



Additional Information - Great Barrier Reef World Heritage Area

This submission provides supplemental information to Australia's [State Party Report on the state of conservation of the Great Barrier Reef Heritage Area - 2019](#). It provides an update on the property's health, implementation and review of the *Reef 2050 Long-Term Sustainability Plan* (the Reef 2050 Plan) and key achievements to protect the Great Barrier Reef World Heritage Area.

Reef Health

In March 2020, the Great Barrier Reef Marine Park Authority issued a [statement](#) reporting a widespread coral bleaching event across the property – the third mass bleaching event since 2016. While the geographic footprint of the 2020 event was the largest to date, there was a variety of bleaching severity within and between different regions, ranging from no bleaching to the most severe category. The most severely affected regions were the inshore reefs in the central and southern Great Barrier Reef World Heritage Area, commensurate with locations that experienced the highest heat stress. More detailed information is provided in the [Summer 2019-20 Reef Snapshot](#).

Coral bleaching does not necessarily lead to coral death, but the more severe the bleaching, the lower the likelihood the bleached coral will recover. Annual long-term monitoring surveys inform assessments of post-bleaching mortality levels. In 2020, the survey program was impacted by COVID-19-related work, health and safety limitations. The next Australian Institute of Marine Science Long-Term Monitoring Program annual update will provide information on coral cover, including impacts of the 2020 bleaching, and will be released mid-2021.

The Australian Government continues to report on Reef health through regular web updates (available online at: <https://www.gbrmpa.gov.au/the-reef/reef-health>), annual long-term monitoring updates, annual Reef health snapshots and five yearly Outlook Reports. See **Attachment A2** for more detail.

Reef Water Quality Report Card

The Reef Water Quality Report Card 2019 demonstrates that encouraging progress is being made towards achieving the [Reef 2050 Water Quality Improvement Plan](#) targets. It shows good outcomes particularly at a regional and catchment level, with improved practices leading to pollutant reductions. For the first time, progress towards the dissolved inorganic nitrogen target was rated as 'A – Very Good', as a result of a modelled 4.3% annual reduction in run-off of this major water pollutant across the overall catchment. Further information highlighting the key outcomes of the report card is at **Attachment A3**.

Reef 2050 Plan

The first five-year review of the Reef 2050 Plan is nearing completion, with an updated Plan expected to be released before the 44th Session of the World Heritage Committee. The public consultation version of the draft Plan was provided to the World Heritage Centre on 19 August 2020. It is available at **Attachment A4** and online at: <https://haveyoursay.awe.gov.au/reef-2050-plan>.

The review and update of the Plan has involved an extensive consultation process, involving the two Reef 2050 Plan advisory bodies, Great Barrier Reef Indigenous Traditional Owners and a six-week public comment period (see **Factsheet** at **Attachment A5**).

The Plan is being revised to be a more strategic document, in response to expert and stakeholder feedback that previous versions of the Plan represented a hybrid between a strategy and an operational plan. Other key changes in the consultation draft include:

- responding to the findings of the Great Barrier Reef Marine Park Authority's [2019 Outlook Report](#), so the Plan continues to address the highest risk threats facing the Reef
- greater consideration of climate change and its impact on the Reef
- increased reflection on and inclusion of Traditional Owner aspirations
- an updated vision of: *The Great Barrier Reef is sustained as a living natural and cultural wonder of the world.*
- a revised organising structure with a clearer explanation of links between actions and outcomes so as to better guide actions, evaluate progress and support adaptive management
- incorporation of investment information within the Plan.

A total of 4,939 responses were received during the public consultation period, comprising 133 unique submissions and various campaign responses. The consultation draft is now being revised in light of public feedback and is expected to be considered for approval by Ministers around March-April 2021.

Key achievements since December 2019

Achievements since Australia's submission of the State Party Report on the state of conservation of the Great Barrier Reef World Heritage Area in December 2019 are summarised at **Attachment A6**. They include:

- announcement of more than AUD300 million¹ of investment in projects that contribute to Reef protection, including commencement of the AUD150 million research and development phase of the world-leading [Reef Restoration and Adaptation Program](#)
- enhanced regulations to improve water quality entering the Great Barrier Reef
- actions to reduce marine plastic pollution

¹ The table of achievements at Attachment A5 includes some programs which benefit Reef protection as well as a broader suite of activities (e.g. the Queensland Government Land restoration fund and the Australian Government's COVID relief and recovery fund) – these sources are not included in the AUD300million of investment in recently announced projects. The Australian and Queensland governments are reviewing the Reef funding table included at Appendix B of the State Party Report on the State of Conservation of the Great Barrier Reef World Heritage Area (2019), and updated investment figures will be included in the updated Reef 2050 Plan.

- the first investments in [Reef Credits](#)- an innovative market-based tool to support on-ground improvements in private land management to reduce pollutant run-off into the Reef, and
- more than AUD40 million has now been committed to redeveloping Reef HQ Aquarium – to support world-leading environmental education and showcase the World Heritage values and management of the Reef.

These achievements recognise the collective efforts undertaken in partnership between governments, industry, land managers, scientists, Traditional Owners and the wider community to address the threats to the Great Barrier Reef World Heritage Area.

ATTACHMENTS

- A2 Reef health update
- A3 Reef Water Quality Report Card
- A4 Public consultation draft of the updated Reef 2050 Plan
- A5 Reef 2050 Plan Consultation Factsheet
- A6 Key achievements since December 2019