

REEF JOINT FIELD MANAGEMENT PROGRAM BUSINESS STRATEGY SUMMARY 2020 TO 2024



EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The Reef Joint Field Management Program (Program) plans and delivers field operations within the Great Barrier Reef World Heritage Area (WHA). This includes Commonwealth and State marine parks (plus Commonwealth Islands Zones) and island national parks.

The Program is delivered jointly by the Great Barrier Reef Marine Park Authority and Queensland Parks and Wildlife Service - part of the Queensland Department of Environment and Science. There are also established and evolving collaborative arrangements with allied government agencies, First Nations People, research institutions, industry and the community to work together to protect the WHA.

The WHA is an international icon under pressure. The *Outlook Report 2019* identified that while the WHA's outstanding universal value remains whole, its integrity is challenged and deteriorating. Actions taken now by the Program, other managers, First Nations People, researchers, stakeholders and the community will make a difference to the long-term outlook.

PROGRAM BUDGET

The Great Barrier Reef Intergovernmental Agreement sets out the Australian and Queensland governments' commitment to joint 50:50 funding for the Program. The Program is currently undergoing a significant five-year expansion. By 2021-22 the Program will have more than doubled, with joint base funding increasing to over \$38 million.

The Program is also charged to oversight funding from other sources on behalf of the Authority and the Department of Environment and Science. These funds vary, with a forecast \$5-13 million annually across the next three years from other sources.

PARTNERSHIPS WITH FIRST NATIONS PEOPLE

First Nations People have an enduring connection with the WHA. Their land and sea management, custodianship, rich culture and shared efforts has protected the WHA, and will continue to protect the WHA for future generations. The Program has a number of partnerships with Traditional Owners and this will continue to expand.



PROGRAM PRIORITIES

The Business Strategy is framed around five Program priorities, how they contribute to the protection of WHA values, and mitigate threats to these values. The five priorities deliver the nine outcomes the IGA directs the Program to achieve together with *Reef Blueprint* initiatives, and *Reef 2050 Long-Term Sustainability Plan* actions.



FIVE PROGRAM PRIORITIES

DELIVERING CONSERVATION ACTIONS



The Program delivers conservation actions to protect and recover important values, including coral reefs, seagrass meadows, mangrove forests, coral cays, continental islands, threatened species and cultural heritage.

EXPECTED OUTCOMES

- Healthy resilient islands and species
- Raine Island improves as a viable green turtle rookery
- Values based planning guides island management
- Public moorings and reef protection markers protect fringing reef
- Condition of seabird breeding and foraging sites is maintained or improved
- Restoration projects improve habitats and species recovery
- Joint management of National Park (Cape York Peninsula Aboriginal Land) extends to planning, delivery and reporting
- Built historic heritage endures for future generations

CHECKING FOR CHANGE



Knowing the condition of values is fundamental to effective management. The Program checks for change on islands and in the water to monitor reef and island condition and the extent of existing or emerging threats.

- Reef health assessments inform understanding of reef health and management
- Condition and trend of key island values informs management
- Seabird and shorebird monitoring informs management
- Technology enhances efficient collection and use of data

RESPONDING TO INCIDENTS



The Program responds to a wide range of incidents including ship and vessel groundings, oil and other pollution spills, wildfires, coral bleaching and disease, island and marine pests, stranded marine animals and severe weather events like cyclones.

- A well-established incident management framework guides efficient and effective incident response
- Risks from maritime incidents informs vessel and ship management
- Shift from mitigation to rehabilitation of damaged sites
- Consequences for causing environmental harm promote responsible vessel and ship operations
- Marine strandings data informs species management

WELCOMING PEOPLE



The WHA is a natural wonder that contributes \$6.4 billion to the Australian economy. While nearly 90% of this economic contribution is from the commercial tourism industry, there are also important contributions from research, recreational use and commercial fishing.

- Visible on-water and on-island presence and engagement with visitors across the WHA
- First Nations People are part of field management delivery
- Expanded network of world-class visitor opportunities that support recreational users and the tourism industry
- Community volunteers contribute to field activities

UPHOLDING COMPLIANCE



The Program is the principal driver and coordinator of environmental compliance in the WHA. Risk-focused, well planned and intelligence-driven patrols are delivered to deter and detect illegal activity.

- Reducing the threat illegal activity poses to the WHA
- Vessel tracking improves commercial fishing compliance
- Reductions in permissions related non-compliance
- Indigenous Rangers are active partners in WHA compliance
- Industry and the community are aware of the rules and behave responsibly

PROGRAM INPUTS

The Program requires a number of inputs to deliver these five Program priorities, including funding, staff, vessels, partnerships, operational bases, offices, training, equipment and technology.

- Strong safety culture with a safe fit-for-purpose vessel fleet to reach the entire WHA
- Improvements in technology and data management inform reporting and management
- Comprehensive financial planning and management
- Collaborative reporting captures delivery of field management activity by the Program and partners
- Expand Program capacity to operate across the entire WHA and deliver more days at sea

DELIVERING CONSERVATION ACTIONS



- Deliver fire programs to mitigate risk of wildfires and maintain island habitats
- Deliver reef restoration trials and support others undertaking trials
- Maintain moorings and reef protection markers and review future needs
- Review vulnerability assessments for key species and develop conservation actions
- Integrate the values based management framework into management of islands
- Strengthen biosecurity measures and enhance pest management
- Expand the island protected area network
- Protect and recover island habitats including seabird roosting and nesting and turtle nesting.
- Identify, support and sometimes lead higher level intervention projects to halt species or habitats decline including Raine Island Recovery and the Great Barrier Reef Foundation's Reef and Islands Initiative
- Support First Nations People to lead or assist with heritage protection and restoration
- Support Traditional Use of Marine Resource Agreement development and implementation
- Jointly manage National Park (Cape York Peninsula Aboriginal Land) with First Nations People
- Support implementation of the *Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Heritage Strategy for the Great Barrier Reef*
- Support land and sea country planning
- Protect and where appropriate restore island historic heritage
- Support underwater heritage activities by partners.



CHECKING FOR CHANGE



- Improve knowledge and understanding of marine habitats, islands, species, threats and recovery following impacts
- Undertake surveillance for crown-of-thorns starfish to assess outbreak severity and extent, and guide control activities
- Investigate, trial and implement new technologies to improve monitoring capability, efficiency and staff safety
- Complete the review of reef health assessment methods and implement improvements
- Re-evaluate the success of moorings and reef protection markers in reducing anchor damage
- Evaluate the success of planned burns and pest programs
- Undertake a five year review of the *Coastal Bird Monitoring and Information Strategy – Seabirds 2015-20*
- Develop and implement a framework to identify and assess protection of seabird foraging areas
- Improve knowledge and understanding of Indigenous heritage and threats together with First Nations People
- Encourage and support First Nations People to lead or assist with monitoring
- Provide vessel and logistical support for monitoring by partners.



RESPONDING TO INCIDENTS



- **Prepare** – ensure the Program is well prepared to detect and respond to incidents
- **Plan** – expand awareness and use of the incident management framework, and clarify respective roles and responsibilities
- **Plan** – maintain situational awareness of reef health, including climate-related risks
- **Respond** – assess damage following incidents and reduce further harm
- **Recover** – increase active intervention to enable recovery of damaged sites
- Investigate, trial and implement new technologies to improve preparedness, planning, response and recovery
- Collaborate with other agencies and industry to establish a framework and funding for rapid in-field response to maritime incidents
- Align maritime incident response with other National and State response arrangements
- Support the North-East Shipping Management Group
- Improve knowledge and understanding of marine stranding trends and causes
- Respond to live marine mammal strandings
- Collaborate with other agencies to develop stranding response procedures
- Collaborate with partner agencies and community groups on oiled wildlife response.

WELCOMING PEOPLE



- Provide an increased ranger and officer field presence and maximise engagement with park users
- Provide safe visitor facilities that support the tourism industry and recreational users
- Maintain a rolling five year visitor infrastructure investment program
- Undertake risk-based environmental assessment, regulation and administration
- Streamline permissions management to be more efficient, effective and risk-based
- Promote greater engagement with WHA permittees to increase awareness, compliance, collaboration and stewardship
- Maintain or increase the involvement of volunteer groups, the community and Traditional Owner ranger groups in marine strandings
- Embrace opportunities to work with more volunteers to expand monitoring capability
- Increase First Nations People involvement in field management, including greater cross decking
- Collaborate with partner agencies to align business and optimise use of First Nations People's valuable time and knowledge
- Share systems and processes with Indigenous Land and Sea Rangers to expand shared capacity and knowledge
- Encourage adaptive re-use of historic heritage
- Develop a communication strategy to guide education, communication and stewardship
- Improve people's understanding of WHA values and threats, and First Nations Peoples connection and protection of country.



UPHOLDING COMPLIANCE



- **Awareness and education** – Increase voluntary compliance and awareness of marine parks zoning, and reduce deliberate illegal activity
- **Planning, executing and reporting** – increase cooperative, multi-agency compliance patrols to deter and detect illegal activity
- **Administrative actions and sanctions** – utilise available legislation to deter illegal activity and investigate legislative changes to improve efficiencies
- **Intelligence** – expand use of innovative intelligence to deliver targeted compliance, including vessel tracking
- **Investigations and prosecutions** – provide offenders with a fair investigations process and direct prosecutions at deliberate systemic illegal activity
- Support First Nations People with compliance of their land and sea country
- Investigate and implement technology that will improve surveillance capability
- Encourage increased compliance reporting and investigation by Land and Sea Rangers and other First Nations People
- Encourage community and industry stewardship so that WHA users are guardians, promote best practice and report illegal activity
- Encourage industry to develop codes of practice that promote responsible behavior and compliance – potentially reducing permit restrictions.

PROGRAM INPUTS

- Expand to 186 Program-funded staff
- Provide a safe, supportive, rewarding workplace
- Equip field officers with a clear understanding of issues and key messages
- Develop and implement a rolling five-year training program for staff and volunteers
- Build partnerships and work with third parties (including contractors) to expand field delivery
- Support staff in transitioning from being deliverers to enabling delivery by others
- Develop and implement a First Nations Partnership Strategy
- Provide support to Coral Sea Marine Park management activities
- Collaborate with Australian and international partners on island, reef and species recovery
- Maintain a vessel deployment system and a rolling five-year vessel replacement program
- Deliver a new 24 metre vessel to expand patrol and response capacity
- Utilise Reef Trust Offsets and Curtis Island EMP funding to deliver field management activities that offset approvals for LNG projects
- Pursue funding partnerships for projects that compliment field management priorities
- Develop and implement a rolling five-year electronic system improvement program and technology improvement program including drones
- Record data in relevant electronic systems
- Contribute to other government reporting, including the *State of the Parks Report*, the *Outlook Report* and *Reef 2050 Plan* reporting
- Contribute to the DES Carbon Neutral Parks 2025 Program.

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