



Budget 2020-21: Protecting our iconic places

Many of Australia's naturally and culturally significant places have been affected by the downturn in tourism caused by COVID-19. In response, the Australian Government is investing in projects which enhance visitor experiences and puts our iconic places in the best position possible to kick-start and sustain their recovery.

We continue to work closely with communities, industries and traditional owners to protect Australia's significant natural and cultural heritage.

Investments like these ensure our environmental and heritage values endure and are reflected in our most iconic places and institutions.

Why is it important?

The long-term resilience of Australian landscapes, protection of our unique biodiversity and restoration of our natural capital is crucial to our identity and our prosperity. The Australian Government is committed to protecting, maintaining and promoting our environment and heritage values, ensuring iconic sites are preserved for future generations with the following measures:

1. Protecting and restoring Sydney Harbour Federation Trust properties

- This measure is an investment to protect and restore the Indigenous, convict military and industrial heritage of Sydney Harbour Federation Trust properties. This work will ensure the iconic harbour foreshore sites managed by the Trust are safe, open to the public, used by the community and an asset to Sydney's visitor economy.
- The work includes urgent repairs and restorations in response to the *Independent Review of the Sydney Harbour Federation Trust*.

2. Great Barrier Reef tourism industry activation and reef protection

- This measure provides \$3.2 million for the Great Barrier Reef Marine Park Authority (GBRMPA) to engage eligible marine tourism operators to monitor coral condition, control native pest outbreaks, and rehabilitate local reef sites.
- The tourism industry knows the Reef well, is passionate about its protection, and is ideally placed to take part in reef conservation and restoration activities at high-value reef tourism sites. Marine tourism operators can submit a proposal, through an AusTender process, to deliver in-water conservation and monitoring activities to ensure Reef tourism sites are well maintained and ready to welcome new guests when travel restrictions are lifted.
- This initiative is part of the Australian Government's \$1 billion COVID-19 Relief and Recovery fund, which is supporting regions, communities and industry sectors severely affected by the pandemic.

3. Modernising educational exhibits

- This measure provides \$5.6 million for the Great Barrier Reef Marine Park Authority to modernise Reef HQ educational exhibits through the use of technology and showcasing reef science through research and engagement exhibits.
- This investment will help ReefHQ reach a larger audience by creating an immersive adventure where hands-on learning, talks and tours will be creatively interwoven with technology, virtual connecting and aquarium exhibits. This experience will be supported by outreach education programs that capitalise on video-conferencing technology.
- As part of this measure, the Authority will undergo a consultation process with Reef Traditional Owners, co-designing the inclusion of sea country themes, stories and experiences with the proposed modernised exhibits.
- The intent is a whole of aquarium theme and education programs that will lead to better understanding, protection and promotion of Indigenous heritage values of the Great Barrier Reef.
- A communications and marketing strategy will promote the new and improved Reef HQ, while also capturing imagery and videography of the Great Barrier Reef to showcase its environmental, educational, heritage and tourism importance to Australia.

4. Renewing the National Education Centre for the Great Barrier Reef, Reef HQ Aquarium

- Through these measures, the world’s largest living coral reef aquarium—Reef HQ at Townsville—will receive a facelift, and help Reef HQ drive further tourism numbers by enhancing access and visitor experiences at the aquarium and education centre.
- This initiative will create a lasting legacy in Townsville through tourism infrastructure, which will be a big boost to the local community and small-to-medium sized businesses in the areas.
- The measures will provide the Great Barrier Reef Marine Park Authority (GBRMPA) \$7.6 million to conduct a suite of upgrades to enhance visitor experiences, modernise the facility and improve exhibits at the aquarium and education centre, and upgrade and maintain the aquarium’s tanks and critical animal life support systems while work is being carried out at Reef HQ.
- The measures include:
 - \$5 million funding for technological updates for visitor admissions efficiency, modernising Reef HQ’s iconic façade that will create up to 20 local jobs
 - \$2.6 million for the upgrade and maintenance the aquarium’s tanks and systems supporting Reef HQ’s living exhibits.
- Reef HQs tanks—which hold more than 4 million litres of saltwater—house more than 150 species of fish and more than 120 species of hard and soft coral exclusive to the Great Barrier Reef. It showcases the world’s largest living coral reef aquarium and it is both a wonderful tourism experience and an important education and research facility.
- These measures continue the Australian Government’s support for Reef HQ in Townsville.
- Renewals to the Reef HQ Aquarium facility and its systems are part of the Australian Government’s \$1 billion COVID-19 Relief and Recovery fund, which is supporting regions, communities and industry sectors severely affected by the pandemic.

5. Temporary waiver of GBRMPA Environmental Management Charge – Apr-Dec 2020

- Under this measure, the Environmental Management Charge (EMC) collected by businesses operating in the Great Barrier Reef Marine Park has been waived from 1 April 2020 to 31 December 2020 to support tourism operators and encourage greater domestic and international tourism to the Great Barrier Reef
- The EMC is collected by tourism operators in the Marine Park who provide their services under a permit issued by the Great Barrier Reef Marine Park Authority. The EMC currently equates to \$7 (full day) or \$3.50 (half-day) per visitor.
- It is a charge associated with most commercial activities, including tourism operations, non-tourists charter operations, and facilities in the Great Barrier Reef Marine Park.
- This initiative is part of the Australian Government’s \$1 billion COVID-19 Relief and Recovery fund, which is supporting regions, communities and industry sectors severely affected by the pandemic.

6. Supplementing GBRMPA for waiving environmental management charges

- On 12 March 2020, the Prime Minister (PM) agreed to provide \$1 billion for the Support for Coronavirus-Affected Regions and Communities package (the Package) aimed at supporting businesses and individuals directly affected by reduced tourism activities stemming from the impacts of COVID-19. As part of that package, the Great Barrier Reef Marine Park Authority waived the Environmental Management Charge (EMC) for tourism operators in the Great Barrier Reef from April 1 2020 until 31 December 2020 with lost revenue to be provided to the Authority to support continued service delivery.
- In response to requests for further assistance from the Great Barrier Reef tourism industry, these measures will assist businesses operating in the Great Barrier Reef Marine Park by:
 - waiving payment of the EMC collected between 1 January and 31 March 2020 and
 - waiving fees associated with permit assessments and applications until 30 June 2021.
- This measure also waives rent for eligible resort facilities on Commonwealth-owned islands until 31 December 2020 and supports continuation of the critical operations of the Authority's ReefHQ Aquarium with supplementation of lost revenue during forced closures due to COVID-19.
- This initiative is part of the Australian Government's \$1 billion COVID-19 Relief and Recovery fund, which is supporting regions, communities and industry sectors severely affected by the pandemic.

7. Extending the waiver of the Great Barrier Reef Marine Park Environment Management Charge

- The Australian Government is continuing its support for Great Barrier Reef Marine Park tourism operators significantly affected by COVID-19 by extending the current waiver of the Environmental Management Charge for visitors and businesses which operate in the Great Barrier Reef Marine Park for a further six months.
- The current waiver, worth an estimated \$11 million is due to finish on 31 December 2020. An additional \$6 million has been provided to enable an extension of the waiver of EMC to the end of June 2021.
- Application and assessment fees for permits to operate in the Great Barrier Reef Marine Park are also currently waived until the end of June 2021, providing additional support for businesses.
- The marine tourism industry is a key partner in the protection and management of the Great Barrier Reef, with tourism operators playing an important role in helping to protect the Reef's ecosystem.
- Although the Reef is starting to see some limited increase in tourism activity, significant recovery of the tourism industry is expected to take some time.
- This measure will support the Great Barrier Reef region, which – prior to COVID-19 – contributed \$6.4 billion to the Australian economy and supported an estimated 70,000 jobs.
- This initiative is part of the Australian Government's \$1 billion COVID-19 Relief and Recovery fund, which is supporting regions, communities and industry sectors severely affected by the pandemic.
- The additional funding will ensure the Great Barrier Reef Marine Park Authority continues its high standard of management of the Marine Park and World Heritage Area. The long-term protection and presentation of the Great Barrier Reef is essential for the prosperity of Queensland and Australia's reputation.

8. Sustaining tourism at Australia's iconic World and National Heritage sites

- We are providing \$33.5 million to enhance tourism infrastructure at World and National Heritage properties around Australia.
- We continue to work closely with communities, industries and traditional owners to protect Australia's significant natural and cultural heritage.
- Following the historic World Heritage listing in 2019 of the Budj Bim Cultural Landscape, the first place in Australia to be listed solely for its Indigenous heritage values, we have now added the

Murujuga Cultural Landscape and its 45,000 year old petroglyphs to Australia's World Heritage Tentative List, paving the way towards achieving World Heritage Listing. Additionally, we have added two new places to Australia's National Heritage List: Erawondoo Hill in Western Australia and Parkes Observatory in New South Wales.

- This initiative is part of the Australian Government's \$1 billion COVID-19 Relief and Recovery fund, which is supporting regions, communities and industry sectors severely affected by the pandemic.

9. Waiving commercial tour operator licence and permit fees at our National Parks

- In May 2020, the Australian Government announced that licence and permit fees for commercial tourism businesses operating in Kakadu and Uluru-Kata Tjuta National Park and the Australian National Botanic Gardens have been waived from 1 January 2020 to 31 March 2021.
- This initiative is part of the Australian Government's \$1 billion COVID-19 Relief and Recovery fund, which is supporting regions, communities and industry sectors severely affected by the pandemic.

10. Supplementing our National Parks for waiving park entry fees

- Up to \$772,000 has been made available for the licence and permit fee waiver and a further \$11.187 million for the park entry fee waiver.
- Under the lease arrangements for the jointly managed national parks (Booderee, Kakadu and Uluru-Kata Tjuta), a percentage of revenue generated from the sale of park entry fees, and from licence and permit fees for commercial tourism businesses, is returned to Traditional Owners.
- The funding secured for these measures under the Relief and Recovery Fund will enable these arrangements to remain in place and Traditional Owner payments will be paid based on 2019 revenue figures.
- This initiative is part of the Australian Government's \$1 billion COVID-19 Relief and Recovery fund, which is supporting regions, communities and industry sectors severely affected by the pandemic.

Who will benefit?

Many of Australia's naturally and culturally significant places have been affected by the downturn in tourism caused by COVID-19. In response, the Government is investing in projects to enhance visitor experience and support hard-hit tourism operators. This year we announced the biggest single investment in Australia's Commonwealth National Parks, injecting \$233 million into critical tourism infrastructure. This will generate over a thousand jobs in parks and the surrounding regions and communities.

We are supporting our communities and regions by helping businesses stay open during the pandemic. Under the COVID-19 Relief and Recovery Fund, **we have provided relief from licence and permit charges for tourism businesses** operating in Kakadu and Uluru-Kata Tjuta National Parks and the Australian National Botanic Gardens. **We are also allowing visitors free entry to the national parks they love so much** (Booderee, Kakadu and Uluru-Kata Tjuta) to support tourism and help industry rebuild their business operations.

We are providing \$33.5 million to enhance tourism infrastructure at World and National Heritage properties around Australia.

Investments now to repair and restore **Sydney Harbour Federation Trust** properties will create employment opportunities for trades and specialty contractors providing a vital lifeline for local businesses over the coming years.

The **Great Barrier Reef tourism industry activation and reef protection initiative** supports jobs in the Reef tourism industry by providing a degree of business continuity to eligible marine tourism

operators now, so that they will be better placed to resume operations when COVID-19 restrictions are eased. This will see successful marine tourism operators deliver over 300 vessel days of in-water reef site maintenance and monitoring until 30 June 2021. These actions will contribute to Reef management and stewardship. In-water survey data will help us understand the condition and recovery of corals, while stewardship actions, such as Crown-of-Thorns Starfish control and coral gardening—where permitted—will aid in reef recovery.

The tourism and education measures to **renew the National Education Centre for the Great Barrier Reef, Reef HQ Aquarium** will provide an economic stimulus for Townsville and North Queensland and further enhance its reputation as a world leader in edu-tourism, showcasing the Great Barrier Reef, its management and what visitors can do to help the Reef.

It will support local, small and medium business enterprises in Northern Queensland – particularly with job creation. It will also help Reef HQ attract further tourism numbers for Townsville, and more broadly for Australia as the nation works to recover from the economic impacts of the COVID-19 pandemic. Reef HQ showcases the world’s largest living coral reef aquarium by replicating it on land and making it accessible for all.

Tourism operators, businesses, and individuals that require a permit to operate in the Great Barrier Reef Marine Park will benefit from the **continued waiver of the Environmental Management Charge**. The waived charge will lower the operating costs for these businesses, as they work towards recovery from the effects of COVID-19. The additional funding will ensure the Great Barrier Reef Marine Park Authority continues its high standard of management of the Marine Park and World Heritage Area. The long-term protection and presentation of the Great Barrier Reef is essential for the prosperity of Queensland and Australia’s reputation.

The investment, including the waiver of fees at our National Parks aim to encourage strong visitation to these places, and drive tourism businesses and regional economies recovery from the impacts of the COVID-19 pandemic.

What will this cost?

Table 1 allocated budget

Measure	Amount
Protecting and restoring of Sydney Harbour Federation Trust properties	\$ 40.6 million
Great Barrier Reef tourism industry activation and reef protection	\$3.2 million
Modernising educational exhibits	\$5.6 million
Renewing National Education Centre for the Great Barrier Reef, Reef HQ Aquarium	\$ 7.6 million
Temporary waiver of GBRMPA Environmental Management Charge – Apr-Dec 2020	\$8.1 million
Supplementing GBRMPA for waiving environmental management charges	\$5.5 million
Extending waiver of the Great Barrier Reef Marine Park Environment Management Charge	\$ 6.0 million
Sustaining tourism at Australia’s iconic World and National Heritage sites	\$ 33.5 million
Waiving commercial tour operator licence and permit fees at our National Parks	\$ 0.8 million
Supplementing our National Parks for waiving park entry fees	\$ 11.2 million

