



Australian Government  
Great Barrier Reef  
Marine Park Authority

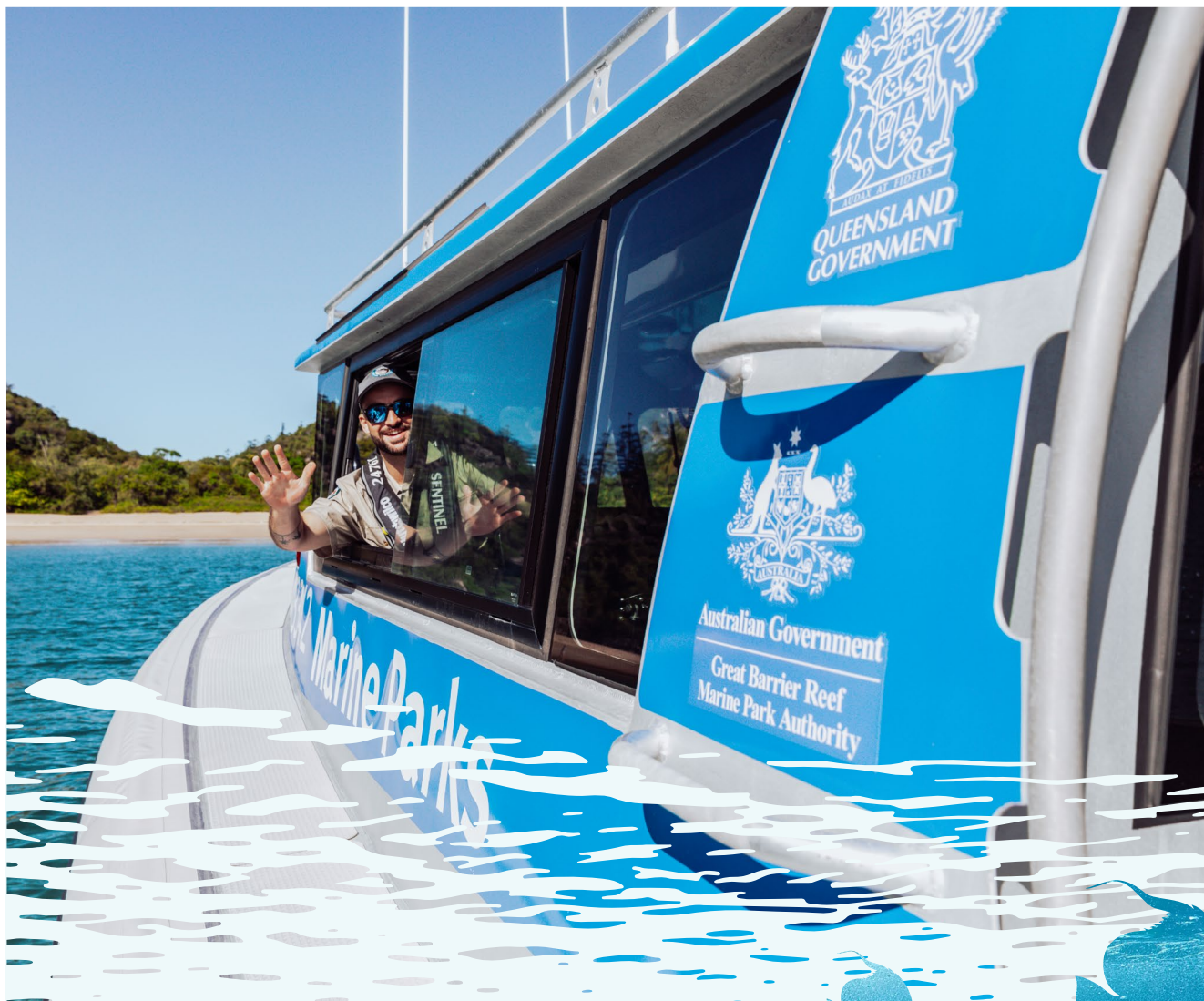


Queensland  
Government

# INSIGHT STORIES

Reef Joint Field Management Program





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# What is the Reef Joint Field Management Program?

The Great Barrier Reef (the Reef) is one of the seven wonders of the natural world and the largest living structure on the planet – so big it’s visible from space! Over 348,000 square kilometres of coral reef and its surrounds make up the Reef, Great Barrier Reef World Heritage Area and the Program – an area the Reef Joint Field Management Program (the Program) has been managing for over 40 years in on-ground, practical ways.

The Reef is not just beautiful, it’s one of the most precious and diverse ecosystems on Earth. Fiercely loved by people within Australia – and worldwide – the area is also critical to the cultural, economic and social well-being of local and regional communities and Australians more broadly. We all want to see the Reef thrive for us and future generations, but system-wide declines in the condition of the Reef have put it under pressure. We all have a part to play, this is where the Program comes in.

The Program plans and delivers on-ground actions to protect the Reef, including Commonwealth and State marine parks (plus Commonwealth Islands Zones) and island protected areas like national parks.

The Program plays a proactive role in maintaining the values and building resilience of the Reef, delivering hands-on results while

global efforts to limit climate change and regional efforts to improve water quality have the time to take effect.

Run jointly by the Great Barrier Reef Marine Park Authority and Queensland Department of Environment and Science (through the Queensland Parks and Wildlife Service), the Program carries out key actions outlined in the *Reef 2050 Long-Term Sustainability Plan 2021–25* and *Great Barrier Reef Blueprint for Resilience 2017*. The Program has established evolving collaborations with allied government agencies, partners, research institutions, reef-dependent industries and the community to ensure we have the very best people on the job at all times.



# The five Program priorities are:



**DELIVERING CONSERVATION ACTIONS** to protect and recover important natural and cultural values, including coral reefs, seagrass meadows, mangrove forests, coral cays, continental islands, threatened species and cultural heritage.



**CHECKING FOR CHANGE** on islands and in the water to monitor reef and island conditions and determine the extent of existing or emerging threats.



**RESPONDING TO INCIDENTS** involving ships and smaller vessel groundings and sinkings, pollution spills, bushfires, coral bleaching, island and marine pest incursions, stranded marine animals and extreme weather events.



**WELCOMING PEOPLE** to improve community understanding of values and threats, foster responsible behaviour and provide visitor facilities.



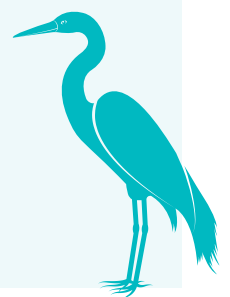
**UPHOLDING COMPLIANCE** to manage the impact users pose to the Reef. The Program delivers risk-focused, well-planned and intelligence-driven patrols to detect and deter illegal activity.



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



[Click here to learn more about our work](#)







## Meet our heroes of the Reef – working to make a difference.

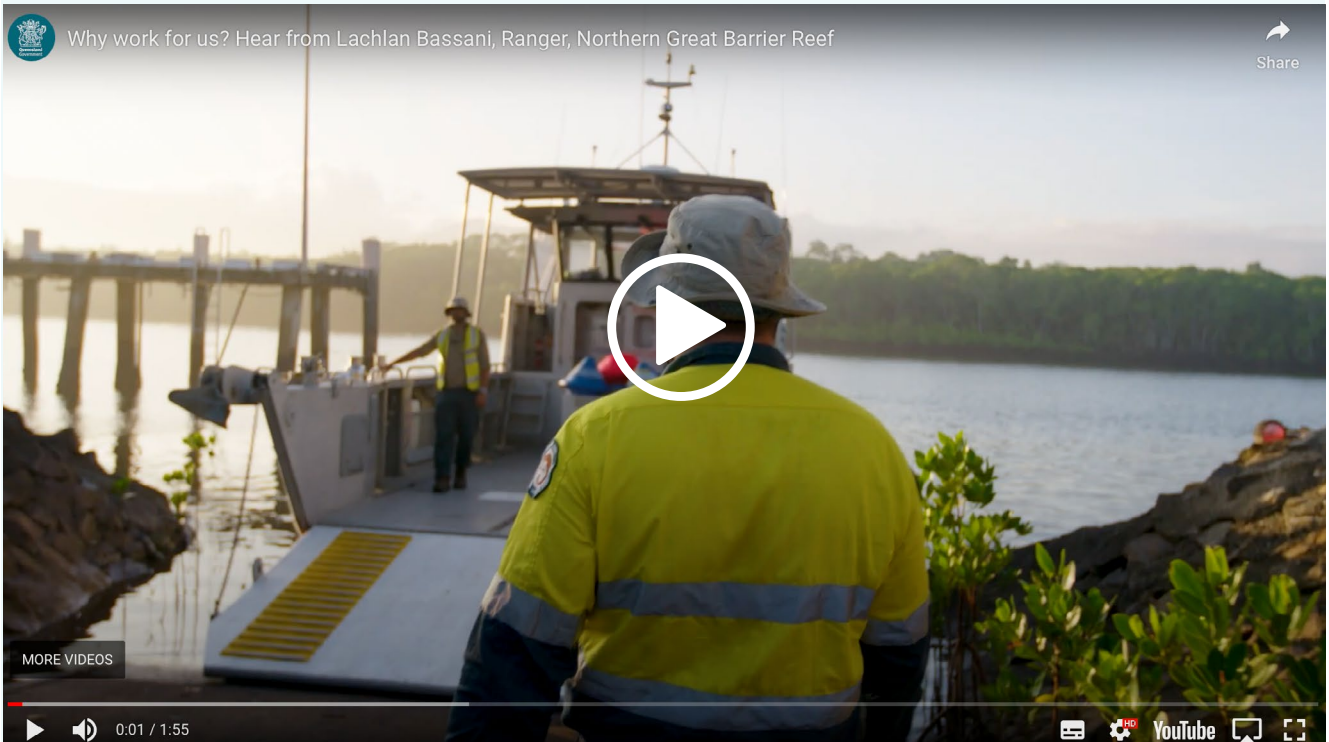
For proud Lama Lama man Lachlan Bassani, being a ranger is about more than connection to Country. “Having a job that I can help preserve the environment for many generations to come, that’s why I’m so passionate about working in this role,” says Lachlan.

Traditional Owners have an enduring connection with the World Heritage Area. Their holistic Land and Sea management, custodianship, rich culture and shared efforts have protected the Reef for 40,000 years and will continue to do so for countless future generations.

The Program – run in partnership by the Great Barrier Reef Marine Park Authority and Department of Environment and Science through the Queensland Parks and Wildlife Service – is committed to strengthening and enriching partnerships with First Nations people.



[Click here to learn more about Lachlan’s important work below](#)





## Reef stars and corals of opportunity build optimism in Keppel Bay Islands reef trial.

In 2022 the Program commenced a reef rehabilitation trial in the Keppel Bay islands on Woppaburra Land and Sea Country. Located just 15 kilometres east of Yeppoon, the trial is the third of its kind on the Great Barrier Reef. It uses live coral fragments known as corals of opportunity, and Mars Assisted Reef Restoration System (MARRS) reef stars to build new, stable areas of coral reef habitat.

While the Keppel Bay is home to diverse, healthy and resilient reefs, there are some reefs off Great Keppel Island (Monkey and Shelving) and Humpy Island where coral rubble and macroalgae have been hampering recovery – making them ideal locations for this trial.

The trial is called Yarul Dhingiga, which comes from the Woppaburra peoples' words for 'connecting rope' and 'setting down', respectively. It focuses on further developing rehabilitation methods that follow from major weather events or devastating crown-of-thorn starfish outbreaks in localised areas. The Yarul Dhingiga trial also involved the Woppaburra Traditional Use of Marine Resource Agreement (TUMRA) Aboriginal Corporation (WTAC), Mars Inc, local tourism operators Keppel Dive & Snorkel and Freedom Fast Cats, and Konomie Island Environmental Education Centre.

Thus far, the trial has used 150 reef stars at Monkey and Shelving reefs, 50 reef stars at Humpy Island Reef – part of the Keppel Bay Islands National Park – and more than 3,000 corals of opportunity.

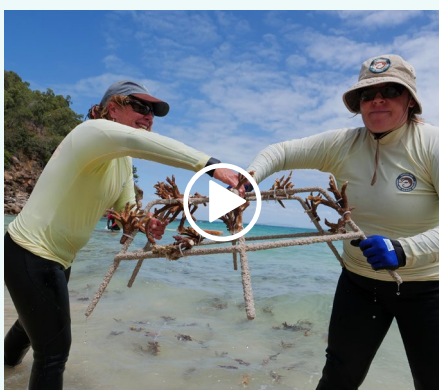
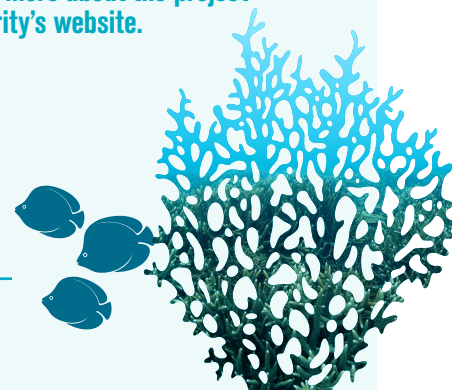
### Key takeaways:

- Promoting hard coral coverage in popular snorkelling reefs on Great Keppel Island.
- Providing technical skills development and field training for Program staff, project partners and Traditional Owners in the use of Reef Stars as a reef rehabilitation tool.
- Supporting access to the rehabilitation sites by local tourism operators, their clients and the public to build awareness and understanding about the pressures on the Great Barrier Reef and the evolving efforts to mitigate them.

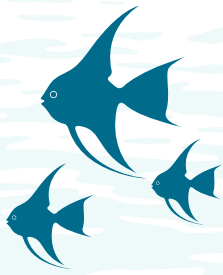
Regular, ongoing site management and detailed monitoring will be completed over a five-year period to establish the level of habitat recovery and learn more about how reef stars might be integrated into the work of marine park managers in the future.



[Click here to learn more about the project on the Reef Authority's website.](#)







## Launch of new vessel boosts Reef protection.

The Australian and Queensland governments are strengthening their ability to protect the Great Barrier Reef with the launch of a new vessel – Tamoya II. The 17-metre vessel is equipped with advanced technology to support rangers undertaking field activities like crown-of-thorns starfish surveillance, infrastructure management and maintenance, reef and island restoration and fire and pest management.

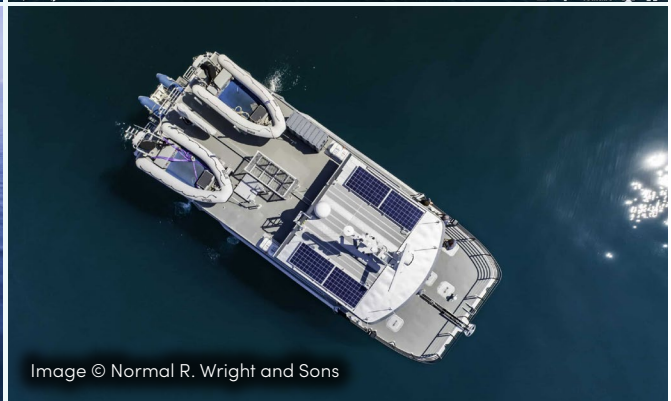
The Program has worked in the World Heritage Area for more than 43 years and its current fleet of 21 vessels spent an impressive 1682 days patrolling the Reef in the last financial year. Along with the Tamoya II, two more vessels are in the process of being built. They are part of a significant expansion of the Program that includes increased funding, more on-water capabilities and more staff to undertake fieldwork and incident responses in the iconic World Heritage Area. Importantly, all new vessels are built in Queensland – providing local jobs and injecting more than \$12.3 million into the Queensland economy.

Because the Program’s critical joint projects stretch from Wide Bay to the Cape, there’s a need for a safe, fit-for-purpose vessel fleet that can be quickly and strategically deployed to support field staff and their work. The production of these vessels, their vital role in Reef protection and the significant boost to local jobs promise a better future.

The builder of the vessels is Norman R. Wright and Sons, who employs 45 full-time staff and has created an additional 25 sub-contractor jobs through these three builds. They are one of Australia’s oldest and most reputable boat builders and have been designing and building commercial and recreational vessels in Queensland for more than 110 years.



[Click here to learn more about Tamoya II](#)





## Traditional Owner rangers ‘deep dive’ into the Reef.

As part of the Program, Traditional Owner rangers are learning to scuba dive and gain hands-on experience caring for the Great Barrier Reef. As of August 2022, 19 rangers from 11 groups had undertaken diver training with adventure tourism operator Experience Co. on Gunggandji and Yirrganydji Sea Country in Cairns.

Traditional Owners have been the custodians of their Country and the Great Barrier Reef for more than 40,000 years. Together with the Queensland and Australian governments and the broader community, their efforts are helping to protect the Reef, their connection to the land and the 60,000 jobs that rely on it.

Provided under the Program and in coordination with the Queensland Indigenous Land and Sea Ranger Program, the open water and advanced training is held throughout the year and starts the rangers on a journey to be able to conduct in-water works on Sea Country. Their vital work includes reef health and impact surveys, reef rehabilitation, crown-of-thorns starfish surveillance and visitor infrastructure maintenance.

The diving skills gained will translate to future opportunities – including employment. More importantly, it means that these Traditional Owner rangers will have the skills needed to manage their Sea Country in partnership with the government going forward.

Ranger Brody Gray from Gunggandji-Mandingalbay Yidinji PBC said: “The whole course was great. It was the first time I had been scuba diving and getting in the water with other Indigenous rangers was a fantastic experience. I’m hoping to use the skills I’ve learnt to help to manage our Sea Country.”



[Click here for more information about the Indigenous Land and Sea Ranger Program](#)

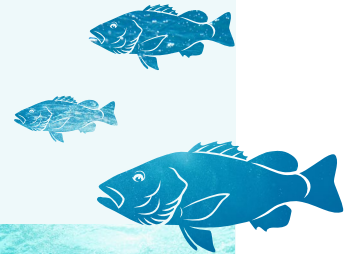


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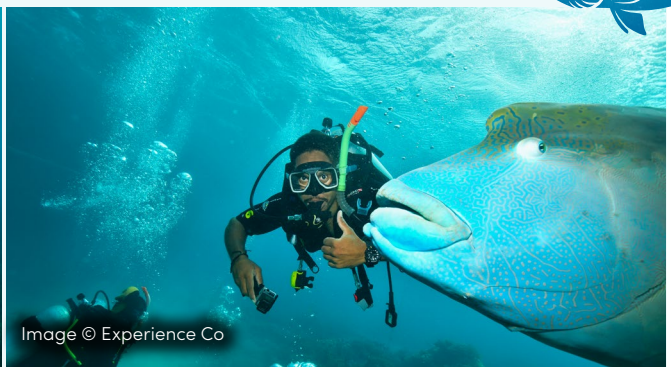


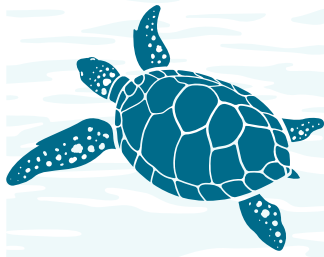
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## Magical experiences on Lady Musgrave Island gets even better with recent upgrades.

Lady Musgrave Island has long been one of the most popular camping destinations on the Great Barrier Reef. More than 150,000 people visit the island every year for a special camping experience right on the doorstep of our spectacular World Heritage Area. Recent upgrades are now complete and provide greater accessibility and new amenities to support the island's great lifestyle.

The recent \$765,000 upgrade to campground amenities makes it wheelchair accessible and adds a new advanced composting toilet system. It uses low-maintenance materials and installation methods that reduce the long-term impact on the sensitive environment.

The zero-discharge treatment system safely manages visitor waste, protecting the fragile coral cay ecosystems.

Lady Musgrave Island and the surrounding reef hosts turtles, humpback whales, manta rays, sharks and many unique reef fish.

Campground host Ms. Salmon said that "We're very privileged to be able to visit these spots, which have extreme natural values, including being really important seabird breeding sites". Ms Salmon said that while the wildlife had free reign to wander the island, human visitors were limited to designated parts.

2023 is the Year of Accessible Tourism in Queensland. Targeted initiatives like this will continue to be delivered to help better cater to visitors of all abilities and provide greater destination experiences.

Funded by the Program, The Reef Trust and in collaboration with Australia Pacific LNG, QGC, and Santos GLNG, the project represents one small-but-important step toward improving visitor experiences in the park.



Image © Tourism and Events Queensland







Image © Tourism and Events Queensland








## For more information about the Reef Joint Field Management Program

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