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The Great Barrier Reef: a chronology of key events, policies and programs

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Introduction

The Great Barrier Reef (GBR) is the world's most extensive coral reef system, comprising around 3,000 individual coral reefs (roughly 10% of the world's total). It extends 2,300 km along the Queensland coastline and spans an area of over 344,000 square kilometres.¹ The GBR holds cultural importance for many Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities and is listed as both a World Heritage property and a National Heritage place, acknowledging it as an area of outstanding universal value (OUV) and significance to the nation.²

The region is one of the most diverse ecosystems in the world, home to more than 1,200 hard and soft coral species, 1,625 types of fish, 15 species of whales and an estimated 18 different dolphin species.³ It is also a crucial habitat for bird populations, with approximately 80% of Australia's shorebird species known to inhabit the area and its surrounding coastline. The region also supports 20 different seabird breeding populations.⁴

In addition to being internationally recognised as a culturally and environmentally significant landmark, the GBR holds huge economic value for Australia. A 2017 report estimated the region's total 'economic, social and icon asset value' to be around \$56 billion.⁵

1. ['Reef facts'](#), Great Barrier Reef Marine Park Authority (GBRMPA), updated 11 September 2023.
2. ['Great Barrier Reef'](#), UNESCO (United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization), World Heritage Convention; ['The Great Barrier Reef, Queensland'](#), Department of Climate Change, Energy, the Environment and Water (DCCEEW), updated 3 February 2022.
3. GBRMPA, [Great Barrier Reef Outlook Report 2019](#), (Townsville: GBRMPA, 2019), 31, 33, 39–40.
4. GBRMPA, [Great Barrier Reef Outlook Report 2019](#), 38–39.
5. John O'Mahony, Dr Ric Simes, David Redhill, Kelly Heaton, Claire Atkinson, Emily Hayward and Mai Nguyen, [At What Price?: The Economic, Social and Icon Value of the Great Barrier Reef](#), (Brisbane: Deloitte Access Economics, 2017), 5.



However, the health of this ecosystem has been under pressure for an extended period of time, resulting in the decline of the site's Outstanding Universal Value (OUV).⁶ Since 1998 the region has been affected by 7 mass bleaching events.⁷ Climate change is now acknowledged as the biggest threat to the Reef, with impacts including marine heatwaves, rising sea levels, ocean acidification and an increased frequency of destructive cyclones.⁸ Other identified threats include poor water quality due to land-based run-off, impacts from coastal development and fishing, crown-of-thorns starfish outbreaks and marine debris.⁹

In March 2022, a joint reactive monitoring mission to the GBR, undertaken at the direction of the World Heritage Committee, concluded that despite Australia's recent 'unparalleled science and management efforts', the region's OUV continued to be 'significantly impacted by climate change factors' and recommended that the area be inscribed on the 'List of World Heritage in Danger'.¹⁰ In May 2023, the Australian and Queensland Governments sent the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) (the UN body that oversees World Heritage sites) a document outlining several new commitments for the protection of the Reef.¹¹ In its July 2023 report, UNESCO recommended delaying the decision to place the GBR on the 'in Danger' list for at least another year, citing Australia's new commitments and actions, and its progress in the region since the mission.¹²

At its 45th session in September 2023, the World Heritage Committee (WHC) adopted UNESCO's recommendations. It requested Australia provide a progress report on its new commitments, which it would examine at its next meeting, scheduled for 21–31 July 2024, 'considering that the urgent conservation needs of this property require a broad mobilization to preserve its OUV, including the possible inscription on the List of World Heritage in Danger'.¹³ The report was submitted to UNESCO in February 2024.¹⁴

The large size of the GBR, the variety of ecosystems and habitat types that make up the GBR World Heritage Area, the high level of connectivity between terrestrial, freshwater and marine environments, the multiple threats it faces, and the cumulative impacts of stressors present significant challenges to its protection and management.¹⁵ Over the years, the Australian Government has introduced numerous policies and programs – often in conjunction with the Queensland Government – to address these threats, and to protect and conserve this significant natural landmark and its values.

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6. '[World Heritage Outlook: Great Barrier Reef](#)', International Union for the Conservation of Nature (ICUN); GBRMPA, [Great Barrier Reef Outlook Report 2019](#), 271.
 7. '[Coral bleaching events](#)', Australian Institute of Marine Science (AIMS); At the time of writing this publication, AIMS [considers a mass bleaching event](#) to be when 'bleaching becomes common across many sectors of the Great Barrier Reef, including both inshore and offshore reefs'.
 8. GBRMPA, [Great Barrier Reef Outlook Report 2019](#), v, 165–166; '[Protecting the Great Barrier Reef](#)', DCCEEW; as summarised in Dr Evan Hamman and Dr Rebecca Bathgate, '[Protecting the Great Barrier Reef](#)', *Parliamentary Library Briefing Book: Key Issues for the 47th Parliament*, (Canberra: Parliamentary Library, June 2022).
 9. '[Threats to the Reef](#)', GBRMPA, updated 22 August 2022.
 10. Eleanor Carter and Hans Thulstrup, [Report on the Joint World Heritage Centre/IUNC Reactive Monitoring Mission to the Great Barrier Reef \(Australia\): From 21 to 30 March 2022](#), (Paris: World Heritage Centre, 2022), 4–5.
 11. DCCEEW, [State of Conservation of the Great Barrier Reef World Heritage property: Australian and Queensland Government Commitments for the Protection of the Great Barrier Reef – May 2023](#), (Australian Government, May 2023).
 12. UNESCO, [State of Conservation of Properties Inscribed on the World Heritage List](#), (Paris: UNESCO, July 2023), 26–27, 30.
 13. UNESCO, [Decisions Adopted During the Extended 45th Session of the World Heritage Committee](#), WHC/23/45.COM/19, (Riyadh: 2023), 113–114; '[46th Session of the World Heritage Committee](#)', UNESCO, 21–31 July 2024.
 14. DCCEEW, [Great Barrier Reef Progress Report](#), (Australian Government, February 2024), 29–36.
 15. '[World Heritage Outlook: Great Barrier Reef](#)', 2020 Conservation Outlook, ICUN.

With the Great Barrier Reef Marine Park Authority (GBRMPA) confirming that the seventh mass bleaching event since 1998 (and the fifth in 8 years) is underway as of March 2024,¹⁶ and the fourth Outlook Report expected for release later in 2024,¹⁷ this chronology provides a timeline of key policies and programs, as well as other key events and developments, concerning the protection and conservation of the Great Barrier Reef.

Chronology

Milestones	Details	Source Documents
November 1966	Liberal-Country Party Coalition Government takes office.	
8 October 1969	<p>Prime Minister announces decision to establish an Institute of Marine Science in Townsville, Queensland (Qld)</p> <p>Prime Minister John Gorton states that the institute ‘will become a centre of excellence’ and that one of its first priorities will include ‘research in the area of the Great Barrier Reef’.</p> <p>According to a media report, the proposed institute is expected to launch ‘a major research programme into the problem of the destructive crown of thorns starfish on the Great Barrier Reef’.</p>	<p>J. Gorton (Prime Minister), Policy Speech, Federal Election 1969, 8 October 1969, 11.</p> <p>‘Institute to Tackle Starfish Menace’, <i>Australian</i>, 10 October 1969.</p>
29 January 1970	<p>Joint Commonwealth-Qld enquiry into oil drilling in the GBR announced</p> <p>The Australian and Qld Governments agree to conduct a joint enquiry into the possibility of oil drilling causing damage to the GBR. The Qld Government states it will not prevent the oil drilling project in Repulse Bay from going ahead. However, it is later reported that the Qld Government would agree to a suspension provided the project companies agree and the state does not incur financial liability.</p>	<p>J. Gorton (Prime Minister), ‘Agreement on Barrier Reef Oil Drilling Enquiry’, media release, 29 January 1970.</p> <p>J. Bennetts, ‘Judge to Lead Reef Drilling Inquiry’, <i>Canberra Times</i>, 30 January 1970.</p> <p>W. Brown, ‘State to Seek Drilling Halt Agreement for Reef Oil Study’, <i>Courier-Mail</i>, 30 January 1970.</p>

16. GBRMPA, ‘[Aerial Surveys Confirm Widespread Bleaching Across the Great Barrier Reef](#)’, media release, 8 March 2024; ‘[Reef Health Updates](#)’, GBRMPA, updated 26 April 2024 (see ‘Reef Health Update’ dated 28 March 2024 and ‘Aerial Surveys Findings’ dated 17 April 2024); Graham Readfearn, ‘[Fifth Mass Coral Bleaching Event in Eight Years Hits Great Barrier Reef, Marine Park Authority Confirms](#)’, *Guardian*, 8 March 2024.

17. Section 54 of the [Great Barrier Reef Marine Park Act 1975](#) requires that an Outlook Report be prepared every 5 years by GBRMPA; at the time of writing this publication, the most recent Outlook Report was published in 2019.

29 January 1970	<p>Australian and Qld Government agree to establish a crown-of-thorns starfish Joint Committee</p>	<p>J. Gorton (Prime Minister), 'Agreement on Barrier Reef Oil Drilling Enquiry', media release, 29 January 1970.</p>
7 April 1970	<p>Australian and Qld Government crown-of-thorns starfish Joint Committee members announced</p> <p>The 6-member Joint Committee was agreed to on 29 January 1970 and will investigate the problem of crown-of-thorns starfish in the GBR. It will report to both governments and be supported by each on a dollar for dollar basis.</p>	<p>J. Gorton (Prime Minister), 'Crown of Thorns Starfish', media release, 7 April 1970.</p>
5 May 1970	<p>2 Royal Commissions (Commonwealth and Qld State) to inquire into oil drilling in the GBR announced</p> <p>The Commonwealth and Qld Royal Commissions will be established under the Commonwealth's <i>Royal Commissions Act 1902–1966</i> and the Qld <i>Commissions of Inquiry Acts 1950–1954</i>, respectively. The 2 Royal Commissions have identical terms of reference and the same Commissioners and will inquire into the risk of damage to the GBR from drilling for petroleum.</p> <p>Prime Minister John Gorton states that the Royal Commissions 'agreed terms of reference incorporate some improvements and change of a drafting nature from the agreed terms announced on 29 January'.</p>	<p>J. Gorton (Prime Minister), 'Statement: Great Barrier Reef Oil Drilling Inquiry', media release, 28 April 1970.</p> <p>J. Gorton (Prime Minister), 'Inquiry Into the Risk of Damage to the Great Barrier Reef From Drilling for Petroleum', media release, 5 May 1970.</p>
17 June 1970	<p>Australian Institute of Marine Science (AIMS) established</p> <p>The Institute is established under the Australian Institute of Marine Science Act 1970. The Minister is required to appoint an Interim Council to make recommendations concerning the functions of the Institute and the constitution of its Council (responsible for governing the Institute). Regarding the Institute's functions, the Interim Council must consider:</p>	<p>Australian Institute of Marine Science Act 1970</p> <p>Interim Council of the Australian Institute of Marine Science, Marine Science in Australia: Report, (Melbourne: Australian Institute of Marine Science, 1972), 4.</p>

... the need for information and research in relation to the biological and physical aspects of marine science, with particular reference to information and research concerning the effects of exploration for, or exploitation of, oil and other minerals, and of fishing operations, on or in the vicinity of the Great Barrier Reef.

30 March 1971

Joint Committee report on crown-of-thorns starfish in the GBR tabled in Parliament

The committee believes that the starfish ‘does not constitute a threat to the Great Barrier Reef as a whole’ and that any attempts to reduce their population throughout the entire Reef ‘is unwarranted at the present time’. It acknowledges that current reef ecology knowledge is inadequate to fully assess ‘present and future problems concerning the crown-of-thorns starfish and related matters’ and that more research is urgently needed.

The committee recommends the Australian and Qld Governments establish a joint Research Trust Fund (for an initial period of 3 years) and appoint an Advisory Committee to recommend funding allocations. The governments agree to the recommendation. They each [commit \\$45,000 to the fund](#) for its first year and agree to increase that amount by \$10,000 in each of the second and third years.

The members of the Advisory Committee are [announced on 18 August 1971](#).

W. McMahon (Prime Minister), ‘[Crown of Thorns Starfish](#)’, media release, 30 March 1971.

Commonwealth and Qld Governments Joint Committee, [Report of the Committee on the Problem of the Crown-of-Thorns Starfish](#), (Canberra: Commonwealth Government Printing Office, 1971), 6–7, 26.

W. McMahon (Prime Minister), ‘[Appointment of Crown of Thorns Committee](#)’, media release, 16 August 1971.

July 1971

AIMS Interim Council releases report

The report recommends that roughly \$6.5 million be provided over 5 years to establish the Institute.

Interim Council of the Australian Institute of Marine Science, [Marine Science in Australia: Report](#), 10.

2 January 1972

Australian Government commits up to \$8 million to establish AIMS

Based on the proposal outlined in the AIMS Interim Council report, the Australian

M. Fraser (Minister for Education and Science), ‘[Australian Institute of Marine Science](#)’, media release, 2 January 1972.

	<p>Government commits up to \$8 million over 5 years to establish AIMS in Townsville.</p> <p>AIMS will initially focus on ‘matters such as studies of the Great Barrier Reef, the Coral Sea and the coast and adjacent waters of North Queensland’.</p>	
9 June 1972	<p>New AIMS Act enacted</p> <p>The <i>Australian Institute of Marine Science Act 1970</i> is repealed and replaced by the Australian Institute of Marine Science Act 1972. AIMS is continued in existence by the new Act, which sets out the institute’s specific functions (section 9) and powers (section 10).</p>	<p>Australian Institute of Marine Science Act 1972</p>
December 1972 – Labor Government takes office.		
1 November 1974	<p>Royal Commissions into petroleum drilling in the GBR present report to the Australian and Qld Governments</p> <p>For convenience, the report encompasses both the Qld State and the Commonwealth’s Royal Commissions. It is over 1,000 pages long and presented in 2 volumes. The Royal Commission concludes that, among other things:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • drilling should not be permitted in a marine or national park • before any drilling is permitted there must be co-ordinated Australian, state and industry contingency plans. <p>Of the 3 Royal Commission members, 2 consider that drilling in designated areas of the Reef could be permitted provided designated buffer zones and certain safety precautions (including contingency plans) were adopted. The third Commission member, and Commission Chairman:</p> <p>... considers it preferable that petroleum drilling in the GBRP [GBR Province] should be postponed, and be planned and permitted only in the light, and with the aid, of full scientific knowledge of all the effects of oil pollution direct and indirect, short and</p>	<p>G. Whitlam (Prime Minister) and J. Bjelke-Petersen (Qld Premier), ‘Great Barrier Reef Petroleum Drilling Royal Commissions’, media release, 22 November 1974.</p> <p>G. Wallace, J. Smith and V. Moroney, Royal Commissions into Exploratory and Production Drilling for Petroleum in the Area of the Great Barrier Reef: Report, vol. 1, (Canberra: Government Printer of Australia, 1975), v.</p> <p>Wallace, Smith and Moroney, Royal Commissions into Exploratory and Production Drilling for Petroleum in the Area of the Great Barrier Reef: Report, vol. 2, 588.</p>

long-term, on the coral and other marine life of what was described ... as the complex and delicately balanced system of the Barrier Reef.

25 November 1974

Prime Minister announces decision to create a marine park on the GBR

The decision is attributed to 'the urgent need to protect the reef from despoilation [sic]'. It includes a commitment to ban drilling 'in any area of the park where it was considered harmful to the reef or to the environment as a whole'.

Prime Minister Gough Whitlam acknowledges that the park should be 'established in co-operation with the Queensland Government' and states that the Australian Government wants to create a GBR marine park authority, comprised of 'members appointed jointly by the Australian and Queensland Governments', to administer the park.

G. Whitlam (Prime Minister), '[Great Barrier Reef](#)', media release, 25 November 1974.

20 June 1975

Great Barrier Reef Marine Park Act 1975 (GBRMP Act) enacted

[Great Barrier Reef Marine Park Act 1975](#)

The GBRMP Act establishes:

- the Great Barrier Reef Marine Park (GBRMP)
- the Great Barrier Reef Marine Park Authority (GBRMPA) – comprising a Chairman and 2 other members
- a framework for planning and management of the marine park, including zoning plans, plans of management and a system of permissions.

November 1975 – Liberal-National Country Party Coalition Government takes office.¹⁸

February 1976

Advisory Committee on research into the crown-of-thorns starfish disbanded

J. Webster (Minister for Science), '[Economy Measures – Department of Science and Related](#)

18. The Country Party changed its name to the [National Country Party in 1975](#).

	<p>The Federal Minister for Science states that the committee ‘would be disbanded to save administrative costs, but its programs would be continued under the aegis of the Australian Institute of Marine Science’. The Minister also notes that the ‘development of the Institute’s programs would be restrained to enable savings’.</p> <p>The Qld Minister for Fisheries states that ‘the Queensland Government would continue its longstanding interest in research activity through its Fisheries Service’.</p>	<p>Statutory Authorities’, media release, 4 February 1976, 2–3.</p> <p>J. Webster (Minister for Science), ‘Report of the Advisory Committee on Research into the Crown of Thorns Starfish’, media release, 2 March 1976, 2.</p>
4 June 1979	<p>Prime Minister announces temporary ban on further oil drilling and exploration in the GBR</p> <p>In line with the recommendations from the Royal Commissions, the Australian Government decides that:</p> <p style="padding-left: 40px;">... there should be no further exploration for petroleum in the Great Barrier Reef Region and that there should be no renewal of petroleum exploration permits in the Region until the results of both short and longer term research are known.</p>	<p>M. Fraser (Prime Minister), ‘Petroleum Exploration in the Great Barrier Reef’, media release, 4 June 1979.</p>
14 June 1979	<p>First GBR Intergovernmental Agreement (the ‘Emerald Agreement’) signed</p> <p>Prime Minister Malcolm Fraser and Qld Premier Joh Bjelke-Petersen sign an agreement outlining the arrangements between the 2 governments for managing the GBR. They agree to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • establish a GBR Ministerial Council (comprising 2 Commonwealth and 2 Qld Government Ministers) to represent ‘tourism, marine parks, science and environment’ • proclaim the Capricornia section as the first section of the GBRMP. <p>The Prime Minister and the Qld Premier confirm in a joint media release that ‘it was the policies of their respective governments to prohibit any drilling on the Reef or any</p>	<p>Australian Government and Qld Government, Great Barrier Reef Intergovernmental Agreement 1979, 1979.</p> <p>M. Fraser (Prime Minister) and J. Bjelke-Petersen (Qld Premier), ‘Great Barrier Reef’, media release, 14 June 1979.</p>

	drilling or mining which could damage the Reef’.	
21 October 1979	<p>Capricornia Section of GBR is proclaimed the first part of the GBRMP</p> <p>The section covers over 12,000 square kilometres. Prime Minister Fraser’s media release states:</p> <p style="padding-left: 40px;">The proclamation of this first part of the marine park is further evidence of the Commonwealth’s commitment to the conservation of our environment. Over the past four years we have taken decisions that will guarantee that our children and their children have the opportunity to enjoy and experience the unique heritage of Australia.</p>	<p>M. Fraser (Prime Minister), ‘Electorate Talk - The Great Barrier Reef’, media release, 21 October 1979.</p> <p>J. Webster (Minister for Science and the Environment), ‘First Section of Great Barrier Reef Marine Park’, media release, 21 October 1979.</p>
14 September 1980	<p>GBR nominated for inclusion on the World Heritage List</p> <p>To be included on the list as a natural World Heritage site, the GBR site must demonstrate ‘outstanding universal value’ (OUV) by satisfying one or more of the following criteria:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • be an outstanding example representing the major stages on the earth’s evolutionary history • be an outstanding example representing significant ongoing geological processes, biological evolution and man’s interaction with the natural environment • contains unique, rare or superlative natural phenomena, formations and features or areas of exceptional natural beauty • be the habitat where populations of rare or endangered species of plants and animals still survive. 	<p>M. Fraser (Prime Minister), ‘Great Barrier Reef and the World Heritage List’, media release, 14 September 1980.</p>
26–30 October 1981	<p>GBR added to the List of World Heritage Sites</p> <p>The World Heritage Committee (WHC) made the decision during its fifth session in Sydney. In its decision, the WHC notes:</p>	<p>GBRMPA, Nomination of the Great Barrier Reef by the Commonwealth of Australia for Inclusion in the World Heritage List,</p>

... only a small proportion of the area nominated for the World Heritage List had been proclaimed within the Great Barrier Reef Region as defined in the Great Barrier Reef Marine Park Act, 1975, and the Committee requested the Australian Government to take steps to ensure that the whole area is proclaimed under relevant legislation as soon as possible and that the necessary environmental protection measures are taken.

(Townsville: GBRMPA, January 1981).

UNESCO, [World Heritage Committee: Fifth Session: Report of the Rapporteur](#), CC-81/CONF/003/6, (Sydney: 1982), 4.

March 1983 – Labor Government takes office.

19 March 1990

Severe Tropical Cyclone Ivor impacts on the GBR¹⁹

The cyclone crosses the coast of Cape York Peninsula. Physical damage to the Reef is recorded as far as 40 km to the north of the cyclone’s path and 10 km to the south. The impact is most severe over a 50 km section of the outer reef in the northern section.

‘[Severe Tropical Cyclone Ivor](#)’, Bureau of Meteorology (BOM), 15–26 March 1990.

M. Puotinen, T. Done and W. Skelly, [An Atlas of Tropical Cyclones in the Great Barrier Reef Region, 1969–1997](#), CRC Reef Research Technical Report No. 19, (Townsville, James Cook University, 1997).

T. Done, A. Ayling and R. Van Woesik, [Broadscale Survey of Impacts of Cyclone Ivor on Coral Reefs](#), a report to the GBRMPA, (Townsville: GBRMPA, June 1991).

16 November 1990

GBR region designated as first Particularly Sensitive Sea Area

The designation by the Marine Environment Protection Committee (MEPC) of the International Maritime Organization (IMO) allows Australia to implement associated

IMO, [Identification of the Great Barrier Reef Region as a Particularly Sensitive Area](#), Annex 17 to Resolution MEPC.44(30),

19. At the time of writing this publication, the Bureau of Meteorology ranks the [severity of a tropical cyclone](#) in categories from 1 (weakest) to 5 (strongest). A system is called a [severe tropical cyclone](#) if the sustained winds around the cyclone’s centre reach 118 km per hour, with gusts in excess of 165 km per hour (categories 3 and above).

	<p>protective measures such as a compulsory pilotage regime, and ship routing and reporting systems.</p>	<p>adopted 16 November 1990.</p> <p>IMO, Report of the Marine Environment Protection Committee on its Thirtieth Session: Corrigenda, MEPC 30/24/Corr.1, 19 June 1991.</p>
20 July 1994	<p>Twenty Five Year Strategic Plan for the GBR World Heritage Area finalised</p> <p>It is the first major regional plan to be released for the GBR. Developed via a joint decision-making process with all levels of government, Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples, industry (including tourism, commercial, and recreational fishing), conservationists and scientists, the plan is intended to provide an overarching, system-wide perspective for managing the entire GBR.</p> <p>It outlines a vision for the future of the Reef and the objectives and strategies needed to achieve this vision. The 25-year objective is:</p> <p style="padding-left: 40px;">To ensure the persistence of the Great Barrier Reef World Heritage area as a diverse, resilient, and productive ecological system, while retaining opportunity for a diverse range of experiences and uses consistent with Australia’s obligations under the World Heritage Convention.</p>	<p>GBRMPA, The Great Barrier Reef: Keeping it Great: a 25 Year Strategic Plan for the Great Barrier Reef World Heritage Area 1994–2019, (Townsville: GBRMPA, 1994), 15.</p> <p>P. Keating (Prime Minister), ‘Launch of the Great Barrier Reef Strategic Plan, Townsville’, media release, 20 July 1994.</p>
6 April 1995	<p>New position on the GBRMPA created for a representative of indigenous communities</p> <p>A range of amendments are made to the <i>GBRMPA Act</i>, including to provide for an additional, fourth member of the GBRMPA ‘appointed to represent the interests of the Aboriginal communities adjacent to the Marine Park’ (section 5).</p>	<p>Environment, Sport and Territories Legislation Amendment Act 1995</p>
27–29 November 1995	<p>State of the GBR World Heritage Workshop held</p> <p>The technical workshop is intended to support the GBRMPA in producing its first</p>	<p>D. Wachenfeld, J. Oliver and K. Davis (eds), State of the Great Barrier Reef World Heritage</p>

report on the State of the Great Barrier Reef World Heritage Area. The technical studies presented during the workshop are intended to underpin this report, and provide overviews on the Reef's:

- climatic and oceanographic characteristics
- water quality and terrestrial inputs
- status of key plants and animal groups
- management and use issues.

[Workshop: Proceedings of a Technical Workshop Held in Townsville, Queensland, Australia, 27–29 November 1995](#), (Townsville: GBRMPA, 1995), 1.

March 1996 – Liberal-National Party Coalition Government takes office.

18 July 1996

Cargo ship *Peacock* grounds on Piper Reef

The grounding is the 30th marine shipping incident to occur in the GBR and Torres Strait since 1985 and the second time a cargo ship has run aground on Piper Reef in the same period. The ship is grounded for 8 days before being successfully refloated on 26 July.

According to the Australian Transport Safety Bureau's (ATSB) incident report, no pollution occurred as a result of the grounding. However, the incident report does not consider the harmful pollutant effects of the estimated 1 tonne of antifouling paint agent tributyltin (TBT) that is scraped from the ship's hull and released into the Reef.²⁰

P. Glover, '[Marine Casualties in the Great Barrier Reef: "Peacock", "Bunqa Teratai Satu" and "Doric Chariot"](#)', *Maritime Law Association of Australia and New Zealand Journal* 18, (2004): 60.

'[Grounding of the Panamanian flag *Peacock*](#)', Australian Transport Safety Bureau (ATSB).

Great Barrier Reef Shipping Review Steering Committee, [Review of Ship Safety and Pollution Prevention Measures in the Great Barrier Reef](#), (The Committee, July 2001), 85–86.

22 March 1997

Severe Tropical Cyclone Justin impacts on the GBR

The cyclone makes landfall as a category 2 system northwest of Cairns. The

'[Severe Tropical Cyclone Justin](#)', BOM, 6–24 March 1997.

20. TBT compounds are 'considered moderately to highly persistent organic pollutants and are [especially hazardous to marine ecosystems](#)'.

	<p>slow-moving system caused heavy rain and gale to storm force winds.</p>	
1998	<p>First recorded major global mass coral bleaching event occurs²¹</p> <p>The bleaching is the result of unusually warm sea surface temperatures during the summer. The bleaching event occurs globally and causes mass coral bleaching in the Indian Ocean and Pacific.</p> <p>Aerial surveys in the GBR reveal that bleaching has occurred on 21% of the offshore and 74% of the inshore reefs surveyed.</p> <p>AIMS notes that ‘most reefs recovered fully, with fewer than 5% of inshore reefs suffering high coral mortality’; however, ‘the most severely affected reefs were in the Palm Island area, where up to 70% of corals died’.</p>	<p>‘Coral bleaching events’, AIMS.</p> <p>GBRMPA, Coral Bleaching Fact Sheet, n.d.</p> <p>T. Goreau et al., ‘Conservation of Coral Reefs after the 1998 Global Bleaching Event’, <i>Conservation Biology</i> 14, no. 1, (February 2000): 5–15.</p> <p>T. Hughes, J. Kerry and T. Simpson, ‘Large-scale bleaching of corals on the Great Barrier Reef’, <i>Coral Reefs</i> 18, (April 1999): 55–60.</p>
23 February 1998	<p>Australian National Audit Office (ANAO) releases audit report on the Australian Government’s management of the GBR</p> <p>The ANAO report examines the ‘efficiency and effectiveness’ of the Australian Government’s management of the Reef as implemented by the GBRMPA. The ANAO found that the ‘complexity of the Authority’s planning hinders the development of practical and useful performance information for management and accountability purposes’.</p> <p>It also found that ‘the Authority does not have adequate data to determine whether it is achieving its primary objective of protecting, conserving and allowing for reasonable use of the Great Barrier Reef Marine Park’.</p> <p>The ANAO makes 7 recommendations to help enhance the effectiveness of</p>	<p>Australian National Audit Office (ANAO), Commonwealth Management of the Great Barrier Reef: GBRMPA, Auditor-General Report No. 33, 1997–1998, (Canberra: ANAO, 1998), xix–xxi, 12.</p>

21. AIMS has been monitoring mass bleaching events in the GBR [since the early 1980s](#). Some [earlier bleaching events](#) are also known to have occurred, however these are beyond the scope of this chronology.

	<p>GBRMPA's governance. The GBRMPA agrees with 6 of the recommendations and agrees 'in broad principle' with one.</p>	
November 1998	<p>First report on the State of the Great Barrier Reef World Heritage Area released</p> <p>The report 'represents the first ever attempt to synthesise information on the state of the whole World Heritage Area as well as human pressures on the environment and management responses to those pressures'.</p>	<p>D. Wachenfeld, J. Oliver and J. Morrissey (eds), State of the Great Barrier Reef World Heritage Area 1998, (Townsville: GBRMPA, November 1998), 7.</p>
25 May 1999	<p>Environment Minister announces a review of existing zoning within the GBRMP</p> <p>The review starts from the premise that existing zoning offers insufficient protection to the full extent of habitats and biodiversity now understood to make up the GBR. Instead, a 'Representative Areas' approach to protection and management is proposed.</p> <p>The Representative Areas Program will identify the key habitats or 'bioregions' within the World Heritage Area and assess how zoning should be amended to provide sufficient protection for all habitat types.</p>	<p>R. Hill (Minister for the Environment and Heritage), Protecting the Diversity of the Great Barrier Reef, media release, 25 May 1999.</p>
2 November 2000	<p>Container ship <i>Bunga Teratai Satu</i> grounds on the Sudbury Reef</p> <p>The 184-metre long, 22,000-tonne ship cuts a path through the reef, causing severe localised damage and destroying an area of approximately 1,500 m². The ship is grounded for 13 days before being successfully refloated on 14 November.</p> <p>Antifoulant TBT paint is scraped from the ship's hull and dispersed by currents and the vessel's own propeller, causing a relatively low level of contamination of 30,000 m². The clean-up effort was carried out in 2 phases from 9 January 2001 to 27 March 2001.</p>	<p>Grounding of the container ship <i>Bunga Teratai Satu</i>, ATSB.</p> <p>Decision 25 BUR V.106-112, 24th session, World Heritage Bureau, UNESCO World Heritage Convention, 2001.</p> <p>GBRMPA, Clean-up at Sudbury Reef, media release, 19 December 2000.</p>
6 November 2000	<p>Review of measures to promote ship safety and pollution prevention in the GBR announced</p>	<p>J. Anderson (Minister for Transport and Regional Services), Review of Great Barrier Reef Safety</p>

The review is 'tasked with developing practical and enforceable ways to strengthen the existing regulatory regime for shipping and develop new initiatives aimed at continuously improving shipping performance in safety and environment protection in the Great Barrier Reef region'.

The review will be overseen by a steering committee comprising senior officials from the GBRMPA, AMSA, the Department of Transport and Regional Services and the Qld Government Department of Transport.

[and Pollution Prevention](#)', media release, 6 November 2000.

J. Anderson (Minister for Transport and Regional Services), '[Improvements in Great Barrier Reef Safety](#)', media release, 24 November 2000.

21 June 2001

Great Barrier Reef Marine Park Amendment Act 2001 receives royal assent

The Act strengthens GBR environmental protection from ship groundings, oil pollution and illegal fishing by introducing new offences that cover some of these activities and by increasing some of the penalties for these offences.

It also replaces the definition of 'compulsory pilotage area' within the *GBRMP Act* to allow the area to be defined and amended via Regulation, rather than needing to amend the Act itself. This change would allow the government to adjust the definition more quickly in response to new information or threats.

[Great Barrier Reef Marine Park Amendment Act 2001](#)

A. Martyn, '[Great Barrier Reef Marine Park Amendment Bill 2001](#)', *Bills Digest*, 128, 2000–01, (Canberra: Parliamentary Library, 17 May 2001), 4, 9.

<p>July 2001</p>	<p>Review of Ship Safety and Pollution Prevention Measures in the Great Barrier Reef released</p> <p>The review notes the ‘response to the <i>Bunga Teratai Satu</i> incident clearly demonstrated the weaknesses and complexities’ of the current management arrangements concerning shipping in the Reef. It recommends establishing a GBR Shipping Management Group to develop a coordinated Shipping Management Plan to:</p> <p style="padding-left: 40px;">... clarify the legal regime and responsibilities of Commonwealth and State authorities, and establish broad objectives and policy parameters for shipping to guide management of the region and regulation of the industry.</p> <p>The review also recommends that the group ‘develop a study of the economic, environmental and social impact of shipping, including indigenous considerations, in the Great Barrier Reef Marine Park and Torres Strait’.</p>	<p>Great Barrier Reef Shipping Review Steering Committee, Review of Ship Safety and Pollution Prevention Measures in the Great Barrier Reef, (the Committee, July 2001), ii, iii, 1–3.</p>
<p>2002</p>	<p>Second recorded mass coral bleaching event occurs</p> <p>Aerial surveys reveal bleaching in a higher proportion of offshore reefs (nearly 41%) and 72% of the inshore reefs counted in the census. Less than 5% of the reefs counted suffered high coral mortality, and recovery after the event is considered ‘generally good’.</p>	<p>‘Coral bleaching events’, AIMS.</p>
<p>7 May 2002</p>	<p>First formal community participation phase of the Representative Areas Program (RAP) commence</p> <p>The first phase of public consultation is undertaken on the proposal to prepare a new (single) Zoning Plan for the entire GBR, based on enhanced protection for all bioregions identified in the RAP.</p> <p>The consultation runs until 7 August 2002 and results in 10,190 written submissions from the public, the largest number ever received by the GBRMPA for a management planning exercise.</p>	<p>GBRMPA, Great Barrier Reef Marine Park: Zoning Plan 2003, (Townsville: GBRMPA, May 2004).</p> <p>GBRMPA, The Great Barrier Reef: Representative Areas, program poster, (Townsville: GBRMPA, 2004), 2.</p>

29 July 2002	<p>Bulk coal carrier ship <i>Doric Chariot</i> grounds on Piper Reef</p> <p>The 225-metre long, 73,000-tonne ship cuts through the reef, creating a grounding scar approximately 50 m long and 70 m wide and destroying over 3,500 m² of coral reef. Toxic antifoulant TBT paint is scraped from the ship's hull and released into the environment.</p> <p>The ship is grounded for 9 days before being successfully refloated on 6 August.</p> <p>Clean up and remediation efforts take place from 27 October to 30 November 2002.</p>	<p>Glover, 'Marine Casualties in the Great Barrier Reef: 'Peacock', 'Bunga Teratai Satu' and 'Doric Chariot'', 69–72.</p> <p>GBRMPA, 'Remediation of Piper Reef Following the Grounding of the "Doric Chariot"', media release, n.d.</p>
2 June 2003	<p>Minister for Environment and Heritage releases draft Zoning Plan</p> <p>The draft plan proposes to increase the proportion of the GBR zoned as 'no-take' (known as Green Zones) from 4.5% to around 30%. It is based on ensuring representation of all 70 bioregions within these 'no-take' areas.</p> <p>A second phase of public consultation follows, with the public invited to make submissions by 4 August 2003.</p>	<p>D. Kemp (Minister for the Environment and Heritage), 'Kemp unveils Great Barrier Reef Protection Plan', media release, 2 June 2003.</p> <p>GBRMPA, Draft Great Barrier Reef Marine Park Zoning Plan 2003, (Townsville: GBRMPA, June 2003).</p>
2 June 2003	<p>Second formal community participation phase of RAP commences</p> <p>The GBRMPA's second round of community consultation on the draft Zoning Plan includes:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • more than 360 meetings and information sessions • the distribution of 76,000 maps • 57,000 submission forms • 29,000 explanatory brochures • more than 2,100 CDs. <p>A total of 31,500 submissions are received across the 2 phases of public consultation, making the RAP 'one of the largest examples of public involvement in any environmental planning process in Australia's history'.</p>	<p>GBRMPA, The Great Barrier Reef: Representative Areas, poster, 2.</p> <p>GBRMPA, Report on the Great Barrier Reef Marine Park Zoning Plan 2003, (Townsville: GBRMPA, 2005), 2.</p>

October 2003	Reef Water Quality Protection Plan released	Australian Government and Qld Government, <i>Reef Water Quality Protection Plan: For Catchments Adjacent to the Great Barrier Reef World Heritage Area</i> , (Brisbane: Qld Department of Premier and Cabinet, October 2003), 6.
	<p>The plan aims to halt and reverse the decline in GBR water quality within 10 years. It outlines multiple actions and strategies to achieve this.</p> <p>The plan has 2 main objectives:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • reduce the load of pollutants from diffuse sources in the water entering the Reef • rehabilitate and conserve areas of the Reef catchment that have a role in removing waterborne pollutants. 	
20 October 2003	ANAO releases follow-up report on its 1997–98 audit report on the Australian Government’s management of GBR	ANAO, <i>Commonwealth Management of the Great Barrier Reef Follow-up Audit: The GBRMPA</i> , Audit Report No. 8, 2003–04, (Canberra: ANAO, 2003).
	<p>The report assesses the extent to which the GBRMPA implemented the recommendations made by ANAO in its earlier 1997–98 audit report. The ANAO finds that the Authority has implemented 6 of the 7 recommendations and has ‘made good progress’ towards implementing the last one.</p>	<i>‘Commonwealth Management of the Great Barrier Reef Follow-up Audit: The GBRMPA’</i> , ANAO.
21 April 2004	Amalgamated GBR section proclaimed	<i>Commonwealth of Australia Gazette, Special, No. S 119</i> , 21 April 2004, (see pdf pages 55–63).
	<p>All 33 existing sections of the GBRMP (which include the 5 main sections and 28 new coastal sections) are united to form one section, called the Amalgamated Great Barrier Reef (AGBR) section.</p>	

<p>1 July 2004</p>	<p>GBR Marine Park Zoning Plan 2003 commences</p> <p>Enacted under the <i>GBRMP Act</i>, the plan was created by the GBRMPA on 26 November 2003 and tabled in Parliament on 3 December 2003.</p> <p>It provides a single, consistent zoning plan for the entire Marine Park and is the primary planning instrument for the conservation and management of the Marine Park.</p> <p>The plan divides the AGBR Section into 8 zones and dictates the purposes for which each zone can be used or entered. The plan is expected to increase the total area of the park that is protected from practices such as fishing and collecting (so called ‘no-take’ or Green Zones) from 4.5% to 33.3%.</p>	<p>GBRMPA, Great Barrier Reef Marine Park Zoning Plan 2003, (Townsville: GBRMPA, May 2004).</p> <p>D. Kemp (Minister for the Environment and Heritage), ‘Reef Protection Increased Six-Fold’, media release, 3 December 2003.</p> <p>GBRMPA, Report on the Great Barrier Reef Marine Park Zoning Plan 2003, (Townsville: GBRMPA, November 2005), 2.</p>
<p>5 November 2004</p>	<p>GBR Coast Marine Park and Zoning Plan commence</p> <p>Enacted under the Qld Marine Parks Act 1982 (now repealed and replaced by the Marine Parks Act 2004), the new GBR Coast Marine Park amalgamated the 4 existing Qld marine parks with new areas so that the Marine Park runs the entire length of the Commonwealth GBRMP Zoning Plan from just north of Baffle Creek (near Bundaberg) to Cape York.</p> <p>The Marine Parks (Great Barrier Reef Coast) Zoning Plan 2004 complements the GBRMP Zoning Plan by adopting similar zone objectives and entry and use provisions.</p>	<p>‘Great Barrier Reef Coast Marine Park’, Qld Government, updated 22 October 2021.</p>

9 March 2005

Severe Tropical Cyclone Ingrid impacts on the GBR

The cyclone crosses far northern part of the GBR and makes landfall as a category 4 system. It is the strongest cyclone to cross this part of the GBR since 1918. It has a tightly defined core, with wind gusts of up to 250 km an hour, generating estimated wave heights of over 5 m within the GBR lagoon.

According to the results of surveys conducted post-cyclone:

The worst-affected inshore reefs were reduced to extensive rubble fields. On the worst-affected outer-shelf reefs, more than half of the surfaces of crests and outer slopes were stripped off their framework down to solid substratum, ~0.5 m below previous living coral surface.

[‘Severe Tropical Cyclone Ingrid’](#), BOM.

K. Fabricius et al., [‘Disturbance Gradients on Inshore and Offshore Coral Reefs Caused by a Severe Tropical Cyclone’](#), *Limnology and Oceanography* 53, no. 2 (2008): 691, 696.

10–17 July 2005

29th session of the WHC held in Durban, South Africa

The committee notes petitions received from concerned non-government organisations requesting that the GBR (and 3 other World Heritage properties) be listed as in danger ‘on the basis of climate change and associated impacts’.

The IUCN notes the petition’s key issues and technical background ‘seem well founded and properly referenced’. However, it also states ‘that it would be premature to accept the petitions outright’, arguing that ‘[t]here is insufficient technical data and evidence on the impacts of climate change on the properties’ and noting that climate change impacts on coral reefs globally and is not unique to the GBR.

The WHC adopts the IUCN’s draft decision, including noting that climate change is affecting many properties and ‘likely to affect many more’ and encouraging Parties to ‘seriously consider the potential impacts of climate change within their management planning’.

UNESCO, [State of conservation of properties inscribed on the World Heritage List](#), WHC-05/29.COM/7B.Rev, (Paris: 2005), 2–3.

UNESCO, [Decisions adopted by the World Heritage Committee at its 29th session](#), WHC-05/29.COM/22, (Paris: 2005), 55–56.

22 July 2005	<p>IMO approves extension of GBR Particularly Sensitive Sea Area to the Torres Strait</p>	<p>IMO, Designation of the Torres Strait as an Extension of the Great Barrier Reef Particularly Sensitive Sea Area, Resolution MEPC.133(53), adopted 22 July 2005.</p>
23 August 2005	<p>Minister for the Environment announces review of the <i>GBRMP Act</i></p> <p>The review implements the Howard Government’s 2004 election commitment ‘to improve the performance of the [GBRMPA], its office holders and its accountability frameworks’.</p> <p>The review’s terms of reference are focused on:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • the role of office holders • the functions of the GBRMPA • accountability frameworks • consultation mechanisms. 	<p>I. Campbell (Minister for the Environment and Heritage), ‘Review of the Great Barrier Reef Marine Park Act’, media release, 23 August 2005.</p> <p>Liberal Party of Australia and the Nationals, Supporting North Queensland, Coalition policy document, Election 2004, 2.</p> <p>D. Borthwick, B. Belcher and J. Hutson, Review of the Great Barrier Reef Marine Park Act 1975: Review Panel Report, (Canberra: Department of the Environment and Heritage, 2006), 5.</p>
2006	<p>Localised coral bleaching event occurs</p> <p>Bleaching occurs in the southern region of the GBR. Despite being confined to a smaller area, surveys reveal that the bleaching event is worse than in previous years, with up to 98% of corals bleached on some reefs, resulting in high coral mortality.</p>	<p>‘Coral bleaching events’, AIMS.</p>

20 March 2006	<p>Severe Tropical Cyclone Larry impacts on the GBR</p> <p>The cyclone makes landfall as a category 5 system close to Innisfail. It has damaging effects on reefs between Hinchinbrook and Cairns, with severe damage recorded on several inshore reefs, but less damage on offshore reefs in the cyclone’s path.</p>	<p>‘Severe Tropical Cyclone Larry’, BOM, 17–20 March 2006.</p> <p>A. Chin, J. Davidson and G. Diaz, Initial Survey of the Impact of Tropical Cyclone Larry on Reef and Islands in the Central Great Barrier Reef, (Townsville: GBRMPA, 10 April 2006).</p> <p>AIMS, Great Barrier Reef Damaged by Severe Tropical Cyclone Larry’, media release, 10 November 2006.</p>
2 October 2006	<p>Review of the GBRMP Act released</p> <p>The reviewers make 28 recommendations to strengthen the future accountability and transparency of the GBRMPA.</p> <p>The first recommendation includes making the Authority’s primary objective ‘the long-term protection, wise use, understanding and enjoyment of the Great Barrier Reef’.</p>	<p>I. Campbell (Minister for the Environment and Heritage), Review of the Great Barrier Reef Marine Park Act’, media release, 2 October 2006.</p> <p>Borthwick, Belcher and Hutson, Review of the Great Barrier Reef Marine Park Act 1975: Review Panel Report, 167–175.</p>
2007	<p>GBR Climate Change Action Plan 2007–2012 released</p> <p>The plan outlines ‘a way forward for the Australian Government to comprehensively act to maximise the resilience of the Reef’.</p>	<p>GBRMPA, Great Barrier Reef Climate Change Action Plan: 2007–2012, (Townsville: GBRMPA, 2007), 3.</p>

1 July 2007

Great Barrier Reef Marine Park Amendment Act 2007 enacted

The Act amends the governance, accountability and transparency requirements in the *GBRMP Act*. In particular, the amendments require:

- a five-yearly, peer-reviewed 'Outlook Report' to document the overall condition of the marine park to be tabled in Parliament and published
- an enhanced process to engage stakeholders in the development of zoning plans for the marine park
- zoning plans to be 'locked down' for a minimum of seven years from the date they come into force to provide stability for business, communities and biological systems.

[‘Managing and protecting the Great Barrier Reef’](#), DCCEEW.

[Great Barrier Reef Marine Park Amendment Act 2007](#)

December 2007 – Labor Government takes office.

13 May 2008

Reef Rescue program launched

The program, to be funded from 2008 to 2013 as part of the ‘Caring for our Country’ initiative, receives \$200 million in funding, to be distributed as follows:

- \$146 million for water quality grants
- \$12 million for the Healthy Reefs Partnerships Program
- \$22 million for water quality monitoring and reporting
- \$10 million for water quality research and development
- \$10 million for the Land and Sea Country Indigenous Partnerships Program.

T. Burke (Minister for Agriculture, Fisheries and Forestry), [‘\\$200m to Rescue the Great Barrier Reef’](#), media release, 13 May 2008.

Australian Government, [Australian Government Reef Achievements 2008–2013](#), (Canberra: 2014).

October 2008	<p>Scientific consensus statement on GBR water quality released</p> <p>The statement concludes that, among other things, ‘water discharged from rivers to the GBR continues to be of poor quality in many locations’ and ‘current management interventions are not effectively solving the problem’.</p>	<p>J. Brodie et al., Scientific Consensus Statement on Water Quality in the Great Barrier Reef, (Brisbane: Reef Water Quality Protection Plan Secretariat, October 2008), 2.</p>
12 November 2008	<p>Great Barrier Reef Marine Park and Other Legislation Amendment Act 2008 enacted</p> <p>The Act ‘put in place a modern, future-focused regulatory framework to secure the long-term protection and ecologically sustainable management of the reef’.</p>	<p>‘Managing and protecting the Great Barrier Reef’, DCCEEW.</p> <p>Great Barrier Reef Marine Park and Other Legislation Amendment Act 2008</p>
Summer 2008–2009	<p>Significant freshwater coral bleaching event occurs</p> <p>Heavier than usual summer rainfall in the region leads to flooding and large amounts of freshwater being discharged to local inshore reefs. Localised coral bleaching occurs as a result of stress due to changes in salinity.</p>	<p>‘Coral bleaching events’, AIMS.</p> <p>GBRMPA, Observed Impacts From Climate Extremes on the Great Barrier Reef–Summer 2008/2009, (Townsville: GBRMPA, 2010).</p>
8–9 March 2009	<p>Severe Tropical Cyclone Hamish impacts on the GBR</p> <p>The cyclone moves into the GBR lagoon as a category 5 system and tracks parallel to the coast for 500 km (or about 25% of the length of the GBR). AIMS’ surveys found that ‘reefs within 30km of the cyclone eye sustained most damage, with around half of the 500 reefs in [that] area exposed to destructive waves and suffering significance damage’.</p> <p>The measured effects are variable, with reductions in coral cover ranging from 10% to 70% on some reefs.</p>	<p>‘Severe Tropical Cyclone Hamish’, BOM, 5–12 March 2009.</p> <p>AIMS, ‘Research Reveals Cyclone’s Ravages on the Reef’, media release, 20 August 2009.</p>

<p>June 2009</p>	<p>Updated GBR Intergovernmental Agreement signed</p> <p>The new agreement updates and replaces the 1979 ‘Emerald Agreement’, and includes 3 main objectives:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • provide long-term protection and conservation of the environment and biodiversity of the GBR ecosystem • allow ecologically sustainable use of the GBR ecosystem, subject to the ‘objective of long-term protection and conservation’ • meet Australia’s international responsibilities for the GBR World Heritage Area under the World Heritage Convention. 	<p>Australian Government and Qld Government, Great Barrier Reef Intergovernmental Agreement, 2009.</p>
<p>September 2009</p>	<p>Reef Water Quality Protection Plan 2009 released</p> <p>The updated plan changes the initial goal outlined by the 2003 Plan to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • an intermediate goal ‘to halt and reverse the decline in water quality entering the Reef by 2013’ • a long-term goal ‘to ensure that by 2020 the quality of water entering the Reef from adjacent catchments has no detrimental impact on the health and resilience of the Great Barrier Reef’. <p>The plan also identifies 3 priority work areas and multiple specific actions and deliverables to be completed between 2009 and 2013.</p>	<p>Queensland Department of the Premier and Cabinet, Reef Water Quality Protection Plan 2009, (Brisbane: Reef Water Quality Protection Plan Secretariat, September 2009), 14.</p>

2 September 2009	GBRMPA releases first GBR Outlook Report	GBRMPA, Great Barrier Reef Outlook Report 2009 , (Townsville: GBRMPA, 2009), i.
	The report identifies the following priority issues that are reducing the resilience of the GBR:	P. Garrett (Minister for the Environment, Heritage and the Arts) et al., ' A Renewed Outlook for the Great Barrier Reef ', media release, 2 September 2009.
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • climate change • continued declining water quality from catchment runoff • loss of coastal habitats from coastal development • impacts from fishing, illegal fishing and poaching. 	
3 April 2010	Bulk coal carrier ship <i>Shen Neng 1</i> grounds on Douglas Shoal	' Shen Neng 1, 3 April 2010 ', AMSA.
	The 230-metre long ship is grounded for 10 days and causes extensive and severe physical damage to the shoal and significant TBT contamination. Over 400,000 m ² of habitat is damaged and an estimated 115,000 m ² of that habitat is found to be severely damaged or completely destroyed. The incident creates the largest ship grounding scar in the GBR to date and, according to GBRMPA , 'possibly the largest reef-related impact in the world'.	GBRMPA, Grounding of the Shen Neng 1 on Douglas Shoal, April 2010: Impact Assessment Report , (Townsville: GBRMPA, June 2011), 1.
	In October 2016, GBRMPA secures \$35 million in an out-of-court settlement with the ship's owners and insurers arising from a civil damages case. Surveys and planning to determine how best to restore the grounding site do not begin until 2019. Offshore remediation activities for the site were completed in September 2023, and onshore remediation activities were expected to be completed at the end of 2023. ²²	' Douglas Shoal environmental remediation project ', GBRMPA, updated 16 October 2023. Parliamentary Standing Committee on Public Works, [Great Barrier Reef Marine Park Authority—Douglas Shoal Environmental Remediation], Report 3, 2022, (March 2022).

22. At the time of writing this publication, the latest GBRMPA [Douglas Shoal Environmental Remediation project update](#) was provided in October 2023 and no further information on the progress of onshore remediation activities has been released.

22 October 2010	<p>Australian Government approves gas project within the GBR World Heritage Area</p> <p>The project involves a number of components, including constructing a liquefied natural gas processing plant and export facility and other supporting infrastructure on Curtis Island (which is located within the GBR World Heritage Area), as well as an underground gas transmission pipeline from the gas field to the facility on the Island.</p>	<p>T. Burke (Minister for Sustainability, Environment, Water, Population and Communities (SEWPC)), ‘Federal Environmental Approval for Coal Seam Gas and Gladstone Projects’, media release, 22 October 2010.</p> <p>‘Queensland Curtis LNG Project’, Qld Government.</p>
2010–2011	<p>Another freshwater coral bleaching event occurs</p> <p>Higher than average summer rainfall in Qld again results in local inshore reefs being exposed to flood plumes and receiving an influx of freshwater, causing localised freshwater bleaching.</p>	<p>‘Coral bleaching events’, AIMS.</p>
2–3 February 2011	<p>Severe Tropical Cyclone Yasi impacts on the GBR</p> <p>The cyclone crosses the coast near Mission Beach as a category 5 system. Just over 13% of the GBRMP is exposed to destructive or very destructive winds and 6% of the total reef area in the Marine Park is severely damaged. Most of the damage occurs in the region between Townsville and Cairns.</p>	<p>‘Severe Tropical Cyclone Yasi’, BOM, 30 January–3 February 2011.</p> <p>GBRMPA, Impacts of Tropical Cyclone Yasi on the Great Barrier Reef: a Report on the Findings of a Rapid Ecological Impact Assessment, (Townsville: GBRMPA, July 2011), 1, 3.</p>

<p>19–29 July 2011</p>	<p>35th session of the WHC held in Paris, France</p> <p>The Committee expresses ‘extreme concern’ at the approval of liquefied natural gas processing and port facilities within the region (on Curtis Island) and expresses regret that Australia did not inform it of the decision as per its Operational Guidelines.</p> <p>It urges Australia to:</p> <p style="padding-left: 40px;">... undertake a comprehensive strategic assessment of the entire property, identifying planned and potential future development that could impact the [OUV] to enable the long-term plan for sustainable development that will protect the [OUV] of the property.</p> <p>It also requests that Australia invite, as soon as possible, a joint World Heritage Centre and IUCN reactive monitoring mission (RM mission) to ‘consider the state of conservation of the property as a whole, and to contribute to the strategic assessment process’.</p>	<p>UNESCO, Decisions adopted by the World Heritage Committee at its 35th session, WHC-11/35.COM/20, (Paris: 2011), 55–56.</p> <p>‘Policy Compendium: Extract 172’, UNESCO.</p>
<p>16 February 2012</p>	<p>Joint comprehensive strategic assessment for the GBR World Heritage Area announced</p> <p>The Australian and Qld Government Environment Ministers sign agreement to undertake a comprehensive strategic assessment of the GBR and its adjacent coastal zone in accordance with section 146 of the Environment Protection and Biodiversity Conservation Act 1999 (EPBC Act).²³</p> <p>The strategic assessment will include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • a marine component – led by the GBRMPA • a coastal zone component – led by the Qld Government. 	<p>T. Burke (SEWPC Minister) and V. Darling (Qld Environment Minister), ‘Development Pressures on Great Barrier Reef to be Assessed’, media release, 18 February 2012.</p> <p>‘Great Barrier Reef strategic assessment’, DCCEEW.</p>

23. Under the EPBC Act, projects that might [impact on protected matters](#) must be [referred to the Commonwealth Minister for the Environment](#) to decide whether the proposed action ‘needs assessment and approval under the EPBC Act’. In addition to

6–14 March 2012

UNESCO World Heritage Centre and IUCN undertake joint RM mission to the GBR

The RM mission's team finds that the GBR 'does not currently meet the requirements for inscription on the List of World Heritage in Danger, but risks meeting those requirements if remedial measures are not undertaken'.

The team makes 14 recommendations for the Australian Government, including that it:

- commission an independent review of the environmental concerns of developments in Gladstone Harbour and on Curtis Island
- develop and adopt 'clearly defined and scientifically justified targets' to improve the Reef's state of conservation
- commission an independent review 'of the overall institutional and legal mechanisms that provide coordinated planning, protection and management' of the GBR.

F. Douvere and T. Badman, [*Mission Report: Reactive Monitoring Mission to Great Barrier Reef \(Australia\): 6th to 14th March 2012*](#), (UNESCO and IUCN, June 2012), 6, 8, 59–60.

individual project assessments, the *EPBC Act* also allows for the strategic assessment of a class of actions in a particular area in which the potential impacts are assessed by [an endorsed policy, plan or program](#), rather than assessed individually by the Minister. Strategic assessments provide a 'way to assess and approve a broad set of actions and development under one process'.

16–27 June 2012

36th session of the WHC held in Saint-Petersburg, Russia

The Committee ‘notes with great concern’ the ‘unprecedented scale of coastal development currently being proposed within and affecting the property’ and requests that Australia:

- prohibit ‘any new port development or associated infrastructure’ (excluding developments within ‘long-established major port areas’) if it would impact the OUV of the property
- complete a strategic assessment and provide, by its 39th session (in 2015), a long-term plan for sustainable development
- undertake an independent review of the management arrangements for Gladstone Harbour
- provide, by 1 February 2013, an updated report on the state of conservation of the GBR and progress on implementing its requests and the RM mission recommendations.

The WHC will consider the updated report at its next session and warns that ‘in the absence of substantial progress’, it will consider inscribing the GBR on the ‘List of World Heritage in Danger’.

UNESCO, [Decisions Adopted by the World Heritage Committee at its 36th Session](#), WHC-12/36.COM/19, (Saint-Petersburg: 2012), 57–58.

31 August 2012	<p>Terms of reference for the comprehensive strategic assessment of the GBR announced</p> <p>The strategic assessment will ‘assess all matters of national environmental significance in the coastal area including world heritage values’ and:</p> <p style="padding-left: 40px;">... investigate the adequacy of existing management arrangements to protect the Great Barrier Reef World Heritage Area as well as the Queensland Government’s coastal management, planning and development framework.</p> <p>Both the marine and coastal components of the joint strategic assessment are required to deliver a Program Report and a Strategic Assessment Report.</p>	<p>Department of Sustainability, Environment, Water, Population and Communities (DSEWPC), Great Barrier Reef Strategic Assessment Fact Sheet, (Canberra: DSEWPC, September 2012), 4.</p> <p>T. Burke (SEWPC Minister), ‘Meeting the Challenges of the Future on the Great Barrier Reef’, media release, 31 August 2012.</p> <p>GBRMPA, Great Barrier Reef Region Strategic Assessment: Terms of Reference, (Townsville: GBRMPA, August 2012), 3.</p>
December 2012	<p>GBRMPA releases GBR Climate Change Adaptation Strategy and Action Plan 2012–2017</p> <p>The plan builds on the previous 2007 Action Plan and outlines the Australian Government’s strategy to address the threat of climate change in the Reef. It describes a plan of action to be undertaken by the government over the next 5 years.</p>	<p>GBRMPA, Great Barrier Reef Climate Change Adaptation Strategy and Action Plan (2012–2017), (Townsville: GBRMPA, 2012).</p>
1 February 2013	<p>Australian Government announces independent review of the Port of Gladstone</p> <p>The review addresses the request made by the WHC at its 36th session.</p> <p>In addition to examining the Port’s ‘current and future planning for development, as well as management, monitoring and reporting programs’, the reviewers will also investigate ‘environmental concerns in the area, including the environmental performance of developments and operations and the impacts of other significant threats affecting the Great Barrier Reef’.</p>	<p>T. Burke (Environment Minister), ‘Labor Protects the Great Barrier Reef’ media release, 1 February 2013.</p> <p>T. Burke (Environment Minister), ‘Terms of Reference Finalised for Independent Review of the Port of Gladstone’, media release, 19 February 2013.</p>

<p>16–27 June 2013</p>	<p>37th session of the WHC held in Phnom Penh, Cambodia</p> <p>The Committee welcomes Australia’s progress toward undertaking the strategic assessment, and the establishment of the independent review into the management of Gladstone Harbour.</p> <p>However, it also ‘notes with concern’ the ongoing coastal development on the Reef and Australia’s limited progress in implementing its other key requests and recommendations proposed by the 2012 RM mission report.</p> <p>The WHC again requests that Australia provide, by 1 February 2014, an updated report on the Reef’s state of conservation and progress towards implementing its requests and the RM mission report’s recommendations. The WHC will consider the updated report at its next session and warns that ‘in the absence of substantial progress’, it will consider inscribing the GBR on the ‘List of World Heritage in Danger’.</p>	<p>UNESCO, Decisions adopted by the World Heritage Committee at its 37th session, WHC-13/37.COM/20, (Phnom Penh: 2013), 64.</p>
<p>10 July 2013</p>	<p>Reef Water Quality Protection Plan 2013 released</p> <p>The updated plan marks 10 years since the release of the initial 2003 plan. The Plan commits to achieving the 2020 long-term goal and identifies new water quality and land and catchment management targets to be achieved by 2018.</p> <p>The Australian and Qld Governments commit \$375 million over 5 years to help achieve the goals and targets outlined in the plan.</p>	<p>Australian Government and Qld Government, Reef Water Quality Protection Plan 2013, (Qld: Office of the Great Barrier Reef and World Heritage, July 2013).</p> <p>M. Butler (Environment Minister) and A. Powell (Qld Environment Minister), ‘A Plan to Protect the Great Barrier Reef’, media release, 10 July 2013.</p>

<p>30 July 2013</p>	<p>Report on the findings of the independent review of the Port of Gladstone released</p> <p>The reviewers find that the environmental management and governance within the Port to be ‘generally comprehensive’ but note that ‘the multiple layers and mechanisms in place can contribute to stakeholder confusion and mistrust’. It identifies 3 main areas for improvement:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. the need to incorporate world heritage and other environmental protection considerations in a single, comprehensive and consultative port planning process 2. the need for assessment and consideration of cumulative impacts 3. the need for meaningful and ongoing stakeholder engagement to improve information and community confidence in environmental management and governance. <p>The Australian Government releases its response to the Review in August 2015 and agrees, or agrees ‘in principle’, with all of the recommendations that fall ‘within the Australian Government’s jurisdiction’.</p>	<p>A. Tinney et al., Independent Review of the Port of Gladstone: Report on Findings, (Canberra: DSEWPC, July 2013), x–xi.</p> <p>‘Independent Review of the Port of Gladstone’, DCCEEW.</p> <p>The Australian Government Response to: the Independent Review of the Port of Gladstone (July 2013) and the Independent Review of the Bund Wall at the Port of Gladstone (April 2014), (August 2015).</p>
<p>September 2013 – Liberal-National Party Coalition Government takes office.</p>		
<p>1 November 2013</p>	<p>Draft strategic assessment of the GBR World Heritage Area released for public comment</p> <p>The media release announcing the consultation states ‘the Strategic Assessment will also guide the Commonwealth Government’s <i>Reef 2050 Plan</i> and priorities for the Reef Trust which will inject money into projects for long-term sustainability’.</p>	<p>G. Hunt (Environment Minister), ‘Strategic Assessment Will Help Protect the Great Barrier Reef’, media release, 1 November 2013.</p>
<p>25 March 2014</p>	<p>Inquiry into the efforts to protect the GBR</p> <p>The Senate asks the Environment and Communications References Committee to inquire into the adequacy of the Australian and Qld Governments’ ‘efforts to stop the rapid decline of the Great Barrier Reef’.</p>	<p>Senate Environment and Communications References Committee, ‘Great Barrier Reef’, inquiry homepage.</p>

<p>11 April 2014</p>	<p>Severe Tropical Cyclone Ita impacts on the GBR</p> <p>The cyclone moves across the GBR lagoon as a category 5 system weakening to a category 4 system just prior to making landfall near Cape Flattery. It is the strongest cyclone to impact the GBR since cyclone Yasi 3 years earlier.</p> <p>According to data collected from outer reefs by AIMS, the 3 recent ‘unusually intense cyclones [Hamish, Yasi and Ita] caused record destruction of corals and great loss of fishes over >1000 km [of the Reef]’.</p>	<p>‘Severe Tropical Cyclone Ita’, BOM.</p> <p>AIMS, ‘More Intense Cyclones Pose Threat to the World’s Coral Reefs’, media release, 27 January 2017.</p>
<p>5 June 2014</p>	<p>Qld Government releases Qld Ports Strategy</p> <p>The Strategy establishes 5 Priority Port Development Areas (PPDAs) – in Townsville, Abbot Point, Hay Point and Mackay, Gladstone, and Brisbane – where future port development will be concentrated. Outside these PPDAs, the Qld Government will prohibit (over the next 10 years) any ‘dredging for the development of new, or the expansion of existing port facilities’ within and adjoining the GBR World Heritage Area.</p> <p>The Qld Government plans to introduce legislation to state parliament to enshrine the strategy’s key actions in law.</p>	<p>J. Seeney (Qld Minister for State Development, Infrastructure and Planning), ‘Ports Strategy to Protect Reef and Grow Jobs’, media release, 5 June 2014.</p> <p>Qld Department of State Development, Infrastructure and Planning, Queensland Ports Strategy 2014, (Brisbane: Qld Government, May 2014), vi.</p>

15–25 June 2014	38th session of the WHC held in Doha, Qatar	UNESCO, Decisions adopted by the World Heritage Committee at its 38th session , WHC-14/38.COM/16, (Doha: 2014), 116– 117.
	<p>The committee welcomes Australia’s progress on the strategic assessment, endorsement of the 2013 Reef Water Quality Protection Plan, release of the Scientific Consensus Statement, and intent to focus port developments to PPDAs.</p> <p>However, it also ‘notes with concern’ the recent approvals for coastal developments in the region, including the dumping of 3 million cubic metres of dredged material, and that the Qld Ports Strategy provisions cannot be applied retroactively. It requests that Australia (among other things):</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • completes an independent review of the institutional and management arrangements for the GBR (as was recommended by the RM mission) • provides, by 1 February 2015, an updated report on the state of conservation of the GBR including progress towards implementing its requests and RM mission recommendations. <p>The WHC will consider the updated report at its next session ‘with a view to considering, in the case of confirmation of the ascertained or potential danger to its Outstanding Universal Value, the possible inscription of the property on the List of World Heritage in Danger’.</p>	
23 April 2014	Australia Government releases Reef Trust Discussion Paper	G. Hunt (Environment Minister), ‘Reef Trust Discussion Paper Released’ , media release, 23 April 2014.
	<p>The Australian Government commits to provide an initial \$40 million investment to the Reef Trust.</p> <p>The Trust was an election commitment announced as a part of the broader <i>Reef 2050 Plan</i>.</p>	
11 August 2014	GBR final Strategic Assessment Programs endorsed	‘Great Barrier Reef strategic assessment’ , DCCEEW.
	<p>The GBRMPA and the Qld Government’s strategic assessment programs are endorsed by the Federal Minister for the Environment.</p>	

<p>12 August 2014</p>	<p>GBRMPA releases second GBR Outlook Report</p> <p>The report finds that, since 2009, ‘continuing investment in management of the Reef has had some positive results ... [however] the greatest risks have not changed’.</p>	<p>GBRMPA, Great Barrier Reef Outlook Report 2014, (Townsville: GBRMPA, 2014), v.</p> <p>G. Hunt (Environment Minister), ‘Strategic Assessment Bolsters Protection of the Great Barrier Reef’, media release, 12 August 2014.</p>
<p>September 2014</p>	<p>Independent review of institutional and legal mechanisms that provide coordinated planning, protection and management of the GBR World Heritage Area released</p> <p>The reviewers find that the legislation for the protection and management of the GBR is generally comprehensive but note that ‘gaps exist in the areas of climate change and agriculture’. They note that the declining condition of the Reef ‘does not appear to be solely a consequence of gaps in the legislation or institutional management arrangements’ but rather ‘a consequence of systemic and long term pressures that are a legacy of past and current activities’.</p> <p>While the WHC warns for a third consecutive year that it would consider putting the GBR World Heritage Area on the ‘In Danger’ list, the reviewers state that the Reef ‘is generally considered to be in good condition by international standards’.</p>	<p>A. Tingay et al., Institutional and Legal Mechanisms That Provide Coordinated Planning, Protection and Management of the Great Barrier Reef World Heritage Area, (Brisbane: Jacobs, September 2014), 1, 55.</p>
<p>3 September 2014</p>	<p>Senate Committee releases report on Australian and Qld Government’s GBR management</p> <p>The Senate Committee makes 29 recommendations, including that the Environment Minister consider the introduction of a cap or ban on the disposal of dredge spoil in the GBR World Heritage Area (Recommendation 2) and that the Australian Government ‘take strong action, and an international leadership role, on the issue of climate change’ (Recommendation 13).</p>	<p>Senate Environment and Communications References Committee, Management of the Great Barrier Reef, (Canberra: The Senate, September 2014), ix, x.</p>

7 October 2014	<p>North-East Shipping Management Plan released</p> <p>The Plan, developed over 2 years, ‘outlines measures currently in place to manage safety of shipping in the sensitive marine environments of Australia’s north-east region and proposes options and action to further minimise the environmental impacts of these activities and related risks to the [OUV] and integrity of the [GBR World Heritage Area] in the years to come’.</p>	<p>W. Truss (Minister for Infrastructure and Regional Development), ‘Safer Seas Along Australia’s Northern Coastline’, media release, 7 October 2014.</p> <p>‘North-East Shipping Management Plan’, AMSA, 6 October 2014.</p> <p>North-East Shipping Management Group, North-East Shipping Management Plan, (Canberra: AMSA, 2014).</p>
20 February 2015	<p>Severe Tropical Cyclone Marcia impacts on the GBR</p> <p>The cyclone makes landfall at Shoalwater Bay as a category 5 system, impacting on inshore reefs south of Mackay. Large waves and storm surge cause significant coastal damage and erosion.</p>	<p>‘Severe Tropical Cyclone Marcia’, BOM, 15–21 February 2015.</p> <p>GBRMPA, Marine Monitoring Program summary report: results for 2014–2015, (Townsville: GBRMPA, 2016), 2.</p>
19 March 2015	<p>Severe Tropical Cyclone Nathan impacts on the GBR</p> <p>The cyclone passes over the northern section of the GBR as a category 3 system. It is small in size and only impacts over a limited scale. However, it causes significant loss of coral cover at impacted sites, including those around Lizard Island, where one study recorded 97% coral mortality.</p> <p>As the second severe cyclone to impact the northern section of the Reef in less than a year, it leaves the region in a weakened state to deal with an ongoing crown-of-thorns outbreak and future bleaching events.</p>	<p>‘Severe Tropical Cyclone Nathan’, BOM.</p> <p>‘GBR Condition Summary 2017–18’, AIMS.</p> <p>A. Baird et al., ‘Effects of tropical storms on the demography of coral reefs’, <i>Marine Ecology Progress Series</i> 606 (15 November 2018), 29–38.</p>

<p>21 March 2015</p>	<p>Additional funding announced on release of the Reef 2050 Long-Term Sustainability Plan</p> <p>The plan, informed by the results of the comprehensive strategic assessment, provides the overarching strategy for managing the GBR World Heritage Area to 2050. It outlines multiple targets and objectives to address 7 overarching themes: ecosystem health; biodiversity; heritage; water quality; community benefits; economic benefits; and governance.</p> <p>It also establishes 2 advisory bodies – the Independent Expert Panel (IEP) and the Reef 2050 Advisory Committee (RAC) – to provide scientific and expert advice to the Ministerial Forum, and support for the implementation and review of the Plan.</p> <p>The inaugural Chair of the IEP is Professor Ian Chubb, the former Australian Chief Scientist. The inaugural Chair of RAC is the former Governor of Qld and former Australian Ambassador for the Environment, Penelope Wensley.</p> <p>The Australian Government commits an additional \$100 million in funding to the Reef Trust to support the implementation of the plan. Under the Plan, the Australian and Qld Governments’ investment in the GBR is expected to be more than \$2 billion over 10 years.</p>	<p>Australian Government and Qld Government, Reef 2050 Long-Term Sustainability Plan, (Canberra: 2015).</p> <p>Tony Abbott (Prime Minister), ‘Additional \$100 Million to Protect the Great Barrier Reef’, media release, 21 March 2015.</p> <p>‘The Reef 2050 Plan, Advisory bodies’, DCCEEW.</p>
<p>15 May 2015</p>	<p>IMO approves extension of GBR and Torres Strait Particularly Sensitive Sea Area to the southwest Coral Sea</p>	<p>IMO, Designation of the south-west Coral Sea as an Extension of the Great Barrier Reef and Torres Strait Particularly Sensitive Sea Area, Resolution MEPC 268(68), adopted 15 May 2015.</p>

<p>17 May 2015</p>	<p>Ban on dredge disposal implemented</p> <p>The ban, implemented by the Great Barrier Reef Marine Park Amendment (Capital Dredge Spoil Dumping) Regulation 2015, ‘applies to all past and future applications for capital dredge spoil’.</p> <p>The media release notes the Qld Government’s commitment to also ban the practice in areas under its jurisdiction.</p>	<p>G. Hunt (Environment Minister), ‘Hunt Signs Great Barrier Reef Permanent and Historic Dredge Disposal Ban’, media release, 17 May 2015.</p>
<p>27 June 2015</p>	<p>Updated GBR Intergovernmental Agreement signed</p> <p>The new Agreement updates and replaces the 1979 Agreement. The Agreement re-commits the Australian and Qld Governments to protecting and conserving the GBR World Heritage Area and reflects the shared vision for the future outlined in the <i>Reef 2050 Plan</i>.</p>	<p>Australian Government and Qld Government, Great Barrier Reef Intergovernmental Agreement 2015, 2015.</p> <p>G. Hunt (Environment Minister), J. Trad (Qld Deputy Premier) and S. Miles (Qld Minister for Environment), ‘New Intergovernmental Agreement Gives Reef 2050 Plan Strong Legal Status’, media release, 27 June 2015.</p>

28 June – 8 July
2015

**39th session of the WHC held in Bonn,
Germany**

The Committee ‘notes with concern’ the 2014 Outlook Report findings that the GBR’s overall outlook was poor, including ‘that climate change, poor water quality and impacts from coastal development are major threats to the property’s health’. However, it welcomes efforts to create the *Reef 2050 Plan* and the commitment to establish a permanent ban on dumping of dredged material. It requests that Australia:

- ‘rigorously implement’ all the commitments made under the *Reef 2050 Plan*, ‘including where necessary through their inclusion in legislation’
- provide, by 1 December 2016, an update on the implementation of the *Reef 2050 Plan* ‘to confirm that the inception of the plan has been effective’
- provide, by 1 December 2019, a report on the overall state of conservation of the GBR, ‘including a 1-page summary, on the state of conservation of the property demonstrating effective and sustained protection of the property’s [OUV] and effective performance in meeting the targets established under the [Reef 2050 Plan]’, to be considered at its 44th session (in 2020).

UNESCO, [Decisions adopted by the World Heritage Committee at its 39th session](#), WHC-15/39.COM/19, (Bonn: 2015), 68–69.

13 August 2015	<p>ANAO releases audit report on the GBRMPA’s regulation of permits and approvals</p> <p>The ANAO identifies shortcomings in the GBRMPA’s regulatory processes and practices across a broad range of GBRMPA’s regulatory activities, ‘including its assessment of permit applications, monitoring of permit holder compliance and response to non-compliance’. The ANAO notes that these shortcomings ‘undermine the effectiveness of the permitting system as a means of managing risks to the Marine Park’.</p> <p>The ANAO makes 5 recommendations to address these shortcomings and the GBRMPA agrees to them all.</p>	<p>ANAO, Regulation of Great Barrier Reef Marine Park Permits and Approvals, Report No. 3, 2015–16, (Canberra: ANAO, 2015), 15, 25–26.</p> <p>‘Regulation of Great Barrier Reef Marine Park Permits and Approvals’, ANAO.</p>
2016	<p>Third recorded mass coral bleaching event occurs</p> <p>Record warm sea surface temperatures cause one of the worst mass bleaching events recorded on the GBR. Most surveyed reefs exhibit some degree of bleaching but at varying intensities (with bleaching observed in less than 10% of coral cover in some regions to over 90% in others).</p> <p>The northern third of the Reef (north of Port Douglas) experiences the worst heat stress and, on average, over half of the bleached corals in that region are lost. Across the entire GBR, studies estimate that 30% of shallow-water coral is lost.</p>	<p>‘Coral bleaching events’, AIMS.</p> <p>GBRMPA, Great Barrier Reef Outlook Report 2019, (Townsville: GBRMPA, 2019), 24.</p> <p>AIMS, ‘Taking Stock of the 2016 Mass Coral Bleaching Event’, media release, 29 November 2016.</p>
3 May 2016	<p>Australian Government commits additional \$70 million to the Reef Trust</p> <p>The new funding brings the total investment committed by the government to the Reef Trust to \$210 million.</p>	<p>G. Hunt (Environment Minister), ‘Budget Boost for the Great Barrier Reef to Antarctica’, media release, 3 May 2016.</p>

<p>July 2016</p>	<p>Costs of achieving water quality targets for the GBR estimated at \$8.2 billion</p> <p>Consulting company Alluvium estimates the costs out to 2025 to meet the fine sediment and dissolved inorganic nitrogen targets in the <i>Reef 2050 Plan</i>.</p>	<p>S. Skull et al., Costs of Achieving the Water Quality Targets for the Great Barrier Reef, prepared by Alluvium Consulting Australia for the Qld Department of Environment and Heritage Protection, (Brisbane: July 2016).</p>
<p>24 November 2016</p>	<p>ANAO releases audit report on the design and implementation of the Reef Trust</p> <p>The ANAO finds that the Department of the Environment and Energy (DEE) has been largely effective with both its design and implementation of the Reef Trust. It makes one recommendation that the department ‘should strengthen its <i>Reef Trust Performance Monitoring and Reporting Plan</i> to clearly indicate how the impact of the Reef Trust will be assessed’, which the Department agrees to.</p>	<p>ANAO, Reef Trust—Design and Implementation, Report No. 27, 2016–17, (Canberra: ANAO, 2016), 7, 10.</p> <p>‘Reef Trust—Design and Implementation’, ANAO.</p>
<p>2017</p>	<p>Fourth recorded mass coral bleaching event occurs</p> <p>Following on from the 2016 bleaching, this event marks the first back-to-back mass bleaching recorded on the GBR. The bleaching is most severe in the central third of the Reef.</p> <p>Collectively, the 2016 and 2017 bleaching events affect two-thirds of the GBR, with the southern region avoiding the worst of the heat stress in both years.</p>	<p>‘Coral bleaching events’, AIMS.</p> <p>‘Timeline and actions’, GBRMPA.</p> <p>GBRMPA, ‘Second Wave of Mass Bleaching Unfolding on Great Barrier Reef’, media release, 10 March 2017.</p> <p>GBRMPA, Great Barrier Reef Outlook Report 2019, 24.</p>
<p>7 March 2017</p>	<p>Independent Review of the Governance of GBRMPA announced</p> <p>The Review will focus on the role and composition of the GBRMPA’s Board in supporting the Authority’s functions.</p>	<p>J. Frydenberg (Environment Minister), ‘GBRMPA Governance Review’, media release, 7 March 2017.</p> <p>‘Independent Review of Governance of the Great Barrier Reef Marine Park Authority’, DCCEEW.</p>

<p>28 March 2017</p>	<p>Severe Tropical Cyclone Debbie impacts on the GBR</p> <p>The cyclone makes landfall near Airlie Beach as a category 4 system. It is the first major cyclone to hit the southern region of the GBR since Hamish in 2009. The resulting waves cause damage to shallow reefs in the Whitsunday area, with some areas recording losses of up to 97% of coral cover.</p>	<p>‘Tropical Cyclone Debbie’, 27–29 March 2017, BOM.</p> <p>GBRMPA, Great Barrier Reef Outlook Report 2019, 24.</p>
<p>2–12 July 2017</p>	<p>41st session of the WHC held in Krakow, Poland</p> <p>The Committee:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • welcomes the progress on the implementation of <i>Reef 2050 Plan</i> • ‘strongly encourages’ Australia to accelerate efforts to meet the interim and long-term targets of the <i>Reef 2050 Plan</i>, in particular, the water quality targets • notes ‘with serious concern’ the 2016 and 2017 coral bleaching events in the GBR. <p>The WHC makes no new requests but reiterates its earlier 39th session request that Australia provide, by 1 December 2019, a report on the GBR’s overall state of conservation demonstrating the ‘effective and sustained protection’ of the Reef’s OUV and ‘effective performance’ in meeting the targets under the <i>Reef 2050 Plan</i>.</p>	<p>UNESCO, Decisions adopted during the 41st session of the World Heritage Committee, WHC/17/41.COM/18, (Krakow: 12 July 2017), 100.</p>
<p>September 2017</p>	<p>2017 Scientific Consensus Statement released</p> <p>The impacts of land use on the GBR water quality and ecosystem condition are examined. The overarching consensus is that major GBR ecosystems continue to be in poor condition.</p>	<p>J. Waterhouse et al., 2017 Scientific Consensus Statement: Land Use Impacts on Great Barrier Reef Water Quality and Ecosystem Condition, (Qld: 2017).</p>

5 October 2017

Final Report of the Independent Review of Governance of the GBRMPA released

The review makes 24 recommendations, including changes to improve the corporate governance arrangements of the GBRMPA, and the legislative amendments needed to implement those changes.

In its [response to the review](#) (released 30 November 2017) the Australian Government agreed, or agreed 'in principle' to all the recommendations.

W. Craik, [Review of Governance of the Great Barrier Reef Marine Park Authority](#), (Canberra: DEE, 2017).

'[Independent Review of Governance of the Great Barrier Reef Marine Park Authority](#)', DCCEEW.

J. Frydenberg (Environment Minister), '[New Arrangements for the Great Barrier Reef Marine Park Authority](#)', media release, 30 November 2017.

DEE, [Government Response to the Review of Governance of the Great Barrier Reef Marine Park Authority](#), (Canberra: November 2017).

13 December 2017

GBRMPA releases GBR Blueprint for Resilience

The Reef Blueprint signals a change in GBRMPA's management strategy, with the Authority now adopting an approach that involves managing the overall 'resilience' of the GBR in the face of multiple stressors.

GBRMPA, [Reef Blueprint: Great Barrier Reef Blueprint for Resilience](#), (Townsville: GBRMPA, 2017).

GBRMPA, '[Top 10 Actions to Protect the Great Barrier Reef Released Today](#)', media release, 13 December 2017.

<p>5 March 2018</p>	<p><i>Great Barrier Reef Marine Park Amendment (Authority Governance and Other Matters) Act 2018</i> enacted</p> <p>The Act implements recommendations made by the independent GBRMPA Governance Review to improve the authority’s governance arrangements.</p> <p>This includes the establishment of a new statutory position of Chief Executive Officer (separate from the Chair of the Board).</p>	<p><u><i>Great Barrier Reef Marine Park Amendment (Authority Governance and Other Matters) Act 2018</i></u></p> <p>S. Power, ‘<u>Great Barrier Reef Marine Park Amendment (Authority Governance and Other Matters) Bill 2017</u>’, <i>Bills Digest</i>, 72, 2017–18, (Canberra: Parliamentary Library, 6 February 2018).</p>
<p>29 April 2018</p>	<p>Australian Government announces \$443.3 million partnership with the GBR Foundation</p> <p>The \$443.3 million grant funding will be provided over 6 years via the government’s Reef Trust to the GBR Foundation to fund projects that ‘tackle crown-of-thorns starfish, reduce pollution into the Reef and mitigate the impacts of climate change’.</p> <p>The grant will also be used to leverage private and philanthropic investment, with a fundraising target of \$357 million.</p>	<p>M. Turnbull (Prime Minister) et al., ‘<u>Record Investment in the Great Barrier Reef to Drive Jobs</u>’, media release, 29 April 2018.</p> <p>DEE, <u>Grant Agreement Between the Reef Trust and Great Barrier Reef Foundation</u>, (Canberra: Australian Government, June 2018).</p>
<p>19 June 2018</p>	<p>Senate inquiry into the GBR 2050 Partnership Program</p> <p>The Senate refers the ‘Great Barrier Reef 2050 Partnership Program’ 2018–19 Budget measure to the Senate Environment and Communications References Committee for inquiry. The committee is also tasked with inquiring into the GBR Foundation, including its proficiency and capacity ‘to deliver components of the Reef 2050 Plan’.</p>	<p>Senate Environment and Communications References Committee, ‘<u>Great Barrier Reef 2050 Partnership Program</u>’, inquiry homepage.</p>
<p>July 2018</p>	<p>Updated Reef 2050 Long-Term Sustainability Plan released</p> <p>The revised plan is released following the mid-term review. It adopts the approach outlined in GBRMPA’s Blueprint for Resilience and includes new actions for immediate attention between now and 2020, focusing on adapting to a changing climate.</p>	<p>Australian Government and Qld Government, <u>Reef 2050 Long-Term Sustainability Plan</u>, (Canberra: DEE, July 2018).</p>

<p>July 2018</p>	<p>Reef 2050 Water Quality Improvement Plan 2017–2022 released</p> <p>The plan is ‘nested’ within the <i>Reef 2050 Plan</i> and builds on the previous plans by:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • including all sources of land-based water pollution (that is, agriculture, industry, urban and public lands) • incorporating the human dimensions of change (that is, social, cultural, institutional and economic factors) • creating separate targets for reducing water pollution from each catchment, to better prioritise actions. 	<p>Australian Government and Qld Government, Reef 2050 Water Quality Improvement Plan 2017–2022, (Canberra: Department of Agriculture, Water and the Environment (DAWE): 2018).</p>
<p>16 January 2019</p>	<p>ANAO releases first audit report on the \$443.3 million GBR Foundation partnership</p> <p>The ANAO examine whether the award of the \$443.3 million grant ‘was informed by appropriate departmental advice and through processes that complied with the grants administration framework’.</p> <p>The ANAO finds that the decision to award the grant to the GBR Foundation was informed by departmental advice, but notes that aspects of that advice had shortcomings, ‘partly as a result of non-compliance with elements of the grants administration framework’.</p>	<p>ANAO, Award of a \$443.3 Million Grant to the Great Barrier Reef Foundation, Auditor-General Report, No. 22, 2018–19, (Canberra: ANAO, 2019), 7–8.</p> <p>‘Award of a \$443.3 million grant to the Great Barrier Reef Foundation’, ANAO.</p>

<p>13 February 2019</p>	<p>Senate Committee releases inquiry report on the GBR 2050 Partnership Program</p> <p>The committee, with majority membership from the Australian Greens and ALP, is critical of the government’s \$443 million GBR Foundation partnership, labelling it ‘a highly irresponsible decision’. It recommends all ‘unspent Foundation Partnership funds be returned to the Commonwealth immediately’ and ‘earmarked for expenditure on projects to protect and preserve the Reef, to be expended by 30 June 2024’.</p> <p>The Coalition Government Senators’ dissenting report states the Senators ‘do not support the findings of the majority committee report’ and that the view of the Coalition Government was ‘that the grant was the most effective way to make a significant and urgent investment in the Reef, while also managing the Commonwealth Budget’.</p>	<p>Senate Environment and Communications References Committee, Great Barrier Reef 2050 Partnership Program, (Canberra: The Senate, February 2019), vii, 93, 109–110.</p> <p>‘Great Barrier Reef 2050 Partnership Program’, inquiry homepage.</p>
<p>23 March 2019</p>	<p>Severe Tropical Cyclone Trevor impacts on the GBR</p> <p>The cyclone crosses the coast as a category 4 system south of Port McArthur. Surveys conducted by AIMS in the Princess Charlotte Bay sector of the GBR as part of their Long-term Monitoring Program show minimal damage from the cyclone, but most of the surveyed reefs are well south of the cyclone’s track.</p>	<p>‘Severe Tropical Cyclone Trevor’, BOM.</p> <p>‘Report on surveys of the Princess Charlotte sector of the Great Barrier Reef’, AIMS.</p>
<p>26 May 2019</p>	<p>Special Envoy for the GBR announced</p> <p>Prime Minister Scott Morrison announces Warren Entsch as the Special Envoy for the GBR.</p> <p>Over the next 2 years, the Special Envoy delivers 4 reports to the Minister for the Environment:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • June – December 2019 • January – June 2020 • July – December 2020 • January – June 2021. 	<p>S. Morrison (Prime Minister), ‘Ministry’, media release, 26 May 2019.</p>

<p>25 June 2019</p>	<p>GBRMPA releases a position statement on climate change</p> <p>The Authority declares:</p> <p style="padding-left: 40px;">Climate change is the greatest threat to the Great Barrier Reef. Only the strongest and fastest possible actions to decrease global greenhouse gas emissions will reduce the risks and limit the impacts of climate change on the Reef. Further impacts can be minimised by limiting global temperature increase to the maximum extent possible and fast-tracking actions to build Reef resilience.</p>	<p>GBRMPA, Position Statement: Climate Change, (Townsville: 25 June 2019), 1.</p>
<p>15 July 2019</p>	<p>North-East Shipping Management Plan reviewed and revised</p> <p>The review, conducted by Australian Maritime Safety Authority (AMSA), found ‘no substantial change to the risk profile of shipping since the 2014 plan’. To address existing and emerging risks, the review outlines new and revised actions for the plan, based on updated shipping activity information.</p> <p>According to the AMSA:</p> <p style="padding-left: 40px;">The revised plan focuses on further enhancing ship and navigation safety, greater incident response capabilities, improvements to traffic management, better quality nautical charts and the implementation of marine biosecurity best practice management.</p>	<p>‘Shipping plan aims to deliver improved marine protection’, AMSA, 15 July 2019.</p> <p>AMSA, Review of the North-East Shipping Management Plan, (Canberra: AMSA, July 2019), 31, 40–41.</p>

<p>30 August 2019</p>	<p>GBRMPA releases third GBR Outlook Report</p> <p>The report finds:</p> <p>The Great Barrier Reef is already a changed system — the effects of climate change are happening now. The Region’s current long-term outlook is for continued deterioration: this could be altered with urgent and coordinated actions to curb greenhouse gas emissions.</p> <p>...</p> <p>The Reef can recover from major impacts if its broader resilience is high and it experiences adequate disturbance-free periods. However, disturbances are becoming more frequent and are undermining recovery in many places. Mitigation of threats and resilience-based management on global and local scales remains essential to reinvigorating recovery of the system.</p>	<p>‘Outlook Report 2019’, GBRMPA.</p> <p>GBRMPA, Great Barrier Reef Outlook Report 2019, 271.</p> <p>S. Ley (Environment Minister), ‘Supporting the Great Barrier Reef’, media release, 30 August 2019.</p>
<p>2020</p>	<p>Fifth recorded mass coral bleaching event occurs</p> <p>The event is the second-worst mass bleaching event recorded on the GBR (the worst being in 2016). For the first time, severe coral bleaching is observed across all 3 regions (northern, central and southern) of the GBR.²⁴</p> <p>Severe bleaching occurs in 25% of surveyed reefs, and a further 35% of surveyed reefs have moderate levels of bleaching. However, overall coral mortality resulting from the bleaching event is low.</p>	<p>‘Coral bleaching events’, AIMS.</p> <p>GBRMPA, ‘Statement: Coral Bleaching on the Great Barrier Reef’, media release, 26 March 2020.</p> <p>T. Hughes and M. Pratchett, ‘We Just Spent Two Weeks Surveying the Great Barrier Reef. What We Saw Was an Utter Tragedy’, <i>Conversation</i>, 7 April 2020.</p>

24. AIMS, [Aerial surveys of coral bleaching](#), standard operating procedure, no. 11, 3rd edn., 2022: classifies reefs into 6 bleaching categories ‘based on the proportion of coral cover that appeared white’ in a surveyed zone. A reef is considered to have severe levels of coral bleaching (category 4) when between 61% to 90% of its corals are bleached (see page 18).

<p>16 April 2020</p>	<p>R&D phase of the Reef Restoration and Adaptation Program (RRAP) launched</p> <p>The Australian Government commits \$100 million from the \$443.3 million GBR Foundation-Reef Trust Partnership to the 10-year program, with an additional \$50 million to be provided in matching in-kind investments by the R&D sector.</p> <p>The RRAP aims to develop safe and effective new interventions for the GBR ‘before they become critically needed’. The interventions will provide a 3-point approach:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • cooling and shading the Reef to help protect it from the impacts of climate change • assisting Reef species to adapt to the changing environment • supporting natural restoration of damaged and degraded reefs. 	<p>S. Ley (Environment Minister) and W. Entsch (Special Envoy for the GBR), ‘\$150 Million to Drive Innovations to Boost Reef Resilience’, media release, 16 April 2020.</p> <p>‘Our Research’, Reef Restoration and Adaptation Program (RRAP).</p> <p>‘The Program’, RRAP.</p>
<p>14 July 2020</p>	<p>Further \$96 million from the GBR Foundation Partnership committed</p> <p>The \$96 million will be distributed as follows:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • \$23 million to support the RRAP initiatives • \$39 million to improve the quality of water flowing into the Reef and deliver water quality innovation projects • over \$15 million to launch a ‘Crown-of-thorns Starfish Control Innovation Program’ and support control activities • over \$7 million for the ‘first phase of a Traditional Owner-led water quality program’ • over \$3 million to engage the community in GBR citizen science and local action projects • over \$7 million to initiate a ‘Technology Transformation Fund’ and improve the quality and cost-effectiveness of reef monitoring. 	<p>S. Ley (Environment Minister) and W. Entsch (Special Envoy for the GBR), ‘Working Together to Protect the Reef in 2020–21’, media release, 14 July 2020.</p>

<p>5 May 2021</p>	<p>ANAO releases second audit report on the \$443.3 million GBR Foundation partnership</p> <p>The ANAO examines if the design and early delivery of the Australian Government’s partnership with the GBR Foundation has been effective. It is found to be only ‘partially effective’.</p> <p>ANAO makes 7 recommendations to the GBR Foundation – 3 of which also include the DAWE – addressing ‘bank deeds, fundraising, subcontracting the delivery of reef protection projects and administration costs’. The foundation and department agree to all recommendations.</p>	<p>ANAO, Implementation of the Great Barrier Reef Foundation Partnership, Auditor-General Report, No. 35, 2020–21, (Canberra: ANAO, 2021).</p> <p>‘Implementation of the Great Barrier Reef Foundation Partnership’, ANAO, 5 May 2021.</p>
<p>17 June 2021</p>	<p>ANAO releases follow-up report on its 2015–16 audit of GBRMPA’s regulation of permits and approvals report</p> <p>The follow-up audit assesses if the GBRMPA has implemented the ANAO’s recommendations to establish an ‘appropriate permissions system to manage risk and preserve the environmental, social and economic significance of the Marine Park and its World Heritage listing’.</p> <p>ANAO finds that the GBRMPA’s regulation has been only ‘partially effective’ and that it has not fully implemented the ANAO’s recommendations. It makes 7 more recommendations and the GBRMPA agrees to all of them.</p>	<p>ANAO, Regulation of Great Barrier Reef Marine Park Permits and Approvals – Follow-up, Auditor-General Report, No. 44, 2020–21, (Canberra: ANAO, 2021).</p> <p>‘Regulation of Great Barrier Reef Marine Park Permits and Approvals – Follow-up’, ANAO, 17 June 2021.</p>

<p>16–31 July 2021</p>	<p>44th extended session of the WHC held online and in Fuzhou, China</p> <p>Following media reporting of intense lobbying by the Australian Government, the WHC decides, against the recommendations of the IUCN and World Heritage Centre, to not include the GBR on the ‘In Danger’ list, but notes:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • ‘with the utmost concern and regret’ that the long-term outlook for the Reef’s ecosystem has further deteriorated and the deterioration ‘has been more rapid and widespread than was previously evident’ • ‘with the utmost concern’ that the progress on meeting key targets of the <i>Reef 2050 Plan</i> ‘has been largely insufficient’ and that the water quality targets have not been met • that ‘climate change remains the most serious threat to the property’. <p>The WHC requests that Australia invites a joint RM mission to ensure the updated <i>Reef 2050 Plan</i> addresses the threat of climate change. It also requests, by 1 February 2022, an updated report on the state of conservation of the GBR.</p>	<p>D. Normile, ‘Great Barrier Reef Escapes “In Danger” Listing After Intense Australian Lobby’, <i>Science Insider</i>, 23 July 2021.</p> <p>UNESCO, Decisions adopted at the 44th extended session of the World Heritage Committee, WHC/21/44.COM/18, (Fuzhou: 2021), 186–7.</p> <p>S. Ley (Environment Minister), ‘World Heritage Committee Rejects Proposed UNESCO in Danger Listing for the Great Barrier Reef’, media release, 23 July 2021.</p>
<p>20 December 2021</p>	<p>Updated Reef 2050 Long-Term Sustainability Plan 2021–2025 released</p> <p>The updated plan identifies 4 main threats to the GBR:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • climate change – considered the ‘most significant threat to long-term outlook’ • poor water quality – due to land-based run-off • direct human use – such as unsustainable and illegal fishing and marine debris • coastal development. <p>It outlines multiple goals to address these threats.</p>	<p>Australian Government and Qld Government, Reef 2050 Long-Term Sustainability Plan 2021–2025, (Canberra: 2021), 7.</p> <p>S. Ley (Environment Minister), ‘Updated Reef 2050 Plan Released’, media release, 20 December 2021.</p>

28 January 2022	<p>Government announces \$1 billion package to protect GBR</p> <p>The package will be delivered over 9 years (from 2021–22 to 2029–30) and will include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • \$579.9 million to improve water quality • \$252.9 million for reef management and conservation • \$92.7 million to research and deploy reef resilience science and adaptation strategies • \$74.4 million for strengthening partnerships and stewardship. 	<p>S. Morrison (Prime Minister), S. Ley (Environment Minister) and W. Entsch (Special Envoy for the GBR), ‘Billion Dollar Reef Investment Backs Queensland Communities’, media release, 28 January 2022.</p>
21–30 March 2022	<p>Joint visit to the GBR by the World Heritage Centre and IUCN RM mission</p> <p>The mission’s main objective is to assess the updated <i>Reef 2050 Plan</i> and ensure it addresses threats to the GBR from climate change (and other factors) and ‘determines a pathway for accelerated action’.</p> <p>The WHC will examine the RM mission report and recommendations at its next (45th) session, initially scheduled for June 2022 but later postponed to September 2023.</p>	<p>UNESCO, ‘UNESCO Sends Reactive Monitoring Mission to Great Barrier Reef’, media release, 17 March 2022.</p> <p>‘Extended 45th session of the World Heritage Committee’, UNESCO.</p>
2022	<p>Sixth recorded mass coral bleaching event occurs</p> <p>The first mass bleaching event to occur during a La Niña year (which are typically associated with cooler ocean temperatures and more cloud cover). Severe levels of bleaching occur in 43% of surveyed reefs, with the central region of the GBR impacted the most.</p>	<p>‘Coral bleaching events’, AIMS.</p>

30 March 2022	<p>World Heritage Centre and IUCN release joint report of its RM mission</p> <p>The mission team finds that the GBR meets the criteria for inscription on the List of World Heritage in Danger and recommends it be placed on the list. They note that, despite Australia’s recent ‘unparalleled science and management efforts’, the region’s OUV:</p> <p style="padding-left: 40px;">... is significantly impacted by climate change factors. The resilience of the property to recover from climate change impacts is substantially compromised, in particular – but not exclusively – due to degraded water quality.</p>	<p>E. Carter and H. Thulstrup, Report on the Joint World Heritage Centre/IUCN Reactive Monitoring Mission to the Great Barrier Reef (Australia): From 21 to 30 March 2022, (World Heritage Centre and IUCN, March 2022), 4–5.</p> <p>‘Report on the Reactive Monitoring Mission to the Great Barrier Reef (Australia), 21–30 March 2022’, UNESCO.</p>
May 2022 – Labor Government takes office.		
31 May 2022	<p>Special Envoy for the GBR announced</p> <p>Following the change of Government, Prime Minister Anthony Albanese announces Senator Nita Green as the Special Envoy for the GBR.</p>	<p>A. Albanese (Prime Minister), ‘Transcript of press conference: Parliament House, Canberra: 31 May 2022’, media release, 31 May 2022.</p>
21 October 2022	<p>Government announces an additional \$204 million funding for the GBR</p> <p>The funding committed to in the October 2022–23 Budget includes:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • \$96.9 million over 4 years to measures that support implementation of the <i>Reef 2050 Plan</i> • \$91.8 million over 5 years for ‘shovel ready’ projects that accelerate reef protection and restoration activities, including gully and streambank restoration. <p>The money is in addition to the \$1 billion package of measures announced by the previous government in January 2022.</p>	<p>T. Plibersek (Minister for the Environment and Water), N. Green (Special Envoy for the GBR), ‘Record Budget Boost to Protect Great Barrier Reef’, media release, 21 October 2022.</p> <p>Australian Government, Budget Measures: Budget Paper No. 2: 2022–23, 74, 76.</p>
24 January 2023	<p>Reef Trust Special Account extended for 10 years</p> <p>The instrument commences on 8 March 2023.</p>	<p>PGPA (Reef Trust Special Account 2014) Determination 01.</p>

<p>5 June 2023</p>	<p>Australian and Qld Governments commit to making the GBR ‘gillnet free by mid-2027’</p> <p>Over \$160 million is committed to ‘significantly reduce net fishing and other high risk fishing activities impacting the Reef’. Among other things, the funding will also be used to create ‘net-free zones’ in the northern GBR region and parts of the Gulf of Carpentaria. The decision is welcomed by UNESCO.</p> <p>The Australian Government also requests the Qld Government declare endangered hammerhead sharks a no-take species for commercial fisheries within state waters. In Qld, hammerhead sharks (great and scalloped) are already classified as a no-take species for recreational fishers.</p>	<p>T. Plibersek (Minister for the Environment and Water) et al., ‘Tackling the Risks to the Reef’, media release, 5 June 2023.</p> <p>UNESCO, ‘Great Barrier Reef: Australia to Put in Place Urgent Safeguarding Measures Requested by UNESCO’, media release, 6 June 2023.</p> <p>‘Protected and no-take species’, Qld Government.</p>
<p>17 July 2023</p>	<p>Qld Government announces Chair of Future Fishing Taskforce</p> <p>The Taskforce will develop industry assistance packages for those impacted by the phasing out of gillnet fishing in the GBR (as well as the Great Sandy Marine Park rezoning).</p>	<p>M. Furner (Qld Minister for Fisheries) and L. Linard (Qld Minister for the Environment and the Great Barrier Reef), ‘Independent Future Fisheries Taskforce Chair Named’, media release, 17 July 2023.</p>

<p>31 July 2023</p>	<p>UNESCO recommends that the WHC re-evaluate if the GBR should be listed as ‘in danger’</p> <p>UNESCO’s draft decisions do not include the RM mission recommendation to place the GBR on the List of World Heritage in Danger, citing Australia’s progress since the mission, including ‘the range of new, but still recent commitments that have been made and actions initiated’. However, it also notes that the GBR still ‘remains under serious threat and urgent and sustained action to implement the priority recommendations of the mission is essential in order to improve the long-term resilience of the property’.</p> <p>The draft decision proposes that Australia submit a progress report on its commitments for examination by the WHC at its 46th session in 2024, ‘including the possible inscription on the List of World Heritage in Danger’. The WHC will consider the draft decisions at its next session scheduled for 10–25 September 2023.</p>	<p>UNESCO, State of conservation of properties inscribed on the of [sic] World Heritage List, (Paris: UNESCO, July 2023), 26–27, 30.</p>
<p>10–25 September 2023</p>	<p>45th extended session of the WHC held in Riyadh, Kingdom of Saudi Arabia</p> <p>The WHC adopts UNESCO’s draft decision including noting ‘with serious concern’, Australia’s slow progress in achieving the GBR water quality targets and requesting Australia submit a progress report on the implementation of its recent commitments by 1 February 2024, for examination by the committee at its 46th session.</p>	<p>UNESCO, Decisions adopted during the extended 45th session of the World Heritage Committee, WHC/23/45.COM/19, (Riyadh: 2023), 113–114.</p>

17 October 2023

New Special Envoy for the GRB delivers first report to the Minister

The report, tabled in parliament on [17 October 2023](#), identifies 4 priorities:

- Ensuring that threats to the Reef, including climate change and water quality, are identified and appropriately managed;
- Strengthening the role of First Nations people in caring for our land and sea country;
- Working with the tourism sector to encourage visitation to the Reef; and
- Improving Australia’s international reputation as custodians of the Reef as a World Heritage Listed site.

N. Green (Special Envoy for the GRB), [Report to the Minister for the Environment and Water: A report from the Special Envoy for the Great Barrier Reef: July 2022 to June 2023](#), 17 October 2023, 5.

16 November 2023

Qld Government announces support for fishers affected by the phase-out of gillnets

The Qld Government accepts all recommendations of the Future Fishing Taskforce and announces a joint funding package of measures with the Australian Government totalling \$185 million.

The Qld Government will provide \$125 million of the funding ‘to implement the phasing out of gillnets on the Great Barrier Reef, rezoning the Great Sandy Marine Park, and increasing protection from gillnet impacts in the Gulf of Carpentaria’.

The remaining \$60 million in funding from the Australian Government will be used for additional programs to implement independent data validation and further reduce by-catch in high-risk fisheries.

‘[Future fishing](#)’, Qld Government Department of Agriculture and Fisheries.

M. Furner (Qld Minister for Fisheries) and L. Linard (Qld Minister for the Environment and the Great Barrier Reef), [‘Measures Build Sustainable Future for Fishing Industry and Protect Great Barrier Reef’](#), media release, 16 November 2023.

21 November 2023	<p>Government announces an additional \$50 million to improve GBR water quality</p> <p>The additional funding brings the total amount committed to the Albanese Government’s ‘Landscape Repair Program’ to \$200 million.</p>	<p>T. Plibersek (Minister for the Environment and Water) and N. Green (Special Envoy for the GBR), ‘\$200 Million to Improve Water Quality on the Reef’, media release, 21 November 2023.</p>
2024	<p>GBRMPA releases GBR Blueprint for Climate Resilience and Adaptation</p> <p>The Reef Blueprint 2030 is a strategic roadmap to strengthen reef resilience and contains 5 strategic goals for the Authority to adapt its management in the face of climate change.</p>	<p>GBRMPA, Reef Blueprint 2030 – Great Barrier Reef Blueprint for Climate Resilience and Adaptation, (Townsville: 2024).</p> <p>‘Reef Blueprint’, GBRMPA.</p>
2 February 2024	<p>Australian Government submits GBR Progress Report to the WHC</p> <p>The report, provided in response to the WHC request made during its 45th extended session, sets out the progress made on actions committed to by the government in May 2023.</p>	<p>Australia Government, Great Barrier Reef Progress Report to UNESCO World Heritage Centre, (Canberra, February 2024).</p> <p>T. Plibersek (Minister for the Environment and Water) et al., ‘Progress Report on the Great Barrier Reef Delivered to UNESCO’, media release, 2 February 2024.</p>
16 February 2024	<p>New Chair of the Reef 2050 Independent Expert Panel (IEP) appointed</p> <p>Professor Margaret Sheil takes over from Professor Ian Chubb, who had chaired the IEP since its establishment in 2015.</p>	<p>T. Plibersek (Minister for the Environment and Water) et al., ‘New Chair for Reef 2050 Independent Expert Panel’, media release, 16 February 2024.</p>

8 March 2024

Seventh recorded mass bleaching event underway

The GBRMPA declares that aerial surveys have confirmed a widespread coral bleaching event is unfolding across the Reef:

This unfolding coral bleaching event follows similar reports from reefs around the world during the past 12 months. Reefs in the Northern Hemisphere have suffered coral bleaching as a result of climate change which has driven elevated sea surface temperatures, amplified by El Niño conditions in the Pacific Ocean.

GBRMPA, '[Aerial Surveys Confirm Widespread Bleaching Across the Great Barrier Reef](#)', media release, 8 March 2024.

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