

# EXECUTIVE **SUMMARY**

The Great Barrier Reef is vast, stretching 2300 kilometres along the Queensland coast in north-eastern Australia. The Marine Park that encompasses the Great Barrier Reef covers 344,400 square kilometres and contains more than 1050 islands.

The Great Barrier Reef was internationally recognised for its outstanding universal value with a world heritage listing in 1981. It's the world's largest coral reef ecosystem and includes around 2900 coral reefs, 600 continental islands, 300 coral cays and about 150 inshore mangrove islands.

Through an intergovernmental agreement the Australian and Queensland governments work together for the long-term protection and management of the Great Barrier Reef.

Out on the water, the Great Barrier Reef Marine Park Authority and the Queensland Parks and Wildlife Service operate a joint Field Management Program for the marine and island national parks, encompassing the Great Barrier Reef Marine Park and the Great Barrier Reef Coast Marine Park.

The Field Management Program delivers practical on-ground actions to protect and maintain well-functioning marine and island ecosystems that support economic, traditional and recreational uses of the Great Barrier Reef.

This document summarises the Field Management Program's 2014–15 achievements and complements the Field Management Program Annual Report 2014–15.

#### 2014-2015 FINANCE SUMMARY

In 2014–15 the Australian and Queensland governments provided combined funding of \$17,054,000 for delivery of the Field Management Program (including Field Management Program generated revenue). The available funds increased through factors such as carryovers, increased revenue from sale of vessels and insurance payments to \$18,396,846. Total expenditure was within one per cent of available funds. At the end of 2014–15 the Queensland Parks and Wildlife Service holds funds of \$203,927 and the Great Barrier Reef Marine Park Authority holds funds of \$1,311,996 on behalf of the Field Management Program (includes previous years carryovers).

The Field Management Program has five core priorities which aim to maintain the outstanding universal value for which the Great Barrier Reef World Heritage Area is recognised, and enhance the economic, recreational and traditional uses of the Great Barrier Reef.

## DELIVERING





METRES OF **ROCK LEDGE** 

and eroded areas were fenced off at Raine Island to stop



**NESTING GREEN TURTLES** 

FALLING OVER ROCKY EDGES & DYING

– AND -

15,000

#### **SQUARE METRES**

OF BEACH WAS REPROFILED TO **BOOST NESTING SUCCESS AND** REDUCE ADULT TURTLE MORTALITY.

**GRAZING PRESSURE ON 21.000** HECTARES OF CURTIS ISLAND CEASED WITH THE REMOVAL OF CATTLE,



OF CATTLE GRAZING ON THE ISLAND



**COVERING 4009 HECTARES OF LAND** between Cape York Peninsula and Curtis Island were conducted to maintain the ecological function island ecosystems, prevent wildfire, contribute to pest animal and weed management, and protect natural integrity of islands.

## ECKING

TO ECOLOGICAL + HERITAGE VALUES

#### ASSESSMENTS OF

crown-of-thorns starfish and reef health condition were supported by

**MANTA TOW** SURVEYS COVERING **KILOMETRES** REEFS



#### 140 BIRD SURVEYS

across the World Heritage Area identified the largest ever record of red-tailed tropic bird breeding activity on Raine Island.



The Field Management Program initiated rapid assessment and on ground responses to two cyclones to help with community clean-ups, and to clean-up and reopen visitor sites.

#### VESSEL TRACKING **DEVICES WERE INSTALLED ON**

QUEENSLAND PARKS & WILDLIFE **SERVICE VESSELS** 

and an electronic field reporting system was introduced to improve operational delivery, planning + reporting



SUCCESSFUL FIELD RESPONSES TO

**VESSEL GROUNDINGS.** WITH SITE ASSESSMENT OF DAMAGE, SITE REMEDIATION AND SUPERVISION OF VESSEL REMOVAL.

NEW 12-METRE BARGES ENTERED SERVICE WITHIN THE CAPRICORN COAST AND TOWNSVILLE-HINCHINBROOK REGIONS.

## WELCOMING **PEOPLE**

**ACCOUNT FOR** 

of responses to stranded marine animals (up from 18% in 2012-13 and 46 % in 2013-14).

60 NEW

**VOLUNTEERS** 

WERE TRAINED TO ASSIST WITH STRANDINGS

bringing the total to TRAINED

**VOLUNTEERS** | LOCATIONS

#### TRADITIONAL OWNERS

FIELD MANAGEMENT VESSELS, UP FROM

43 IN 2013 - 2014

## ON UPHOLDING

THE NEW 24 METRE VESSEL

#### REEF RANGER

KILOMETRES

HAS TRAVELLED IN ITS FIRST YEAR OF operation, a distance equivalent to half way AROUND THE WORLD.

**VESSEL** 

FLIGHT COMPLIANCE PATROL DAYS

1161 POSSIBLE OFFENCES recorded — the highest ever.

**COURT PROSECUTIONS** with fines totalling \$194,000









COMPLIANCE







## 2014-2015 HIGHLIGHTS



The Field Management Program delivered a range of activities to help maintain and improve the condition of the Reef and islands. Its work contributes to protecting marine and island habitats, vulnerable species and restoring ecosystems to their natural state.

#### **REEF SURVEYS**

Field management staff conducted a total of 1392 reef health and impact surveys across 140 reefs in 2014–15. Additionally, 3973 manta tow surveys, covering approximately 745 kilometres and 59 reefs, were completed. When combined with regular localised tourism operator surveys and reactive agency surveys, these field management surveys produce a Reef-wide picture of the condition of the Great Barrier Reef.

#### **SEABIRD MONITORING STRATEGY**

A total of 140 bird surveys were completed in 2014–15. There were 121 breeding pairs of vulnerable red-tailed tropicbirds recorded on Raine Island — the highest breeding effort ever recorded. The first sighting of an endangered herald petrel since June 2002 was also recorded at Raine Island. Bird surveys in the islands of the Capricornia Cays confirmed a concerning 40 per cent decline in breeding of wedge-tailed shearwaters since 2001.

The Coastal seabird monitoring and information strategy was revised to improve the detection of trends in seabird populations, aligning with the Reef 2050 Long-term Sustainability Plan, and will be implemented in 2015–16.

#### RAINE ISLAND

The Field Management Program has continued its adaptation work on Raine Island. An additional 400 metres of rock ledge and eroded areas were fenced off around the island to stop nesting green turtles falling over rocky edges and to guide them back towards the beach on a safe path. Nesting turtles and their hatchlings have also been given a hand — a 15,000 square metre section of beach has been re-profiled to boost nesting and hatchling success by ensuring female turtles nest above tidal inundation height.

#### **PEST MANAGEMENT**

Protecting the natural integrity of priority island locations through targeted conservation management actions continued during 2014–15. Field management staff implemented targeted and routine island conservation activities. Eighteen priority pest and weed management projects were completed for the control of pigs, foxes, dogs, lantana, deer, cattle and goats. Feral pigs on Dunk Island and goats on Orpheus Island and High Peak Island are close to being eradicated.





## INCIDENT RESPONSE

Field Management Program staff respond quickly to environmental incidents such as oil or pollution spills, grounded vessels, stranded marine animals, wildfire, pest species invasions, and cyclone and flood damage to ecosystems and infrastructure.

In 2014–15 there were no oil spills of regional significance or large ship groundings. However, there were 35 vessel incidents in the Great Barrier Reef Marine Park with the potential to cause environmental damage — assessment of these resulted in the issuing of four official Order to Remove notices and the management of an additional six vessel removals.

Staff responded to eight vessel incidents which required site assessment of damage, minor site remediation and supervision of vessel removal. In one case, a salvor was arranged to remove a wrecked and abandoned yacht with minimal coral damage.

#### CYCLONE RESPONSE

Category 5 severe tropical cyclone Marcia crossed the Queensland coast near Shoalwater Bay, north of Yeppoon, on 20 February 2015.

It caused significant structural damage in the Capricorn Coast area, particularly around Yeppoon and Rockhampton. The remote Stockyard Point community north of Yeppoon was stranded, with roads cut by fallen trees. The Field Management Program's new barge, the Reef Guardian, was deployed to Stockyard Point to help reopen vital road access. Field Management Program staff also responded quickly to reopen island visitor sites, including campgrounds and walking tracks.

On 20 March 2015 category 4 tropical cyclone Nathan crossed the coast near Cape Flattery, 100 kilometres north of Cooktown. Fortunately, Nathan's path traversed remote areas, so only minor structural damage occurred. Staff responded quickly to assess damage, clean and reopen island visitor sites, particularly on Lizard Island.



#### **OFFSETS**

In 2014-15, offset funding allowed for cattle grazing to cease on 21.000 hectares of Curtis Island. This brought to an end 150 years of cattle grazing on the island, including on protected areas and the marine plain. Already the aesthetic and habitat values of the marine plain have shown signs of improvement, with the highest number of breeding pairs of the endangered yellow chat bird in 20 years being recorded.

Additionally, 100 head of cattle and 100 tonnes of rubbish (primarily car bodies) were removed from the island using offset funding, a whole-of-island fire management system was implemented and feral animal control meant there was zero recorded predation of flatback turtle nests in 2014-15, for the first time in 18 years of monitoring.



#### **RECREATION AND** TOURISM FACILITIES

The Field Management Program provides visitor facilities that support a vibrant tourism industry and a broad range of recreational users, while minimising visitor impacts. Ensuring visitor facilities are regularly inspected and appropriately maintained is a priority activity.

In 2014–15, marine facilities were serviced to a high standard, with 97.5 per cent of 124 public moorings and 100 per cent of 137 reef protection markers operational in the World Heritage Area. Additionally, \$86,275 has been spent on enhancing visitor infrastructure on islands including the Hawkins Point Lookout on Magnetic Island.





The Field Management Program undertakes complementary planning and permitting across marine park and national park jurisdictions. The established and respected joint assessment and permit framework is a critical component of successful complementary permitting.

In 2014–15, 323 Commonwealth and Queensland Marine Parks permits, 61 Queensland Marine Park and 48 National Park permits were assessed.

The Lady Musgrave Island site management arrangements and the Capricornia Cays National Park and adjoining state waters management plan were reviewed and updated.

Commercial opportunities at popular Tongue Point, overlooking Whitehaven Beach, are set to improve with processes being developed to remove latent permit capacity and reallocate capacity to other operators.

A joint Marine and Island National Park Permit for tourism operations was implemented in 2014–15 and the first permit granted. This was the first major structural enhancement to joint permitting in over 30 years and will streamline permitting arrangements for tour operators.

Additionally, the Field Management Program successfully negotiated approvals for critical tourism and community water and electrical service facilities on Magnetic Island and South Molle Island.



For many users, the public face of the Australian and Queensland governments' management of the Great Barrier Reef is the field management officers they meet when using the Reef and islands.

Marine animal stranding training has now been delivered to almost 400 volunteers in 16 locations, including 60 volunteers in 2014–15. Volunteers responded to 59 per cent of reported marine strandings in 2014–15, a significant increase from 18 per cent in 2012–13 and 46 per cent in 2013–14. This was supported by the development and publication of the field resource *Marine animal strandings quick guide* with grant recipients, the World Wildlife Fund.

Additionally, the Whitsunday Region Trail Care Agreement was established with a Whitsunday Mountain Bike Club to foster a cooperative approach to the use, maintenance, and management of approved mountain bike trails on South Molle Island with the local mountain biking community.

Field Management Program activities have been promoted on the Great Barrier Reef Marine Park and the Queensland National Parks Facebook pages, reaching thousands of people.





There are more than 70 Traditional Owner groups with connections to sea country between Bundaberg and the eastern Torres Strait Islands. The Field Management Program focuses on getting Traditional Owners back on country and engaged in land and sea country management.

Seven per cent of Field Management Program staff identify as Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander people, and Traditional Owners spent 348 days on Field Management Program vessels in 2014–15, a significant increase from the previous year's 143 days.

The program collaborated with Traditional Owners on six of the seven Raine Island trips, focusing on recovery actions. A 14-week trial period of works and services in the Girringun Traditional Use of Marine Resources Agreement area was contracted to the Girringun Aboriginal Land and Sea Rangers in a successful pilot.

## CULTURAL HERITAGE PROTECTION

The Field Management Program manages cultural and Indigenous heritage on island national parks and Commonwealth-owned islands. This includes developing heritage management plans to protect significant sites and active maintenance and restoration at some locations.

Forward planning for heritage buildings in 2014–15 included progressing tourist access to the Lady Elliot Island Lighthouse, by engaging a heritage architect to prepare a Building Code of Australia compliance report on the structure and developing a project plan for three dimensional imaging of the historic Raine Island stone beacon in 2015–16.



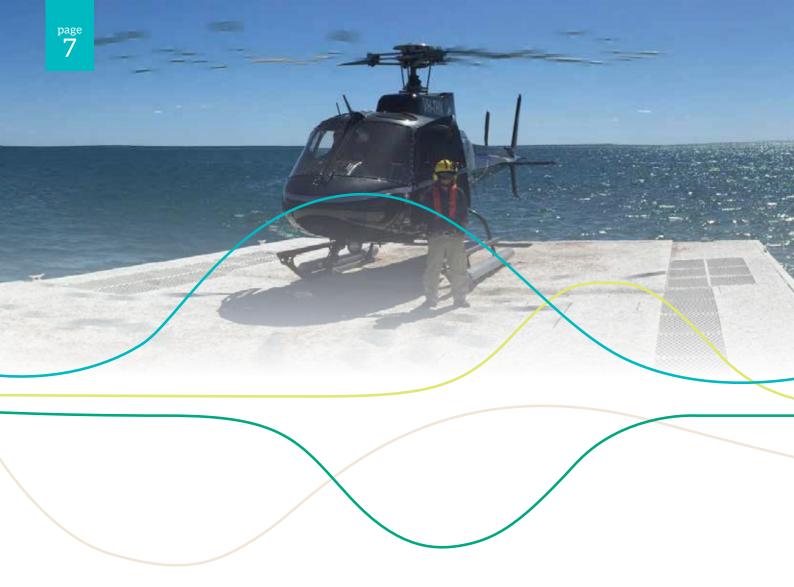
#### **PROGRAM SUPPORT**

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 and good systems.

In 2014–15, the Field Management Program's new primary vessel, the 24-metre *Reef Ranger*, spent 242 days at sea during its first 12 months of operation. It has boosted productivity through quicker transit times and its multi-tasking capacity. The *Reef Ranger* travelled 25,700 kilometres, a distance equivalent to half way around the world, with on-board staff working on compliance, visitor facility management, natural resource management (fire and pest), reef monitoring and crown-of-thorns starfish response. Field Management vessels spent a total of 1467 days at sea during 2014–15.

Each vessel in the Field Management Program fleet has been fitted with GPS vessel monitoring, enabling remote real-time monitoring to enhance safety, efficient deployment and monitoring of resources, and analysis of vessel activity. In collaboration with Fisheries Queensland, staff are investigating the application of GPS monitoring for future rollout in the commercial fishing industry.

Thirty-eight Queensland Parks and Wildlife Service and Great Barrier Reef Marine Park Authority staff completed the newly developed Foundations of Field Management training course, run twice in 2014–15. This custom-made, five day course strengthens and unifies the participants' understanding of the Field Management Program. The course has been well received and three courses are expected to run in 2015–16.



## **COMPLIANCE**

During 2014-15, the Field Management Program's Compliance Unit continued to step up its enforcement operations against illegal fishing. It issued the first three strikes direction against a commercial fisher, banning them from entering the Marine Park for commercial or recreational purposes for two years.

There were 792 days dedicated to compliance patrols on vessels, 20 land-based days and 62 days of chartered flights, including use of a Eurocopter 130 (Squirrel) turbine aircraft to cover the distant offshore reaches of the Marine Park, such as the Swains Reefs.

There were 1161 possible offences reported in 2014–15, which is the highest number ever recorded - 61 per cent of these offences had resulting compliance actions.

In addition, court prosecutions of commercial fishers during the 12-month period resulted in fines totalling \$57,000. There were 21 court prosecutions with fines totalling \$194,000 — the majority of which came from two Chinese crew charged for taking the bulk coal carrier *MV Bulk Ingenuity* five kilometres outside the designated shipping area and in a Marine National Park zone on route to Abbot Point in July 2014.

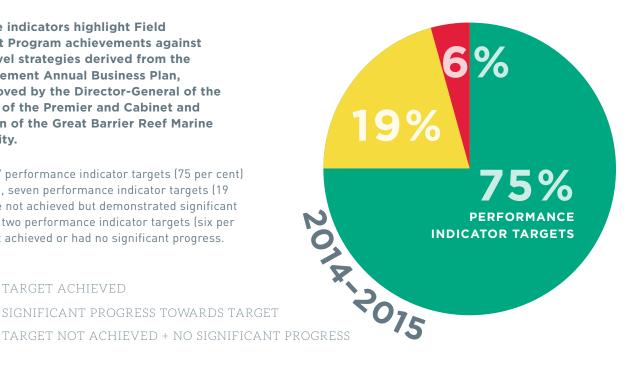


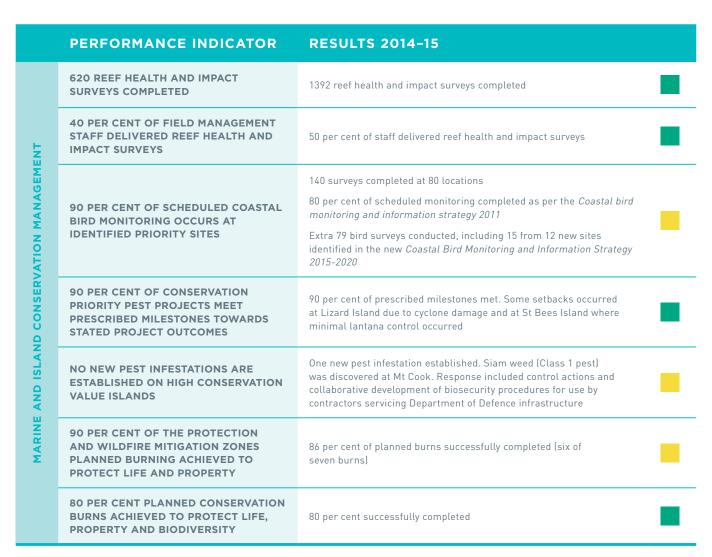
#### RESULTS AGAINST PERFORMANCE INDICATORS

Performance indicators highlight Field Management Program achievements against nine high level strategies derived from the Field Management Annual Business Plan, jointly approved by the Director-General of the **Department of the Premier and Cabinet and** the Chairman of the Great Barrier Reef Marine Park Authority.

In 2014–15, 27 performance indicator targets (75 per cent) were achieved, seven performance indicator targets (19 per cent) were not achieved but demonstrated significant progress, and two performance indicator targets (six per cent) were not achieved or had no significant progress.

TARGET ACHIEVED





	PERFORMANCE INDICATOR	RESULTS 2014-15
INCIDENT RESPONSE MANAGEMENT	100 PER CENT OF SPILLS ARE RISK ASSESSED	100 per cent of reported spills risk assessed
	FIELD RESPONSE TO 100 PER CENT OF INCIDENTS WHERE THE INCIDENT MANAGEMENT AGENCY REQUIRES THE FIELD MANAGEMENT PROGRAM'S SUPPORT	No instances required the Field Management Program's support
	QUEENSLAND PARKS AND WILDLIFE SERVICE GREAT BARRIER REEF REGION OILED WILDLIFE RESPONSE PLAN REVIEWED ANNUALLY	Not updated
	100 PER CENT OF VESSEL GROUNDINGS OR SINKINGS NOTIFIED TO THE FIELD MANAGEMENT PROGRAM ARE RISK ASSESSED	100 per cent of reported vessel groundings or sinkings risk assessed
	FIELD MANAGEMENT RESPONSE TO 100 PER CENT OF VESSEL GROUNDINGS OR SINKINGS WHERE INCIDENT MANAGEMENT LEAD AGENCY REQUIRES PROGRAM SUPPORT	For all 25 recorded cases of groundings or sinkings, the Great Barrier Reef Marine Park Authority, through the Field Management Program, was the lead agency
	MINIMUM OF 90 PER CENT OF REMOVAL ORDERS ISSUED ARE EFFECTIVE AT NO COST TO THE AGENCIES	90 per cent at no cost. The Field Management Program paid for one vessel removal (out of four managed under actual removal orders and the management of an additional six vessel removals)
RECREATION + TOURISM FACILITIES	95 PER CENT OF PUBLIC MOORINGS AND REEF PROTECTION MARKERS ARE IN OPERATION AT ALL TIMES	97.5 per cent of 124 public moorings operational 100 per cent of 137 reef protection markers operational
	100 PER CENT OF CRITICAL AND STATUTORY INSPECTIONS ON VISITOR INFRASTRUCTURE OCCUR WITHIN SCHEDULED TIMEFRAMES	100 per cent of infrastructure inspections completed (48 tasks)
	90 PER CENT OF FUNDED, HIGH PRIORITY INFRASTRUCTURE MAINTENANCE TASKS DELIVERED ANNUALLY	100 per cent of maintenance tasks delivered (11 tasks)
	MINIMUM OF 90 PER CENT OF VISITOR FACILITIES CAPITAL WORKS PROJECT FUNDING EXPENDED	100 per cent of funding expended (\$86,275 on four projects)
INDIGENOUS ENGAGEMENT	NUMBER OF DAYS TRADITIONAL OWNERS SPEND ON FIELD MANAGEMENT VESSEL TRIPS AND LAND BASED PATROLS IS MAINTAINED OR INCREASES	Traditional Owners spent 348 person days on vessels, a significant increase from 143 days in 2013–14
	GREATER THAN FIVE PER CENT OF FIELD MANAGEMENT PROGRAM WORKFORCE IDENTIFY AS INDIGENOUS PEOPLE	Seven per cent identify as Indigenous people (8 of 115 full-time equivalent staff)
	100 PER CENT OF REQUIRED MEETINGS WITH LAND TRUSTS FOR JOINTLY MANAGED NATIONAL PARKS (CAPE YORK PENINSULA ABORIGINAL LAND) ATTENDED	100 per cent of Lama Lama Land Trust; Cape Melville, Flinders and Howick Group Aboriginal Corporation joint management and fire planning meetings attended
		One Kuuku Ya'u Corporation joint management meeting not attended due to a late change in meeting arrangements

	PERFORMANCE INDICATOR	RESULTS 2014-15	
CULTURAL HERITAGE PROTECTION	100 PER CENT OF COMMONWEALTH ISLANDS WITH LEASES HAVE AN ANNUAL INSPECTION TO ENSURE TENANTS ARE MEETING OBLIGATIONS TO PROTECT CULTURAL HERITAGE VALUES	100 per cent of annual inspections completed for the three Commonwealth islands with Commonwealth heritage listed buildings (Lady Elliot Island, Dent Island, Low Isles)	
	THE NUMBER OF FORMAL ARRANGEMENTS IN PLACE WITH TRADITIONAL OWNERS FOR ACTIVE INVOLVEMENT IN CULTURAL SITE PROTECTION IS INCREASING	In addition to progressing cultural site protection measures within existing joint management, and Traditional Use of Marine Resources Agreements, new initiatives were developed with Girringun and Gudjudu Indigenous ranger groups. Discussions continued with the Port Curtis Coral Coast native title claimant group on protecting the Indigenous cultural values of Curtis Island	•
PLANNING + PERMITS	OVER 300 JOINT MARINE PARK PERMIT APPLICATIONS ARE DECIDED WITHIN THE AGREED TIMEFRAMES	323 joint Marine Park permit applications decided, of which 304 were joint Level 1 (Low Risk) permits and 19 were joint Level 2–4 permits	
	OVER 100 STATE-ONLY MARINE PARK AND ISLAND PROTECTED AREA APPLICATIONS (FOR RELEVANT AUTHORITIES) ARE DECIDED WITHIN THE AGREED TIMEFRAMES	110 state-only Great Barrier Reef Coast Marine Park, island national park and Green Island Recreation Area permit applications were decided	
	LESS THAN TWO PER CENT OF ALL DECISIONS ARE REQUIRED TO BE REVIEWED OR APPEALED	Less than two per cent of decisions (seven decisions) were reviewed or appealed	
COMMUNICATION, EDUCATION + STEWARDSHIP	SIX INFORMATION BULLETINS PRODUCED FOR USE BY RANGERS TO INFORM USERS OF THE WORLD HERITAGE AREA OF CONTEMPORARY MANAGEMENT ISSUES	Two new fact files distributed to Marine Park rangers about Traditional Owners connections to sea country, traditional use of marine resources and traditional hunting, and planned burns on island national parks	•
	80 PER CENT ATTENDANCE BY QUEENSLAND PARKS AND WILDLIFE SERVICE AT LOCAL MARINE ADVISORY COMMITTEE MEETINGS	70 per cent attendance at Local Marine Advisory Committee meetings (37 of 53 meetings)	
	NINE FRIENDS OF PARKS GRANTS IMPLEMENTED	All projects completed	
	50 PER CENT OF MARINE ANIMAL STRANDINGS ARE RESPONDED TO BY VOLUNTEERS	59 per cent of reported marine animal strandings were responded to by volunteers	

	PERFORMANCE INDICATOR	RESULTS 2014-15
COMPLIANCE	800 DEDICATED COMPLIANCE VESSEL PATROL DAYS FUNDED OR PARTIALLY FUNDED BY THE FIELD MANAGEMENT PROGRAM UNDERTAKEN IN THE WORLD HERITAGE AREA	792 dedicated compliance vessel patrols days were completed during the year
	AT LEAST 70 PER CENT OF TARGETED SPECIAL OPERATIONS IN THE WORLD HERITAGE AREA HAVE MULTI-AGENCY PARTICIPATION	81 per cent of the 17 special operations conducted had multi-agency participation
	100 PER CENT OF REPORTS OF ALLEGED OFFENCES WITHIN THE GREAT BARRIER REEF MARINE PARK WILL BE RECORDED ON THE FIELD MANAGEMENT COMPLIANCE UNIT INFORMATION MANAGEMENT SYSTEM AND ASSESSED AGAINST THE CONSISTENT FRAMEWORK CONTAINED WITHIN THE PRIORITY COMPLEXITY MODEL	616 incident and 329 information reports were received that resulted in the recording of 1161 offences assessed and allocated in accordance with the Compliance Management and Investigations Procedures
PROGRAM SUPPORT	DECREASING TREND IN LOST TIME INJURIES YEAR ON YEAR	Continued decreasing trend. There were three injuries in 2014–15. This is a further reduction from five in 2013–14 and eleven in 2012–13
	EXPENDITURE IS WITHIN ONE PER CENT OF BUDGET AND IN ACCORDANCE WITH LABOUR, OPERATING AND CAPITAL ALLOCATIONS	Total expenditure was within one per cent of available funds
	DOWNTIME OF THE FIELD MANAGEMENT PROGRAM'S TWO OFFSHORE VESSELS (EXCLUDING SCHEDULED MAINTENANCE) IS LESS THAN 10 PER CENT OF PLANNED DAYS AT SEA	3.3 per cent downtime for the two offshore vessels. The <i>Reef Ranger</i> recorded three unscheduled outage days out of 270 planned days at sea. The <i>Reef Heron</i> recorded 10 unscheduled outage days out of 120 planned days at sea
	MORE THAN 1500 DAYS AT SEA ARE DELIVERED BY THE FIELD MANAGEMENT PROGRAM	A total of 1467 vessel days delivered

Further information about the Field **Management Program** 

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