



Australian Government

Great Barrier Reef Progress Report

TO UNESCO WORLD HERITAGE CENTRE – FEBRUARY 2024



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Acknowledgement of Country

Our department recognises the First Peoples of this nation and their ongoing connection to culture and country. We acknowledge Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Peoples as the Traditional Owners, Custodians and Lore Keepers of the world's oldest living culture and pay respects to their Elders past, and present.

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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Australia is protecting the Outstanding Universal Value (OUV) of the Great Barrier Reef (the Reef) World Heritage Area. Australia works constructively and closely with UNESCO and IUCN to ensure protection of the Reef and all our World Heritage properties.

Increased actions and investments delivered by the Australian and Queensland governments to maintain the OUV ensures the Reef remains one of the best-managed World Heritage properties. This is achieved through a collaborative, interjurisdictional relationship between both the Australian and Queensland governments for joint management of the Reef.

Our actions are underpinned by the latest science, world-leading marine park management and strong partnerships, particularly with Traditional Owners, and a long-standing practice of transparency and regular public reporting. Australia publishes annual Long-Term Monitoring Program reports, regular Water Quality Report Cards, and five yearly Reef Outlook Reports.

Since the Reef was inscribed on the World Heritage List in 1981, Australia has regularly reported to the World Heritage Committee on issues affecting the property. In the past five years Australia has provided two State Party Reports on the State of Conservation (December 2019, February 2022), additional information ahead of 44COM (2021) and 45COM (2023), hosted a joint Reactive Monitoring Mission (March 2022) and responded to the resulting report with new commitments (May 2023), followed by submission of this latest progress report in 2024.

Given the substantial information within this report, in addition to the extensive engagement over previous years, Australia considers it appropriate to provide a state of conservation report in 2026 prior to any further consideration of adding the Reef on the List of World Heritage in Danger.

A minimum of two years between reports to the UNESCO World Heritage Centre is optimal, to allow time to provide evidence of on-ground implementation and demonstrate outcomes. This is particularly true for a property the size of the Reef, which is roughly the same size as Italy and has a catchment larger than Norway.

In May 2023, Australia provided a set of commitments to the UNESCO World Heritage Centre (available online at: www.dcceew.gov.au/parks-heritage/great-barrier-reef/publications) focusing on actions to address key pressures on the Reef. Delivering these commitments will lead to a stronger, more resilient Reef. This report outlines our delivery, progress and next steps for these commitments.

Water Quality

Improving water quality is one of the most important things we can do to protect the Reef. Poor water quality impacts the health of the Reef and affects its resilience to other pressures. Our actions to date have delivered significant outcomes, including stopping 140,000 tonnes of fine sediment pollutant (equivalent to approximately 55 Olympic swimming pools) and 550,000 kilograms of dissolved inorganic nitrogen from entering the Reef since 2014 through the Reef Trust program alone.

We are accelerating progress towards water quality targets through the newly established joint Streambank Remediation and Landscape Repair programs. These programs will boost efforts to repair land and reduce soil loss in priority Reef catchments by controlling erosion, supported by revegetation and investments in grazing land management to reduce sediment runoff to the Reef.

Fishing

Australia is committed to ensuring high-risk fishing activities do not impact the Reef. The Australian and Queensland governments have worked for many years to ensure fishing in the Reef is sustainable and are working together to implement fisheries reforms in close consultation with our fishing industry.

The Queensland Government moved to ban commercial gillnets and small bait mesh have been banned from the northern third of the Great Barrier Reef and dugong protected areas, implementation of the Queensland Sustainable Fisheries Strategy has accelerated and action is underway to phase out gillnet fishing on the Reef by 2027 and to introduce Independent Data Validation in Queensland's commercial fisheries.

Climate Change

Climate change is the greatest threat to coral reefs worldwide. It is a global threat that requires a global solution, and Australia is taking increased action domestically through increasingly ambitious emission reduction targets and significant investments. For example, the Australian Government has already legislated to reduce emissions by 43 per cent below 2005 levels by 2030 and achieving net zero by 2050 and committed over \$40 billion to building a clean energy future. In December 2023 the Queensland Government committed to increase its emissions reduction target to 75 per cent on 2005 levels by 2035.

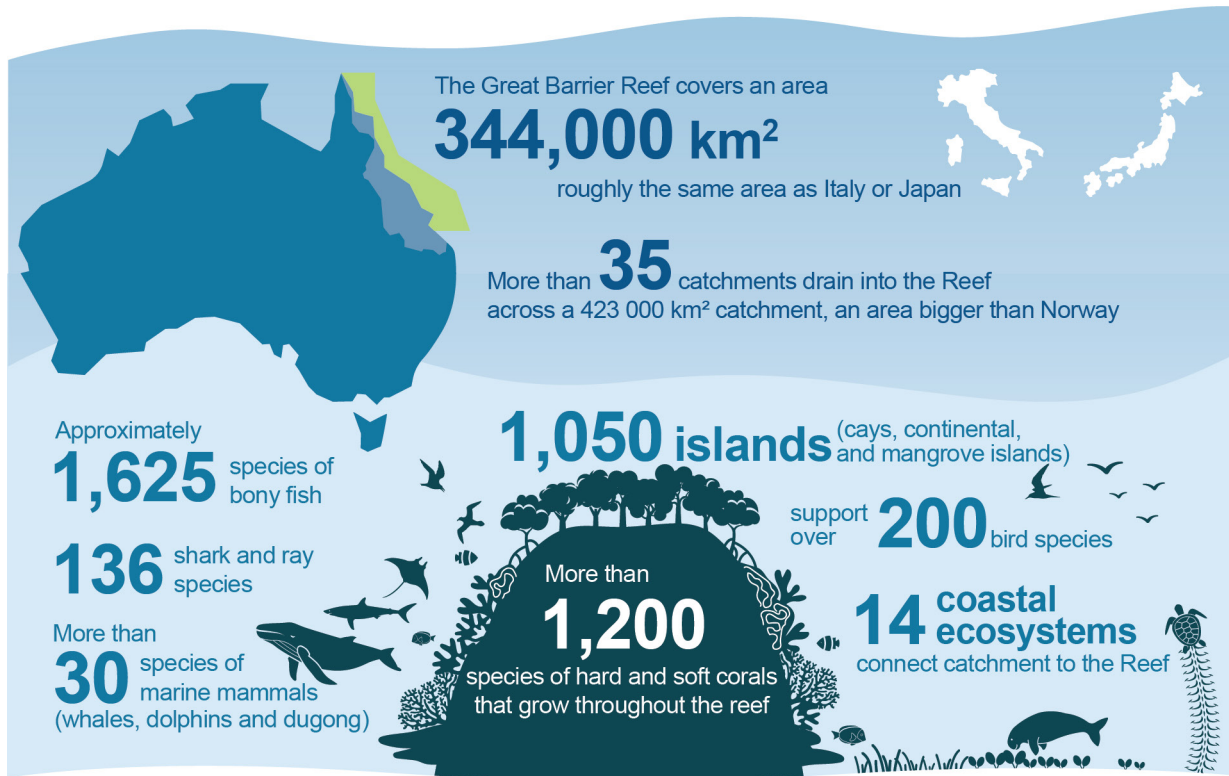
The Australian Government is now developing a Net Zero Plan and six Sectoral Decarbonisation Plans that will feed into strong 2035 emission reduction targets, which are on track to be announced ahead of the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change Conference of the Parties in 2025.

Australia's management of the Reef is world-leading, demonstrating the importance of using good science to inform decision-making. This has been recognised by the authors of the 2022 Reactive Monitoring Mission Report and is made possible by a strong reliance on the latest and best available science and partnerships between multiple governments and local communities.

This Report demonstrates how Australia is managing the threats to the Reef, supported by and providing unprecedented levels of investment to implement conservation and protection measures. Together, the Australian and Queensland governments are investing more than \$AUD4.7 billion in the Reef from 2014–15 to 2029–30. Private sector investment is also being mobilised, with \$318 million already leveraged by the Great Barrier Reef Foundation through the Reef Trust Partnership Collaborative Investment Strategy.

Our investment is guided by the *Reef 2050 Long-Term Sustainability Plan 2021–2025* (Reef 2050 Plan), Australia's overarching strategy for protecting and managing the Reef, and aims to address key threats to the Reef. Australia is committed to continuing to work with UNESCO and others in the World Heritage system to support the protection of World Heritage sites globally.

Protecting the Great Barrier Reef World Heritage Area



Taking action



Managing and protecting the Reef is a big, challenging and complex task.

The **Reef 2050 Plan** is Australia's overarching framework of protecting and managing the Great Barrier Reef and prioritises Australia's actions to help address key threats for the Reef.

Australia is taking actions to mitigate climate change, the biggest threat to the Great Barrier Reef, and coral reef ecosystems worldwide. Other threats include:



Poor water quality



Fishing impacts on protected and threatened species



Marine debris



Crown-of-thorns starfish outbreak

Investments

Australian and Queensland governments

\$ AUD 4.7 billion

Private sector investment

\$ AUD 318 million

Progress



Mitigating Climate Change

- Committed \$40 billion towards a clean energy future (Australian Government)
- Increased emission reduction targets to 75% on 2005 levels by 2035 (Queensland Government)



Improving Water Quality

- Prevented
- 140,000 tonnes of fine sediment pollutant, approx. **55** Olympic swimming pools
 - 550,000 kilograms of dissolved inorganic nitrogen stopped from entering the Reef



Sustainable Fishing

- Commenced phase-out of gillnet fishing
- Strengthening the use of Independent Data Validation on commercial fishing vessels

INTRODUCTION

This Report provides an update on the implementation of commitments made to UNESCO in May 2023 on the Great Barrier Reef (the Reef) World Heritage Area (available online at: www.dcceew.gov.au/parks-heritage/great-barrier-reef/publications) and referred to in UNESCO's [media release](#) of 6 June 2023.

It responds to World Heritage Committee Decision 45COM 7B.13, builds on the [information provided](#) for consideration ahead of 45COM, and is current as of January 2024.

As this Report details, advice and recommendations from the World Heritage Committee continue to be incorporated in the Reef's comprehensive planning and management framework.

Response to the Decision of the World Heritage Committee

This Report addresses the issues raised in the World Heritage Committee Decision 45COM 7B.13 and provides updates on commitments concurrently, as follows:

- **Section 1** – Improving Water Quality on the Great Barrier Reef
- **Section 2** – Sustainable Fishing on the Great Barrier Reef
- **Section 3** – Mitigating Climate Change impacts on the Great Barrier Reef.

Section 4 outlines the reviews underway, reports due to be published soon and next steps for Australia's adaptive management of the Reef. A dashboard summary of progress against commitments is also available at **Appendix A**.



1 IMPROVING WATER QUALITY ON THE GREAT BARRIER REEF


Gully Repair, Restoration and Remediation

45 COM7B.13, Paragraph 4.a.

Identify priority areas of grazing land for gully repairs and associated restoration and remediation activities, and significantly scale up restoration activities.

Australia's May 2023 Commitments

WQ1. By 31 December 2023: Deliver a complete mapping of all priority areas of grazing land for gully repairs and associated restoration and remediation activities, the identification of the priority gullies where the repair, restoration and remediation action will have the greatest impact on sediment reduction, and a detailed timeline for the completion of the repair of the areas of highest priority.

Status: Complete 

WQ2. By 31 December 2023: Initiate the delivery of a joint federal-state program that will start repairing and restoring the gullies of the highest priority with immediate effect and deliver significant and meaningful sediment reduction necessary to protect the ecology of the Great Barrier Reef including the most polluting catchment areas (e.g. Burdekin, Fitzroy and Burnett Mary catchments).

Status: Complete 

Report on Commitments

Australia has delivered its commitments to:

- Complete mapping of grazing land for repair, restoration, and remediation.
- Initiate a joint program to repair and restore the gullies of the highest priority with immediate effect.

This is delivering meaningful sediment reduction necessary to protect the ecology of the Great Barrier Reef including the most polluting catchment areas.

Mapping priority areas of grazing land

Preliminary mapping of all Reef catchments has been delivered by the Queensland Paddock to Reef program. Gully and Streambank Mapping and enhanced mapping of the high priority catchments is complete. This mapping will inform the prioritisation of future investment primarily through its application in the Reef Water Quality Report Card catchment models.

Joint programs to repair and restore gullies

A joint Australian and Queensland government [Streambank Remediation Program](#) is underway. Funding was provided to successful contractors in May and September 2023. The \$AUD12.4 million Program will help further reduce sediment runoff from eroded streambanks and gullies in the Burdekin, Mackay Whitsunday, Burnett Mary, Herbert River, and Fitzroy River catchments. The Streambank repair projects are expected to be completed by June 2026.

The program will help accelerate progress toward the Australian and Queensland governments' joint objectives for protecting the Great Barrier Reef. It complements a \$AUD200 million joint [Landscape Repair Program](#) that is underway to address sediment in priority locations. A \$AUD150 million investment was announced by the Australian Government in April 2023 for the program with a further \$AUD50 million investment announced in November 2023, bolstering the Queensland Government's commitment of \$AUD10 million for major gully remediation projects. Delivery partners across the 6 Reef regions have been engaged and issued with program guidance to support co-design of project proposals.

Together, the two programs will boost efforts to repair land and reduce soil loss in priority Reef catchments by controlling erosion primarily from gullies and streambanks. This will be supported by revegetation and investments in grazing land management to reduce sediment runoff to the Reef.

Reef 2050 Water Quality Improvement Plan

45 COM7B.13, Paragraph 4.e.

Ensure Reef 2050 Water Quality Improvement Plan (WQIP) water quality targets, are sufficient and implemented to reverse the negative trend in water quality.


45 COM7B.13, Paragraph 6.

Notes with serious concern the slow progress in achieving the water quality targets, in particular for fine sediment and dissolved inorganic nitrogen and also welcomes the State Party's commitment to enact, with immediate effect, a major shift in its water quality programmes with the aim to achieve the 2025 water quality targets and to finalize the revision of the WQIP and set new 2025–2030 water quality targets by June


2025, and further requests the State Party to ensure that the commitments are fully implemented and that the anticipated 2025–2030 water quality targets are sufficiently ambitious to reverse the negative trend in water quality;

Australia's May 2023 Commitments

WQ3. By 30 June 2025: finalise the independent water quality science review and the Scientific Consensus Statement as the foundational scientific understanding to underpin the revision of the Reef Water Quality Improvement Plan and the establishment of new water quality targets for the period 2025–2030, to ensure consistency with the management frameworks adopted in the Reef 2050 Plan.

Status: On Track 

WQ5 By February 2025: accelerate progress to achieve all water quality targets through a program of sediment, nutrient and pesticide reduction through combined efforts in regulation, incentives, and accelerated landscape restoration programs, e.g. 60% reduction in dissolved inorganic nitrogen loads (remaining to target: 32.3%), 25% reduction in sediment loads (remaining to target: 9.8%), 20% reduction in particulate nitrogen loads (remaining to target: 5.6%), 20% in particulate phosphorous loads (remaining to target: 2.6%), and pesticides target of 99% of aquatic species protected at end of catchments (remaining to target: 2.3%)

Status: On Track 

Report on Commitments

Australia is on track to deliver its commitments to:

- Finalise the updated Scientific Consensus Statement on land-based impacts to Reef water quality and ecosystem condition, including the associated independent water quality science review to underpin the revision of the Reef 2050 Water Quality Improvement Plan and the establishment of new water quality targets.
- Accelerate progress to achieve water quality targets.

The Great Barrier Reef catchment is 424,000 square kilometres, an area bigger than Norway. It is important to recognise delivering tangible, sustainable, long-term water quality improvements for the largest coral and sea grass reef ecosystem on the planet is a complex task that takes time.

Independent Scientific Consensus Statement

The independent water quality science review is part of the process to update the [Scientific Consensus Statement](#) (SCS) on land-based impacts to Reef water quality and ecosystem condition. The SCS provides the scientific evidence to underpin the Reef 2050 Water Quality Improvement Plan and is on track for release in mid-2024. The SCS brings together the latest scientific evidence on how land-based activities can influence water quality in the Reef, how these influences can be managed, and is used as an evidence-base for policy makers.

There are several changes to the way the updated SCS has been developed for greater independence and increased transparency in the approach. To achieve this, development of the SCS has involved oversight and assurance by Australia's Chief Scientist, and endorsement of technical details by the Reef Water Quality Independent Science Panel. Several expert working groups were also established to support development of methods to ensure best practice was followed for the synthesis of evidence, peer review and consensus processes.

Reef 2050 Water Quality Improvement Plan and Target Review

The water quality targets form an integral part of the framework for the [Reef 2050 Water Quality Improvement Plan](#). They are ecologically-relevant targets, that are developed to manage impacts from pollutants, maintain seagrass and coral cover and provide a mechanism to track progress of water quality actions. The independent Water Quality Target Review will result in greater confidence in the targets set. In some catchments these targets may change, due to the availability of more recent and accurate data.

The [Review](#) of the Reef 2050 Water Quality Improvement Plan will be completed by mid-2025, informed by the updated SCS, the Water Quality Target Review, Traditional Owner knowledge and engagement with Reef catchment communities. It will also be informed by progress towards targets reported through the Paddock to Reef Integrated Monitoring, Modelling and Reporting Program (Paddock to Reef program). This will result in an ambitious and inclusive set of actions that seek to comprehensively tackle land-based pollution risks to the Reef.

Water Quality Improvement Review



Accelerating Progress

The Australian Government's \$AUD1.2 billion [Reef Protection and Restoration](#) commitment includes funding to accelerate actions to meeting water quality targets. Further investments will be made to support improved urban, regional and remote land management through voluntary practice change programs, rehabilitating wetlands and building regional capacity and expanding successful pilots such as the Burdekin Irrigation Project that radically reduces runoff by modernising irrigation systems. The Queensland Government has committed \$AUD289.6 million over five years to 2025–2026 to continue the [Queensland Reef Water Quality Program](#). The Program funds a range of water quality improvement projects working with industry, agricultural producers, communities and Traditional Owners, including an expanded compliance presence to support the implementation of the Reef Protection Regulations.

The continuing and new programs build on previous successes and significant investments and commitments by the Australian and Queensland governments to Reef water quality since 2014-15. The next Reef Water Quality Report Card will report on progress to June 2022 and is scheduled for release by mid-2024. This report card will report on results from projects completed and underway between July 2020 and June 2022. Progress towards the water quality targets is graded in each report card based on the required trajectory to meet them by 2025. The cumulative progress to date is also provided as context. Note the current water quality targets are under review.

A significant number of projects have been initiated or completed since this reporting period and are not captured in these results. They will be reported in future report cards, and will strengthen our progress towards the targets since 2022. It is worth noting that improving water quality over an area larger than most nations is a complex system wide challenge and substantial investment and time is needed to implement the required land management changes. It will take years to see the results on the ground and new program timeframes are designed to capture these.


Native Vegetation

45 COM 7B.13, Paragraph 4d.

- 4.d. Prioritise the protection of remnant native vegetation across the GBR catchments

Australia's May 2023 Commitments

WQ4 By July 2024: expand the implementation of 2018 land clearing legislation and further strengthen protection to remnant and high value conservation areas, including, through an accelerated and enhanced compliance program to secure the protection of remnant native vegetation in areas of high conservation value in the Reef catchments.

Status: On Track 

Report on Commitment

Australia is on track to deliver the commitment to strengthen protection of remnant and high value conservation areas and enhance compliance with land clearing legislation in the Reef catchment areas.

Protection of remnant and high value conservation areas

Protection of remnant and high value conservation areas has increased across the Reef catchments following the November 2022 Queensland Government announcement on initiatives to further improve vegetation management. This includes the expansion of the protected area system through Queensland Government's investments in both the \$AUD6 million [Great Barrier Reef Island Arks](#) initiative and the \$AUD262.5 million allocated to increase Queensland's public protected area estate. Properties secured (in whole, or in part) include Long Island Broad Sound (35km²), St Bees Island (1.05km²), Wild Duck Island (1.18km²) and Spadely Station (16.36 km²) within the Great Barrier Reef Marine Park region.

The Queensland Government's \$AUD38.5 million [Cape York Peninsula Tenure Resolution Program](#) is returning ownership and management of identified lands to Traditional Owners, while ensuring the protection of Cape York Peninsula's iconic natural areas and significant natural and cultural values. This program is protecting additional land in the Reef catchment, including the newly dedicated Apudthama National Park (3,620km²).

The Queensland Government will also pursue better engagement and incentives for sustainable native vegetation management recognising the important work of landholders to conserve forests and habitat on their properties. This follows the acceptance in principle of the 10 recommendations of the [Native Vegetation Scientific Expert Panel Report](#) on identifying measures to further reduce vegetation clearing in Queensland. The Report and the Government's response was publicly released on 12 October 2023.

The Queensland Government accepted all recommendations of this report either fully or in-principle and will deliver on the recommendations over the next two years by:

- Maintaining regulatory stability.
- Tailoring the recent third funding round of the \$AUD500 million Land Restoration Fund to prioritise projects that provide improvement to the health of wetlands, coastal ecosystems and land restoration for threatened species and ecosystems.
- Implementing actions under the Queensland Low Emissions Agriculture Roadmap 2022–2032.
- Funding rounds of the \$AUD2.7 million Carbon Farming Advice Scheme.

In addition, the Queensland and Australian governments are working to identify opportunities to increase the uptake of market-based incentives to further protect vegetation through research, innovation and landholder engagement initiatives, including new methods for the carbon market.

Land clearing legislation

The *Vegetation Management Act 1999 (Qld)* prohibits broadscale clearing in both remnant vegetation and areas of high value regrowth. A report released in December 2022 showed overall clearing in 2019–20 fell by nearly 40 per cent state-wide and 16 per cent in Reef catchments from the previous year. A report released on 30 July 2023 shows overall clearing in 2020–21 fell another 17 per cent statewide and 10 per cent in Reef catchments. This is a total reduction of nearly 50 per cent statewide and 26 per cent in Reef catchments in two years. It is important to note that 82 per cent of all clearing was re-clearing of areas that had previously been lawfully cleared. The next report, which will be for the 2021–22 monitoring period, will be released in the second half of the 2024 calendar year.

It is essential that the public have confidence that the laws which protect our Reef and its catchments are being upheld. The Queensland Government has developed innovative systems to rapidly detect and prevent illegal clearing as quickly as possible, minimising potential vegetation loss. The Early Detection System tool uses the European Space Agency's Sentinel-2 satellite imagery (10-metre resolution) to detect changes in vegetation cover across Queensland's land surface every five days. Each fortnight, the detections are analysed by departmental officers, allowing early intervention with landholders to correct practices and minimise environmental harm. This has resulted in formal warnings, fines, and prosecutions to prevent further clearing, and restoration notices to reverse the impacts.

Starting in 2023, statewide compliance is being further enhanced through a \$AUD9.8 million 4-year pilot project included in the Queensland Government's June 2023 budget. The project will increase proactive education such as audits and workshops, and support enforcement activities to further reduce unauthorised clearing. This will reduce carbon emissions and increase retention of endangered and of concern regional ecosystems in Reef catchments.

Monitoring and reporting native vegetation

The Queensland Government continues to monitor and report on vegetation change through its long-standing [Statewide Landcover and Trees Study](#) (SLATS) and the [Regional Ecosystem](#) framework, with \$AUD2.5 million annually committed to this work. Since 2021–22, an additional \$AUD9.5 million is being invested over four years to enhance the SLATS program to include development of a vegetation condition assessment and mapping framework and to generate more scientifically advanced information about the condition of the vegetation.

SLATS monitors and reports annual change in the extent of woody vegetation due to land clearing and regrowth using satellite imagery as the primary monitoring tool. It is the only large-scale vegetation change monitoring program in Australia that makes its methods, reporting and data available as open access, ensuring full transparency and accountability.

SLATS is complemented by the [Early Detection System](#) (EDS), the proactive compliance monitoring program which builds on SLATS' technologies to monitor land clearing in regulated vegetation. The EDS will be integral to the Queensland Government's 4-year enhanced compliance pilot project for land clearing.

Best Practice Land Management

45 COM 7B.13, Paragraph 4c.


Increase significantly the scale and pace of adoption, monitoring and enforcement of best management practice in sugarcane and banana farming,

Australia's May 2023 Commitments

WQ6 By January 2024: Double compliance activity being undertaken across the regulated Reef catchment areas comparative to what was being achieved in 2021 in order to enforce landholder compliance with Reef protection regulated standards and respond to any non-compliance. Concurrently secure improved water quality outcomes by supporting increased industry participation in best management practice projects and programs, with 50% of sugarcane and banana areas operating above minimum practice standards by June 2026.

Status: Complete 

(for component due January 2024)

and **On Track** 

(for component due June 2026)

Report on Commitment

Australia has met its commitment to double compliance activities by January 2024 and is continuing to support industry adoption of improved land management practices and participation in best practice management projects and programs.

Compliance Activities

Compliance activity has increased across the regulated Reef catchment areas to ensure adoption of regulated practice standards in sugarcane farming, banana farming and beef cattle grazing. The standards commenced in phases from 1 December 2019, taking full effect across all relevant Reef regions and industries from 1 December 2022. The number of reef compliance officers in 2023 has more than doubled compared to 2021, and consequently, compliance activity has substantially increased, and the target of doubling physical (on-farm) inspections has been exceeded. Compliance activities focus on increasing awareness of the regulations, the benefits of improved farm practices and potential consequences for non-compliance, as strategies to inform and enable voluntary compliance in the first instance. Where voluntary compliance is not achieved, warning letters, statutory notices and fines are used to secure compliance. Escalated enforcement measures are only part of the behaviour change achieved through compliance activities, non-compliance is most often addressed rapidly and voluntarily by the client when the issue is raised.

Supporting Industry participation

A statutory review of the Reef protection regulations will evaluate whether the regulations, and Queensland Government investment to support implementation, has resulted in improved practices in the agriculture, industrial, and resource sectors. The statutory review will be completed by the end of February 2024 and its findings used to inform future activity, including the review of the Reef 2050 Water Quality Improvement Plan.

Data from recent surveys of farmers indicates that regulations are a motivating factor for participation in practice change programs. Furthermore, participation in practice change programs in combination with regulated standards assists farmers to comply with and go beyond the regulated standards. Market research indicates that the number of farmers fully implementing best farming practices to reduce run-off has increased from 2021 to 2023, and more farmers (90% - self reported) are taking action to manage their run-off compared to 2021 (80% - self reported).

Industry participation in adopting best management practices will be supported through the Reef Trust Water Quality Package 2022–23 to 2029–30. Under the earlier Reef Trust Water Quality Program (2014 to 2023), cane farmers were supported to improve their farm design or drainage and implement Smartcane Best Management Program practices, such as trash blanketing, legume fallow, and minimum tillage.

In addition to over \$AUD10 million in funding to continue support for industry Best Management Practice programs, the Queensland Government has allocated around \$AUD25 million for practice improvement programs across key agricultural commodities. The aim is to further enhance land management in Reef catchments and support growers to exceed minimum practice standards, using lessons learned from other projects to reduce the risk of soil and nutrients being lost to waterways. Enhancing land management systems improves land condition, ground cover and landscape stability, which benefits Reef water quality and the productivity and sustainability of grazing enterprises.

Net Benefits

45 COM 7B.13, Paragraph 4g.

Ensure that the carbon¹ and water quality related credit schemes being deployed in the GBR catchments deliver overall net benefits to the OUV of the property.

The [Reef Credit](#) market is evolving and responding to growing interest from a market looking for sustained and verified pollutant reductions for Reef water quality. The Queensland Government is working with Eco-Markets Australia, the country's first independent environmental market administrator, to help establish the voluntary Reef Credits Scheme and resultant market. Support for the Scheme includes a \$AUD10 million Reef Credit Fund designed to encourage scheme participation by brokers, project developers, landholders, and credit purchasers.

Eco-Markets Australia oversees the Reef Credit Scheme methodologies and standards to ensure claimed water quality improvements to the Great Barrier Reef are real and additional, and also oversee the register of generated and traded Reef Credits. Reef Credits can be sold into compliance markets as offsets or into voluntary markets. For example, this could include entities looking to meet environmental and social charters. Credit project terms can be up to 25 years, providing potential ongoing financial benefits to landholders.

¹ Carbon related credit schemes are discussed under Net Benefits in Section 3 Mitigating climate change impacts on the Great Barrier Reef.

On 15 December 2023, the Nature Repair Act 2023 came into effect following passage by the Australian Parliament. The Act creates the framework for the world's first legislated, national, voluntary biodiversity market, the Nature Repair Market. Once established, the Nature Repair Market will complement the Reef Credit Scheme, for example by enabling landholders to be issued with a tradeable biodiversity certificate for repair and restoration projects in the Reef catchments and World Heritage Area (within 12 nautical miles of the low tide mark). The Nature Repair Market will operate in parallel with the Australian Carbon Credit Unit scheme. Where carbon and biodiversity outcomes are additional, both carbon credits and biodiversity certificates will be allowed to be issued from the same site – carbon related credit schemes are discussed under Net Benefits in Section 3 of this report.

The Australian Government is enabling a co-investment project through the Reef Trust Partnership, between, the Great Barrier Reef Foundation and L'Oréal Fund for Nature Regeneration to develop a methodology to calculate the value of coral reef biodiversity, support the deployment of restoration efforts, and ultimately, support future biodiversity markets.

Environmental Regulation

45 COM 7B.13, Paragraph 4b.

Require proposed and in-progress dam developments to show clear alignment with water quality improvement for the Great Barrier Reef (GBR)

45 COM 7B.13, Paragraph 7.

Further welcomes the cancellation of the Urannah and Hells Gate dam projects due to their potential impact on the OUV of the property, and requests furthermore the State Party to require proposed and in-progress dam developments to show clear alignment with water quality improvement for the property as a condition for approval under relevant legislation, and ensure all proposed projects are assessed in line with the new Guidance and Toolkit for Impact Assessments in a World Heritage Context;

Under the [Environment Protection and Biodiversity Conservation Act 1999](#) (EPBC Act) any action with a significant impact on the Great Barrier Reef World Heritage Area, or any threatened or migratory species that exist within the Reef, requires approval by Australia's Environment Minister. If a dam or other project is approved under this legislation, it can be subject to conditions that avoid, mitigate, or offset environmental impacts.

In December 2022, Australia released the [Nature Positive Plan: better for the environment, better for business](#). The Plan sets out the Government's commitment to strengthen and streamline the EPBC Act, to better protect, restore, and manage Australia's unique environment.

In the [2023–24 Budget](#), the Australian Government committed funds to deliver the key initiatives in the Nature Positive Plan. These reforms include:

- New National Environmental Standards to guide regulatory decision-making. The National Environmental Standards will set out clear thresholds and guidance for regulation of impacts on the Reef, including a requirement that any regulatory approval delivers an overall net positive outcome for the Reef.
- A new independent agency, Environment Protection Australia (EPA), to administer environmental laws and maintain confidence in Australia’s environmental protection system. The new EPA will be resourced and empowered to ensure compliance with national environmental law.
- An authoritative source of high-quality environmental information, Environment Information Australia (EIA). EIA will have a legislative mandate to provide environmental data to EPA, the Australian Environment Minister and the public, and track progress against environmental goals. Access to quality data will underpin effective compliance by EPA.

These reforms will enhance confidence in the capacity of Australia’s national environmental laws to effectively regulate any proposed impacts on the Reef into the future.

2 SUSTAINABLE FISHING ON THE GREAT BARRIER REEF

Net Fishing

45 COM 7B.13, Paragraph 4j


Phase out destructive gillnet fishing in the property;

45 COM 7B.13, Paragraph 8.

by December 2023, complete the implementation of the Queensland Sustainable Fisheries Strategy,² establish a net free zone in the northern third of the property, introduce new legislation requiring independent data validation in commercial fisheries,³ and to ensure the property is gillnet free by June 2027 and the target maximum economic yield (60% biomass) is achieved by December 2027,² and requests moreover the State Party to effectively implement the phase out of all gillnet fisheries in the property and ensure compliance with the mandatory independent data validation of vessels operating in the property introduced by the new legislation;³



Australia's May 2023 Commitments

F1. Phase out all destructive gillnet fisheries to ensure the property as a whole will be gill-net free by 30 June 2027.


Status: On Track 

F2. Establish a complete net free zone in the Northern third of the property (Cape Bedford to the tip of Cape York) and establish additional net-free-zones that expand net restrictions in the

Gulf of Carpentaria (e.g., Mornington Island, rivers/foreshores adjacent to Weipa, Karumba and Mapoon), to further strengthen protections for threatened species that move between Great Barrier Reef and the Gulf, and ensure displaced fishing effort does not intensify threats to those species as well as in other high value habitats of protected species identified through consultation, by 31 December 2023.

Status: Complete  and **In Progress**  (for Gulf of Carpentaria only)

F5. Immediately make threatened hammerhead sharks 'no take' for commercial fishers.

Status: Complete 

Report on Commitments

Australia has met its commitments to:

- Establish a net free zone in the northern third of the Reef.
- Ensure effort is not displaced to other high value habitats.
- Make hammerhead sharks no take for commercial fishers.

Gillnet fishing is also on track to be phased out by June 2027 as committed. The establishment of net free zones in the Gulf of Carpentaria (outside the Great Barrier Reef World Heritage Area) to ensure effort is not displaced is in progress and expected to be implemented from March 2024.

² The Queensland Sustainable Fisheries Strategy and associated harvest strategies are covered in the subsection of the same name below.

³ Independent data validation is covered in the subsection of the same name below.

Gillnet fishing

The Queensland Government is taking action to [phase out gillnet fishing](#) on the Great Barrier Reef. Regulations commenced in January 2024 to remove large mesh gillnet licences (N1, N2 and N4 symbols) from the Great Barrier Reef World Heritage Area.

A limited-life 'NX' fishing licence will be available from February 2024 for up to 40 eligible licence holders to allow for some gillnet fishing to continue in the Reef during the transition phase until these licences expire in mid-2027. This is less than half the number of active licensees previously using gillnets in the Reef and less than a quarter of the number of current licences available. The NX licences will apply to Queensland Waters that are within the World Heritage Property and adjacent waters such as port areas, rivers, and streams. However, NX licence holders will be restricted from gillnetting in identified high value habitat areas for threatened species and must meet mandatory requirements for onboard monitoring (observers or cameras) and to support independent data validation.

Net free zones

Commercial gillnets and small bait mesh nets were banned from the northern third of the Great Barrier Reef (from Cape Bedford to the tip of Cape York) from 1 January 2024. At the same time, commercial gill nets were also banned from all dugong protection areas in the Great Barrier Reef, with the exception of gill netting in creeks and streams of dugong protection B areas for a reduced number of transitional gill net licence holders.

Industry consultation regarding establishment of new Gulf of Carpentaria gillnet-free zones closed on 10 December 2023. Gillnet-free zones in the Gulf will further strengthen protections for threatened species that may move between the Great Barrier Reef and the Gulf and ensure displaced fishing effort does not intensify threats to those species. The Gulf zones are on a different timeline to zones within the Great Barrier Reef World Heritage Area and are proposed to be implemented from March 2024.

High value habitats and threatened species

Existing dugong protection areas (DPA)(both A and B) have already been identified as high value habitat. NX gillnet licence holders will not be able to operate within DPAs during the transition phase, with the exception of rivers and creeks in DPA B's. A working group has been established to identify other high value habitat through an additional evidence collation process.

Threatened hammerhead sharks were made no-take for commercial fishers in Queensland in January 2024 through a declaration. This protection is aimed at reducing the main threat, fishing mortality. Regulations to provide [structural adjustment](#) payments for these changes, to support fishers' exit from the gillnetting industry, and for related impacted businesses, also commenced in January for the Reef and will commence from March 2024 for the Gulf of Carpentaria.

Queensland Sustainable Fisheries Strategy

45 COM 7B.13, Paragraph 4i.


Accelerate the implementation of the Queensland Sustainable Fisheries Strategy.

45COM 7B.13, Paragraph 8

by December 2023, complete the implementation of the Queensland Sustainable Fisheries Strategy, establish a net free zone in the northern third of the property,⁴ introduce new legislation requiring independent data validation in commercial fisheries,⁵ and to ensure the property is gillnet free by June 2027 and the target maximum economic yield (60% biomass) is achieved by December 2027, and requests moreover the State Party to effectively implement the phase out of all gillnet fisheries in the property and ensure compliance with the mandatory independent data validation of vessels operating in the property introduced by the new legislation;

Australia's May 2023 Commitments

- F3. By 31 December 2023: Complete implementation of the Sustainable Fisheries Strategy, including finalising all harvest strategies with defined quotas for all key species, and by 31 December 2027, working to achieve the target maximum economic yield (60% biomass).

Status: In Progress 

Report on Commitment

Australia has accelerated implementation of the [Queensland Sustainable Fisheries Strategy 2017–2027](#). With 29 of 33 actions under the Strategy already completed, implementation is ahead of the original scheduled delivery by 2027. The remaining actions are mostly procedural, could not be delivered early, and are on track for completion before the Strategy expires in 2027.

There is only one outstanding harvest strategy for the Reef. It is for the Rocky Reef fishery. In this fishery, most fishing effort occurs outside of the World Heritage Area in the central and south-east regions of Queensland. The management reforms for the harvest strategy are already in place, with the harvest strategy expected to be delivered prior to the completion of the Sustainable Fisheries Strategy.

The introduction of the net closures is expected to positively affect the trajectory to meet the 60 per cent unfished biomass targets for some species. Many harvest strategies are due to be reviewed within the next two to three years.

⁴ The net free zone and gillnet phase out is discussed above in the Net Fishing subsection.

⁵ Independent data validation is covered in the subsection of the same name below.

Independent Data Validation

45COM 7B.13, Paragraph 8

by December 2023, complete the implementation of the Queensland Sustainable Fisheries Strategy,⁶ establish a net free zone in the northern third of the property, introduce new legislation requiring independent data validation in commercial fisheries, and to ensure the property is gillnet free by June 2027 and the target maximum economic yield (60% biomass) is achieved by December 2027, and requests moreover the State Party to effectively implement the phase out of all gillnet fisheries in the property and ensure compliance with the mandatory independent data validation of vessels operating in the property introduced by the new legislation;

Australia's May 2023 Commitments

- F4. By 1 December 2023: Introduce legislation to mandate the use of Independent Data Validation on all commercial fishing vessels.

Status: Complete 

Implementation of Independent Data Validation in ecologically high-risk commercial fisheries will follow in the first quarter of 2024. Gillnet and trawl fisheries will be progressed as a priority, drawing on the ecological risk assessments completed for each fishery. The Queensland Government has allocated \$AUD22 million in their budget for Independent Data Validation. The Australian Government will match Queensland's funding for Independent Data Validation from its \$AUD1.2 billion Reef protection package.

Report on Commitment

The legislative process to mandate the use of Independent Data Validation on all commercial fishing vessels was initiated in December 2023 and will likely come into effect in the first quarter of 2024.

Legislation was introduced into the Queensland Parliament in late 2023 to establish the head of power necessary to mandate Independent Data Validation on commercial fishing vessels in any Queensland Fishery. This is expected to come into effect under the *Queensland Fisheries Act 1994* in the first quarter of 2024.

⁶ The Queensland Sustainable Fisheries Strategy and associated harvest strategies are discussed in the subsection of the same name above.

3 MITIGATING CLIMATE CHANGE IMPACTS ON THE GREAT BARRIER REEF

Net Emissions Reduction

45 COM 7B.13, Paragraph 4f

Review and strengthen the Reef 2050 Plan to include clear government commitments to reduce greenhouse emissions consistent with the efforts required to limit the global average temperature increase to 1.5°C above pre-industrial levels, to limit the impacts of climate change on the property's Outstanding Universal Value (OUV) (recommended by the March 2022 mission to be achieved by 31 December 2022),


45 COM 7B.13, Paragraph 5

Welcomes the State Party's significantly increased actions in addressing climate change since the Reactive Monitoring mission, including through newly adopted legislation introducing progressive reduction targets for carbon emissions, and for the State Party's additional commitment to set successively more ambitious emission reduction targets in alignment with efforts to limit global temperature increase to 1.5°C above pre-industrial times, and also requests the State Party to revise and strengthen the Reef 2050 Plan accordingly and in alignment with the mission recommendations.

Australia's May 2023 Commitments

CC1. The Australian Government commits to set successively more ambitious emissions reduction targets, reflecting highest possible ambition, consistent with achieving net zero by 2050, and in alignment with efforts to limit global temperature increase to 1.5°C. These targets will be informed by advice from the independent Climate Change

Authority. The Government will set a 2035 target and communicate it to the UNFCCC as Australia's second Nationally Determined Contribution under the Paris Agreement in advance of the Conference of the Parties serving as the meeting of the Parties to the Paris Agreement in 2025.

Status: On Track 

CC2. The Australian Government commits to update the Reef 2050 Plan (in consultation with the Queensland Government) to reflect (a) the new commitments taken under the Climate Change Act 2022 and (b) Australia's overall commitment to work alongside global partners to tackle the climate crisis, achieve the goals of the Paris Agreement and pursue ambitious emissions reductions to limit the global temperature increase to 1.5°C above pre-industrial levels.

Status: Complete 

In support of these commitments:

- a. The Australian Government has legislated emissions reductions of 43 per cent by 2030 and net zero emissions by 2050.
- b. The Australian Government is required by law to prepare annual statements to Parliament under the Climate Change Act 2022 - on progress towards national emissions reduction targets, international developments, climate risks, impacts and policy. These statements must be informed by advice from the independent Climate Change Authority.

- c. The Australian Government commits to continually increasing its climate ambition, including by working urgently to implement its substantial and rigorous suite of new policies across the economy to maximize their emissions impact and drive Australia's transition to net zero. Australia's States, Territories and local governments are also implementing significant policies and programs to reduce emissions. The cumulative impact of action by governments at different levels, and industry, businesses, land managers and Australians, seek to deliver the greatest possible emissions reductions in this critical decade.
- d. The Australian Government commits to increase renewable electricity generation to 82 per cent by 2030.
- e. The Queensland Government has released its Energy and Jobs Plan to achieve, 70 per cent renewable energy by 2032 and 80 per cent by 2035. The plan will achieve a 50 per cent reduction in electricity emissions on 2005 levels by 2030 and a 90 per cent reduction in electricity emissions by 2035–36. It includes delivery of a 2 gigawatt 24 hour Borumba pumped hydro energy storage project and the world's largest 5 gigawatt Pioneer-Burdekin pumped hydro energy storage dam.
- f. By 2035 Queensland will have no regular reliance on coal for power production and will have more pumped hydro energy storage for renewable energy than the rest of Australia combined. Queensland's pumped hydro energy storage for renewable energy will be more than Europe, China or the US as a share of energy demand. This will provide

Queensland with reliable, firmed renewable energy combined with a SuperGrid to transmit renewable energy including a connection to Australia's largest renewable energy zone and the world class North West Minerals Province with over \$AUD500 billion in new economy minerals needed to manufacture renewable energy technologies. That means Queensland will not only transition to renewable energy but will also play a key role in the global supply of new economy minerals and in the manufacturing of renewable technologies.

Report on Commitment

Australia's delivery of commitments demonstrates our ongoing commitment to strong action on climate change, including:

- The legislation of ambitious 2030 targets and work towards developing more ambitious 2035 targets.
- The suite of programs and policies, including those for renewable energy, to achieve these targets.
- The update of the Reef 2050 Plan to reflect commitments and initiatives.

Reef 2050 Plan

Australia is firmly committed to strong action on climate change, as reflected in the [2023 Climate Change Addendum to the Reef 2050 Plan](#), published 22 November 2023. The Addendum acknowledges climate change is the most serious and pervasive threat to the Reef and captures the Australian and Queensland Government's recent climate policy commitments and legislation in the Reef 2050 Plan's 'Work Area 1: Limit the Impacts of Climate Change'.

Emissions Reduction Targets

Australian Government

The Australian Government has demonstrated its commitment by legislating targets to reduce Australia's emissions by 43 per cent below 2005 levels by 2030 and achieving net zero by 2050. The Climate Change Act 2022, which enshrines these targets in legislation, came into effect on 14 September 2022. The legislation also introduced the requirement for an Annual Climate Change Statement to Parliament to provide greater accountability and transparency, supported by independent advice from Australia's Climate Change Authority. There have been two statements delivered to the Australian Parliament, which reinforce our commitment and the implementation status.

The Australian Government has committed to setting successively more ambitious emissions reduction targets and by 2025 will be required to submit its 2035 emissions reduction target under the Paris Agreement. This will be informed by Climate Change Authority advice and the sectoral emissions reduction plans being developed. These plans will reflect input from communities, businesses, investors, workers, experts, and individuals. They will reflect that all Australians have a role to play in the net zero transformation. The Australian Government is on track to announce its second Nationally Determined Contribution ahead of the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change Conference of the Parties in 2025.

Queensland Government

The Queensland Government made a landmark announcement on 15 December 2023 of a new emissions reduction target of 75 per cent on 2005 levels by 2035, which will play a critical role in mitigating the effects of climate change. This is significant given Queensland represents approximately 30 per cent of total national emissions. This initiative will bolster Australia's ability to meet its domestic and international emission reduction commitments. The Queensland Government is committed to enshrining the targets in legislation. Legislation will also seek to establish an expert panel to set a credible pathway to net zero and five yearly targets until 2050. This builds on existing commitments to achieve net zero by 2050 and to accelerate uptake of renewable energy reaching 80 per cent of Queensland's power generation by 2035.

Transitioning to a Net Zero Future

The [second Annual Climate Change Statement](#), tabled in Parliament on 30 November 2023, recognised that reducing emissions by 43 per cent below 2005 levels by 2030 will require a whole-of-economy effort. But with our policy framework in place and effective implementation, it is an achievable target.

The Australian Government is developing a Net Zero Plan, which was committed to in the [first Annual Climate Change Statement](#) to Parliament in 2022. The plan will articulate how Australia will transition to a net zero economy by 2050, consistent with our international and domestic commitments, and will identify new policies and programs to support Australia's decarbonisation pathway.

The Government is also developing 6 Sectoral Decarbonisation Plans, covering electricity and energy, industry, resources, built environment, transport, and agriculture and land. The Sectoral Plans will feed into both Australia's Net Zero Plan and strong 2035 emission reduction targets.

The Sectoral Plans will take into account the extensive work, policies, and reforms already underway to reduce emissions. The Government will continue to engage extensively with industry, the community, and all levels of government in the development of these Sectoral Plans. This will ensure they are robust, ambitious but achievable, and accepted by the community. The Australian Parliament has also requested the Climate Change Authority review the potential technology transition and emissions pathways that best support Australia's transition to net zero by 2050 for each of the sectors, which will be delivered by 1 August 2024.

In May 2023, the Queensland Government released the [Queensland New Industry Development Strategy](#), which is designed to grow the industries critical to the global shift to a net zero economy. The strategy focuses on six key areas: renewable energy manufacturing and infrastructure; critical minerals processing, manufacturing and product development; battery industry development; green hydrogen; the circular economy and resource recovery, and the bioeconomy (including biofuels and sustainable aviation fuel).

Australia is also ensuring heavy industry plays its part, with reforms to the [Safeguard Mechanism](#). The reforms commenced 1 July 2023 and will reduce emissions at Australia's largest industrial facilities predictably and gradually over time. The reforms will put large emitters on a pathway to net zero by 2050.

Renewable Energy

The Australia Government is making good progress towards its commitment to increase renewable electricity generation to 82 per cent by 2030. Government investment of \$AUD40 billion has set Australia on a path to becoming a renewable energy superpower.

The [Powering Australia](#) commitments will create clean energy jobs, establish Australia as a global climate change leader, reduce pressure on energy bills, and reduce emissions by boosting renewable energy. We are taking the next steps to transform Australia's electricity system to achieve our goal of 82 per cent renewables by 2030 through the [Rewiring the Nation](#) program, [Community Batteries for Household Solar](#) program, [Community Solar Banks](#) program and taking the first steps to establish Australia's offshore renewables industry.

The Australian Government is also accelerating investment in new renewable generation and storage through the Capacity Investment Scheme. In November 2023, it was announced that the Capacity Investment Scheme is being expanded from its current pilot stage to support 9 gigawatt (GW) of dispatchable capacity and 23 GW of variable renewable capacity – for a total of 32 GW nationally.

The Queensland Government is making strong progress under the [Queensland Energy and Jobs Plan](#), which is anticipated to result in a 90 per cent reduction in electricity emissions on 2005 levels by 2035–36. The plan will provide Queensland with reliable renewable energy and puts Queensland on a pathway by 2035 to have no regular reliance on coal for power production.

Since the release of the plan, the Queensland government has achieved several key milestones, including 27 per cent renewable energy supply – over halfway to our goal of 50 per cent renewable energy by 2030.

Queensland now boasts 52 large-scale renewable energy projects, representing more than \$AUD11 billion of investment, over 6,000 megawatts (MW) of clean energy and more than 14 million tonnes of avoided emissions each year (current as at 30 June 2023).

The Energy (Renewable Transformation and Jobs) Bill is the next foundational step in delivering the State's energy transformation. The Bill seeks to enshrine key commitments from the Queensland Energy and Jobs Plan in legislation for a smooth coordinated energy transformation.

The Queensland government's publicly owned energy businesses are also investing in Queensland's energy transformation, including in new wind, solar, storage and transmission, supported by the [Queensland Renewable Energy and Hydrogen Jobs Fund](#).

Net Benefits

45 COM 7B.13, Paragraph 4g.

Ensure that the carbon and water quality related credit schemes being deployed in the GBR catchments deliver overall net benefits to the OUV of the property.

The [Australian Carbon Credit Unit](#) (ACCU) Scheme continues to deliver outcomes for the Reef. This includes reducing sediment loss in catchments and reducing greenhouse gas emissions by keeping trees in the ground.

The ACCU Scheme was independently reviewed (the ACCU Review) to ensure it continues to have high integrity and align with best practice. The Australian Government has accepted all recommendations from the review in-principle and is working with stakeholders to implement them.

The ACCU Review recommended procedures be developed to maximise transparency of different project characteristics and co-benefits associated with ACCUs and to find ways for co-benefits to be recognised. Better recognition of co-benefits, such as reducing sediment loss, will allow carbon market participants to make more informed investment and purchasing decisions.

In 2022, a [new ACCU method](#) for abatement was introduced resulting from tidal reconnection of coastal wetlands, valuing the emissions avoidance, and soil and biomass sequestration of carbon.

The Queensland Government's Land Restoration Fund (LRF) purchases ACCUs generated by high-quality carbon farming projects that can demonstrate additional environmental, socio-economic, and First Nations co-benefits. One of the key priorities guiding the LRF's investment in projects is how that project contributes to land restoration that improves the health of wetlands and coastal ecosystems, including the Reef. By directly investing in projects that can demonstrate such valuable co-benefits, among other investment priorities, the LRF is promoting the advancement of sustainable land management practices to benefit wetlands, coastal ecosystems and, ultimately, positive outcomes for the Reef.

Adaptation and Research

45 COM 7B.13, Paragraph 4h.

Continue support for scientific research and increase financial resources to enable deployment of climate adaptation mechanisms.

The Australian Government's \$AUD1.2 billion Reef Protection Package is funding a wide range of new and enhanced adaptation and research initiatives. Initiatives like the Crown-of-Thorns Starfish Control Program, Reef Joint Field Management Program, and the Tourism Reef Protection Initiative are reducing pressures on coral reefs and increasing their resilience to climate change. In the longer term, initiatives like the [Reef Restoration and Adaptation Program](#) (RRAP) will provide managers with new and improved tools to mitigate climate change impacts.

The RRAP is a collaboration that seeks to develop and demonstrate a suite of interventions to help the Reef resist, adapt to and recover from climate change impacts. The design of the program was informed by a \$AUD6 million two-year feasibility study funded by the Australian Government. In addition, to date, the program has received:

- \$AUD100 million of cash investment from the Australian Government via the Reef Trust Partnership with the Great Barrier Reef Foundation (GBRF).
- \$AUD20 million from the Australian Government during 2023-24 via the Australian Institute of Marine Science (AIMS).
- \$AUD6.9 million cash via GBRF (third party donations).
- ~\$AUD50 million in co-investment by program partners.

The investment by the Australian Government has enabled a strong start and RRAP has focused its research and development effort on five categories of interventions. This includes seeding of aquaculture-propagated corals with improved thermal tolerance, coral spawning slick collection and larval reseedling, cloud brightening and local-scale fogging, rubble stabilisation, and cryopreservation of coral biodiversity (in partnership with Taronga Conservation Society Australia).

Over a short three-year period, RRAP has achieved scientific breakthroughs both in the laboratory and out on water, such as the world-first demonstration of high-throughput semi-automated coral production for dozens of coral species, innovative coral seeding devices for rapid diver-less deployments and increased survival of young corals, and world-first heat-evolved symbiont algae to increase coral thermal tolerance.

These early breakthroughs have addressed critical knowledge gaps, dramatically improved coral restoration capacity, and established best-practice engagement models with Traditional Owners and local industry and community actors. This is paving the way for deployment of pilot at-scale field trials from the 2025–26 Australian Summer. A readiness assessment found that, subject to regulatory approval and social licence, two new technologies progressed by RRAP could be suitable for pilot deployment from 2025-26.

The Great Barrier Reef Marine Park Authority has recently released its *Great Barrier Reef Blueprint for Climate Resilience and Adaptation* (Blueprint 2030). The purpose of Blueprint 2030 is to drive how the Reef Authority adapts its management under a changing climate so it can progressively and effectively respond to the risks identified in the Outlook Report. Blueprint 2030 will be a key driver of Reef adaptation investment to 2030.

4 NEXT STEPS IN ADAPTIVE MANAGEMENT OF THE REEF

Australia has a comprehensive adaptive management system for the Reef, which includes regular reviews and public reporting. In addition to the water quality reports and reviews referenced in Section 2, there are several reports and reviews due in the near to medium term.

The [summer updates](#) set the scene for the more comprehensive annual report of the AIMS [Long-Term Monitoring Program](#)'s Annual Summary Report of Coral Condition, published mid-year, and the [Great Barrier Reef Marine Monitoring Program](#)'s reports for the inshore area.

With reef surveys extending over many years (over 35 years for the Long-Term Monitoring Program) the monitoring provides an invaluable record of change by repeatedly surveying coral reef communities over a large area of the Reef.

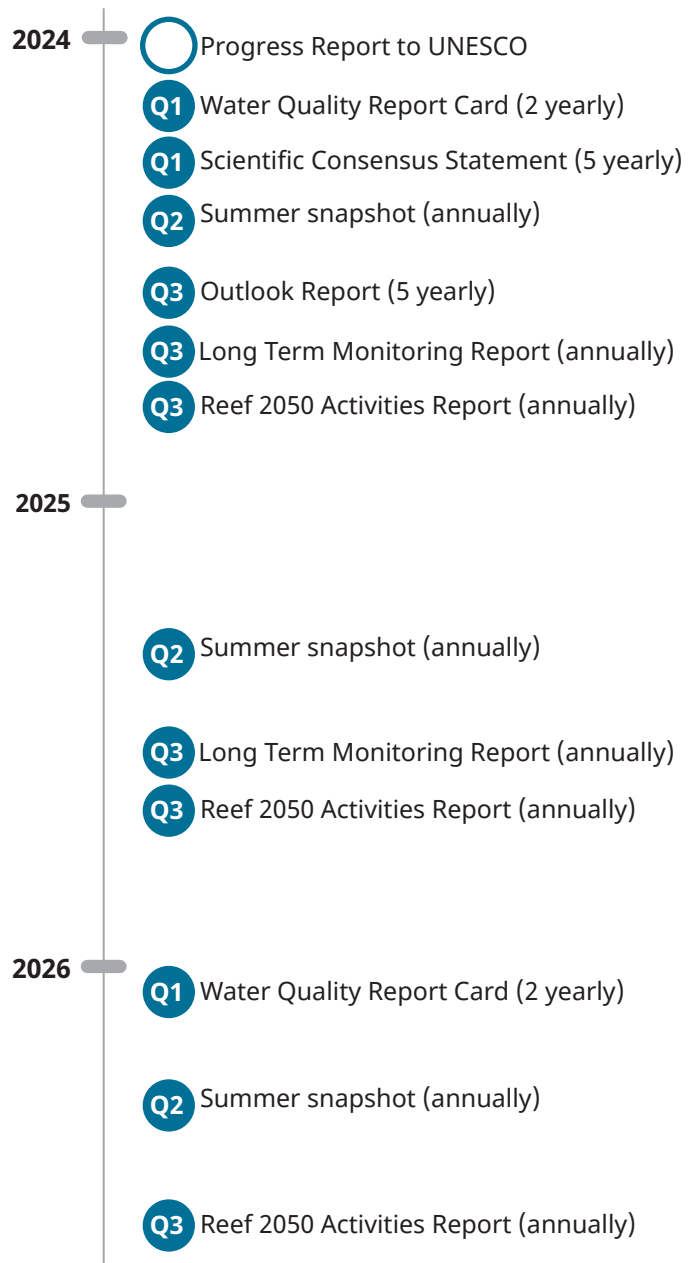
The results of this and other monitoring and research feeds into the Great Barrier Reef Outlook Report, published every five years, which examines the Reef's health, pressures, and likely future. The Outlook Report includes an assessment of the state of the World Heritage values, the integrity of the property and the safeguards in place to protect the values.

There are annual reports on activities under the [Reef 2050 Long-term Sustainability Plan 2021–2025](#) (Reef 2050 Plan). The [Reef 2050 Activities Report 2022–2023](#) was published in November 2023 and the next report is expected to be published in the second half of 2024.

The Reef 2050 Plan will then be due for its five yearly review and update in 2025–2026. It is Australia's overarching strategy for protecting and managing the Reef and is regularly updated to ensure it continues to deliver an agile and integrated response to emerging pressures on the Reef. The next review and update will draw on and respond to the findings of the 2024 Outlook Report.




A key foundational component of the Reef 2050 Plan is implementation of the Reef 2050 Integrated Monitoring and Reporting Program (RIMReP). RIMReP aims to provide a comprehensive and up-to-date ecological, social and cultural understanding of the Reef. The Program's primary purpose is to drive resilience-based management and track progress against the Reef 2050 Plan.



Reef 2050 Plan Reporting








APPENDIX A




COMMITMENT STATUS DASHBOARD





Commitment	Activity	Status as at January 2024
Water Quality		
1. By 31 December 2023: Deliver a complete mapping of all priority areas of grazing land for gully repairs and associated restoration and remediation activities, the identification of the priority gullies where the repair, restoration and remediation action will have the greatest impact on sediment reduction, and a detailed timeline for the completion of the repair of the areas of highest priority.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Preliminary mapping of all Reef catchments was delivered through the Queensland Gully and Streambank Mapping Program and enhanced mapping of the high priority catchments is complete. This mapping will inform the prioritisation of future investment primarily through its application in the Reef Report Card water quality catchment models. 	 Complete
2. By 31 December 2023: Initiate the delivery of a joint federal-state program that will start repairing and restoring the gullies of the highest priority with immediate effect and deliver significant and meaningful sediment reduction necessary to protect the ecology of the Great Barrier Reef including the most polluting catchment areas (e.g. Burdekin, Fitzroy and Burnett Mary catchments).	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Two joint federal-state programs have been initiated, including the Streambank Remediation Program and Landscape Repair Program. Together, the two programs will boost efforts to repair land and reduce soil loss in priority Reef catchments by controlling erosion primarily from gullies and streambanks. 	 Complete
3. By 30 June 2025: Finalise the independent water quality science review and the Scientific Consensus Statement as the foundational scientific understanding to underpin the revision of the Reef Water Quality Improvement Plan and the establishment of new water quality targets for the period 2025–2030, to ensure consistency with the management frameworks adopted in the Reef 2050 Plan	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The SCS provides the scientific evidence to underpin the Reef 2050 Water Quality Improvement Plan and is on track for release in mid-2024. To achieve greater independence and increased transparency, development of the Scientific Consensus Statement has involved oversight and assurance by Australia’s Chief Scientist, and endorsement of technical details by the Reef Water Quality Independent Science Panel. 	 On track




Commitment	Activity	Status as at January 2024
Water Quality		
<p>4. By July 2024: expand the implementation of 2018 land clearing legislation and further strengthen protection to remnant and high value conservation areas, including, through an accelerated and enhanced compliance program to secure the protection of remnant native vegetation in areas of high conservation value in the Reef catchments.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Compliance is being enhanced by the Queensland Government through a 4-year pilot project to enhance vegetation management compliance, increase education and support enforcement activities to further reduce unauthorised clearing. • The Queensland Government will also pursue better engagement and incentives for sustainable native vegetation management following the acceptance in principle of the recommendations of the Native Vegetation Scientific Expert Panel Report. • Protection of remnant and high value conservation areas is being strengthened through the Great Barrier Reef Island Arks initiative, funding to expand the Queensland protected public area estate and Cape York Peninsula Tenure Resolution Program. 	 <p>On track</p>
<p>5. By February 2025: accelerate progress to achieve all water quality targets through a program of sediment, nutrient and pesticide reduction through combined efforts in regulation, incentives, and accelerated landscape restoration programs, e.g. 60% reduction in dissolved inorganic nitrogen loads (remaining to target: 32.3%), 25% reduction in sediment loads (remaining to target: 9.8%), 20% reduction in particulate nitrogen loads (remaining to target: 5.6%), 20% in particulate phosphorous loads (remaining to target: 2.6%), and pesticides target of 99% of aquatic species protected at end of catchments (remaining to target: 2.3%).</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The Australian Government's \$AUD1.2 billion Reef Protection and Restoration commitment includes around \$AUD534 million to accelerate actions to meeting water quality targets. • The Queensland Government has committed \$AUD289.6 million over five years to 2025–2026 to continue the Queensland Reef Water Quality Program. • The continuing and new programs build on previous successes and significant investments and commitments by the Australian and Queensland Governments to Reef water quality since 2014–15. 	 <p>On track</p>


Commitment	Activity	Status as at January 2024
Water Quality		
<p>6. By January 2024: Double compliance activity being undertaken across the regulated reef catchment areas comparative to what was being achieved in 2021 in order to enforce landholder compliance with reef protection regulated standards and respond to any non-compliance. Concurrently secure improved water quality outcomes by supporting increased industry participation in best management practice projects and programs, with 50% of sugarcane and banana areas operating above minimum practice standards by June 2026.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Resourcing of the compliance program and compliance activities undertaken in 2023 has more than doubled compared to 2021. • A statutory review of the Reef protection regulations, due for completion by the end of February 2024 will evaluate whether the regulations, and Queensland Government investment to support implementation, has resulted in improved practices in the agriculture, industrial and resource sectors. • The Queensland Government has allocated over \$AUD10 million in funding to continue support for industry Best Management Practice programs and around \$AUD25 million for practice improvement programs across key agricultural commodities. • Industry participation in adopting best management practices will also be supported through the Australian Government Reef Trust Water Quality Package 2022–23 to 2029–30. 	<div>  <p>Complete (January 2024 component)</p> </div> <div>  <p>On track (June 2026 component)</p> </div>

Commitment	Activity	Status as at January 2024
Fisheries		
1. Phase out all destructive gillnet fisheries to ensure the property as a whole will be gill-net free by 30 June 2027.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Regulations commenced in January 2024 to remove large mesh gillnet licences (N1, N2 and N4 symbols) from the Great Barrier Reef World Heritage Area. A limited-life 'NX' fishing licence will be available from February 2024 for up to 40 eligible licence holders to allow for some gillnet fishing to continue in the Reef during the transition phase until these licences expire in mid-2027. 	 On track
2. Establish a complete net free zone in the Northern third of the property (Cape Bedford to the tip of Cape York) and establish additional net-free-zones that expand net restrictions in the Gulf of Carpentaria (e.g., Mornington Island, rivers/foreshores adjacent to Weipa, Karumba and Mapoon), to further strengthen protections for threatened species that move between Great Barrier Reef and the Gulf, and ensure displaced fishing effort does not intensify threats to those species, as well as in other high value habitats of protected species identified through consultation, by 31 December 2023.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Commercial gillnets and small bait mesh nets were banned from the northern third of the Great Barrier Reef (from Cape Bedford to the tip of Cape York) from 1 January 2024. Existing dugong protection areas (DPA) have been identified as of high value habitat. NX gillnet licence holders will not be able to operate within DPAs during the transition phase, with the exception of rivers and creeks in DPA B's. A working group has been established to identify other high value habitat through an additional evidence collation process. Industry consultation regarding establishment of new Gulf of Carpentaria gillnet-free zones closed on 10 December 2023. The Gulf zones are proposed to be implemented from March 2024. 	 Complete  In Progress (for Gulf of Carpentaria component only)

Commitment	Activity	Status as at January 2024
Fisheries		
3. By 31 December 2023, complete implementation of the Sustainable Fisheries Strategy , including finalising all harvest strategies with defined quotas for all key species, and by 31 December 2027, working to achieve the target maximum economic yield (60% biomass)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Australia has accelerated implementation of the Queensland Sustainable Fisheries Strategy 2017-2027. With 29 of 33 actions under the Strategy already completed implementation is ahead of the original scheduled delivery by 2027. The remaining actions are mostly procedural, could not be delivered early and on track for completion before the Strategy expires in 2027. There is only one outstanding harvest strategy for the Reef, for the Rocky Reef fishery. In this fishery, most fishing effort occurs outside of the World Heritage Area in the central and south-east regions of Queensland. The management reforms for the harvest strategy are already in place. 	 In Progress
4. By 1 December 2023, introduce legislation to mandate the use of Independent Data Validation on all commercial fishing vessels.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The legislative process to mandate the use of Independent Data Validation on all commercial fishing vessels was initiated in December 2023 and will likely come into effect in the first quarter of 2024. Gillnet and trawl fisheries will be progressed as a priority, drawing on the ecological risk assessments completed for each fishery. 	 Complete
5. Immediately make threatened hammerhead sharks 'no take' for commercial fishers.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Threatened hammerhead sharks were made no-take for commercial fishers in Queensland in January 2024 through a declaration. 	 Complete

Commitment	Activity	Status as at January 2024
Climate Change		
<p>1. The Australian Government commits to set successively more ambitious emissions reduction targets, reflecting highest possible ambition, consistent with achieving net zero by 2050, and in alignment with efforts to limit global temperature increase to 1.5°C. These targets will be informed by advice from the independent Climate Change Authority. The Government will set a 2035 target and communicate it to the UNFCCC as Australia's second Nationally Determined Contribution under the Paris Agreement in advance of the Conference of the Parties serving as the meeting of the Parties to the Paris Agreement in 2025.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The Australian Government is on track to announce its second Nationally Determined Contribution, informed by Climate Change Authority advice, ahead of the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change Conference of the Parties in 2025. The Queensland Government made a landmark announcement on 15 December 2023 of a new emissions reduction target of 75 per cent on 2005 levels by 2035, which will play a critical role in mitigating the effects of climate change. This is significant given Queensland represents approximately 30 per cent of total national emissions. 	 On track
<p>2. The Australian Government commits to update the Reef 2050 Plan (in consultation with the Queensland Government) to reflect (a) the new commitments taken under the <i>Climate Change Act 2022</i> and (b) Australia's overall commitment to work alongside global partners to tackle the climate crisis, achieve the goals of the Paris Agreement and pursue ambitious emissions reductions to limit the global temperature increase to 1.5° C above pre-industrial levels.</p> <p>In support of these commitments:</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The 2023 Climate Change Addendum to the Reef 2050 Plan, published 22 November 2023. The Addendum acknowledges climate change is the most serious and pervasive threat to the Reef and captures the Australian and Queensland Government's recent climate policy commitments and legislation in the Reef 2050 Plan's 'Work Area 1: Limit the Impacts of Climate Change'. 	 Complete
<p>a. The Australian Government has legislated emissions reductions of 43 per cent by 2030 and net zero emissions by 2050.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The <i>Climate Change Act 2022</i>, which enshrines these emissions targets in legislation, came into force on 14 September 2022. 	 Complete
<p>b. The Australian Government is required by law to prepare annual statements to Parliament under the <i>Climate Change Act 2022</i> - on progress towards national emissions reduction targets, international developments, climate risks, impacts and policy. These statements must be informed by advice from the independent Climate Change Authority.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The <i>Climate Change Act 2022</i> requires an Annual Climate Change Statement to Parliament to provide greater accountability and transparency, supported by independent advice from Australia's Climate Change Authority. There have been two statements delivered to Parliament which reinforce our commitment and the implementation status. 	 Complete

Commitment	Activity	Status as at January 2024
Climate Change		
<p>c. The Australian Government commits to continually increasing its climate ambition, including by working urgently to implement its substantial and rigorous suite of new policies across the economy to maximize their emissions impact and drive Australia's transition to net zero. Australia's States, Territories and local governments are also implementing significant policies and programs to reduce emissions. The cumulative impact of action by governments at different levels, and industry, businesses, land managers and Australians, seek to deliver the greatest possible emissions reductions in this critical decade.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The Australian Government is developing a Net Zero Plan, which was committed to articulate how Australia will transition to a net zero economy by 2050 and identify new policies and programs to support Australia's decarbonisation pathway. • The Government is also developing six Sectoral Decarbonisation Plans, covering electricity and energy, industry, resources, built environment, transport, and agriculture and land. The Sectoral Plans will feed into both Australia's Net Zero Plan and strong 2035 emission reduction targets. • In May 2023, the Queensland Government released the Queensland New Industry Development Strategy, which is designed to grow the industries critical to the global shift to a net zero economy. 	 <p>On track</p>
<p>d. The Australian Government commits to increase renewable electricity generation to 82 per cent by 2030.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The Powering Australia commitments will create clean energy jobs, establish Australia as a global climate change leader, reduce pressure on energy bills, and reduce emissions by boosting renewable energy. We are taking the next steps to transform Australia's electricity system to achieve our goal of 82 per cent renewables by 2030. 	 <p>On track</p>
<p>e. The Queensland Government has released its Energy and Jobs Plan to achieve, 70 per cent renewable energy by 2032 and 80 per cent by 2035. The plan will achieve a 50 per cent reduction in electricity emissions on 2005 levels by 2030 and a 90 per cent reduction in electricity emissions by 2035–36. It includes delivery of a 2 gigawatt 24 hour Borumba pumped hydro energy storage project and the world's largest 5 gigawatt Pioneer-Burdekin pumped hydro energy storage dam.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The Queensland Government is making strong progress under the Queensland Energy and Jobs Plan. Since the release of the plan, the Queensland government has achieved several key milestones, including reaching 27 per cent renewable energy supply which is over halfway to our goal of 50 per cent renewable energy by 2030. • The Energy (Renewable Transformation and Jobs) Bill is the next foundational step in delivering the State's energy transformation. The Bill seeks to enshrine key commitments from the Queensland Energy and Jobs Plan in legislation. 	 <p>On track</p>

Commitment	Activity	Status as at January 2024
Climate Change		
<p>f. By 2035 Queensland will have no regular reliance on coal for power production and will have more pumped hydro energy storage for renewable energy than the rest of Australia combined. Queensland's pumped hydro energy storage for renewable energy will be more than Europe, China or the US as a share of energy demand. This will provide Queensland with reliable, firm renewable energy combined with a SuperGrid to transmit renewable energy including a connection to Australia's largest renewable energy zone and the world class North West Minerals Province with over \$500 billion in new economy minerals needed to manufacture renewable energy technologies. That means Queensland will not only transition to renewable energy but will also play a key role in the global supply of new economy minerals and in the manufacturing of renewable technologies.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Queensland now boasts 52 large-scale renewable energy projects (operating, under construction or financially committed), representing more than \$AUD11 billion of investment, over 6,000 megawatts (MW) of clean energy and more than 14 million tonnes of avoided emissions each year (current as at 30 June 2023). • Combined with rooftop solar, the state has more than 9,700MW of renewable energy capacity. In total, 27 per cent of electricity used in Queensland is produced from renewable energy sources (current as of November 2023). 	 <p>On track</p>