



Australian Government

Great Barrier Reef
Marine Park Authority



Queensland
Government

REEF JOINT FIELD MANAGEMENT PROGRAM

Business Strategy 2025–2030



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This Reef Joint Field Management Program Business Strategy 2025–2030 was approved by the Chief Executive Officer of the Great Barrier Reef Marine Park Authority on 31 July 2025 and the Director-General of the Department of the Environment, Tourism, Science and Innovation on 31 July 2025. This strategy will undergo a mid-cycle review in 2027–28.

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Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander readers are advised this publication may contain names and images of deceased persons.

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The Great Barrier Reef Marine Park Authority and Queensland Parks and Wildlife Service acknowledge Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples as the Traditional Owners and custodians of Land and Sea Country in the Great Barrier Reef World Heritage Area. As the Great Barrier Reef's first managers, their enduring connections, wisdom and expertise have guided the care and protection of the Reef for millennia. We pay our respects to Elders past and present.

We are global leaders, setting the standard for world-class marine park management.

Together, we are entrusted with safeguarding the health and vitality of the Great Barrier Reef and the extraordinary life that it supports—on behalf of all people.

We take decisive, hands-on action to build the Reef's resilience, addressing the impacts of climate change and other threats to its ecological integrity.

Through a powerful network of enduring partnerships, we inspire collaboration, drive innovation and lead by example.

We are the catalysts for positive, lasting change—ensuring the Reef's future for all generations.





About us

The Reef Joint Field Management Program (the Program) manages marine parks and protected islands within the Great Barrier Reef World Heritage Area—a natural wonder of global importance. It is an enduring partnership of more than 45 years between the Great Barrier Reef Marine Park Authority and the Department of the Environment, Tourism, Science and Innovation's Queensland Parks and Wildlife Service. The Program is managed by these agencies on behalf of the Australian and Queensland governments, representing a joint commitment to protecting the World Heritage Area's Outstanding Universal Value for future generations.

Our success depends on genuine and meaningful partnerships with Traditional Owners, who play a central role in caring for Land and Sea Country. We also work closely with other government agencies, researchers, industry and communities.

The Program is widely recognised as a global leader in marine protected area management, renowned for its collaborative approach, dedication to innovation and effective threat mitigation.

Our purpose

The Great Barrier Reef (the Reef) is one of the planet's most biodiverse and ecologically significant ecosystems, yet it faces increasing pressures from climate change, coastal development, land-based run-off and direct human use.

We protect and enhance the Reef's health and resilience through strategic, hands-on actions aligned with the nine outcomes of the *Great Barrier Reef Intergovernmental Agreement 2024*.

This work is essential to protect biodiversity, conserve cultural heritage, support economies, advance science, enable recreation, promote wellbeing through nature connection and tackle urgent environmental challenges.

Our approach

Our approach is organised in two layers to ensure strategic and effective management:

1.



The Strategy: Outlines high-level outcomes and strategic actions aligned with our purpose. Organised into five themes, these actions are designed to address the Reef's critical needs and are supported by separate action plans. The action plans define the detailed activities that will be undertaken to achieve outputs and outcomes.

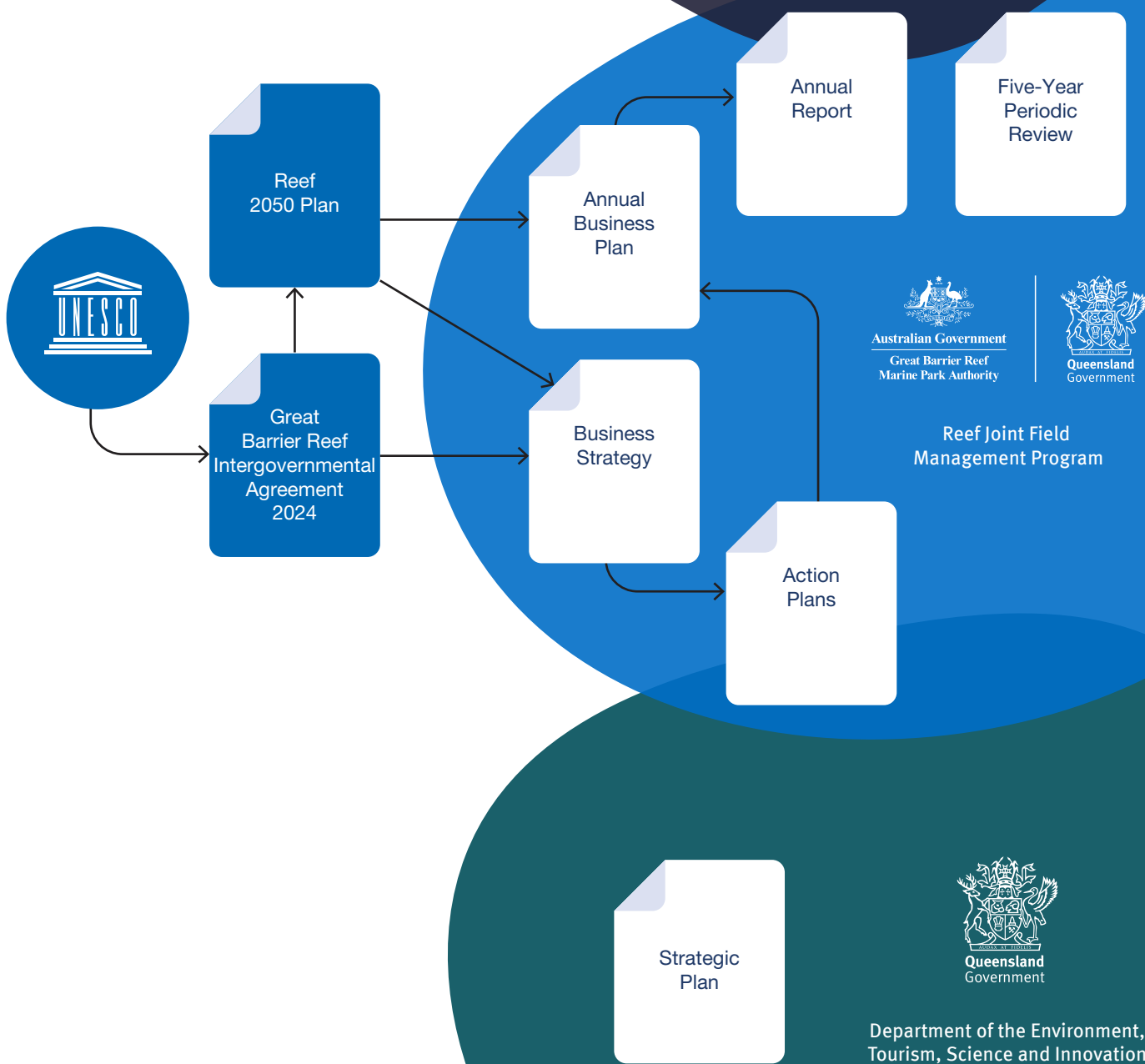
2.



Annual Business Plan: Describes the business arrangements to deliver the strategy. This includes identifying capacity, capabilities and resource requirements necessary for successful implementation.

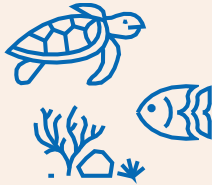
The Great Barrier Reef global community

The Program plays a vital role in the broader global effort to protect the iconic World Heritage Area. Protection of the Reef is guided through a tiered framework—ranging from international conventions to local, site-level initiatives. The diagram below provides a simplified view of these interconnected relationships.



Strategic themes

1. Supporting Reef and species resilience



The Program focuses on addressing the most critical threats to the Great Barrier Reef World Heritage Area's natural and heritage values, while also building resilience to broader, long-term pressures. Through our best-practice in-field capability and strong partnerships, we deliver diverse and impactful actions that sustain species and habitats, maintain ecological function, and mitigate harm from climate change and other threats. Guided by contemporary science, traditional knowledge and real-time data, we take a prioritised, risk-based approach to managing threats and protecting the Reef's enduring value.

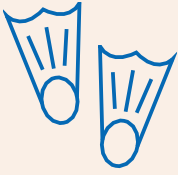
Outcomes

- The resilience of the Reef (including key threatened species) is improved by prioritising our activities and implementing an adaptive management approach informed by Reef health data, contemporary science and traditional knowledge.
- The condition of key values on island protected areas is improved.
- Harm to Reef values is minimised by taking a risk-based response to maritime and environmental incidents.
- The values of marine park zones and island national parks are protected and human impacts reduced by users exhibiting high levels of voluntary compliance and responsible behaviours achieved through the delivery of a joint compliance program.

Strategic actions

- Prioritise and implement rehabilitation and intervention activities related to habitats, populations and species that are most important for maintaining ecosystem resilience.
- Improve data evaluation and establish processes to ensure Reef health data informs prioritised programs of work.
- Support Program partners to implement the Reef Restoration and Adaptation Program Pilot Deployment Program.
- Improve management of island protected areas through use of the Values Based Management Framework (VBMF) to guide work priorities and resourcing.
- Develop and implement a risk-based framework to guide the Program's response to maritime and environmental incidents.
- Implement a risk-based compliance strategy that maximises voluntary compliance, leverages new technologies, and strengthens in-park surveillance and communications.

2. Providing world-class Reef experiences



Each year over 14 million recreational visits occur across the Reef, contributing billions of dollars to the Australian economy. Visitation to the Reef will continue to rise as the population increases along the east Queensland coast and access to the Reef becomes easier. This increased visitation, combined with the pressures of climate change and other threats, means it is essential to foster sustainable use, encourage stewardship and adapt our joint risk-based permissions management. We will work with our partners to ensure that the Reef remains a must-see destination for visitors and all users to enjoy and respect into the future.

Outcomes

- Visitors enjoy world-class experiences across the Reef, providing economic benefits for local communities and the nation.
- Sustainable Reef tourism practices continue to be supported and delivered through a risk-based joint permission management system.
- Reef users and visitors are well informed about the importance and benefits of marine and island national park rules, resulting in increased stewardship and voluntary compliance.
- Sustainable Reef tourism is supported through infrastructure designed to showcase the Reef's world-class natural assets.

Strategic actions

- Manage visitor experience across the Reef guided by values-based adaptive planning frameworks.
- Continue to provide input into adaptive marine park planning processes to safeguard all values of the Great Barrier Reef Marine Park and ensure complementarity with management of the Great Barrier Reef Coast Marine Park and island national parks.
- Continue to streamline joint regulatory processes through a risk framework to enable ecologically sustainable use of the Reef while minimising regulatory burden.
- Manage the impacts of human use and foster a culture of stewardship in all Reef users through contemporary communication techniques that promote voluntary compliance and best practice behaviours.
- Build and maintain capital visitor infrastructure at high-use locations that protects and presents Reef values, maximises public safety, accommodates increasing visitor numbers, and distributes impacts across multiple locations.



3. Creating a workforce for success



Our staff are our greatest strength in managing and protecting the integrity of the Reef. We will invest in creating and retaining a skilled, adaptive and safe workforce that can meet the challenges associated with working across a vast, remote and demanding work environment. We will continue to cultivate a workplace culture that is motivated and empowered to drive efficiency and innovation to achieve the Program's purpose.

Outcomes

- A purpose-driven workforce that is skilled, knowledgeable, agile, and engaged is successfully attracted and retained.
- Enhanced compliance with the Work Health and Safety Acts. Joint program operates under both the state and Commonwealth acts (which have been harmonised) to improve safety and welfare of staff, fostering a secure and healthy working environment.
- A work culture that prioritises safety, respect and high performance.
- A workforce equipped with fit-for-purpose resources, driving innovative and efficient Program delivery.
- A fit-for-purpose vessel fleet is operated, maintained and continuously improved to maximise safety and efficiency.

Strategic actions

- Establish and sustain workforce skills and competency through regular analysis of workforce needs to inform training, recruitment, retention and succession planning.
- Develop and maintain capacity and competency targets across all work units.
- Develop and implement a workforce management plan that addresses recruitment, retention and succession of Program personnel aimed at having the right people in the right roles, reduces the rate of attrition and maintain a sustainable rate of internal mobility.
- Improve workforce safety through implementing leadership and safety culture programs that promote behaviours aligned with the Program's commitment to best-practice policy, procedure and statutory compliance.
- Improve management infrastructure at operational bases to enable co-location of Program staff and partners where possible.
- Implement a structured large vessel operating system that demonstrably delivers Program priorities efficiently and effectively.



4. Protecting through partnership



The best outcomes for the Reef will be achieved through collaboration with a diverse range of partners, united by a common purpose. We will build strategic partnerships with organisations, agencies and communities that share our objectives. By aligning our resources, we will maximise our capacity to address threats and drive innovation in Reef protection. Recognising the Traditional Owners' deep connection to and knowledge of Country, we are committed to strengthening partnerships to protect Sea Country values.

Outcomes

- Traditional Owners are co-governing and co-managing alongside the Program and have opportunities to lead management in their Sea Country.
- The Program partners with organisations that align with its strategic goals through joint initiatives, shared resources, and coordinated efforts in compliance, research, development, and communications.
- Collaborate with organisations and agencies that can deliver actions beyond the Program's scope to protect the Reef.
- Strong, enduring partnerships with Traditional Owners and Indigenous Land and Sea Ranger groups that enable better protection of Sea Country values and enhance cross-jurisdictional engagement.

Strategic actions

- Partner and leverage third-party funding to augment Program work including rehabilitation of key island and marine habitats, investment in tourism and visitor opportunities and working with Traditional Owners.
- Partner with Queensland Fisheries to improve sharing of compliance data, maintain service arrangements for surveillance and compliance activities across the Reef, and to train and appoint field staff as fisheries and marine park inspectors.
- Partner with Australian Border Force (Maritime Border Command), participating in risk-planning and national joint agency forums to advocate for resources that safeguard the Reef from illegal activities in protected areas.
- Use the Values-Based Monitoring Framework monitoring and research strategies as a foundation for engaging with universities and research institutions to guide management actions.
- Work with Queensland and Australian governments' Threatened Species units to implement actions from the Queensland Threatened Species Program 2020–2040 and the Australian Government Threatened Species Strategy 2021–2031.
- Partner with Queensland and Australian government agencies that respond to maritime and environmental incidents to ensure the Program has capacity and capability to lead or assist responses and minimise risks to Reef values.
- Develop a suite of service arrangements, training and crossover capability-building opportunities with Traditional Owners to improve protection of Sea Country values, drive co-management and facilitate two-way learning.
- Target Program staff and resources to align work programs with Indigenous Land and Sea Ranger groups.



5. Innovation and technology for management



We will evaluate, pilot and adopt new technologies and innovative approaches to support decision-making, safety and efficiency in the field management of the Reef. Our focus will be on balancing the integration of new technologies with the expertise of our workforce, while considering the cost-benefit of each investment decision. We will ensure that essential data capture tools, such as our Field Reporting System, Compliance Management System and Reef Health Impact Surveys (RHIS), are fit for purpose and able to support these advancements.




Outcomes

- High-quality, strategic data drives informed decisions and supports our objectives.
- Efficient management of data in systems enables real time access and improved insights, with a strong foundation in information management.
- Streamlined processes and systems leverage artificial intelligence (AI) and innovative technologies to improve Program delivery and impact.
- Business intelligence and AI enhance data-driven decisions, improving accuracy and speed, supported by effective information management systems.
- Reduced health and safety risks through the application of technology, ensuring a safer working environment.
- Fit-for-purpose foundational systems that support innovation, enabling the Program to evolve with emerging technologies.
- The Program's carbon footprint is reduced.

Strategic actions

- Build data maturity and digital capability, including tools and systems to improve interoperability across agencies.
- Embed ReefScan and other emerging technologies into impact assessments and seagrass and coral monitoring.
- Deploy ReefScan to deliver most shallow-water Reef Health Impact Surveys in high safety risk areas.
- Identify, test and implement remote sensing and autonomous monitoring technologies, at scale, to improve the efficiency and effectiveness of compliance, Reef health monitoring and biosecurity surveillance.
- Deliver a multi-year project to assess, upgrade and/or replace the Field Reporting System, ensuring it meets current and future needs and provides business intelligence to improve operational efficiency and effectiveness.
- Finalise the delivery of the Compliance Management System, realising the benefits in improved compliance data access, analysis and efficiencies. Continue to identify and implement improvements as required.
- Build specialist information technology project management skills in the workforce.
- Incorporate technological advances when building and/or refitting the vessel fleet to reduce the Program's carbon footprint.
- Investigate and implement processes and technology to lower carbon emissions in daily operations and offset emissions through purchase of carbon credits.

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

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