two separate monitoring trips in February and April 2024 continued to show higher rates of hatching success and hatchling counts in the reprofiled sectors of the island; a review and maintenance of the clifftop fencing was undertaken; and seabird surveys recorded the highest ever numbers of red-tailed tropicbirds in February and April 2024.
- Eradicated pest animals from multiple islands: deer from Wild Duck Island, protecting the largest flatback turtle rookery on the Australian east coast; pigs from Dunk Island; and goats from Orpheus Island—strategic pest management activities have been planned and undertaken over numerous years, including final monitoring to confidently declare these pests eradicated.
- Responded swiftly on North West Island after identifying an incursion of rats, only months after eradicating mice—follow-up monitoring of the mice eradication project identified the presence of rats early and the Program immediately began management activities, including education with commercial operators about movement of pest species, with eradication of rats expected to continue in 2024–25.
- Continued successful management of pigs and other former grazing animals on Curtis Island—monitoring of the island’s key values indicated an improvement in condition where these animals have been removed and is guiding ongoing control activities of these pest animals (see map 4 for locations of all pest management activities undertaken in 2023–24).



A Reef Authority officer, Mandubarra rangers and an ecologist conducts surveys at Bajigal (Stephens Island).
© Commonwealth of Australia (Reef Authority)

PRIORITY PROJECTS

Restoration of Reef Islands

In 2020–21, the Restoration of Reef Islands project commenced with the aim of improving island habitat resilience. In 2023–24, the project delivered: values and threats surveys; management action planning meetings and a draft technical report for Bajigal (Stephens Island) in partnership with contractors Aestra and Mandubarra Aboriginal Land and Sea Incorporated; and scale insect threat surveys and *Pisonia grandis* tree health assessments at Douglas, Wallace and Cairncross islets with Aestra and Traditional Owners from the Ipima Ikaya Aboriginal Corporation. In 2024–25, weed management will start at Bajigal (Stephens Island) and assessments will be extended to additional islands with pisonia.

[Australian Government Reef Trust funding: \$5.4 million]



A Yadkeykenu Traditional Owner, Reef Authority staff and an ecologist examine a pisonia leaf. © Commonwealth of Australia (Reef Authority)

Island Arks Acquisition



Tern Island, off Mackay. © Queensland Government

The four-year Great Barrier Reef Island Arks Acquisition project was successfully completed in June 2024. Priority islands were identified and added to the protected area estate thereby improving conservation outcomes, visitor experiences and co-stewardship opportunities with First Nations peoples. Regional workshops, expert input and ecological assessments identified priority islands to undergo tenure transfers and dedication. In 2023–24, four regulation amendment dedications were made for the project, with preparations underway for dedication of the remaining acquisitions.

This project has added 147 islands, or parts thereof, with 1,473 ha added to the Reef's protected area estate to date and an additional 6,500 ha expected in future dedications. Islands were secured by purchasing leasehold and freehold properties, including a non-operational tourism lease, a residential lease and grazing properties, and transferring environmentally valuable unallocated state land and land reserves adjacent to protected area estate.

[Queensland Government Reef Package funding: \$6 million across four years and \$1 million ongoing]



Wild Duck Island's abandoned resort in 2021, before its removal.
© Commonwealth of Australia (Reef Authority)

Restoration of Wild Duck, St Bees and Long islands

The demolition and initial site restoration of the derelict infrastructure on Wild Duck Island's former lease area was successfully completed in September 2023. A revegetation rehabilitation plan was workshopped and drafted after a site visit and will be finalised in 2024–25. The St. Bees Island former lease area demolition project was completed in June 2024. Re-vegetation rehabilitation planning has begun, including a work program for 2024–25 and options are being considered to involve Yuwi Land and Sea Rangers in the on-ground rehabilitation works. Planning has begun for the Long Island Broad Sound acquisition rehabilitation plan. It will be transferred officially to QPWS management in February 2025 when rehabilitation and asset rationalisation planning will be finalised.

[Reef Trust Indirect Offset Curtis Island LNG funding and Island Arks funding]

Rehabilitation of Lady Elliot Island and Pine Islet

Restoration of native cay ecosystems continued on Lady Elliot Island, with approximately 3,700m² re-vegetated and/or managed for weeds by resort staff and volunteers. Over 420 plants (grown in the island's nursery) were planted in the coastal zone, including tree, shrub and groundcovers and a small area of pisonia forest, supported by the establishment of water irrigation systems. A new walking track was established and a vehicle track closed to reduce the spread of weeds. Herbicide trials commenced to complement hand-pulling and improve the efficacy of weed management.

Restoration of native vegetation also continued on Lady Elliot Island with the island's resort managing the activities via a contract with the Reef Authority. A review of the *Lady Elliot Island Ecosystem Resilience Plan* has commenced in accordance with the program adaptive management cycle to best guide next year's activities. A consultant has been engaged to undertake the review.

Planning commenced for removal of cyclone-damaged asbestos buildings on Pine Islet.

[Reef Trust funding]



Threatened species officer, volunteer researcher and Erubam Le Traditional Owners release tagged turtle.
© Commonwealth of Australia (Reef Authority)



CHECKING FOR CHANGE

The Program checks for change on islands and in the water to monitor reef and island conditions and the extent of existing or emerging threats. Checking for change identifies impacts from the main threats to the World Heritage Area and enables appropriate management actions to be implemented.

HIGHLIGHTS

- Won a Premier's Award for Excellence in the 'Protecting our liveability and environment' category with the submission 'Keeping islands pest-free: Pest prevention and surveillance on Great Barrier Reef and other islands'—announced in March 2024, the award recognises the efforts of Program staff in maintaining the highest levels of biosecurity to safeguard the health of Queensland's protected area islands.
- Maintained vigilant surveillance of pests by delivering 131 Island Watch surveys across the World Heritage Area and continuously improving internal work procedures to prevent pests arriving onto islands and ensure swift management responses.
- Completed 35 annual and 20 periodic shorebird surveys in the first year of the new Shorebird Monitoring Strategy—in response to recommendations of a 2019 RIMReP report, the Program developed the new strategy and is now delivering both seabird and shorebird surveys across the World Heritage Area, including some shorebird sites never surveyed before and many remote sites requiring vessels to access (see map 5 for coastal bird monitoring locations).
- Supported turtle nesting, local population health assessments and foraging index site monitoring at Raine, Heron, Wreck, Curtis, Peak, Wild Duck, Howick and Green islands and Piper, Capricorn and Bunker groups and Port Curtis—the Program provides vessel, accommodation, remote camping equipment, biosecurity and logistical support, with research partners undertaking turtle tagging, monitoring of nest incubation success and other activities (see map 6 for turtle monitoring locations supported by the Program).
- Delivered 1,134 RHIS to maintain contemporary awareness of Reef health and emergent threats to inform management actions—334 surveys focused on COTS outbreak severity and extent throughout the year and 297 surveys were undertaken during February and March 2023 specifically to assess coral bleaching severity (see map 4 for RHIS locations).
- Monitored 18 subtidal seagrass sites, including subtidal seagrass surveys to fill knowledge gaps at Newry Island, Whitehaven Beach, Tongue Bay, Cid Harbour, Hinchinbrook Island (conducted with the Giringun Land and Sea Ranger Corporation), Flinders Island, Bathurst Bay, Lloyd Bay and Margaret Bay (conducted with the Wuthathi Land and Sea Ranger Corporation)—all form an integral part of the Marine Monitoring Program.



The Premier's Awards for Excellence night. © Queensland Government



A ranger operates a drone on a cay.
© Queensland Government

PRIORITY PROJECTS

Filling RIMReP knowledge gaps

The three-year Reef Trust-funded project to fill knowledge gaps in seabird, island habitat and biosecurity monitoring was completed in June 2024. The project brought together technical partners from research and non-government sectors to fill knowledge gaps through vegetation and fauna surveys on selected islands and conduct trials of new monitoring techniques. The results will contribute to adequately measuring progress towards *Reef 2050 Long-Term Sustainability Plan objectives*.

Novel monitoring and survey method trials included:

- development of a simple drone survey method to detect changes in cay geomorphology.
- development of a new classification framework for cays that identifies geomorphic change potential and drivers of change.
- using drones, passive acoustic recorders and community-based monitoring to improve our ability to detect breeding population trends for target seabird species.
- early detection of invasive rodents using remote image capture with automatic species recognition software and detection of high-risk ant species using eDNA screening.

In early 2024–25, the findings of the trials will be presented to technical experts and managers of the World Heritage Area to assess the feasibility of integrating these novel monitoring approaches into ongoing management activities.

[Great Barrier Reef Foundation funding contribution: \$2.01 million]



East Fairfax Islands cay orthophoto map. © Queensland Government

Green Turtle Research Program

This program aims to improve our understanding of the population dynamics and health of northern green turtles, the world's largest green turtle population. Delivered in partnership with the DESI Threatened Species Operations team and Traditional Owner groups, over 3,000 turtles have been measured, weighed, tagged and genetically sampled at foraging ground index sites in the far northern Reef and eastern Torres Strait since the program began. Fifty-two breeding adult male green turtles have been fitted with GPS satellite tags to examine movement patterns and habitat use during foraging, breeding migrations and courtship. A second season of trialling methods for artificially cooling sand temperatures at nest depth are now complete. Outcomes from these projects will help inform future conservation and management strategies.



An Erubam Le Traditional Owner, a volunteer researcher and wildlife officer carefully lift a green turtle. © Commonwealth of Australia (Reef Authority)



A Reef Authority officer prepares for an aerial Reef health survey.
© Commonwealth of Australia (Reef Authority)



RESPONDING TO INCIDENTS

Field management officers respond to incidents to minimise harm to the World Heritage Area’s outstanding universal value including ship and smaller vessel groundings and sinkings, pollution spills, wildfires, pest incursions, stranded marine animals and severe weather events, such as flooding.

HIGHLIGHTS

- Responded to 15 of 22 high priority marine mammal strandings—three dolphins, nine dugongs and 10 whales were recorded as stranded, with most deceased upon inspection; a beach-washed live whale was rescued in the Cairns region; and a beach-washed live dolphin was rescued in the Townsville region, with both animals being released into open water.
- Observed a reduction in marine animal strandings, coinciding with recovery of seagrass foraging habitats—279 marine animal strandings were recorded in 2023–24, down from 326 in 2022–23 and 339 in 2021–22 after La Nina-induced extreme weather events in late 2021 and early 2022 saw a decline in seagrass meadows (see map 7 for marine animal stranding locations).
- Contributed over 100 staff days to bushfire response on Queensland mainland protected areas during the 2023 bushfire season—Program staff assisted with all elements of bushfire response ranging from firefighting to incident management and other support.
- Maintained visibility of 123 maritime incidents, including 62 groundings and sinkings and 10 pollutant spills—four vessels were salvaged and removed from the World Heritage Area, with two managed by salvors and two managed by the Maritime Incident Response team. See map 8 for locations of maritime incidents.
- Refurbished 20 oil spill evidence collection kits to maintain response readiness for an oil spill event including new procedures and guidelines for staff—18 kits were completed for the Program’s large vessel fleet, Reef Authority Field Operations team and QPWS work bases, and two kits were allocated for training.
- Responded rapidly to Tropical Cyclone Kirrily in late January 2024, using *Island Ranger* and *Island Guardian* vessels to re-open high visitation areas in the Whitsundays and Townsville areas, with minimal impact on the World Heritage Areas tourism industry during the peak period.



Rangers clean up bridge at Wujal Wujal after cyclone.
© Queensland Government

Tropical Cyclone Jasper response

Tropical Cyclone Jasper struck the far north Queensland coast near Wujal Wujal on 13 December 2023 as a category 2 system. As the cyclone transitioned into a slow-moving tropical low, over 3 m of rain fell between Cairns and Cooktown in the following five days. Subsequent severe flooding destroyed roads, isolated coastal communities and heavily impacted critical infrastructure and services. With its fit-for-purpose vessel fleet and ready workforce, the Program has a unique capacity to support incident response in and adjacent to the World Heritage Area. Using the 20 m barge *Island Guardian*, Program staff delivered pallets of bottled water to Port Douglas in the immediate aftermath of the cyclone.

The Program also assisted QPWS' Northern Region unit in a four-day assessment and recovery mission in the Cape Tribulation section of Daintree National Park (CYPAL). The Program's 24 m long-range patrol vessel *Reef Ranger* was used as a floating base for staff to undertake works. Along with delivering needed items for the local council, Program staff assisted in clearing mud and debris from boardwalks and walking tracks to help prepare the park for reopening.

Floodwaters at Wujal Wujal destroyed community infrastructure and cut road access. *Reef Ranger* was anchored offshore from the township and used as a base to transport staff and equipment and support in recovery response. Program staff assisted in initial clean-up work on roads and parks within the community.



Rangers clear a boardwalk in Daintree National Park.
© Queensland Government

Coral bleaching and summer Reef health assessment

The Program assesses Reef health year-round but has a heightened focus during the high-risk summer period. During the 2024 summer, the Reef experienced its seventh mass coral bleaching event since 1998. The pre-summer workshop in November 2023 had planned response options with key partners should the Reef be subject to widespread coral bleaching over summer. Once heat accumulation and in-water assessments indicated that coral bleaching was occurring in February 2024, the Program's Reef Health team organised and led aerial surveys over 1080 reefs and coordinated Program staff and partners to undertake more than 8,300 in-water surveys across 273 reefs from February to April 2024. The aerial survey results showed that coral bleaching had occurred on 73% of surveyed reefs in the World Heritage Area. Innovations in data management in 2023–24 streamlined workflows by centralising data from numerous providers to allow analyses in near-real time, greatly improving visibility of the condition of the Reef. The Program's Reef health team, supported by the Reef Authority's Chief Scientist, prepared and delivered 49 special presentations, seven formal briefs, 19 weekly Reef health updates and 45 media interviews on the bleaching event.



A Reef Authority diver conducts a RHIS.
© Commonwealth of Australia (Reef Authority)



Wulgurukaba smoking ceremony.
© Queensland Government



WELCOMING PEOPLE

The Program welcomes people to appreciate, respect and enjoy the World Heritage Area by improving community understanding of values, threats and responsible behaviours, while also providing visitor facilities to enable ecologically sustainable use. The Program welcomes the involvement of industry and the broader community in the protection and recovery of reefs, islands and species.

HIGHLIGHTS

- Enhanced visitor experience on Curtis Island with the completion of new visitor infrastructure: new picnic shelters along the multi-use trail provide welcome respite for visitors; an upgrade at Joey Lees campground has created safer beach access and better separation of camping and day-use facilities; a new Dump Ezy was installed to accommodate the growing number of visitors travelling with portable toilets as an efficient alternative to maintaining a public toilet—these works were funded by Curtis Island Environmental Management Precinct funding (see map 10 for capital works locations).
- Enabled sustainable use with decisions made on 259 joint marine parks permit applications, 28 state marine park permit applications, 40 commercial activity permits and 5 commercial activity agreements—risk-based environmental assessment and regulation is essential to effective management of the World Heritage Area.
- The Program's strategic communications this year resulted in an increased reach of social media posts and media releases. These efforts contributed to raising awareness and understanding of key topics and issues, building appreciation for the World Heritage Area, encouraging positive behaviours, inspiring visitation, and elevating confidence in the Program's work. Notable content included animal encounters, rescues, staff profiles and location highlights.
- Supported volunteer campground hosts at North West and Lady Musgrave islands at Capricornia Cays National Park—hosts camp on-site, undertake ranger duties, such as talking to campers and cleaning facilities, and allow Program staff to focus on maintenance, island health checks, pest management and compliance activities. During the 2023-24 season, community volunteers completed up to 10 separate shifts on each island.
- Provided more visitor opportunities to enjoy the World Heritage Area by finalising the \$2.5 million Reef Trails project, which installed 94 new public moorings and 30 new reef protection markers in high visitation locations across the Reef—the four-year project is funded by the Queensland Government Reef Package (see map 3 for locations of reef protection markers and public moorings).



An interview with a Wulgurukaba Traditional Owner.
© Queensland Government

PRIORITY PROJECTS

Multi-day trails development

The \$3.2 million Munamudanamy (Hinchinbrook) project focusing on the world-renowned Thorsborne Trail will include works on three primary campgrounds (Zoe Bay, Mulligan's and Little Ramsay Bay) to better separate user groups and facilitate additional capacity for commercial opportunity. In 2023–24, planning for all sites was completed and on-ground works commenced. A new pontoon expansion was also completed to facilitate easier and safer access at the northern entry point to the trail. In 2024–25, campground works will be completed, safety and erosion issues along the Thorsborne Trail will be addressed and the current booking system, commercial permits and communication products will be reviewed and improved. Maintaining engagement with the Bandjin and Girramay peoples in all stages of the three-year project is key to guiding the protection of Munamudanamy's key values, including the remote wilderness experience. It also ensures works are appropriate and visitor opportunities and management are enhanced.

In 2023–24, the Program also progressed Phase 2 of the project to upgrade and build new nature-based visitor experiences along the Ngaro Track on Whitsunday Island. The upgrade included installation of water collection points and trailhead, directional signs, track upgrades and construction of two uniquely designed hiker camp sites that will be completed in 2024–25. A tender process to appoint a suitable ecotourism commercial operator to manage the hiking opportunity was commenced and will be finalised in 2024–25. The project is due to be completed in December 2024.

Transforming permissions management, policies and legislation

In 2022–23, a review of permit conditions identified a need for significant review and development of complementary marine parks and island policies, plans and legislation to reduce permit conditions to allow for future-pay and print functionality. This work progressed in 2023–24 with the development of a future legislative amendment repository, which collates all the identified issues from across the Reef Authority that may benefit from legislative amendment. Commonwealth legislative amendments have also progressed through development of policy intents to move identified content within permit conditions to the regulations. The Program will continue to advance systems-based improvements and enhance existing technologies to enable a fully automated joint permit system, with pay and print capability, through the Reef Management System. This work supports the long-term development of a single marine and island national parks permit for the Reef and contributes to the Reef Authority's Policy and Planning Strategic Roadmap.



A fleet vessel approaches a tourism operator at Magnetic Island.
© Queensland Government



A compliance officer on patrol.
© Commonwealth of Australia (Reef Authority)

UPHOLDING COMPLIANCE

In multi-use marine parks, a range of compliance risks of varying complexity and seriousness exist. The threat of illegal fishing, unsafe navigation of ships and offences that impact species of conservation interest remain focus areas for the compliance program. During 2023–24, the Program continued to prioritise the delivery of compliance operations with support from partner agencies, including Maritime Border Command, Commonwealth Director of Public Prosecutions, Australian Maritime Safety Authority, Queensland Boating and Fisheries Patrol, and the Queensland Police Service. Compliance is a foundational management activity for the protection of World Heritage Area values and reef resilience.

HIGHLIGHTS

- Achieved a 29% reduction in the number of offences detected in the marine parks (1,124 in 2023–24, down from 1,583 in 2022–23) whilst delivering a record number of patrols.
- Recorded a dramatic drop in recreational fishing offences—284 fewer offences or a decrease of 45% compared with 2022–23 (see the five-year trends for all fishing offences and surveillance in Figure 1). This significant decline was the largest contributor to the overall reduction of offences. In contrast to previous trends where reduced offences were linked to decreased patrol efforts, the 2023–24 period showed different outcomes with a record patrol effort. The Program delivered more patrols, focused on recreational fishing non-compliance and detected significantly fewer offences.
- Applied a combination of strategies in four themes to promote high levels of voluntary compliance: technology innovation (including vessel tracking), education, partnerships and in-park presence.
- Recorded very high compliance levels for commercial fishing operations and a significant decline in commercial fishing offences over the last five years—electronic vessel tracking and other strategies have led to a 63% reduction in commercial fishing offences, with only 54 offences recorded in 2023–24 (most of these were transit-related and not suspected of fishing with minimal or no impact on the marine parks).
- Increased community awareness through the Recreational Fishing Campaign about where to find and how to use marine parks zoning information—4,064 downloads of the Eye on the Reef app; 52,400 website views by 5,600 unique users; strategic partnerships with key fishing influencers; and integration of ‘Fish for their future, Fish the right zones’ messaging.
- Supervised works permitted under joint marine parks permits, including a Defence training task at Bowen as part of Exercise Talisman Sabre and two community events at Whitehaven Beach that included biosecurity inspections.

Barcoo patrol vessel's radar.
© Commonwealth of Australia (Reef Authority)

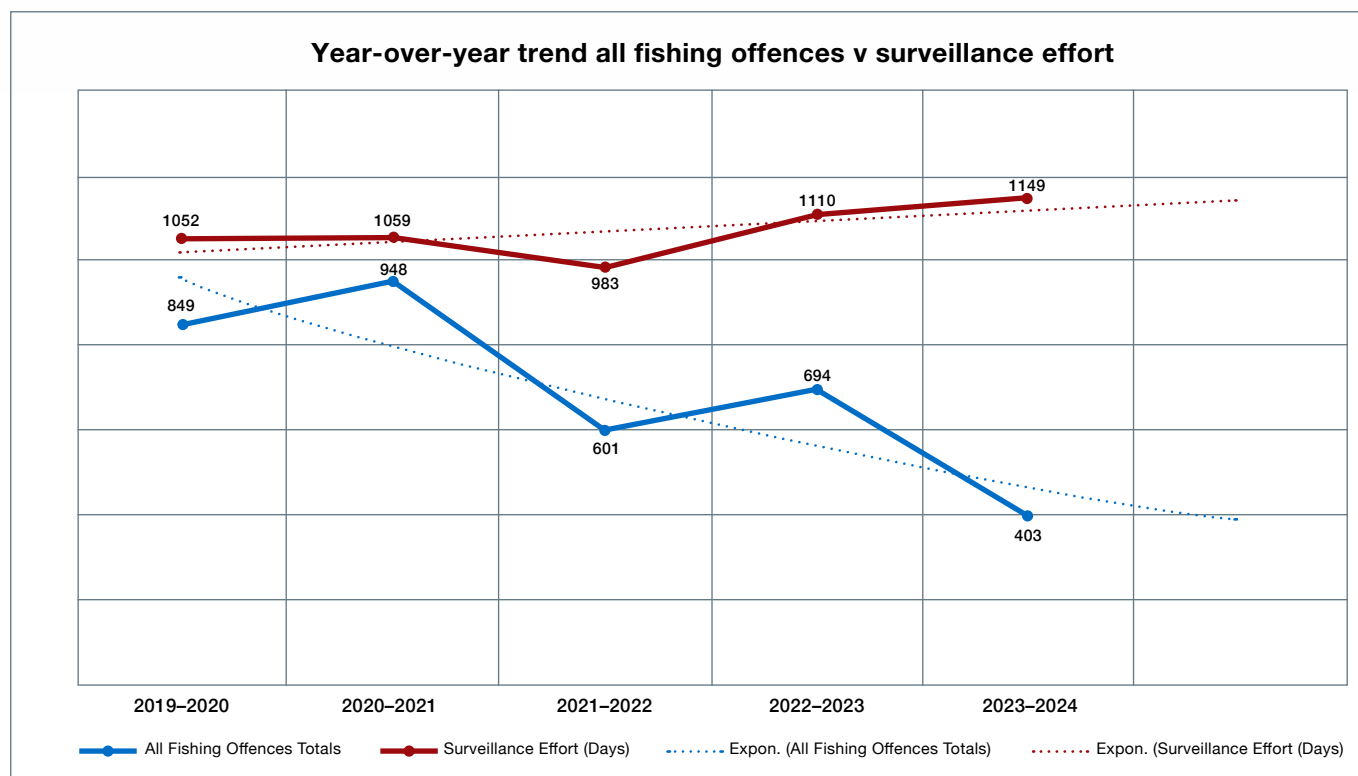


Figure 1: The divergence of “all fishing offences” and “surveillance effort” trendlines indicates that as surveillance effort increases, fishing offences decreases.

PRIORITY PROJECTS

Enhancing compliance through vessel monitoring

A discussion paper explored the options to expand real-time vessel tracking beyond the commercial fishing fleet to permitted vessels operating in the marine park. Three technology options are being considered: vessel monitoring systems, automatic identification systems and mobile device applications. The need for vessel tracking of tourism operators has been identified as an area of focus to improve future management of tourism activities. It would improve our understanding of tourism operators’ patterns of use at sites, streamline permit conditions and increase compliance with regulatory obligations. The next step is a collaborative in-field trial to better understand the feasibility of this technology and cost of implementation for tourism operators.



A ranger, compliance officer and fisheries officer at Rosslyn Harbour.
© Queensland Government



Darumbal and Woppaburra rangers, involved in the work placement program, at Humpy Island, Keppel Bay Islands National Park.
© Queensland Government



WORKING WITH TRADITIONAL OWNERS

The Program acknowledges the ongoing custodianship of the World Heritage Area by Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples and focuses on re-engaging Traditional Owners in Land and Sea Country management, guided by the *Traditional Owner Partnership Strategy 2022–2027*.

HIGHLIGHTS

- Finalised cultural protocols between the Green Turtle Research Program and Meriam Nation Traditional Owners—the first formalised arrangement to be established between the Reef Authority and any Traditional Owner group within Torres Strait.
- Showcased personal and contemporary stories of connection to Country for Yunbenun (Magnetic Island) through the Yunbenun Wulgurukaba interpretive project, delivered over five years with the Yunbenun Advisory Group—this co-designed project has created on-park interpretation and digital content that is bringing Traditional Owner artwork and voices to Country.
- Supported the Dabu Jajikal Aboriginal Corporation to conduct an on-Country visit to Hope Island and record Elders sharing traditional Sea and Reef Country stories with the younger generation, with stories recorded in language and then transcribed by corporation members to produce children's story books—informing the management and protection of cultural resources in the World Heritage Area.
- Supported Mandubarra Indigenous Land and Sea Rangers to restore a traditional fish trap at Bajigal (Stephens Island) with the local council and a commercial operator—Mandubarra Elders shared knowledge of the cultural significance of the site with their junior rangers.
- Supported ongoing development of a Southern Plan of Management that will cover 42% of the Reef with Traditional Owner groups of the southern Great Barrier Reef.

PRIORITY PROJECTS

Supporting Indigenous Land and Sea Rangers

The Program offers 6–18 month work placements for Indigenous Land and Sea Rangers to gain experience, skills and qualifications working as a ranger at QPWS bases. Seven work placements have been coordinated since 2021,

three of these in 2023–24 were based at the Cairns and Rosslyn Bay work bases. These opportunities promote two-way learning and help build partnerships between the Program and Indigenous Land and Sea Ranger groups.

The Program is uniquely placed to provide training in marine qualifications to Indigenous Land and Sea Rangers. In 2023–24, 16 Indigenous rangers from six Traditional Owner groups participated in dive training coordinated and funded by the Program, nine in PADI Open Water/Advanced Open Water training, three in PADI Rescue Diver training and four in PADI Divemaster training. All the trained divers are now on the Program's dive register and two participated in moorings maintenance and Reef health survey field trips with the Program on their Sea Country in 2023–24.

The Program also supported 13 Indigenous staff to undertake the Indigenous Rangers Leadership Program where participants master skills for self-improvement, team management, and time and relationships management. Over four years, the Program has supported 15 Indigenous staff to participate in this leadership program.

The Program proudly supports Traditional Owner aspirations to access and manage Sea Country. In 2023–24, First Nations peoples spent 958 person-days on Program vessels, including 491 days by Traditional Owners not employed by the Program. Wuthathi and Meriam Nation people now participate in every trip to Raine Island where they lead habitat and cultural restoration activities. Yirrganydji rangers participate in every trip to Michaelmas Cay and lead the seabird counts. Woppaburra rangers participated in a planned burn in 2023–24 on Konomie (North Keppel Island), sharing their knowledge of traditional techniques with Program staff.

An agreement has been reached with the Queensland Indigenous Land and Sea Ranger Program to integrate Program funding and works into original workplans for ranger groups, streamlining processes and reducing administration for Traditional Owner groups in the future.



A Reef Authority officer and ranger at the Foundations Program training.
© Commonwealth of Australia (Reef Authority)

PROGRAM INPUTS

Delivery of field management activities relies on a skilled workforce, operational and appropriately located management infrastructure, a fit-for-purpose and well-maintained vessel fleet, technological advances, good systems and strong governance.

HIGHLIGHTS

- Undertook operations over the entire World Heritage Area, delivering a total of 1,754 vessel days and 7,652 Program staff days at sea (see map 1 for vessel operations activity)—this was the first year with all 21 vessels of the purpose-built fleet in operation, supporting activities from all Program priority areas, including an increase in Indigenous Land and Sea Ranger days at sea (28% of vessel days in 2023–24, up from 24% in 2022–23).
- Maintained a fit-for-purpose vessel fleet, including awarding a contract to refit the *Reef Ranger* that will extend the vessel's life and include carbon emissions reduction options—replacement of *Munda Gola* and *Sousa II* is underway with construction of two new RHIBs well advanced and due for delivery in early 2024–25.
- Streamlined the management of marine wildlife strandings with successful stage 1 and 2 testing completed of the new QWildlife Marine Strandings app, including sightings reporting, case management and detailed stranding reporting—the app will be completed in 2024–25 with finalisation of a dashboard, data migration and user interface.
- Won the DESI Director-General Safety Behaviour Award in the category of 'Safety Recognition' that acknowledges significant actions taken by employees during emergency and emergent events—in March 2024 the crew of the *Reef Resilience* rescued two people from a life raft in dark and rough conditions and transported them to Heron Island after their yacht caught fire near Wistari Reef (the crew were recognised for their efforts, exceptional skills and positive attitude during the rescue).

PRIORITY PROJECTS

Integrated compliance management system

The new compliance management system will revolutionise the collection, storage and use of compliance data for the Program. Phase 1 of development commenced with configuration of the base system for maritime incident response management and an initial demonstration. Phase 2 will commence in 2024–25 involving customisation and development of the core compliance management requirements.

Technology transformation

The Program is working with the Australian Institute of Marine Science to advance trials and use of the ReefScan benthic monitoring system. Phase 1 is complete with development of the camera, sensor and integrated computer system. A shallow ReefScan transom-mounted system is now operational and was used during 50 COTS surveillance manta tows, resulting in coral cover estimates that are comparable to ranger in-water assessments. Refinement of the ReefCloud artificial intelligence component is continuing.

Drones were used to monitor seabird reproductive success and turtle nesting populations on Raine Island, conduct a census of wallabies and koalas on St Bees Island, and map priority coral cays for change with orthomosaic 3D processing. Refinements are planned to improve functionality and results. The Program trialed the use of beyond visual line-of-sight drones for aerial surveillance compliance patrols in partnership with the Department of Climate Change, Energy, the Environment and Water, and Textron Systems Australia. Future trials will include extended visual line-of-sight, night visual line-of-sight and vertical take-off and landing to extend the patrolling reach of vessels.



A researcher operates drone.
© Queensland Government

Work continued on the maintenance and ongoing development of the Field Reporting System with three new system updates introducing new features and bug fixes. Development of a marine moorings app is also underway to improve efficiency of moorings management and maintenance. Design of the app has begun with testing to be undertaken in 2024–25.

Health and safety

The Program is committed to promoting a strong safety culture by improving systems, processes and education across the Reef Authority and QPWS. Safety officers ensured that all incidents and hazards were investigated and that findings were shared across the agencies where appropriate. The improved communication around hazard and incident reporting has ensured issues are proactively rectified at the site and at other locations across the Program.

To maintain staff and public safety during compliance activities in the World Heritage Area, 78 Program staff participated in QGATE Operational Foundation (Positive Interactions) training. This training, delivered by the Queensland Police Service, equips participants with the skills to maintain situational awareness and safely approach and intercept visitors in remote or potentially hazardous situations. Additionally, 17 Program staff undertook Human Factors training that teaches cognitive and self-management skills in emergent or high-risk situations. Staff safety is a critical

priority and the Program has commissioned the development of a Human Factors training package specific to our vessel and in-water operations. The Program will continue to support staff training in these areas in future to promote a safe work environment and a skilled and effective workforce.

Refining governance of Program priority areas

A review undertaken in 2022–23 identified the need to improve governance within Program priority areas to better prioritise projects and resourcing. New governance groups with terms of reference are now established to oversee Program activity areas: Conservation Actions, Checking for Change, Responding to Incidents and Program Inputs. These groups complement the already established Compliance Operations Group, Indigenous Partnerships Governance Group, Regional Infrastructure Steering Committee and the Fire and Pest Referral Group.

A quarterly review process was established to assess delivery against performance indicators and priority projects in the Annual Business Plan. A single SharePoint reporting tool is used across the Reef Authority and QPWS and quarterly reports are now assessed at Operations Group meetings to address emerging issues. A complementary annual reporting tool has also been developed to inform production of the Annual Report.



Hinchinbrook Island National Park.
© Queensland Government

RESULTS AGAINST PERFORMANCE INDICATORS

Performance indicators highlight the Program’s achievements against the Program’s *Annual Business Plan 2023–24*, which the Director-General of DESI and the Chief Executive Officer of the Reef Authority jointly approved.

In 2023–24, the Program had 34 performance indicator targets of which 22 (65%) were achieved, 10 (29%) were not achieved but demonstrated significant progress, and 2 (6%) were not achieved or had no significant progress. The number of targets achieved decreased from 2022–23 due to external factors, including unplanned vessel maintenance, two tropical cyclones causing the cancellation of planned activities and contractor delays extending project milestones.

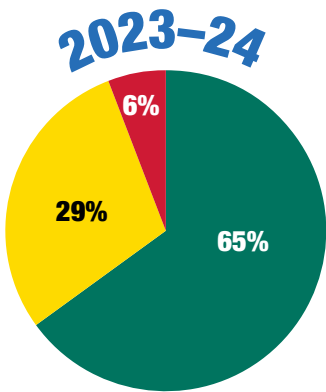


Figure 2: Percentage of the Program’s performance targets achieved in 2023–24

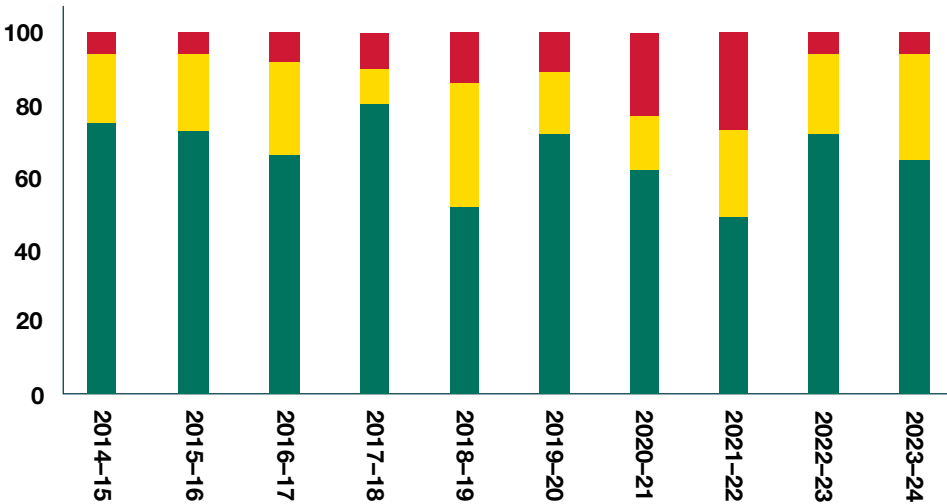





















Figure 3: The Program’s performance over the last 10 years.






KEY





- TARGET NOT ACHIEVED + NO SIGNIFICANT PROGRESS
- SIGNIFICANT PROGRESS TOWARDS TARGET
- TARGET ACHIEVED







	PERFORMANCE INDICATOR	RESULTS 2023–24	TARGET
DELIVERING CONSERVATION ACTIONS	1. 90% OF REGIONAL PRIORITY BURN PROGRAM ACTIVITIES DELIVERED AND REPORTED IN FLAME	<p>Significant progress. 60% of regional priority burn program activities were delivered. Three of the five programmed burns were completed at:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Wild Cattle Island National Park: bushfire mitigation zone hazard reduction achieved. Curtis Island National Park: annual broad scale aerial program for landscape and ecosystem management, two aerial treatments undertaken successfully. Thorsborne Trail, Hinchinbrook Island National Park: reduced bushfire likelihood and protect visitor values and access. <p>Burns were not completed at:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Curtis Island Environmental Management Plan: Ship Hill protection burn not undertaken due to unsuitable weather conditions. All pre-planning approvals and logistics are complete and ready for the burn to occur in 2024–25 as soon as weather conditions are suitable. Possession Island National Park: bushfire prevention burning could not take place due to the area being burnt again by suspected arson in December 2023. 	 <p>Significant progress towards target</p>
	2. 80% OF ALL PROTECTION ZONES ARE MAINTAINED WITHIN PRESCRIPTION, AND 100% OF CRITICAL FIRE LINES ARE MAINTAINED TO DESIGN STANDARD	<p>Significant progress. 78% (7 of 9 ha) of gazetted protection zone has been treated and is maintained within prescription. 100% of critical fire lines were maintained to design standard. The remaining area is planned for treatment in early 2024–25.</p>	 <p>Significant progress towards target</p> <p>No trend.</p> <p>First year of KPI</p>
	3. 90% OF REGIONAL PRIORITY PEST PROGRAM ACTIONS DELIVERED AND DOCUMENTED IN FLAME	<p>Achieved. 92% of regional pest program actions were delivered with 76% documented in FLAME.</p>	 <p>Achieved</p>
	4. 90% OF MOORINGS AND REEF PROTECTION MARKERS ARE INSPECTED AND REGULARLY MAINTAINED – MOORINGS AT FOUR MONTHLY INTERVALS AND REEF PROTECTION MARKERS ANNUALLY	<p>Achieved. 96% of mooring inspections and 100% of reef protection marker inspections were undertaken.</p> <p>18 new moorings were installed to protect coral reef at the Whitsundays, around the Keppel Bay Islands and at the Capricornia Cays, bringing the total number of moorings to 369. No new reef protection markers were installed, with a total number of 293.</p> <p>Adverse weather and contractor availability caused delays and cancellation of some inspection rounds.</p>	 <p>Achieved</p>
	5. 90% OF HISTORIC HERITAGE INFRASTRUCTURE IS MAINTAINED OR IMPROVED TO 'GOOD' OR 'GOOD WITH SOME CONCERN' AS ESTIMATED USING HEALTH CHECKS AND IN AT LEAST 'REASONABLE CONDITION' FROM S3 INSPECTIONS WHEN REQUIRED	<p>Achieved. 100% of historic heritage infrastructure is assessed as being in 'good', 'good with some concern' or in at least 'reasonable condition' from health checks and S3 inspections.</p> <p>Health checks and B2 inspections were completed for 100% of all State and Commonwealth listed historic heritage infrastructure on state national park and Commonwealth islands, including Raine, Low Isles, Magnetic, Dent, Cape Capricorn and Lady Elliot.</p>	 <p>Achieved</p>

	PERFORMANCE INDICATOR	RESULTS 2023–24	TARGET
CHECKING FOR CHANGE	6. 400 RHIS DELIVERED DURING HIGH-RISK PERIOD BETWEEN SEPTEMBER TO MARCH (INCLUDES 80 RHIS UNDERTAKEN AT >6 M DEPTH)	<p>Significant progress. 347 RHIS were undertaken during the high-risk period between September and March. 89 of these RHIS were undertaken at >6 m depth.</p> <p>Two scheduled RHIS deployments were cancelled due to a dive compressor breakdown and Tropical Cyclone Kirrily impacting operations, contributing to not achieving 400 RHIS.</p>	 Significant progress towards target No trend. First year of KPI
	7. 60 DAYS COTS SURVEILLANCE DELIVERED	<p>Significant progress. 50 days of COTS surveillance was delivered.</p> <p>A scheduled COTS surveillance deployment was cancelled in December 2023 due to unplanned maintenance required on the <i>Reef Resilience</i>. An additional COTS surveillance deployment was shortened by three days in January 2024 due to Tropical Cyclone Kirrily. Both these events impacted capacity to achieve 60 days surveillance.</p>	 Significant progress towards target
	8. PRIORITY ISLAND NATIONAL PARKS (HINCHINBROOK, WHITSUNDAYS, GREEN, MAGNETIC, CAPRICORNIA CAYS, RAINE) AND LIZARD AND CURTIS ISLAND NATIONAL PARKS HAVE REQUIRED HEALTH CHECKS UNDERTAKEN	Achieved. Health checks were completed on all priority island national parks and at Lizard and Curtis island national parks.	 Achieved
	9. 90% OF ESSENTIAL MONITORING SITES FOR SEABIRDS AND SHOREBIRDS ARE SURVEYED	<p>Significant progress. 69% of essential (annual) seabird surveys (86 of 124 surveys) were completed and 60% of essential (annual) shorebird surveys (35 of 58) were completed.</p> <p>This is a decline from 87% of seabird surveys completed in 2022–23.</p> <p>This was the first year of monitoring under the new Shorebird Monitoring Strategy that includes more sites. While the target was not achieved, monitoring was conducted at 15 more sites than in 2022–23.</p>	 Significant progress
	10. 90% OF SIGNIFICANT MONITORING SITES FOR SEABIRDS ARE SURVEYED WITHIN THE PREVIOUS FIVE YEARS AND 20% OF SIGNIFICANT MONITORING SITES FOR SHOREBIRDS ARE SURVEYED IN 2023–24	Achieved. 96% of significant (periodic) seabird monitoring sites (40 of 41 sites) have been surveyed within the previous five years and 14% of significant (periodic) shorebird monitoring sites (20 of 145) were surveyed in 2023–24.	 Achieved
	11. AT LEAST 70% OF ALL NATIONAL PARK AND COMMONWEALTH ISLANDS SURVEYED WITHIN A FIVE-YEAR PERIOD, WITH AT LEAST 120 ISLAND WATCH SURVEYS COMPLETED IN 2023–24	Achieved. 131 Island Watch surveys were completed in 2023–24. 67% of national park and Commonwealth islands have been surveyed in the last five years.	 Achieved
	12. 90% OF PRIORITY NESTING AND FORAGING INDEX SITE MONITORING WITHIN THE WORLD HERITAGE AREA IS DELIVERED OR SUPPORTED BY THE PROGRAM	<p>Achieved. The Program supported or delivered monitoring at 90% of priority marine turtle nesting and foraging index sites within the World Heritage Area – six nesting index sites (Raine, Wild Duck, Milman, Wreck, Heron and Peak islands) and three foraging sites (Howick reefs and Port Curtis).</p> <p>Additional nesting index monitoring was undertaken at Curtis Island and Wreck Rock.</p>	 Achieved

	PERFORMANCE INDICATOR	RESULTS 2023–24	TARGET
RESPONDING TO INCIDENTS	13. 100% OF MARITIME AND ENVIRONMENTAL INCIDENTS REPORTED TO THE PROGRAM ARE RISK ASSESSED AND RESPONDED TO ACCORDINGLY	Achieved. 100% of 123 maritime incidents reported to the Program, tropical cyclones Jasper and Kirrily and the widespread coral bleaching event were assessed and responded to accordingly. This is a decrease in maritime incidents from 152 reported in 2022–23. The Program also supported other QPWS regions on the mainland by providing qualified and experienced staff to assist in wildfire response efforts.	 Achieved
	14. 80% OF MARITIME INCIDENTS REQUIRING A SITE ASSESSMENT OF DAMAGE ARE UNDERTAKEN WHERE IT IS SAFE TO DO SO	Not achieved. Of the two incidents requiring a site assessment of damage, none were completed due to unavailability of trained staff.	 Not Achieved
WELCOMING PEOPLE	15. 95% OF ROUTINE AND 80% OF TAILORED ASSESSMENT DECISION NOTICES ARE GIVEN IN ACCORDANCE WITH THE PERMISSION SERVICE CHARTER	Achieved. 100% of routine assessment decision notices and 72% of tailored assessment decision notices were given in accordance with the Permission Service Charter (25 days for routine and 50 days for tailored). An increase in complex applications (predominantly for research) required greater resources to process. This is an increase from 91% of routine assessment and 65% of tailored assessment decision notices in 2022–23.	 Achieved
	16. 70% OF MARINE STRANDINGS REQUIRING RESPONSE ARE ATTENDED TO BY TRAINED COMMUNITY VOLUNTEERS OR INDIGENOUS LAND AND SEA RANGERS	Achieved. 72% of strandings reported (201 of 279) were attended to by trained community volunteers or Indigenous Land and Sea Rangers. This is a decline from 74% of strandings reported (236 of 319) in 2022–23.	 Achieved
	17. 2,700 PUBLIC CONTACT EVENTS WHERE PROGRAM STAFF ARE TALKING DIRECTLY WITH WORLD HERITAGE AREA USERS DURING VESSEL OR LAND-BASED ACTIVITIES	Significant progress. 2,497 events recorded on the Field Reporting System – comprising 2,141 public contacts, 202 incidents, 75 permit checks, 74 information reports, 4 inspections and 1 caution notice events – where field staff were talking directly with World Heritage Area users. This is a decrease from 3,045 events recorded in 2022–23. 2,209 events were recorded in 2021–22 and 2,835 events in 2020–21.	 Significant progress towards target
	18. 100% OF PROGRAMMED CRITICAL AND STATUTORY INFRASTRUCTURE MAINTENANCE TASKS COMPLETED	Significant progress. 97% (58 of 60) of programmed statutory infrastructure maintenance tasks completed. Unavailability of contractors and adverse weather conditions meant two statutory maintenance tasks (two mooring inspections) were unable to be completed.	 Significant progress towards target No trend. First year of KPI
	19. 95% OF PLANNED CAPITAL VISITOR INFRASTRUCTURE PROGRAM MILESTONES DELIVERED	Significant progress. 77% of visitor capital project milestones were completed as planned. Seven of 12 visitor capital projects were completed, and five projects will continue into 2024–25.	 Significant progress towards target

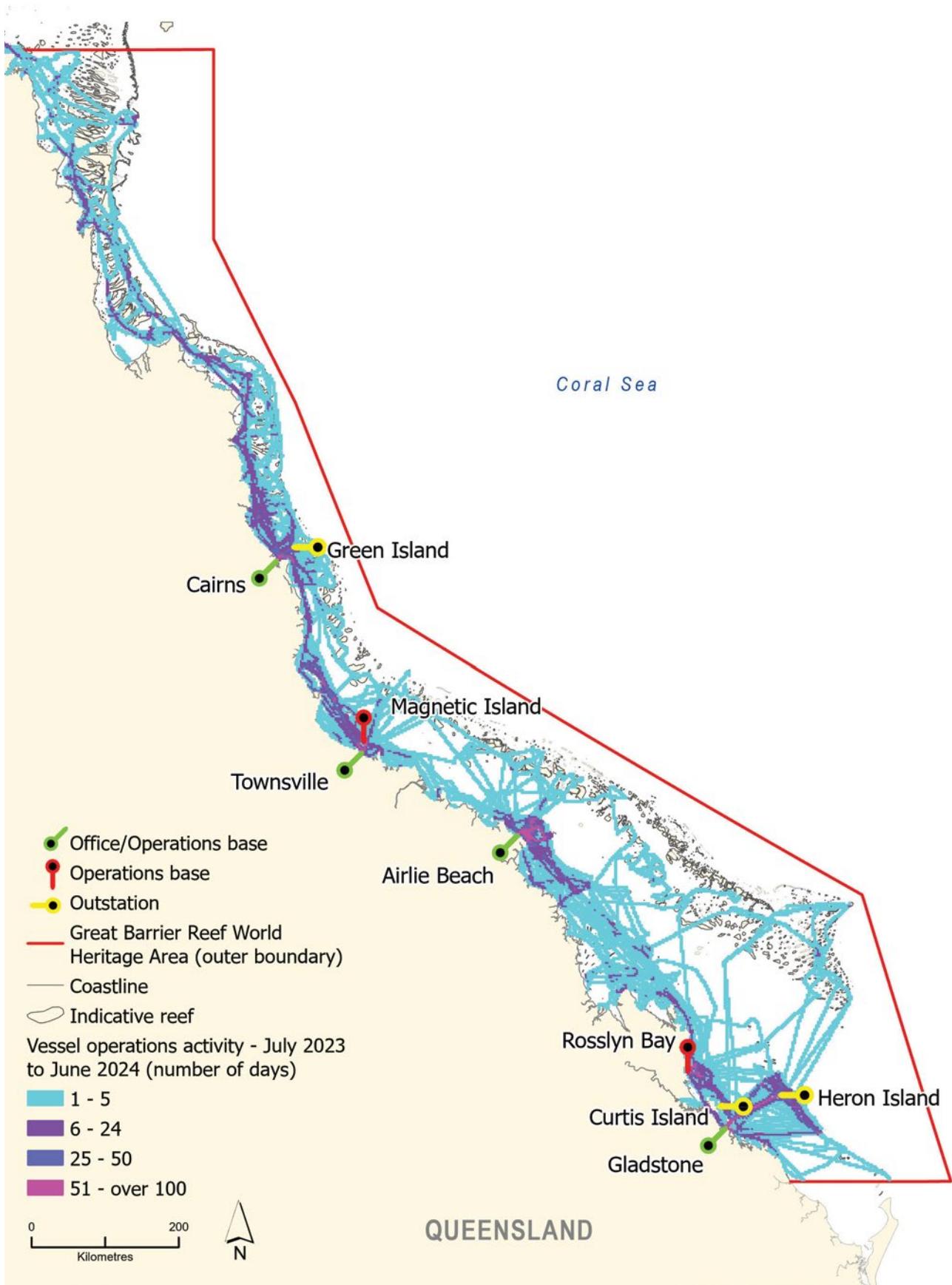
	PERFORMANCE INDICATOR	RESULTS 2023–24	TARGET
UPHOLDING COMPLIANCE	20. 1,000 DEDICATED COMPLIANCE PATROL DAYS (AERIAL, VESSEL AND LAND BASED)	<p>Achieved. 1,149 dedicated compliance days delivered across all partner agencies (1,014 vessel, 62 land-based and 73 aerial) to deter and identify illegal activity. 901 days were delivered by Program staff and 248 days were delivered by Queensland Boating and Fisheries Patrol.</p> <p>This is a record achievement and an improvement from 1,110 days in 2022–23, 981 days in 2021–22 and 1,059 days in 2020–21.</p>	 Achieved
	21. 60% OF DEDICATED COMPLIANCE PATROL DAYS UNDERTAKEN WHEN WIND IS <15 KNOTS	<p>Achieved. 65% of dedicated Program compliance days (589 of 901) were undertaken when wind was under 15 knots.</p> <p><i>Note: this does not include Queensland Boating and Fisheries Patrol or Queensland Police Service patrols that were undertaken during good weather periods where winds were < 15 knots as this information was not recorded in the Field Reporting System. If these patrols were included the percentage achieved would be higher than 65%.</i></p>	 Achieved No trend. First year of KPI.
	22. AT LEAST 20% OF ALL CURRENT JOINT MARINE PARKS PERMITS HAVE BEEN CHECKED FOR PERMISSION COMPLIANCE OVER THE FINANCIAL YEAR	<p>Achieved. 24% of current joint marine parks permits were reviewed for compliance with 371 of 1,554 permits reviewed.</p>	 Achieved
	23. 90% OF ON-WATER VISITORS REACHED DURING PATROLS HAVE ZONING MAPS AVAILABLE, PRINT OR ELECTRONIC (INCLUDING MOBILE APPS)	<p>Achieved. For 96% of 2,497 public contact events recorded in the Field Reporting System visitors had access to one or more sources of zoning information – 79% chart plotters, 24% printed maps, 42% Eye on the Reef app.*</p> <p><i>*Some visitors had access to more than one method so total of individual methods is greater than 100%.</i></p>	 Achieved
	24. 10% OF DEDICATED COMPLIANCE PATROLS ARE CONDUCTED JOINTLY WITH OR LED BY EXTERNAL INDIGENOUS RANGERS	<p>Significant progress. 9% of dedicated compliance days (109 of 1,149 days) were conducted with, or led by, external Indigenous rangers.</p> <p>This is an increase from 7.7% of dedicated compliance days in 2022–23.</p> <p><i>Note: this captures dedicated compliance days led by Program staff, it does not include Queensland Boating and Fisheries Patrol-led patrols.</i></p>	 Significant progress towards target

	PERFORMANCE INDICATOR	RESULTS 2023–24	TARGET
WORKING WITH TRADITIONAL OWNERS	25. 100% OF NATIONAL PARK (CYPAL) NEGOTIATION AND JOINT MANAGEMENT IMPLEMENTATION MEETINGS ATTENDED	Achieved. 100% of meetings held were attended (22 meetings including four with Wuthathi, four with Kuuku Ya'u, four with Lama Lama, four with Flinders/Howicks, four with Jabalbina and two with Ipimiya Ikaya peoples).	 Achieved
	26. 90% OF TRADITIONAL USE OF MARINE RESOURCES AGREEMENT (TUMRA) MEETINGS ATTENDED	Achieved. 100% of meetings that the Program was invited to were attended. <i>Note: The Program was not invited to all TUMRA meetings.</i>	 Achieved
	27. INCREASING TREND OF PROGRAM VESSEL DAYS INCLUDE EXTERNAL INDIGENOUS RANGERS	Achieved. 28% (491 of 1,754 days) of Program vessel days included Indigenous rangers external to the Program. This is an increase from 24% (431 of 1,819 days) in 2022–23.	 Achieved
	28. FEE-FOR-SERVICE ARRANGEMENTS ARE IN PLACE WITH A MINIMUM OF SIX DIFFERENT LAND AND SEA RANGER GROUPS	Achieved. Fee-for-service arrangements were in place with four different Indigenous ranger groups: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Girringun: delivery of various services via a works contract. Dawul Wuru: delivery of bird surveys by Yirrganydji rangers. Gidarjil: delivery of various services via a works contract. Wulgurukaba-Yunbenun: delivery of various services via a works contract. Recognising that formal fee-for-service arrangements will not suit all Traditional Owner groups, the Program also engaged (and paid) Indigenous rangers, cultural advisors and groups throughout the World Heritage Area for various services. These arrangements are considered to contribute to achieving this performance indicator. Negotiations are underway with other First Nations groups for delivery of services, including compliance patrols and incident response. <i>Note: the Program also has Indigenous rangers embedded at QPWS bases and coordinates work placements where Land and Sea Rangers work at QPWS bases for six months.</i>	 Achieved

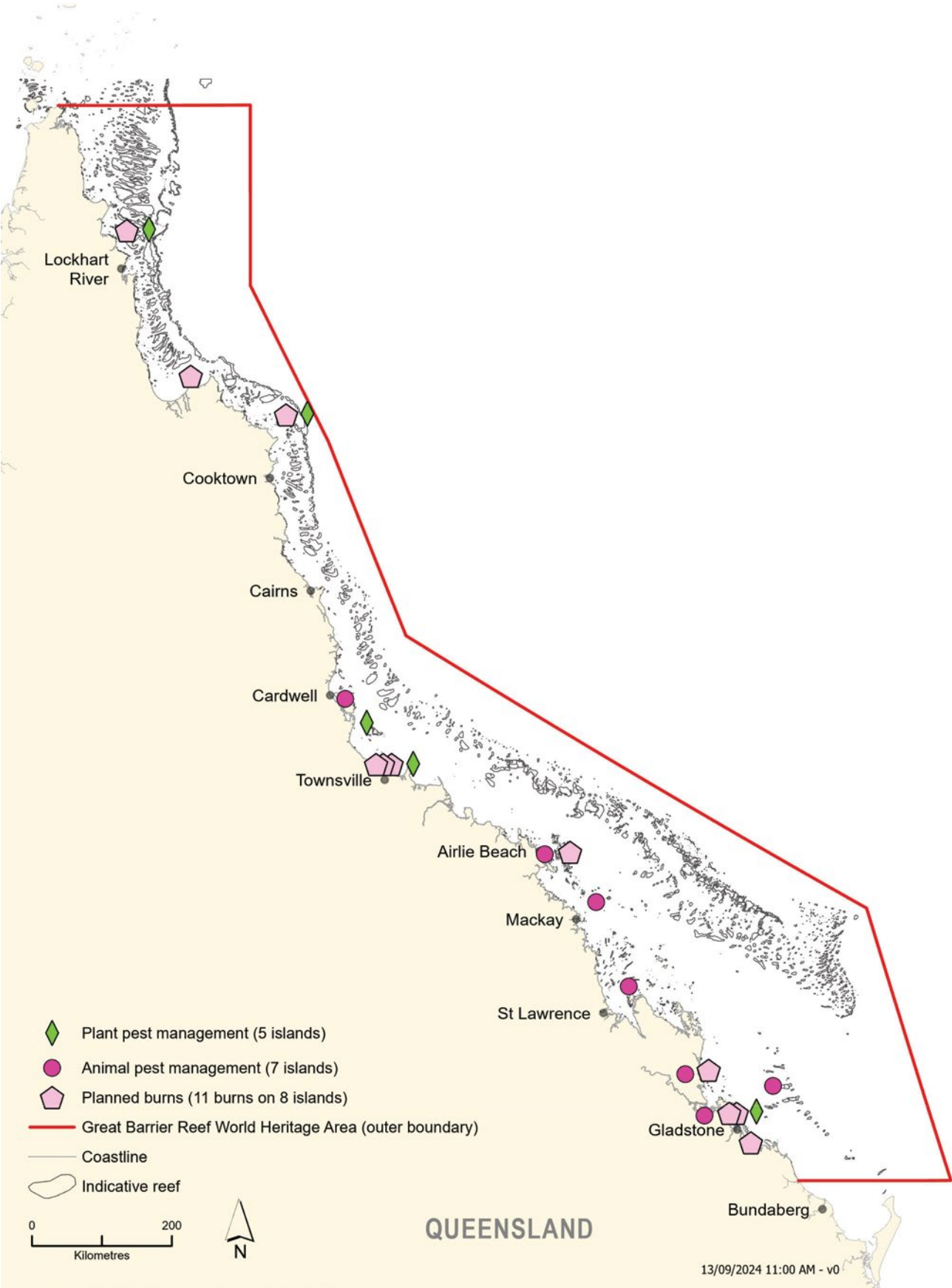
	PERFORMANCE INDICATOR	RESULTS 2023–24	TARGET
PROGRAM INPUTS	29. ANNUAL TRAINING PROGRAM DEVELOPED AND DELIVERED	<p>Significant progress. Majority of training program delivered.</p> <p>343 participants (129 Reef Authority, 169 QPWS and 45 Queensland Boating and Fisheries Patrol) attended training to increase workforce capability and skills.</p> <p>Development of a draft five-year training strategy will be progressed in 2024–25 and the procurement of a suitable cross-agency learning management system is ongoing.</p>	 Significant progress towards target
	30. PROGRAM MAINTAINS 100% COMPLIANCE WITH STATUTORY SAFETY OBLIGATIONS	Achieved. The Program maintained 100% compliance with statutory safety obligations, for both the Reef Authority and QPWS.	 Achieved
	31. 100% OF ALL INCIDENT REPORTS ARE INVESTIGATED AND ACTIONED WITHIN STATUTORY OR PROGRAM IDENTIFIED TIMEFRAMES	Achieved. 100% of incident reports were investigated and actioned within statutory or Program identified timeframes.	 Achieved
	32. 100% OF ALL HAZARD REPORTS ARE INVESTIGATED AND ACTIONED WITHIN PROGRAM IDENTIFIED TIMEFRAMES	Achieved. 100% of hazard reports were investigated and actioned within Program identified timeframes.	 Achieved
	33. 1,700 TOTAL DAYS AT SEA DELIVERED ABOARD PROGRAM VESSELS, OR ABOARD VESSELS CHARTERED BY THE PROGRAM	<p>Achieved. 1,754 total days at sea delivered.</p> <p>This is a decrease from 1,819 total days at sea delivered in 2022–23.</p>	 Achieved
	34. EXPENDITURE IS WITHIN 1% OF PROGRAM BUDGET ALLOCATION	Not achieved. Expenditure was within 5.2% of the budget allocation, with project delays impacting budget phasing and expenditure.	 Not achieved

APPENDIX 1: FIELD DELIVERY MAPS

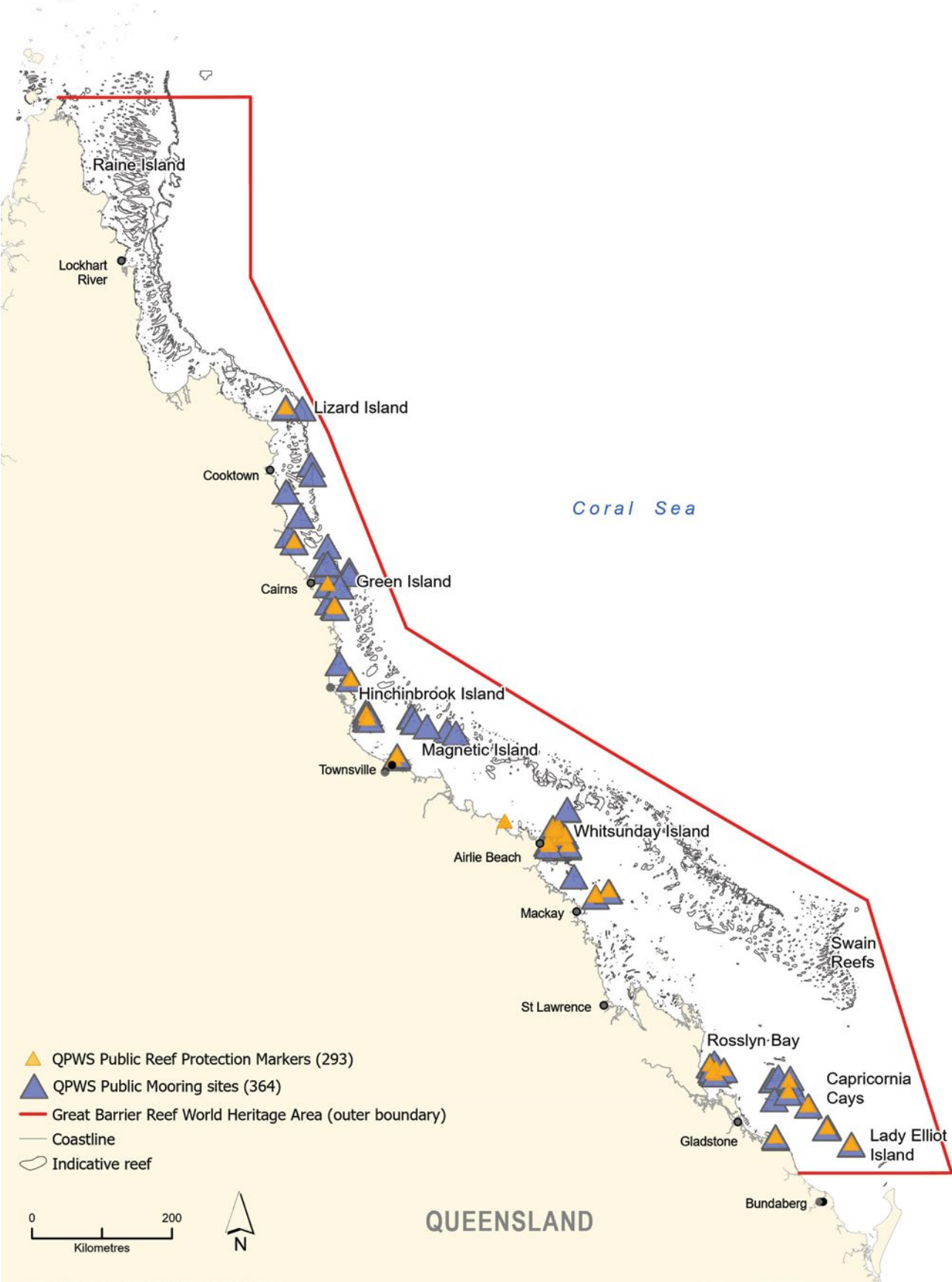
MAP 1: VESSEL ACTIVITY



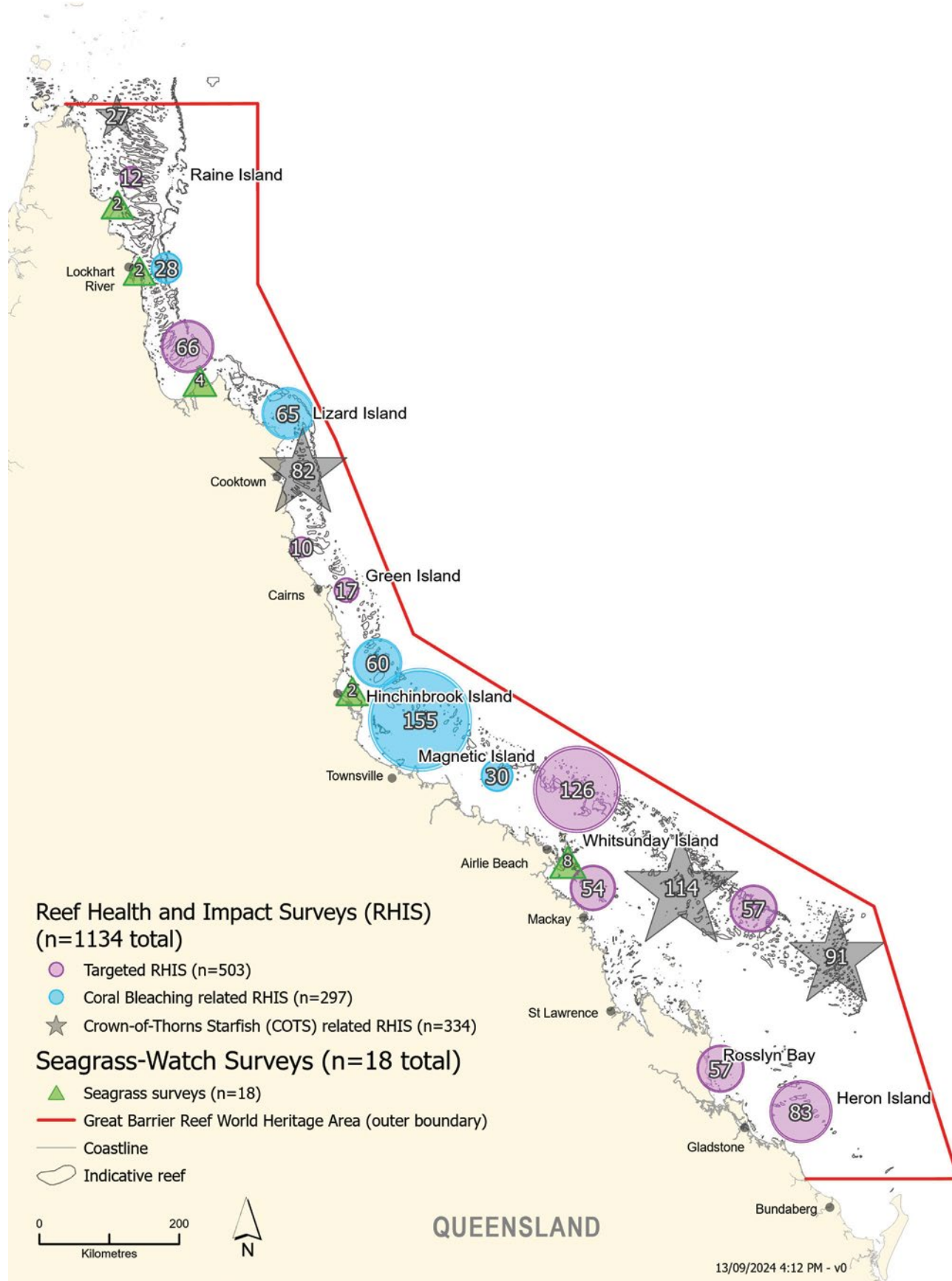
MAP 2: DELIVERING CONSERVATION ACTIONS - PEST AND FIRE MANAGEMENT



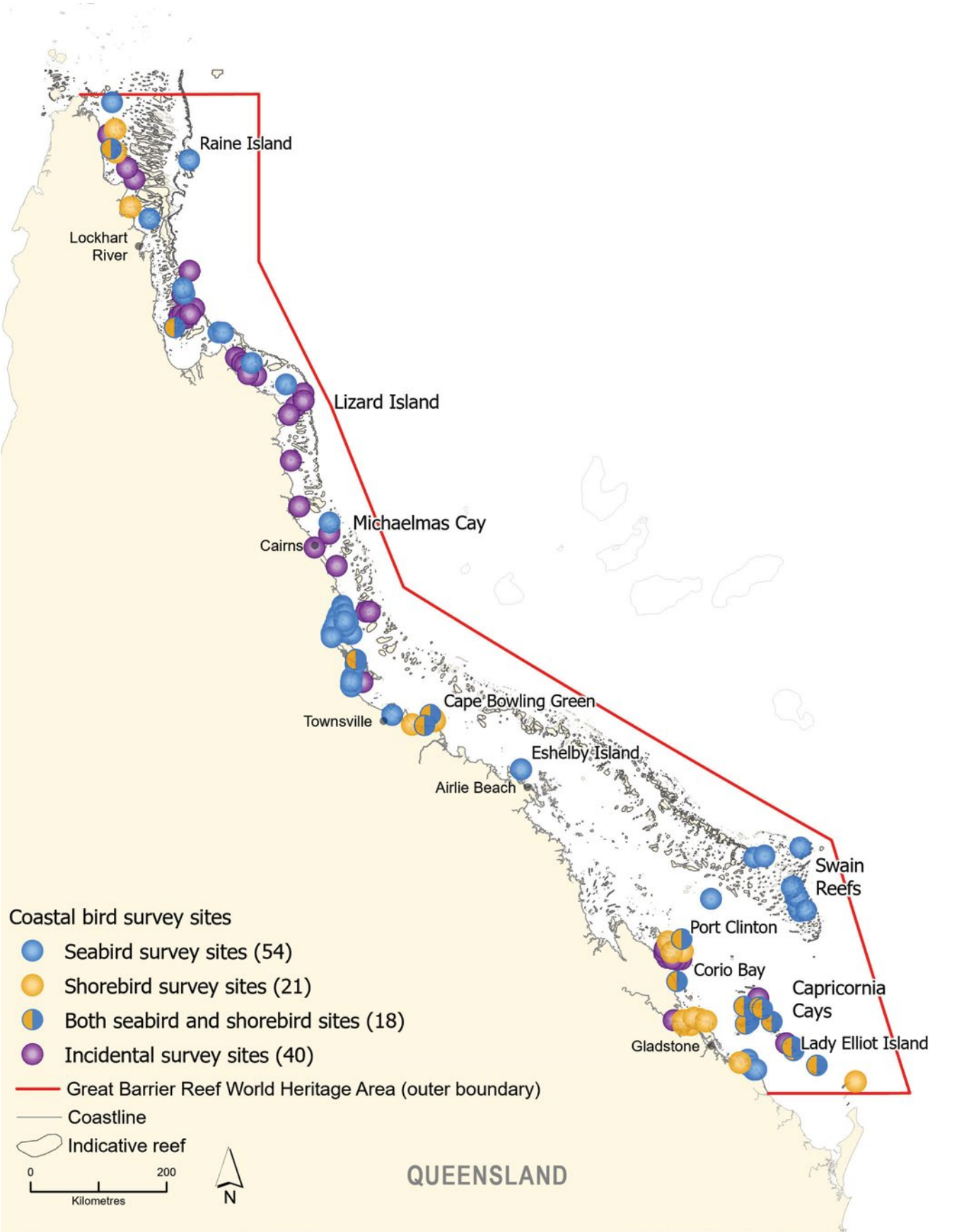
MAP 3: REEF PROTECTION MARKERS AND PUBLIC MOORINGS INSTALLATION AND MAINTENANCE



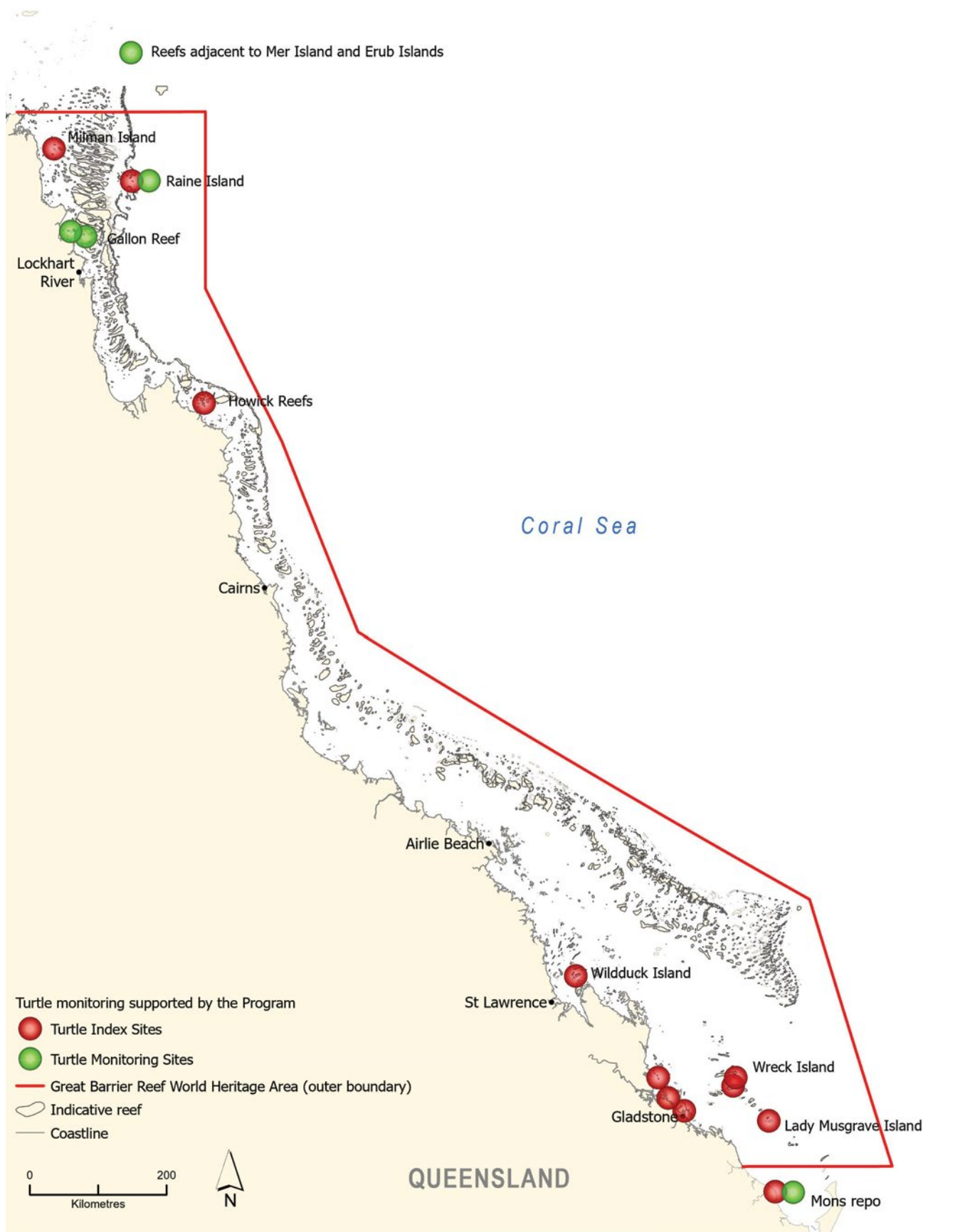
MAP 4: CHECKING FOR CHANGE - REEF HEALTH IMPACT SURVEYS (RHIS) AND SEAGRASS WATCH SURVEYS



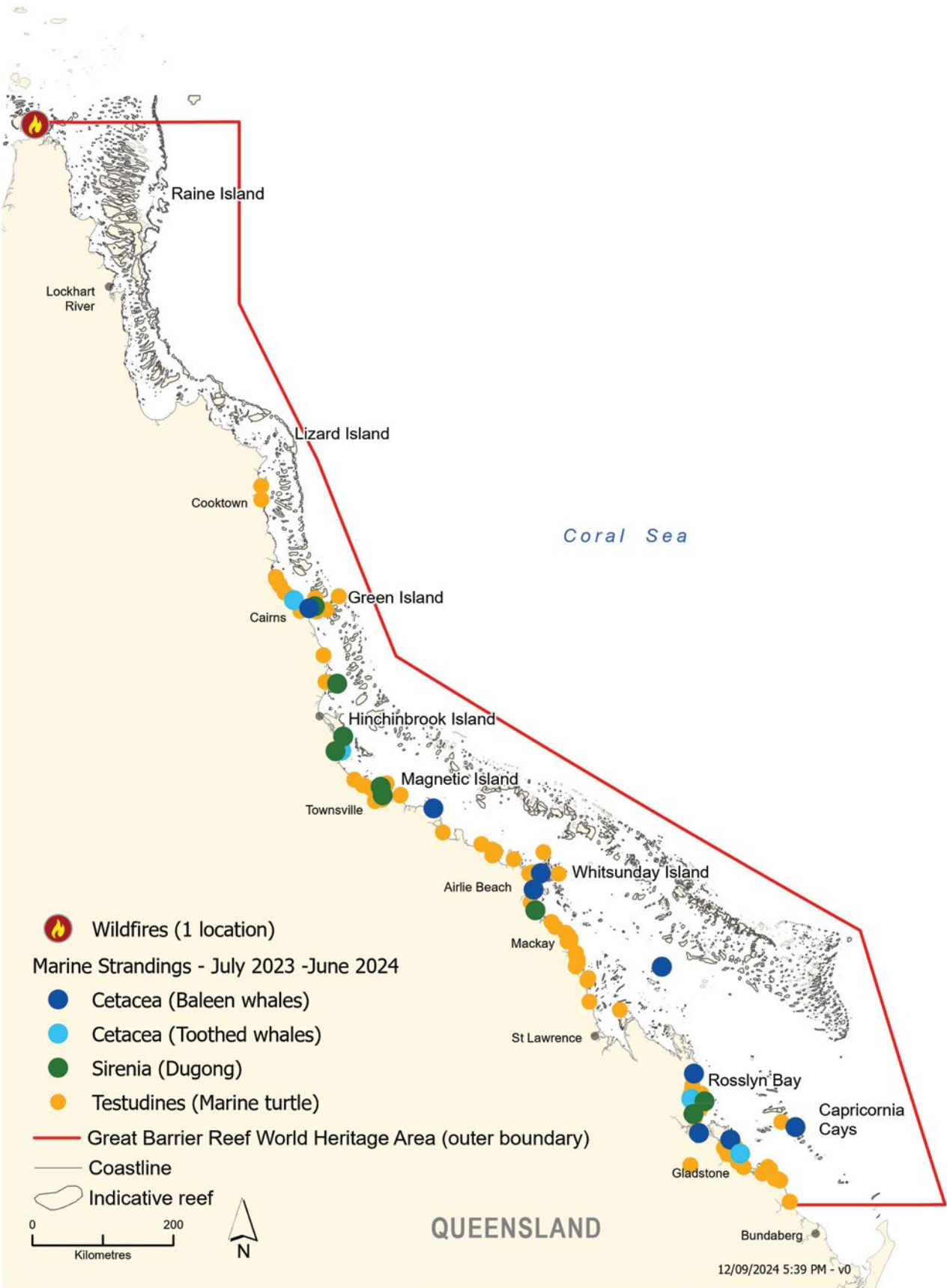
MAP 5: CHECKING FOR CHANGE - COASTAL BIRD SURVEYS



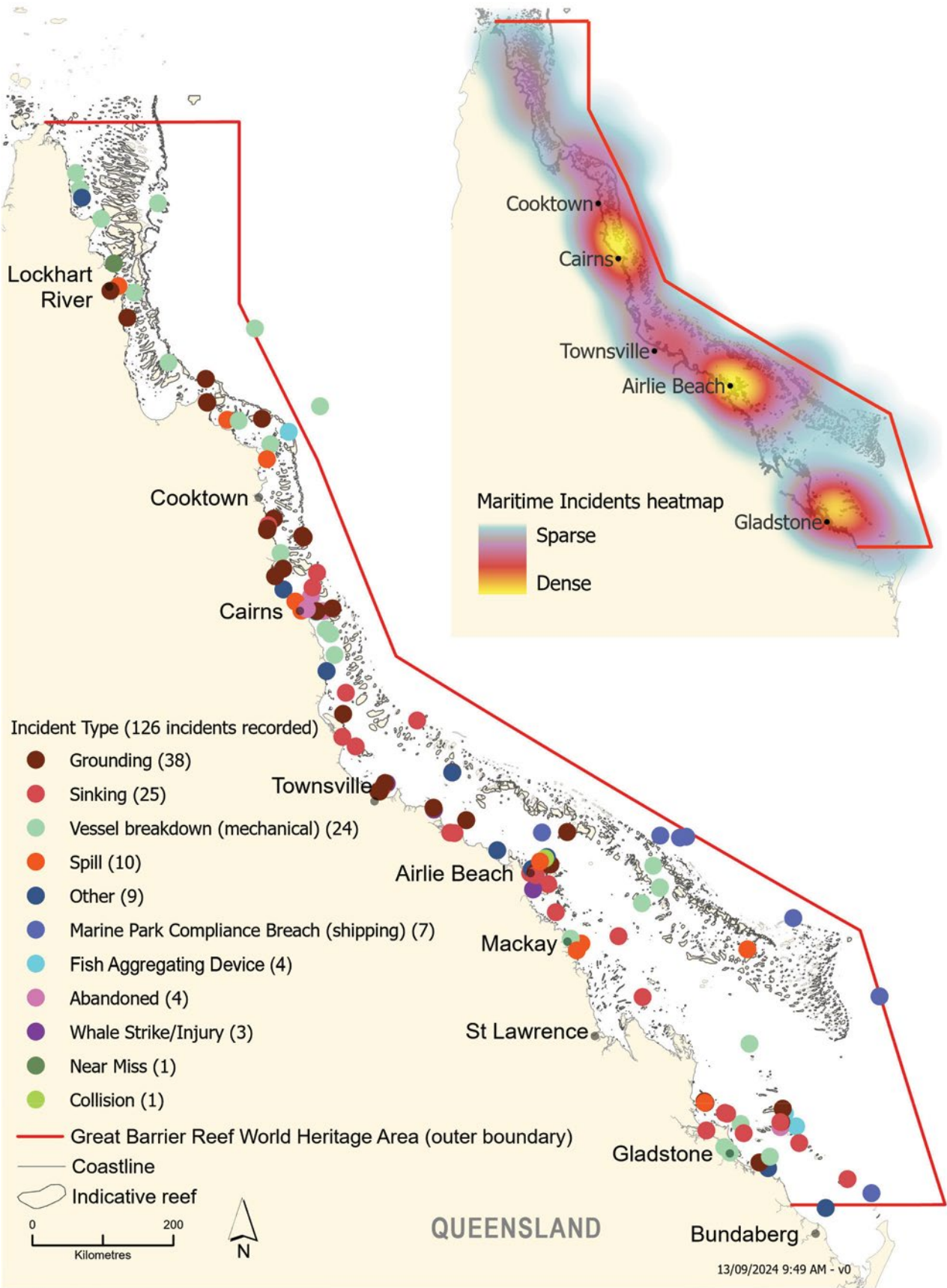
MAP 6: CHECKING FOR CHANGE - TURTLE MONITORING



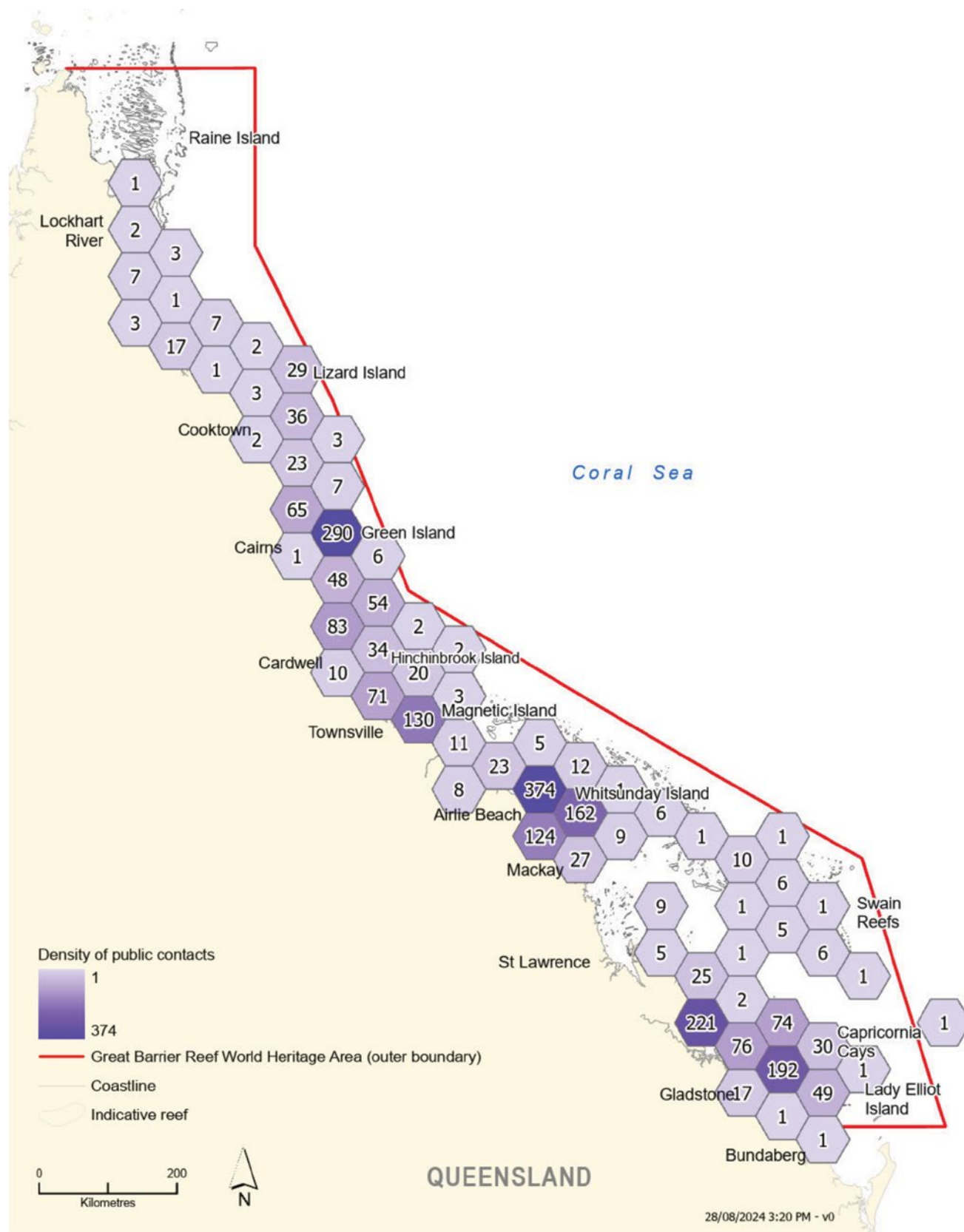
MAP 7: RESPONDING TO INCIDENTS - WILDFIRES AND MARINE STRANDINGS



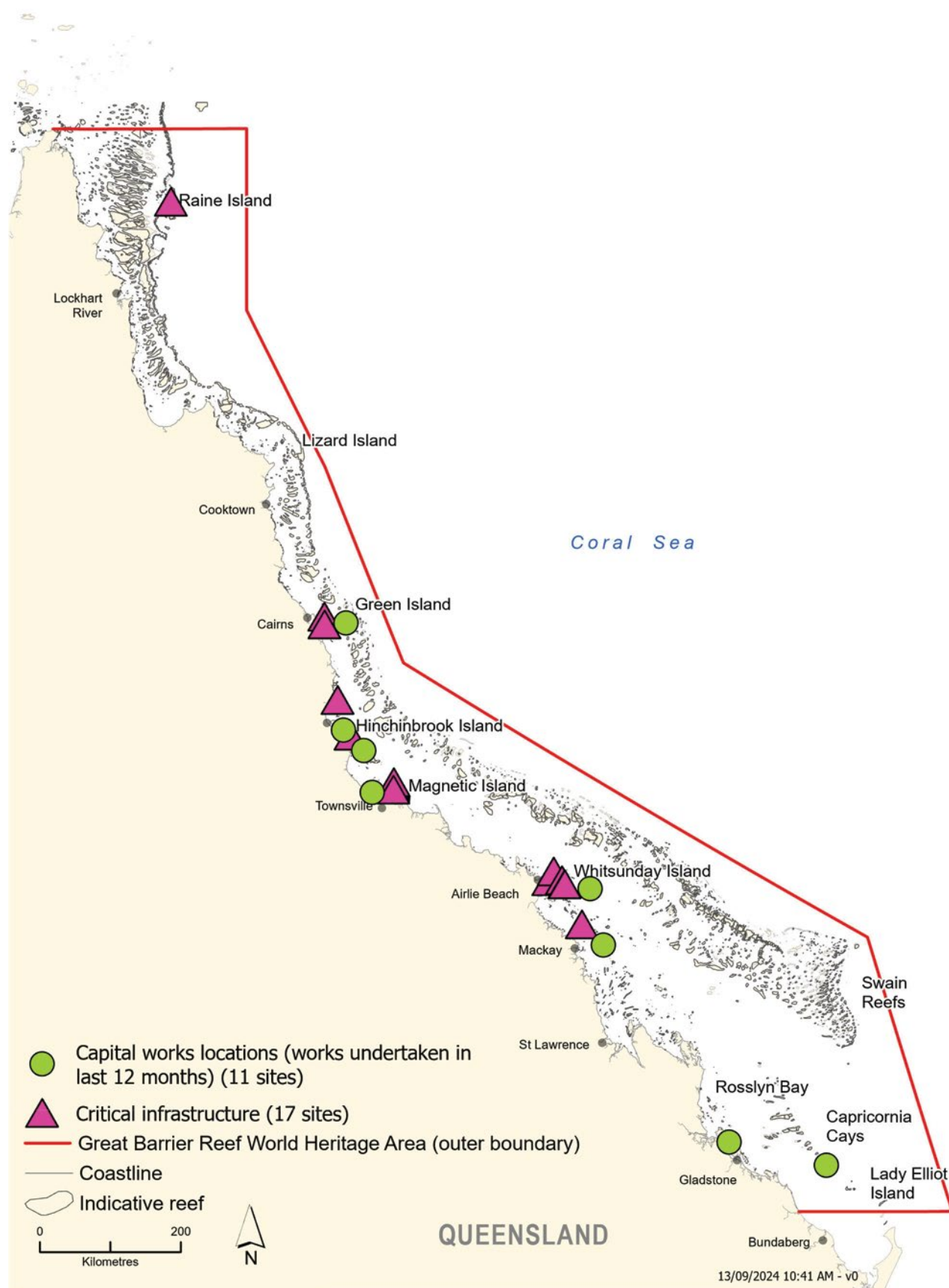
MAP 8: RESPONDING TO INCIDENTS - MARITIME INCIDENTS



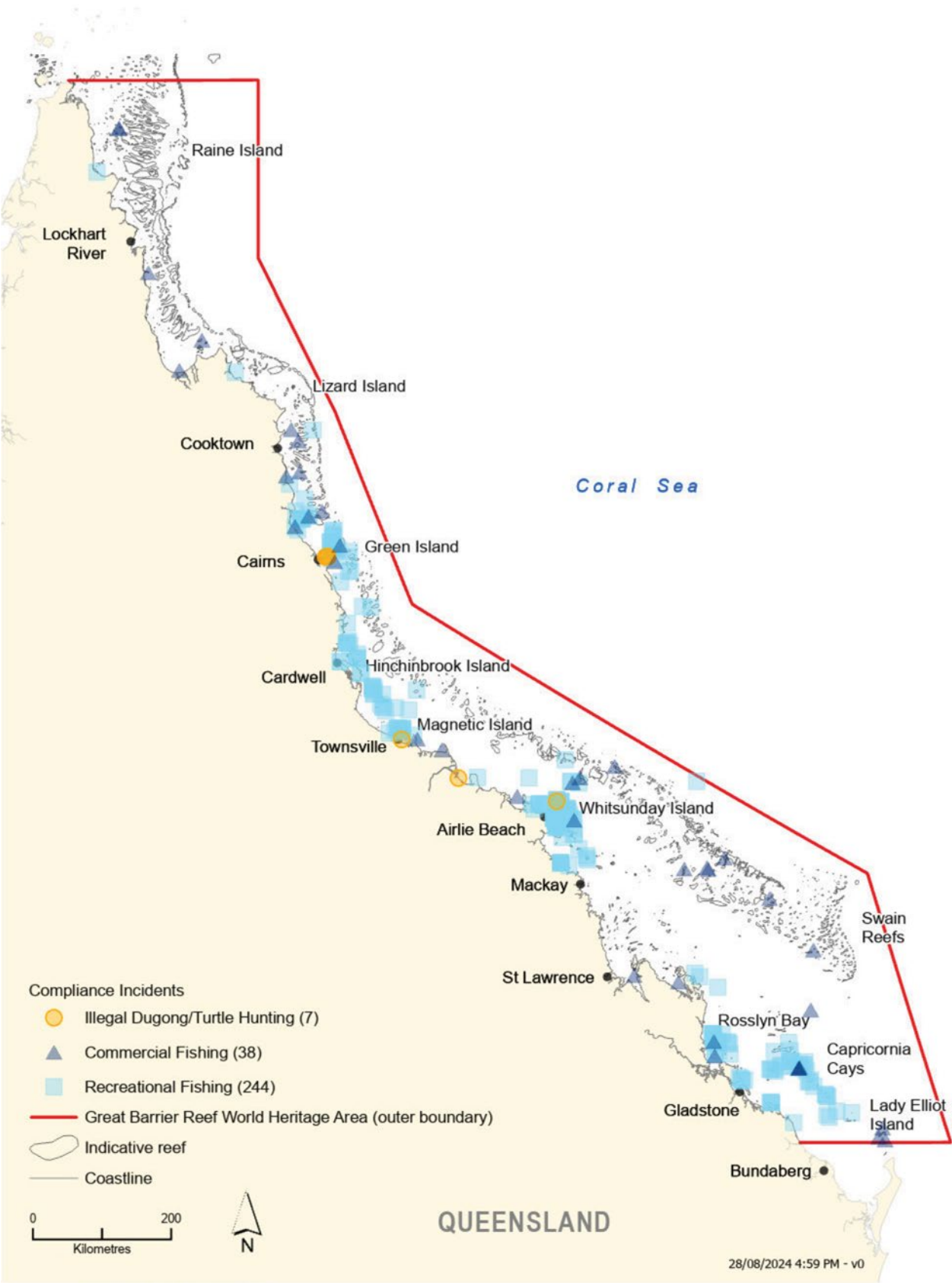
MAP 9: WELCOMING PEOPLE - PUBLIC CONTACTS



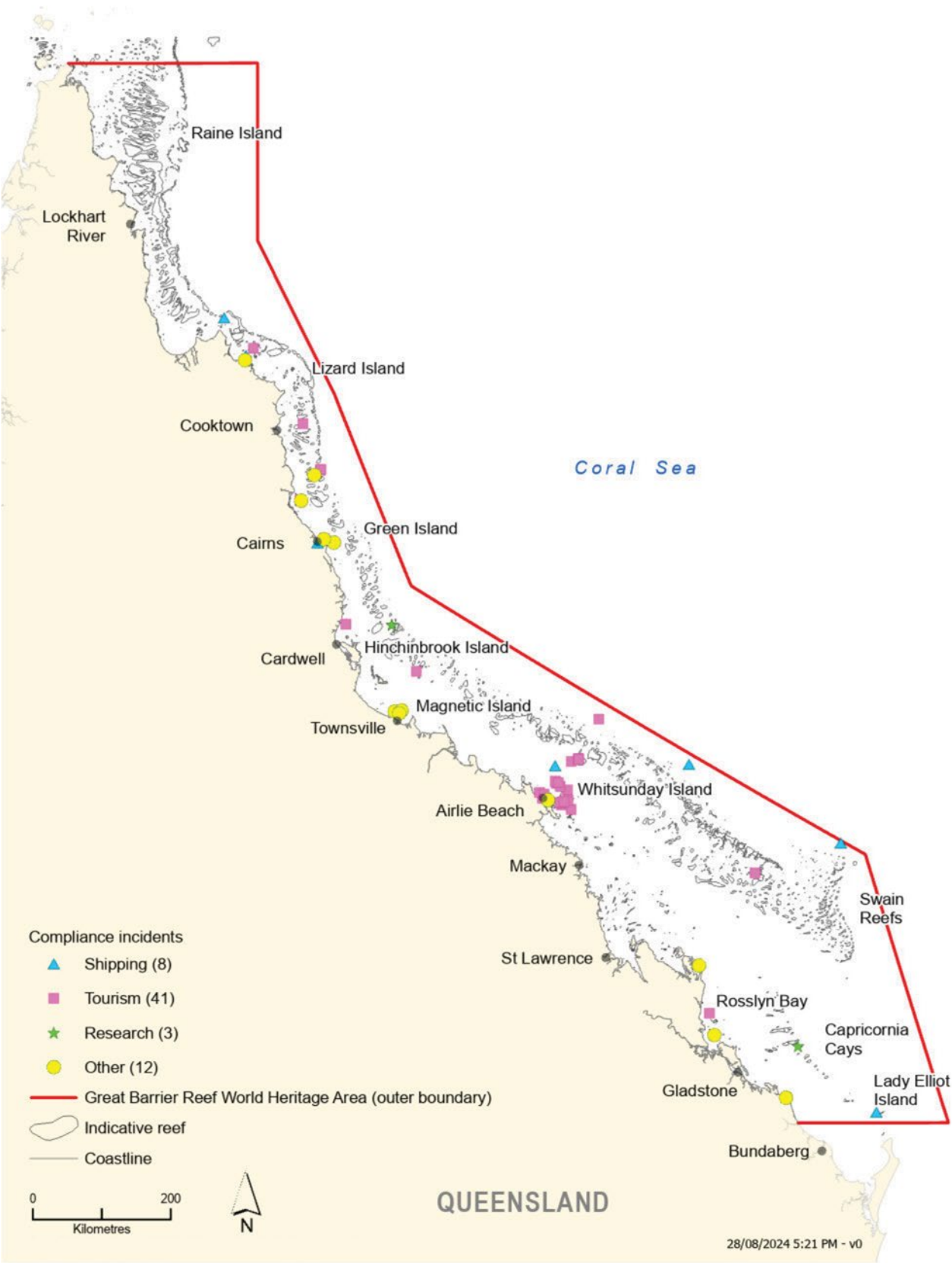
MAP 10: WELCOMING PEOPLE - CAPITAL WORKS AND CRITICAL INFRASTRUCTURE MAINTENANCE



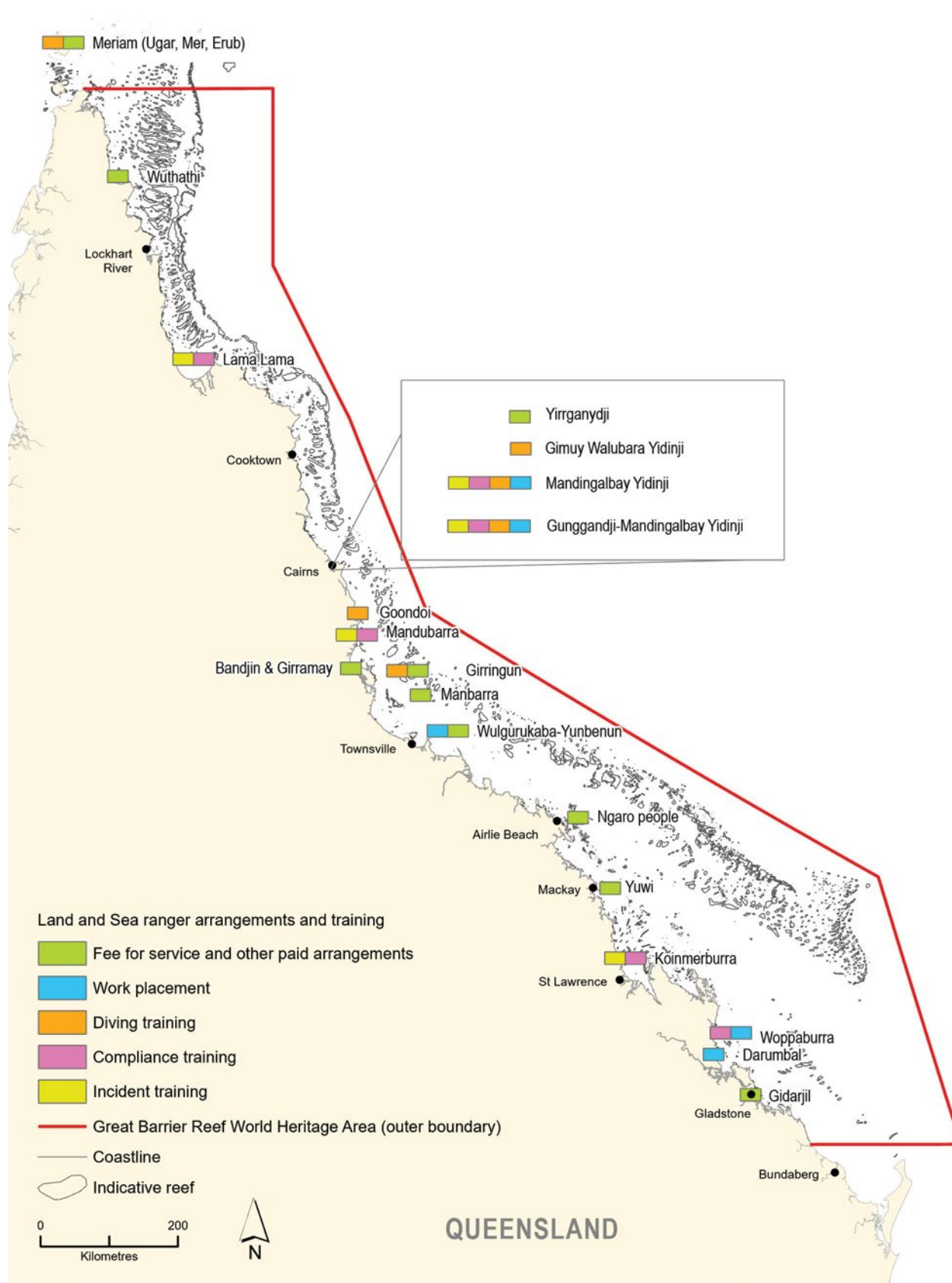
MAP 11: UPHOLDING COMPLIANCE - FISHING INCIDENTS



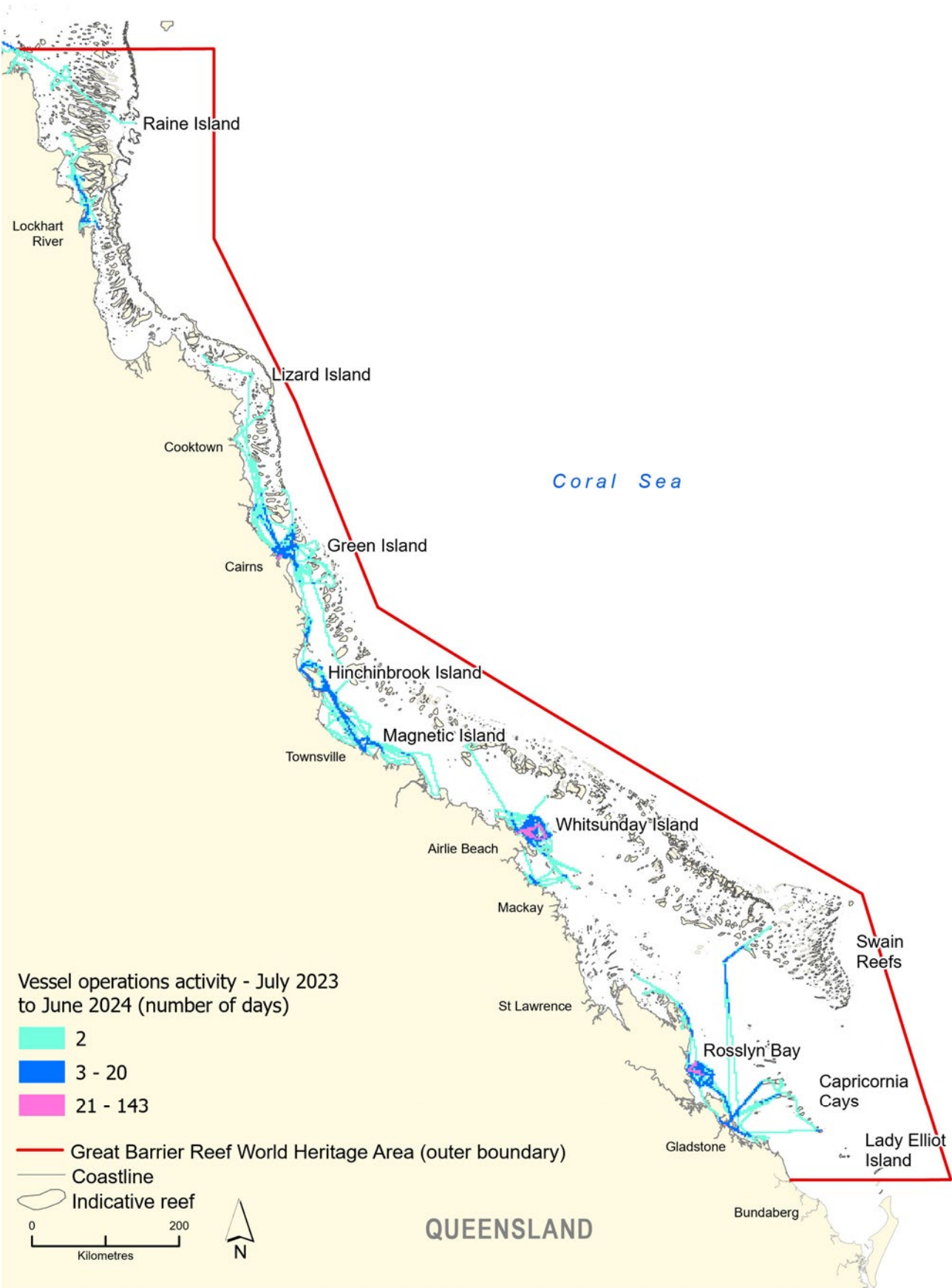
MAP 12: UPHOLDING COMPLIANCE - INCIDENTS OTHER



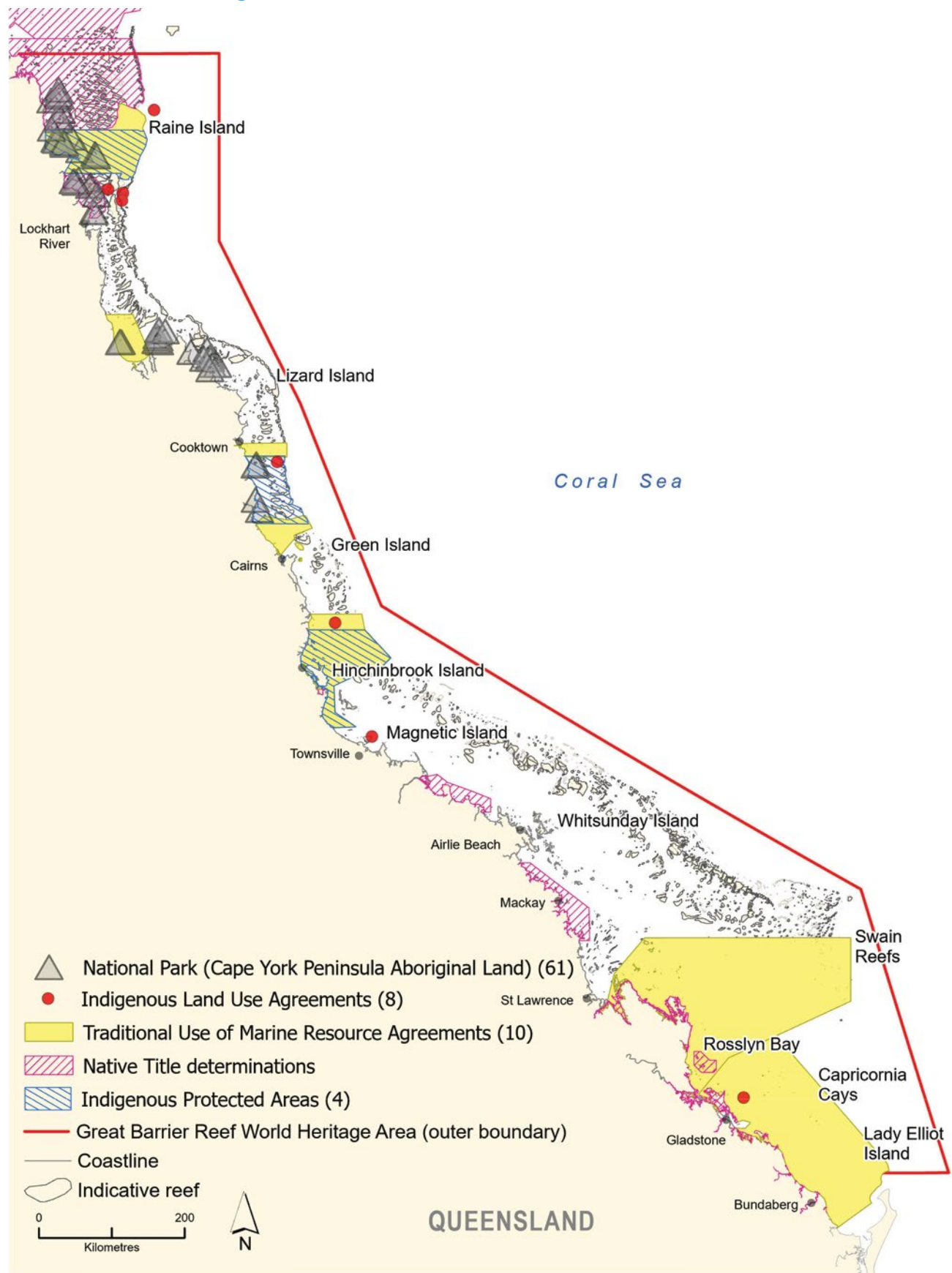
MAP 13: WORKING WITH TRADITIONAL OWNERS - LAND AND SEA RANGER SUPPORT






MAP 14: WORKING WITH TRADITIONAL OWNERS - VESSEL DAYS



MAP 15: WORKING WITH TRADITIONAL OWNERS - AGREEMENTS AND LAND TENURE



**Further information about the
Reef Joint Field Management Program**

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