

Report on findings from the independent evaluation of the implementation of the Coral Sea Marine Park Management Plan

Director of National Parks

**Australian Government Department of Climate Change, Energy, the
Environment and Water**

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ORIMA pays respect to First Nations peoples past and present, their cultures and traditions and acknowledges their continuing connection to Land, Sea and Community.



The ORIMA Research team would like to acknowledge and thank all the participants from across Australia who were involved in the research. Their willingness to share their experiences, engage in open and honest discussions, and reflect on strategies for improvement was critical to informing the research findings presented in this report.



ORIMA Research is privileged to have had our First Nations Community Interviewer artwork completed by **Tristan Pwerl Duggie**. The artwork depicts ORIMA Research's core values of conducting work in an ethical manner with honesty, integrity, respect, and humility. The painting represents ORIMA's First Nations Community Interviewers humbly visiting the country and Community of other First Nations Peoples, sitting courteously with, listening with integrity, and respectfully sharing the views and thoughts of First Nations Peoples.

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Executive Summary

BACKGROUND AND METHODOLOGY

The Australian and state and territory governments **designate ‘Marine Protected Areas’ (MPAs)** – regions of the ocean where human activity is restricted and regulated to protect marine life and ecosystems. MPAs include **marine parks managed by state and territory governments** and **Australian Marine Parks (AMPs) managed by the Australian Government**.

For Commonwealth managed parks, the EPBC Act mandates the preparation of **‘management plans’ to guide the governance and regulation** of each AMP/ AMP network. These plans contain **seven ‘management programs’**, each of which covers a number of priority areas listing planned outcomes and specific actions to be undertaken.

ORIMA Research was commissioned to conduct an **independent evaluation of the implementation of the management plan for the Coral Sea Marine Park** which is set to expire in mid-2028. The methodology for this evaluation adopted a multi-phased approach, as depicted in Figure 1 below.

Figure 1: Overview of evaluation methodology



The evaluation framework identified two core evidence sources:

- **Documentary evidence** – sourced through administrative data provided by Parks Australia and a desktop review conducted by ORIMA researchers.
- **Stakeholder and First Nations peoples engagement** – undertaken by ORIMA researchers. A total of n=50 stakeholders and First Nations peoples participated in the evaluation and spoke from either a perspective specific to the Coral Sea, or from a national perspective with relevance to the Coral Sea Marine Park.

FINDINGS RELATING TO OVERALL EVALUATION QUESTIONS

The **Coral Sea Marine Park demonstrated positive progress** in implementing the actions and achieving the intended outcomes across its management programs.

Overall, the evaluation identified a range of **strengths and achievements** in relation to the implementation of the Coral Sea Management Plan, including the:

- **Development of robust and structured frameworks, strategies and policies** – such as of the *‘Communication, Education and Awareness Strategy’* and the *‘Australian Marine Parks Assessment and Authorisations Policy’*.
- **Substantial progress in ecological baseline data collection** – which provided critical insights into the natural values and pressures within the Coral Sea.

- **Effective assessments, authorisations and compliance activities** – supported by the timely implementation of a range of policies, procedures and partnerships to support achievement of the relevant management program areas.

However, a number of **limitations** were also identified through the evaluation, including:

- **Remote and offshore nature of the park** – the isolated and deep-sea nature of the Coral Sea Marine Park made implementation challenging, particularly for tourism, monitoring, compliance, and communication and stakeholder engagement. These challenges were compounded by the park's proximity to the Great Barrier Reef Marine Park, which benefits from substantial national and international attention and well-established communication efforts. This was found to hinder efforts to effectively raise awareness of, and support for, the Coral Sea Marine Park.
- **Engagement with Traditional Owners, First Nations partners, organisations and users was not fully effective** – while some efforts were identified to meaningfully engage First Nations groups and Traditional Owners, these were of limited scope and effectiveness and were primarily focused on one community – the Murray (Mer) Island community in the Torres Strait.
- **Gaps in data** for some programs areas – limited data on progress of some actions and outcomes within the management plan was identified as a barrier to assessing the effectiveness of the management plan's implementation and making evidence-based management decisions.
- **Appropriately balancing protection of ecological, social and economic values** – the evaluation found that balancing competing stakeholder interests in the Coral Sea Marine Park will be an ongoing challenge, with a range of diverse views identified in relation to the balance of protection for ecological and other values. However, clearly and transparently communicating the evidence-based rationale for management decisions should go some way to addressing these concerns.
- **Limited effectiveness of the Coral Sea Marine Park Advisory Committee (CSMPAC) process** – both CSMPAC members and Parks Australia staff raised concerns about the effectiveness of the current advisory committee model, with stakeholder feedback suggesting the committees may not be achieving their intended role in contributing to marine park management. However, the need for ongoing and in-depth engagement with a range of stakeholders was acknowledged, suggesting that a more inclusive and collaborative approach could better capture diverse stakeholder perspectives for consideration in decision-making processes.

FINDINGS RELATING TO SPECIFIC PROGRAMS OF THE CORAL SEA MARINE PARK NETWORK MANAGEMENT PLAN

The **specific program grades indicated positive progress overall**. Three programs were assessed as 'good', one was assessed as 'good with some concerns' and three were assessed as having 'significant concerns'. Specific findings for each program are outlined below.

Communication, Education and Awareness Program



Significant concerns

The Communication, Education and Awareness Program was assessed as having 'significant concerns', with the outcome of the management program rated as 'partially met'. Of the nine planned actions, three were assessed as 'completed', while the remaining six were deemed 'partially completed'.

Although several actions were only partially completed, the evidence suggests that these efforts were reasonable given the remoteness of the Coral Sea Marine Park. Feedback from Parks Australia staff indicated that the scope and specificity of actions within this program area did not match the available resources, and

that the program was felt to be less relevant for the Coral Sea Marine Park. As such, Parks Australia staff noted that the communication activities undertaken demonstrated considerable progress given these constraints. However, the evaluation found that there remains scope to enhance the program's effectiveness, particularly in improving comprehensive stakeholder engagement, as well as awareness, understanding, and support for marine park management among community stakeholders and users of the park.

Tourism and Visitor Experience Program



Significant concerns

The Tourism and Visitor Experience Program was assessed as having 'significant concerns', with the overall outcomes of the management program rated as 'partially met', 'not met' and 'unknown'. Of the nine planned actions, two were assessed as 'completed', six were deemed 'partially completed' and one 'not commenced'.

However, the evaluation found that this assessment does not indicate poor performance by Parks Australia. Instead, it reflects the limited relevance of this program to the values of the Coral Sea Marine Park and the appropriate decision to focus resources and efforts on programs that are more aligned with the region's specific needs and priorities.

Indigenous Engagement Program



Significant concerns

The Indigenous Engagement Program was assessed as having 'significant concerns', with the overall outcomes of the management program rated as 'partially met'. Of the eight planned actions, six were deemed 'partially completed' and two 'not commenced'.

It is important to note that feedback from First Nations perspectives for this program was very limited, with only one First Nations partner participating in the stakeholder engagement phase of the evaluation specifically in relation to the Coral Sea Marine Park. In addition, Parks Australia staff reported a range of challenges and complexities in implementing this program area which indicate that this assessment does not necessarily reflect a lack of effort on the part of Parks Australia.

Marine Science Program



Good with some concerns

The Marine Science Program was assessed as 'good with some concerns', with the overall outcomes of the management program rated as 'partially met'. Of the eleven planned actions, five were assessed as 'completed' or 'ongoing' and six as 'partially completed'.

The evaluation identified significant improvements over the life of the plan, particularly in the development of baseline ecological datasets and enhanced collaboration between Parks Australia and other stakeholders to strengthen marine park management. However, scope for improvement was also identified, particularly in

relation to the implementation of clear evidence-based decision-making.

Assessments and Authorisations Program



The Assessments and Authorisations Program was assessed as 'good'. The outcome of the management program was assessed as 'fully met'. Five out of seven of the planned actions were 'completed' or 'ongoing', one was 'partially completed', and one was assessed as 'not commenced'. Positive stakeholder feedback was provided.

While Action 40 (develop an effective and efficient process to assess new technologies and gear types to allow for the use of new equipment during the life of this plan if appropriate) was assessed as 'not commenced', this was not considered to be a significant gap as other evidence was provided of new technologies and gear types being adopted where appropriate – suggesting that the non-completion of this action did not impede the overall aims of the management program.

Parks Protection and Management Program



The Parks Protection and Management Program was assessed as 'good', with the outcome of the management program rated as 'substantially met'. Of the nine planned actions, eight were assessed as 'completed' or 'ongoing' and the remaining one was assessed as 'partially completed'.

Overall, the evaluation found that there had been positive progress against this program area which was reflected in stakeholder feedback. However, there was also scope noted to more effectively communicate with stakeholders about the activities conducted under this program to enhance awareness.

Compliance Program



Overall, the grade for the actions in the Compliance program was assessed as 'good'. The outcomes of the management program were assessed to be 'partially', 'substantially' and 'fully' met. Of the six planned actions, all were assessed as 'completed' or 'ongoing'.

Stakeholders identified several strengths and achievements of the Compliance Program, including the effective use of new technologies. However, they also raised some key challenges, such as difficulties in measuring voluntary compliance and the practical barriers to enforcement in remote offshore parks.

IMPLICATIONS FOR FUTURE PLAN DEVELOPMENT

Based on the evaluation findings, it is recommended that the following matters be considered when developing the next plan for the Coral Sea Marine Park:

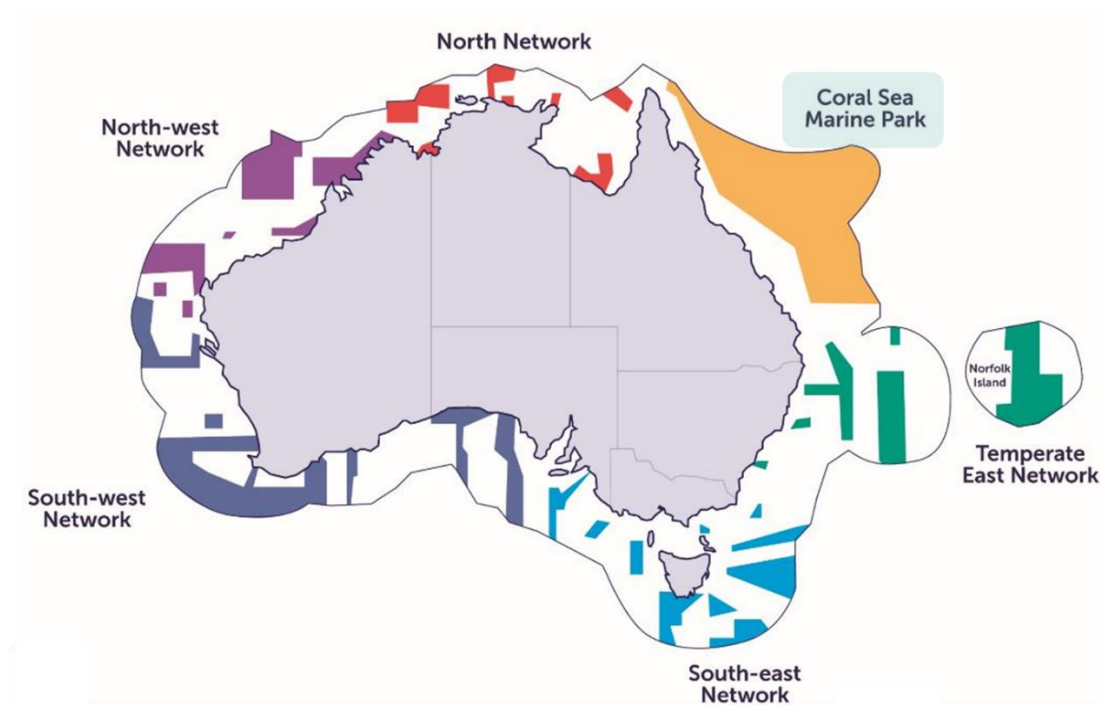
- **Demonstrating how robust evidence has been used, particularly for zoning decisions** – stakeholders reported an expectation that any future management plans would clearly draw from the evidence and data now available. They expected such an approach to be transparent and well-communicated to ensure clarity and explain why decisions had been made.
- **Ensuring comprehensive and effective engagement with key stakeholder groups** – by incorporating early, wide-reaching and ongoing engagement with key user groups.
- **Addressing the unique needs of localised settings/ parks within the network** – by considering specific place-based requirements in consultation with relevant individuals or organisations, to ensure that the structure and program areas within the plan align with the distinct and diverse needs of communities and stakeholders across the park.
- **Embedding First Nations perspectives in the management of Sea Country where possible** – with recognition of the more limited Traditional Owner interests in the Coral Sea Marine Park compared with other AMPs. This should include adopting co-management approaches that embed early and ongoing engagement with First Nations communities, tailored to their unique priorities and preferences.
- **Where possible, zoning full reefs or ecosystems within one zone** – to enable clear comparisons across zones of the effectiveness of protection and the impacts of permitted activities over time.
- **Improving monitoring, evaluation, and accessibility of management plan actions** – by incorporating key performance indicators (KPIs) and targets to make measuring and evaluating action and outcome performance easier and raising awareness of the Coral Sea Marine Park Management Plan factsheet to improve usability and accessibility for stakeholders.
- **Considering Australia's '30 by 30' commitment** – including implications of potential changes to zoning arrangements. In doing so, it will be important to clearly communicate the evidence-based need and benefits of commitment to '30 by 30' in an Australian context.

1. Introduction

1.1. Background

The oceans surrounding Australia are foundational to our way of life – offering important places for recreation, supporting industries and jobs and contributing to our food and energy security. To safeguard the health of these waters, and the variety of ocean life that inhabits them, the Australian and state and territory governments designate ‘Marine Protected Areas’ (MPAs) – regions of the ocean where human activity is restricted and regulated to protect marine life and ecosystems. MPAs include marine parks managed by state and territory governments and Australian Marine Parks (AMPs) managed by the Australian Government. Most AMPs are organised into marine park networks comprising multiple parks, except for the Coral Sea Marine Park, which stands alone as a single park. Figure 2 below shows the six AMPs/ AMP networks, with the Coral Sea Marine Park highlighted in yellow.

Figure 2: Australian Marine Parks



The Director of National Parks (the Director) is a statutory office and Commonwealth corporate entity and is supported by Parks Australia. Parks Australia is a division within the Australian Government Department of Climate Change, Energy the Environment and Water (DCCEEW). One of the Director’s roles is to manage AMPs (and all other Commonwealth reserves) in accordance with the *Environment Protection and Biodiversity Conservation Act 1999* (EPBC Act). The EPBC Act mandates the preparation of ‘management plans’ to guide the governance and regulation of each AMP/ AMP network, to be renewed every ten years. These plans contain a range of ‘management programs’, each of which covers a number of priority areas listing planned outcomes and specific actions to be undertaken in the pursuit of these outcomes. The seven management programs are: Communication, Education and Awareness; Tourism and Visitor Experience; Indigenous Engagement; Marine Science; Assessments and Authorisations; Parks Protection and Management; and Compliance.

The management plan for the Coral Sea Marine Park is the first to have been developed since the Marine Park was established. This management plan is set to expire in 2028, requiring the completion of two processes beforehand:

1. **An independent evaluation of the implementation of the current Coral Sea Marine Park Management Plan** – providing a retrospective look at how the Plan has been implemented in practice since 2018.
2. **The preparation of a new Coral Sea Marine Park Management Plan for the next 10-year cycle (2028-2038).**

ORIMA Research was commissioned to conduct the independent evaluation of the implementation of the current management plan. The evaluation drew on a range of evidence sources, including a review of collated documentary evidence provided by Parks Australia and engagement with a range of stakeholders as well as First Nations peoples. The outcomes of this evaluation, alongside a range of other consultations and activities, will contribute to the second process – the development of a new management plan for the next 10-year cycle.

1.2. Project objectives

The overarching aim of the project was to **conduct an independent evaluation of the implementation of five expiring management plans** (with this report focusing on the evaluation of the Coral Sea Management Plan). More specifically, the evaluation sought to:



Facilitate the generation of a collectively agreed evaluation framework, and methods for evaluating the management plan's program implementation.



Engage with stakeholders and First Nations peoples to understand and define their metrics of satisfaction with the implementation of the plan.



Address a range of key evaluation questions, with a key focus on assessing the performance of planned actions listed in each management program and progress towards the intended outcomes to assign completion status, trend and effectiveness ratings.



Provide recommendations to inform the preparation of the next management plan (including but not limited to recommendations for goals, desired outcomes and actions).

This evaluation forms just one part of the review of the expiring management plans and development of new plans. Key directions for the review were outlined prior to the evaluation (including ensuring 30% of Australia's ocean is highly protected and limiting intensive activities). Subsequent statutory review processes are also planned.¹

1.3. Methodology

The methodology for this project adopted a multi-phased approach as depicted in Figure 3 (below), incorporating sequential stages to ensure a comprehensive and systematic evaluation process.

¹ Review of the 2018 Australian Marine Park management plans:
<https://australianmarineparks.gov.au/management/consultations-reviews/review-2018-australian-marine-park-management-plans/>

Figure 3: Methodology overview

1.3.1. Development of evaluation framework

The evaluation framework was developed through an iterative, structured process of drafting, consultation and refinement. Initial development was led by ORIMA, whereby a draft framework was developed based on the Coral Sea Marine Park Management Plan and program logic. This was followed by a series of targeted workshops with Parks Australia, the Australian Marine Parks First Nations Reference Group and Australian Marine Parks Advisory Committee (AMPAC) members. Written feedback from AMPAC members was also provided and incorporated where relevant. This process ensured the framework was methodologically robust, contextually appropriate and aligned with stakeholder expectations.

The evaluation framework identified two core evidence sources:

- **Documentary evidence** – sourced through administrative data provided by Parks Australia and a desktop review conducted by ORIMA Research.
- **Stakeholder and First Nations peoples engagement** – undertaken by ORIMA Research.

More detail about the evaluation framework is provided in section 1.5.

1.3.2. Desktop review

During the desktop review process, key documents and data sources were collected as evidence to assess the implementation of the Coral Sea Marine Park Management Plan actions and outcomes. Some documents and data sources were supplied by the Parks Australia project team while others were sourced via desktop searches of publicly available information.

Documentary evidence that directly demonstrated the fulfilment of actions and outcomes was prioritised in the desktop review (e.g. policy documentation, official reports or media activities). Where direct evidence was absent or insufficient, indirect evidence was also used (that is, references to activity conducted to fulfil actions and outcomes without clear evidence of the activity itself, such as AMPAC meeting communiqués noting the discussion of activities conducted to fulfil actions and outcomes; or self-reported evidence in self-assessment documents). Key findings and evidence points were recorded against the evaluation framework and reviewed to build an initial evidence base for the evaluation of actions and outcomes. For actions and outcomes where insufficient evidence was provided, requests for data were compiled and submitted to Parks Australia.

ETHICS ASSESSMENT AND APPROVAL

Prior to the commencement of the external stakeholder engagement, the project was submitted for review by the ORIMA Research's NMHRC approved Human Research Ethics Committee (HREC) to ensure the evaluation was conducted in an ethical, safe and culturally responsive manner. Ethics approval was granted on 4 February 2026: HREC Reference Number 0012026.

1.3.3. Stakeholder and First Nations Peoples engagement

TARGET AUDIENCE

The target audience for the engagement was stakeholders and First Nations peoples with experience or expertise relevant to either the Coral Sea Marine Park specifically or marine parks nationally.

The following stakeholder groups were targeted for engagement:

- Parks Australia staff
- Government agencies (both federal and state/ territory agencies)
- Industry and community groups, such as:
 - Commercial fishing industry representatives
 - Recreational fishing and boating groups
 - Tourism operators
 - Conservation/ environmental organisations
 - Industry representatives (including from shipping, offshore energy and space/ technology industries)
 - Researchers and data custodians, and
 - AMPAC members and members of the Australian Marine Parks First Nations Reference Group.²

In addition, engagement was conducted with a First Nations partner.

SAMPLE DESIGN AND METHODOLOGY

Comprehensive stakeholder mapping was undertaken based on the findings from desk research on relevant individuals and organisations, and consultation with Parks Australia staff, AMPAC committee members and members of the Australian Marine Parks First Nations Reference Group.

Stakeholder engagement was conducted between 26 February and 14 May 2026. A total of **n=195** stakeholders and First Nations peoples participated in the evaluation of the five expiring marine park management plans, via **82 in-depth interviews** of up to one hour³ and **15 workshops** of up to two hours in duration.⁴

Of the **n=195** total participants, **n=23** spoke from a perspective specific to the Coral Sea Marine Park, and a further **n=27** spoke from a national perspective with relevance to the park. Each of these participants fell into one or more of the key stakeholder groups identified during the stakeholder mapping phase, with some contributing from multiple key perspectives. The numbers of participants who contributed from each stakeholder perspective are outlined in the table overleaf.

² AMPAC and First Nations Reference Group members were also consulted during the project establishment and evaluation framework development stages as advisory groups for the project.

³ In a small number of cases, stakeholders elected to complete their interview by providing feedback in writing.

⁴ Workshop (WS), n=up to 10 people; In-depth interview (IDI), n=up to 3 participants)

Key perspective		Number of participants who spoke from key perspective
Coral Sea Marine Park	Parks Australia staff	<i>n</i> =4
	State government agencies	<i>n</i> =2
	First Nations peoples/ organisations	<i>n</i> =1
	Researchers/ data custodians	<i>n</i> =7
	Industry and community groups: Commercial and recreational fishing representatives	<i>n</i> =4
	Industry and community groups: Tourism operators	<i>n</i> =3
	Industry and community groups: Conservation/ environmental organisations	<i>n</i> =1
	AMPAC Members	<i>n</i> =10
Across all Parks/ Park Networks	Parks Australia staff	<i>n</i> =9
	Federal government agencies/ departments	<i>n</i> =7
	Industry and community groups: Commercial and recreational fishing representatives	<i>n</i> =6
	Industry and community groups: Tourism operators	<i>n</i> =1
	Industry and community groups: Conservation/ environmental organisations	<i>n</i> =4

ENGAGEMENT APPROACH

To support the discussions, ORIMA developed a comprehensive discussion guide aligned with the evaluation objectives. A flexible and adaptive approach was applied during discussions to ensure the collection of meaningful data and insights, while also allowing stakeholders the opportunity to share their views and perspectives. It was important to establish which evaluation questions were most applicable to each participant. To assist with this, participants were invited to complete a short questionnaire ahead of their interview or workshop to nominate the scope and areas of their involvement in marine parks, as well as to provide initial feedback in relation to relevant management program areas.

ASSUMPTIONS AND LIMITATIONS

In conducting this evaluation, a range of assumptions were made, and several potential research limitations were identified. While action has been taken to ensure the robustness of any assumptions and minimise the impact of potential limitations on the evaluation, these should nonetheless be considered when interpreting the findings.

More specifically, the **following assumptions** were made:

- **Accuracy of documentary evidence** – the evaluation assumes that administrative data and documentation provided by Parks Australia accurately reflect the timing, scope and completion of reported outputs.
- **Representativeness of consulted stakeholders** – based on the stakeholder mapping conducted, it is assumed that the engaged stakeholders reasonably reflect the diversity of perspectives across user groups, jurisdictions and regions within the park. Where key stakeholder groups were

unable to be engaged as part of the evaluation, this has been noted in the limitations section below.

The following **potential research limitations** were identified:

- **Some limitations in the coverage of stakeholder participation** – the stakeholder engagement process faced challenges in ensuring comprehensive representation, with certain groups underrepresented due to factors such as lack of availability to attend sessions, being on leave during the research period, or not responding to participation requests.
- **Reliance on stakeholder perceptions due to data gaps** – in the absence of consistent, outcome-level monitoring data across program areas, some parts of the evaluation relied more heavily on stakeholder perceptions and qualitative evidence to assess implementation effectiveness and outcomes.
- **Variability in data availability across programs** – the availability and quality of documentary evidence varied between program areas, limiting the ability to assess implementation consistently.

1.4. Understanding this report

STRUCTURE OF REPORT

This evaluation is split across two broad categories:

1. **Findings relating to overall evaluation questions** – this section addresses the broader evaluation questions, focusing on the design of the plan, its assessment and monitoring processes, responsiveness and adaptability, and key considerations for the development of future plans.
2. **Findings relating to program implementation** – in this section, the implementation of each management program is assessed. This involves evaluating the implementation of individual actions, assessing the achievement of intended outcomes, and providing an overall assessment of program implementation. Key strengths, achievements, barriers and limitations are also highlighted.

Based on these findings, the final section of this report (Chapter 11) provides conclusions, including key learnings and recommendations.

NOTES ON INTERPRETATION

- All acronyms used in this report have been specified the first time they are used in each chapter.
- When the term ‘stakeholders’ is used, it refers to all types of stakeholders consulted in the project. When findings pertain to a specific group of stakeholders only, this has been specified (e.g. AMPAC members, Parks Australia staff, First Nations peoples and partners).
- The terms ‘none’, ‘a few’, ‘many’, ‘most’ and ‘all’ have been used to refer to the proportion of stakeholders consulted who expressed a certain opinion or perspective. These terms are defined in the ‘Stakeholder engagement metrics’ section of Appendix A.

Subsequent to the original publication of this report, a participant indicated that they did not want their comments to be identified. As such, some text has been altered to remove any possibility of identification. This has not affected the overall findings of the report or evaluation ratings.

1.5. Understanding the evaluation framework

There are three components to the evaluation framework, outlined below. To see the full framework, please refer to Appendix B.

OVERALL EVALUATION QUESTIONS

A set of overarching evaluation questions was developed to guide assessment at the whole-of-plan level. These questions were initially drafted by ORIMA and refined through consultation with Parks Australia, the Australian Marine Parks First Nations Reference Group, and AMPAC members.

The key evaluation questions were:

1. **Were the management programs in this management plan implemented effectively?**
(Including the extent to which management plan actions and outcomes were achieved according to the Performance Information Matrix, see section below).
2. **To what extent do stakeholders perceive the activities occurring in zones to be consistent with zone objectives**, at an overall level?
3. Based on stakeholder perceptions, **how well aligned was the implementation of the plans with external regulatory settings and management activities?**
4. **To what extent do stakeholders perceive that there was an effective and efficient balance between the use of grants and other implementation mechanisms** in addressing management plan objectives?
5. **What lessons can we learn for future management plans?**

Together, they provide a structure for synthesising findings across programs and plans.

PERFORMANCE INFORMATION MATRIX (PIM)

The Performance Information Matrix (PIM) is the core analytical tool used in the evaluation to systematically assess program implementation.

For each action and outcome in the management programs, the PIM defines a consistent set of measurement components to guide assessment:

- **Outputs** – The tangible deliverables linked to each action (not applicable to outcomes).
- **Measures of success** – The criteria used to determine whether an action or outcome has been achieved.
- **Indicators** – The observable evidence used to assess performance against each measure of success.
- **Data sources** – The data used to assess each indicator (e.g. documentary evidence, stakeholder feedback).

This structure provides a clear connection between planned activities, evidence and evaluative judgement. It ensures consistent and transparent assessment across programs. The full PIM for the Coral Sea Marine Park is provided in Appendix B.

RATING APPROACH AND MEASUREMENT METHODS

A set of standardised rating approaches were developed to assess performance across actions, outcomes and programs. These approaches were designed to align with Parks Australia's reporting requirements and the nature of the management plan. Specifically, the evaluation assigned the following:

- **Action completion status** – drawing on documentary evidence and stakeholder feedback, each action was assessed as 'completed', 'ongoing', 'implemented with modifications', 'partially completed or implemented' or 'not commenced'.

- **Program implementation effectiveness ratings** – the achievement of actions and outcomes at the management program level was assessed as ‘good’, ‘good with some concerns’, having ‘significant concerns’, ‘critical’ or ‘unknown’.
- **Outcome achievement rating** – outcome effectiveness was assessed as ‘fully met’, ‘substantially met’, ‘partially met’ or ‘not met’. Trend ratings were also assigned for each outcome (i.e. indicating a positive, negative or stable trend).

Further detail about each rating approach is provided at Appendix A.

Quality and Compliance Statement

This project was conducted in accordance with the international quality standard ISO 20252, the international information security standard ISO 27001, as well as the Australian Privacy Principles contained in the Privacy Act 1988 (Cth). ORIMA Research also adheres to the Privacy (Market and Social Research) Code 2021 administered by the Australian Data and Insights Association (ADIA).

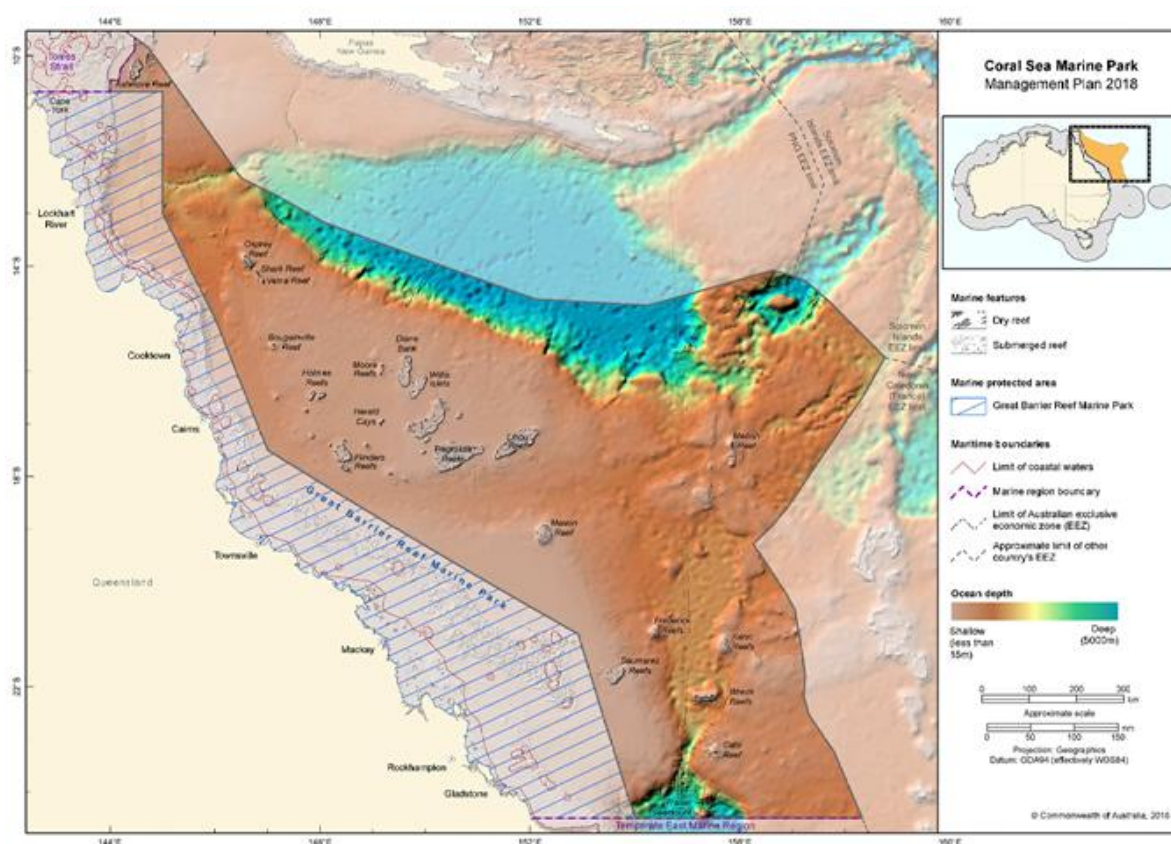
2. Coral Sea Marine Park context

This chapter presents background information about the Coral Sea Marine Park to support understanding of its contextual environment when interpreting evaluation findings.

2.1. About the Coral Sea Marine Park

The Coral Sea Marine Park spans from Cape York Peninsula to an east–west line approximately 40km north of Bundaberg in Queensland, beyond the Great Barrier Reef. Covering 989,836 km², the Coral Sea Marine Park is one of the world’s largest marine parks (as shown in **Figure 4** below).

Figure 4: Coral Sea Marine Park⁵



The Coral Sea Marine Park is characterised by shallow-water tropical marine ecosystems, a large area of continental shelf and continental slope, two areas of abyssal plain with depths to 6000 meters, high incidence of cyclones, high species diversity and globally significant populations of internationally threatened species, including a small number of species that are found nowhere else. There are approximately 34 reefs, and 56 cays and islets in the Marine Park, with a total reef area of approximately 15,024 km². The seafloor features of the Marine Park are diverse and include coral

⁵ Director of National Parks. (2018). Coral Sea Marine Park Management Plan 2018. Australian Marine Parks: <https://australianmarineparks.gov.au/static/e7290288ff51dcc1604d8caa2679ea70/amp-document-coral-sea-management-plan-2018.pdf>

reefs, soft sediments and canyons, including Bligh Canyon in the north of the Marine Park, which is 200 km long, 10 km wide and cuts 300 meters into the seafloor.

The Coral Sea Marine Park is influenced by a complex system of currents that change seasonally and between years. Currents have also influenced the composition of reef species. The east–west flowing South Equatorial Current cuts through the centre of the Marine Park before dividing to form the north-flowing Hiri Current and the south-flowing East Australian Current. These currents create a barrier reducing the mixing of species between the north and south of the Marine Park, forming distinct communities. The southern part of the Marine Park transitions between tropical and temperate waters and includes some temperate species typical of the Temperate East Marine Region.

The Coral Sea Marine Park includes black marlin (*Istiompax indica*) spawning aggregations near Osprey Reef, and every year humpback whales (*Megaptera novaeangliae*) migrate through the Park from Antarctica. Six of the world’s seven species of marine turtle occur in the Marine Park; all have threatened conservation status.

2.1.1. Values

The Australian Marine Park values are the guiding principles for marine park management and decision-making. The Coral Sea Marine Park values include:

- **Natural values** – key ecological features such as deep-water valleys, ridges, troughs, terraces, aprons, slopes, canyons, reefs, cays, atolls, islets, seamounts and plateaux, supporting a range of species listed as threatened, migratory, marine or cetacean under the Environmental Protection and Biodiversity Conservation (EPBC) Act. The marine park provides biologically important breeding and or foraging habitats for seabirds, interesting habitats for marine turtles, and a migratory pathway for humpback whales. The Coringa-Herald and Lihou Reefs are significant ecological features of the Marine Park, acting as a breeding site for several key waterbird species and nationally threatened turtle species.
- **Cultural values** – Sea Country is valued for First Nations cultural identity, health and wellbeing, and First Nations people continue to assert inherited rights and responsibilities over Sea Country within the Coral Sea Marine Park. Specifically, Torres Strait Islander peoples and Aboriginal peoples of the east coast of Cape York have Sea Country responsibilities for parts of the Marine Park. The Meriam People’s sea country extends over the Ashmore Reef region of the Marine Park. Under traditional (Malo’s) law, Ashmore Reef is a significant cultural area for the Meriam People.
- **Heritage values** – over 45 known shipwrecks listed under the Historic Shipwrecks Act 1976 are found in the Park, including the Cato (wrecked in 1803), HMS Porpoise, (wrecked in 1803) and Echo (wrecked in 1820). There are also three United States of America navy ships sunk in 1942 during the Battle of the Coral Sea: the USS Lexington (aircraft carrier), USS Neosho (aviation fuel supplier), and USS Sims (destroyer). Whilst no international, Commonwealth or national heritage listings apply to the Marine Park, it is adjacent to the Great Barrier Reef World Heritage Area.
- **Socio-economic values** – tourism and recreational activities including fishing, snorkelling, diving and boating around reefs, islands, cays and deep-water environments take place in the marine park, despite its offshore location. Commercial fishing also occurs. These activities contribute to the wellbeing of regional communities and the prosperity of the nation.

2.1.2. Pressures

The Coral Sea Marine Park faces a range of pressures that, if left unchecked, may impact on marine park values. Examples of habitats, key ecological features and species vulnerable to the effects of

the below pressures include reef, cay and seamount habitats, and species of seabird, shark, dolphin, marine turtle, sea snake, sea cucumber, marine turtle and fish:

- **Climate change** and its complex environmental impacts, including changes in temperature, sea level, acidification, ocean currents, increased storm frequency and intensity, species range extensions or local extinctions.
- **Extraction of living resources** from illegal, unregulated and unreported fishing (including illegal foreign fishing) can modify natural populations of target species through bycatch of non-target species and/or physical disturbance to habitats.
- **Habitat modification** can occur directly through physical disturbance or indirectly through the presence of infrastructure.
- **Human presence** via activities such as boating, camping, diving and snorkelling has the potential to impact marine park values directly through contact from collision or indirectly through changes in behaviour from disturbance. Examples of habitats and species vulnerable to human disturbance include reef, cay and seamount habitats, and species of seabirds, shark, dolphin, marine turtle and fish.
- **Invasive species** introduced via key sources including vessel ballast and bilge water discharge, biofouling, accidental or deliberate species transport, and land-based activities, with impacts including predation, habitat damage and competition with native species. Examples of habitats, key ecological features and species vulnerable to the impacts of invasive species include reef and island habitats, and nesting seabirds and marine turtles such as those at Coringa–Herald and Lihou Reefs.
- **Marine pollution** including the emission of noise or light, marine debris (for example, plastics and lost fishing gear), and discharge of oil, chemicals or waste. Pollution can be detrimental to marine life, leading to contamination of ecosystems, entanglement, or ingestion by marine species.

2.1.3. Management

The Coral Sea Marine Park is managed by Parks Australia staff within the Marine and Island Parks Branch on behalf of the Director of National Parks. This is done in collaboration with:

- Traditional Owners and First Nations peoples,
- Government agencies (both Commonwealth and state), and
- The Coral Sea Marine Park Advisory Committee (CSMPAC) – an expert advisory committee representing a range of perspectives relevant to marine park management in the Coral Sea Marine Park. The Committee provides strategic advice to Parks Australia on marine park management issues at a regional level.

3. Findings relating to overall evaluation questions

*This chapter presents the findings **related to the broader evaluation questions**, focusing on plan design, assessment and monitoring, responsiveness and adaptability, and considerations for future plans.*

3.1. Overall findings

Overall, the Coral Sea Marine Park demonstrated positive progress in implementing the actions and achieving the intended outcomes across many of its management programs. This is reflected in the program grades, with three programs assessed as ‘good’ and one assessed as ‘good with some concerns’. However, the evaluation also identified room for improvement, with two management programs assessed as ‘significant concerns’ and one being determined as ‘critical’.

The evaluation identified a **range of strengths and achievements** in relation to the overall implementation of the Coral Sea Marine Park Management Plan, including the:

- **Development of robust and structured frameworks, strategies and policies** – such as of the ‘Communication, Education and Awareness Strategy’ and the ‘Australian Marine Parks Assessments and Authorisations Policy’, both of which provided clear guidance for implementing effective actions throughout the duration of the plan.
 - However, the First Nations Engagement and Cultural Heritage Strategy was noted as not having been completed, and the Australian Marine Parks Science Strategy was subsumed into a broader science strategy, with stakeholder feedback suggesting that clearer strategies could go some way to assisting in overcoming shortcomings in these program areas.
- **Substantial progress in ecological baseline data collection** – which provided critical insights into the natural values and pressures within the Coral Sea Marine Park. Given the lack of data and knowledge about the Coral Sea Marine Park prior to 2018, this progress was noted as having substantial benefits in enhancing understanding of the management needs and priorities of the park. This data also supported evidence-based decision-making and adaptive management, ensuring actions were informed by robust scientific evidence where possible.
 - However, Parks Australia staff and marine science stakeholders highlighted that the lack of data at the time of the park’s establishment in 2018 resulted in zoning decisions being made with limited evidence. They also noted that the rigidity of the management plan structure had prevented park zoning and management from adapting to incorporate new data.
- **Effective assessments, authorisations and compliance activities** – supported by the timely implementation of a range of policies, procedures and partnerships to support achievement of the relevant management program areas. For example, the introduction of Vessel Monitoring Systems (VMS) and targeted enforcement operations reduced non-compliance incidents, demonstrating the success of the application of risk-based approaches and innovative technologies.

However, a number of **limitations** were also identified through the evaluation, including:

- **Remote and offshore nature of the park** – the isolated and deep-sea nature of the Coral Sea Marine Park made implementation challenging, particularly for tourism, monitoring, compliance, communication and stakeholder engagement. Limited accessibility as well as resource constraints further hindered consistent management and utilisation of the park.
- **Engagement with Traditional Owners, First Nations partners, organisations and users was not sufficient** – while the evaluation identified initial efforts to build relationships with First Nations

groups and Traditional Owners of the Coral Sea Marine Park, challenges and gaps in this engagement were also identified.

- **Gaps in data for some program areas** – limited data on the progress of some actions and outcomes within the management plan was identified as a barrier to assessing the effectiveness of the management plan’s implementation. In addition, the limited collection of specific data, such as socio-economic data and marine park awareness and perceptions data hindered a comprehensive understanding of progress and/ or the ability to assess the broader impacts of marine park management (while also reducing the ability to make informed decisions that balanced environmental, social and economic outcomes). Addressing these data gaps will be important to ensure accurate measures can be obtained of the plan’s implementation.
- **Appropriately balancing protection of ecological, social and economic values** – the evaluation found that balancing competing stakeholder interests in the Coral Sea Marine Park will be an ongoing challenge, with a range of diverse views identified in relation to the balance of protection for ecological and other values. For example, some stakeholders, particularly marine science stakeholders, felt that additional work was required to effectively protect ecological values (e.g. to support greater protection of biodiversity). However, others felt that the management plan and associated zoning restrictions were overly restrictive (e.g. limiting commercial and recreational fishing activities in particular zones without a clearly communicated rationale for doing so). While balancing competing stakeholder perspectives will be an ongoing challenge, clearly and transparently communicating the evidence-based rationale for management decisions should go some way to addressing these concerns.
- **Limited effectiveness of the Coral Sea Marine Park Advisory Committee (CSMPAC) process** – both CSMPAC members and Parks Australia staff raised concerns about the effectiveness of the current advisory committee model, with stakeholder feedback suggesting the committees may not be achieving their intended role in contributing to marine park management. However, the need for ongoing and in-depth engagement with a range of stakeholders was acknowledged, suggesting that a more inclusive and collaborative approach could better capture diverse stakeholder perspectives for consideration in decision-making processes
- **Limited communication and engagement with the broader community** – while efforts to engage specific stakeholder groups were noted, the evaluation found that broader community engagement remained an important gap. Many stakeholders highlighted the need for increased public awareness and education about marine parks, including their purpose, management, and benefits. It was felt that improved outreach and communication strategies targeting broader park users and the general public could help foster a greater understanding of marine park values, build support for management decisions, and encourage community participation in conservation efforts.

3.2. Specific findings about management plan design: Level of detail provided, plan flexibility, and efficacy of monitoring and review mechanisms

Overall, stakeholders acknowledged the challenges associated with striking a balance between providing adequate detail to support implementation, while also maintaining the required flexibility for a 10-year plan for the Coral Sea Marine Park. Positively, some Parks Australia staff felt that the management plans, including the Coral Sea Marine Park Management Plan, provided an appropriate level of detail, with some who were working in areas relevant to compliance and authorisations describing it as their “source of truth.” In addition, external stakeholders found elements of the plan such as zoning maps, overarching rules and regulations and permitted activity tables particularly valuable for supporting compliance activities.

However, some other Parks Australia staff and a few external stakeholders reported that some actions and outcomes were “overly generic” and not always suitable for standardisation across networks due to the unique characteristics and values of the Coral Sea Marine Park, with such an approach at times felt to complicate implementation and evaluation. Parks Australia staff working specifically in the Coral Sea reported that the plan in its current form was of limited use in guiding and supporting their work, and instead became an additional burden as they had to retroactively fit the work they were undertaking into the plan to try to satisfy its actions and requirements. A key example of this was the management plan’s focus on the Tourism and Visitor Experience and Communication, Education and Awareness Programs, which were felt to have limited relevance to the Coral Sea Marine Park and contained actions which were not possible to meet with the available resources or were not relevant or appropriate to the ultimate goal of protecting the values of the park. In addition, the Indigenous Engagement Program contained a number of actions that stakeholders and Parks Australia staff reported would be very challenging to meet in their current form (see Chapter 6 for more information of these challenges). As such, Parks Australia staff felt that the undue focus of the plan on these program areas did not accurately reflect the true values and management priorities of the Coral Sea Marine Park.

Some external stakeholders also felt that the plan had not been able to effectively adapt to emerging risks, priorities and contextual changes, particularly throughout later stages of the plan as more data about the Coral Sea Marine Park became available. This was generally found to be due to the prescriptive nature of some management plan actions and outcomes, or the lack of flexibility of the plan and zoning decisions to adapt to the large amounts of new data about the Coral Sea Marine Park and to address changes in the ecological or policy environment over time.

The evaluation also identified several challenges with the monitoring and review mechanisms, with some stakeholders reporting that some actions and outcomes were “vague”, ambiguous or lacked clear timeframes for completion. This was felt to make effective assessment difficult. It was suggested that outcomes focus on productivity, reporting quality and engagement with park users where possible.

Conversely, some actions and outcomes were found to be overly prescriptive, such as in identifying the government agencies and other partners to be engaged in implementation. This was particularly evident in the Compliance and Assessments and Authorisations programs, where Parks Australia staff felt that prescribed partner lists did not always align with the practical realities of a risk-based approach to implementation and enforcement. In some cases, partners were identified in the plan whom staff felt were not well placed to address the relevant risks.

3.3. Implications for future plan development

Based on the evaluation findings, it is recommended that the following matters be considered when developing the next plan for the Coral Sea Marine Park:

- **Demonstrating how robust evidence has been used, particularly for zoning decisions** – stakeholders reported an expectation that any future management plans would clearly draw from the evidence and data accrued since 2018 to ensure management and zoning decisions were based on ecological, socio-economic and cultural information available. They expected such an approach to be transparent and well-communicated to ensure clarity and explain why decisions had been made, which would help to enhance trust in the process of plan development and implementation. In addition, communicating evidence of the effectiveness of zoning and management in protecting and strengthening marine park values, both at the start of and throughout the duration of the plan, would help to foster greater understanding and support for marine park management.

- **Ensuring comprehensive and effective engagement with key stakeholder groups and First Nations peoples** – by incorporating early, wide-reaching and ongoing engagement with key user groups. In particular, broad-reaching and culturally responsive engagement with Traditional Owners and First Nations communities was found to be an important focus for future management activities, including by engaging face-to-face on Country where possible.
- **Addressing the unique needs of localised settings/ parks within the network** – by considering specific place-based requirements in consultation with relevant individuals or organisations, to ensure that the structure and program areas within the plan align with the distinct and diverse needs of communities and stakeholders across the park. For instance, tourism was considered to be a less relevant focus for the Coral Sea Marine Park due to its offshore nature. Addressing crossover between program areas was also raised as a consideration. As an example, some stakeholders suggested that communication related to compliance should be managed by the communications and/or regional teams, and suggested this action may therefore be better aligned with the Communication, Education and Awareness Program.
- **Where possible, zoning full reefs or ecosystems within one zone** – to enable clear comparisons across zones of the effectiveness of protection and the impacts of permitted activities over time. A few stakeholders felt that this would allow for clearer tracking of the effectiveness of zoning and park management over time, which was more difficult in cases where particular reefs or ecosystems were split across zones.
- **Improving monitoring, evaluation and accessibility of management plan actions** – by incorporating key performance indicators (KPIs) and targets to make measuring and evaluating action and outcome performance easier, and raising awareness of the Coral Sea Management Plan factsheet to improve usability and accessibility for stakeholders.
- **Considering Australia's '30 by 30' commitment** – including implications of potential changes to zoning arrangements. In doing so, it will be important to clearly communicate the evidence-based need and benefits of commitment to '30 by 30' in an Australian context, particularly with commercial fishing stakeholders whose operations may be directly impacted by this commitment.

4. Findings: Communication, Education and Awareness Program

*This chapter presents assessments of the implementation of **the Communication, Education and Awareness Program** of the Coral Sea Marine Park Management Plan.*

4.1. Overall findings about the efficacy of program implementation

Grade



The Communication, Education and Awareness Program was assessed as having 'significant concerns', with the overall outcome of the management program rated as 'partially met'. Of the nine planned actions, three were assessed as 'completed', while the remaining six were deemed 'partially completed'.

Although several actions were only partially completed, the evidence suggests that these efforts were reasonable given the remoteness of the Coral Sea Marine Park. Feedback from Parks Australia staff indicated that the scope and specificity of actions within this program area did not match the available resources, and that the program was felt to be less relevant for the Coral Sea Marine Park. Despite these challenges, staff acknowledged that the communication activities undertaken represented significant progress within these constraints. However, the evaluation identified opportunities to further enhance the program's effectiveness, particularly by improving stakeholder engagement, as well as increasing awareness, understanding, and support for marine park management among community stakeholders and park users.

Strengths and achievements

The evaluation found that key collaborations (e.g. with the Cairns Aquarium and James Cook University [JCU]) via Our Marine Parks Grants (OMPGs) were critical to delivering communication and engagement activities for the Coral Sea Marine Park. Stakeholders viewed the provision of information through exhibits at the Cairns Aquarium as a particularly effective initiative undertaken as part of this program.

Barriers, challenges and limiting factors

The implementation of communication efforts with the general community under this program had significant weaknesses. Stakeholders identified the following challenges as key constraints:

- The difficulty of engaging communities in relation to a park located far offshore, due to limited visibility, connection, and opportunities for interaction and visitation. This issue was particularly evident for the Coral Sea Marine Park, given its proximity to the Great Barrier Reef Marine Park, which receives significant national and international attention supported by extensive communication efforts. This was found to hinder efforts to effectively raise awareness of, and support for, the Coral Sea Marine Park.

- Limited resources within Parks Australia, with small teams needing to manage various programs and generally tending to have a stronger focus on terrestrial parks. While Parks Australia undertook initiatives to engage the public, Parks Australia staff acknowledged that the scale and reach of these initiatives was limited due to resourcing and capacity constraints. Some staff perceived that the scope and specificity of actions outlined in the management plan were not well aligned with the resources available to implement them.
- Limited communication with stakeholders in relation to marine park management decisions and initiatives, a concern particularly expressed by members of the Coral Sea Marine Park Advisory Committee (CSAMPAC), who had a strong interest in the progress and outcomes of the plan.
- A lack of evidence of measurement or evaluation of the impact of communication activities, which posed challenges in terms of assessing their effectiveness and tailoring efforts to better meet needs, particularly for efforts to engage the broader public and other park users.

The research found that stakeholders believed there was an appetite for further information among engaged members of the public and expressed a willingness to assist in sharing and communicating information. This highlights an opportunity for Parks Australia to better leverage stakeholder networks and improve outreach to the broader community.

4.2. Outcome effectiveness

Outcome	Outcome effectiveness	Trend rating
O1. Increased awareness, understanding and support for marine parks	 Partially met	 Trend getting better
Evidence This outcome was assessed as partially met , with evidence indicating a slight increase in awareness, understanding, and support for marine parks amongst stakeholders. However, stakeholder feedback highlighted limited communication with the broader community. Evidence from desktop review: The National Environmental Science Program (NESP), in partnership with the University of Western Australia (UWA), conducted online and face-to-face surveys with recreational marine park users, charter operators and the general public across Australia in 2021 to establish social and economic benchmarks for Australian Marine Parks (AMPs). These surveys collected data on awareness, understanding and support for AMPs, including the Coral Sea Marine Park. While a subsequent round of research is due to be completed and released in 2026, it was not available at the time of this evaluation. As such, it is not currently possible to make a robust assessment of whether awareness, understanding and support have increased over the life of the plan. ⁶		

⁶ NESP Social and Economic Benchmarks of the Australian Marine Parks Report: https://api.research-repository.uwa.edu.au/ws/portalfiles/portal/363774544/Navarro_et_al_D6_M12_M13_M17_Social_and_Economic_benchmarks_of_the_AMPs_FINAL.pdf

In addition to those outlined against the actions below, the evaluation identified the following documentary evidence of activities to support increased awareness and understanding of the Coral Sea Marine Park:

- Self-reported evidence also indicated that Parks Australia of staff attending an information stall at the Bondi Ocean Lovers Festival in February 2025, during which Parks Australia staff engaged with recreational users and representatives from the tourism industry about the Coral Sea Marine Park.⁷ A school presentation was also conducted in Sydney.⁸
- Development of the '*Coral Sea Marine Park Island Management Strategy*' which outlined intentions for information sharing and education activities.⁹

Evidence from engagement:

Most stakeholders recognised that communication was constrained due to the limited resourcing and capacity of the Coral Sea Marine Park Parks Australia team, and the inherent challenges of raising awareness of a large, offshore marine park with limited opportunities for visitation.

Nonetheless, many participants noted a lack of communication from Parks Australia, and a few stakeholders, particularly recreational fishing representatives, expressed frustration at this perceived lack of engagement. In particular, these stakeholders felt that a lack of communication on the purpose of the marine parks had perpetuated a lack of understanding and support for AMPs.

As such, stakeholders broadly felt there was likely to have been little change in levels of public awareness, understanding and support for the Coral Sea Marine Park since the beginning of the management plan. Nonetheless, it was accepted that the communication activity undertaken over the course of the management plan were likely to have led to at least a small increase in awareness and understanding.

Parks Australia staff echoed this sentiment, reporting that, while they had made efforts where possible to increase awareness of the Coral Sea Marine Park, the actions outlined under this program did not realistically align with the available resources for public communication and engagement for a small management team.

⁷ CS Network Internal Self Assessment: Internal document

⁸ Email chain: Internal document

⁹ Coral Sea Marine Park Island Management Strategy: Internal document

4.3. Specific management plan actions

The tables below present the completion status and supporting evidence collected during the evaluation for each management plan action within the Communication, Education and Awareness Program.

Action	Completion status
A1. Develop a marketing and communication strategy for Australian Marine Parks to raise awareness and understanding of marine park values and the contribution marine parks make to enhancing Australia's wellbeing	 Completed
Evidence This action was assessed as completed, with the marketing and communication strategy delivered in a timely manner. However, it was noted by some stakeholders that the strategy to date had limited effectiveness in increasing awareness and understanding of marine parks and their values among key audiences. Evidence from desktop review: The desktop review identified the '<i>Communication, Education and Awareness Strategy (2021-26)</i>' as the guiding document for relevant activities across marine parks/ marine park networks, including the Coral Sea Marine Park. This document was found to be produced in a timely manner (i.e. within the first four years of the management plan).¹⁰ Evidence of communication activities and initiatives that were developed or implemented in accordance with this strategy are noted against the relevant actions below. Evidence from engagement: Many stakeholders felt that there had been significant gaps in Parks Australia's communication and education efforts in the Coral Sea Marine Park, with communication and marketing activities perceived to be limited. While some specific positives were noted (e.g. Parks Australia website content, some social media communication, and a partnership with Cairns Aquarium), stakeholders also noted the following broad concerns in relation to communication and engagement: - Awareness of the Coral Sea Marine Park and its values remained low among park users and the broader community. While stakeholders understood that Parks Australia faced a range of challenges to communicating with marine park users and the general population (e.g. resource constraints, challenges engaging members of the public without vested interests and/ or in remote/ offshore marine parks), they also felt that raising awareness of the values and importance of the Coral Sea Marine Park was critical to supporting buy-in for management activities and marine conservation. In particular, a couple of stakeholders noted that the location of the Coral Sea Marine Park meant that it was "overshadowed" by the better known Great Barrier Reef Marine Park, and these stakeholders felt comparatively not enough had been done to raise awareness of the values and importance of the Coral Sea Marine Park. - Communication with stakeholders was limited or inconsistent – some stakeholders, particularly those who represented or worked within the marine park (e.g. recreational	

¹⁰ A *Communication, Education and Awareness Strategy (2021-26)*: Internal document

fishers and tourism operators) felt that they had a role to play in supporting communication and information sharing with users of the Coral Sea Marine Park. However, some of these stakeholders felt that they had not received or had access to information from Parks Australia that would enable them to do so.

In addition, a couple of stakeholders felt that it would be more appropriate to have a Coral Sea Marine Park-specific communication strategy which was tailored to the unique context and attributes of the park, rather than a “broad-brush” communication strategy covering all marine parks.

Action	Completion status
A2. Develop online information resources to facilitate awareness of marine park values, management arrangements and visitor opportunities	 Completed
Evidence	
This action was assessed as completed, with the desktop review identifying considerable evidence of online information resources being delivered in a timely manner. Feedback from stakeholders on this action was also broadly positive. Evidence from desktop review: The desktop review identified considerable evidence of online information resources being developed and used. Delivery of these outputs commenced from the initial years of the management plan (i.e. between 2018-2020), highlighting the timely completion of this action. More specifically, the desktop review identified the following online resources designed to facilitate awareness of marine park values: • The ‘Values’ chapter in the ‘<i>Coral Sea Marine Park Management Plan</i>’ (published 2018).¹¹ • The Coral Sea Marine Park values webpage.¹² • The ‘<i>Five that thrive in our marine parks</i>’ website produced by the Fab Five research team at the University of Adelaide (2022), which provided information about five key ‘iconic’ species that live in AMPs.¹³ • An article published on the AMP ‘News’ webpage promoting the protection of Coral Sea Marine Park islands, including the ‘<i>Island Access Guidelines</i>’ (2026).¹⁴	

¹¹ Coral Sea Marine Park Management Plan Chapter 2.3:

<https://australianmarineparks.gov.au/static/e7290288ff51dcc1604d8caa2679ea70/amp-document-coral-sea-management-plan-2018.pdf>

¹² Coral Sea Marine Park values webpage:

<https://australianmarineparks.gov.au/management/values/values-coral-sea-marine-park/>

¹³ ‘Finding the Fab Five’ – Australian Marine Parks webpage:

<https://storymaps.arcgis.com/collections/61ca6f9be4354e808146e47e0a59a7d0?item=1>

¹⁴ Coral Sea Marine Park islands protected webpage (2026):

<https://australianmarineparks.gov.au/news/coral-sea-marine-park-islands-protected/>

The desktop review also identified the following online resources designed to facilitate awareness of marine park management arrangements:

- The 'Coral Sea Marine Park Management Plan' itself,¹⁵ and
- A management plan zoning and rules factsheet.¹⁶

Finally, the desktop review also identified the following online resources designed to facilitate awareness of visitor opportunities:

- Visitor experiences being promoted on the Parks Australia website under the 'Explore' section,¹⁷ and
- 'Island Access Guidelines' and flyer materials developed by Parks Australia for visitors, which outline allowed and recommended activities when visiting the islands in the Coral Sea Marine Park in accordance with the marine park's natural values.^{18 19}

Evidence from engagement:

Only a few stakeholders were aware of the online resources, suggesting that reach of communication and education activities had been limited and/ or inconsistent. Those who were aware of the resources reported broadly positive perceptions of them. Specifically, positive feedback was received about information presented on the Parks Australia website.

However, stakeholders who were unaware of the online resources assumed that communication had not occurred and/ or took this as an indication that the dissemination of such resources had not been broad or effective. A range of stakeholders, particularly recreational fishing stakeholders, felt it would be beneficial if resources were more widely promoted.

Action	Completion status
A3. Maximise the use of new technologies and partnerships (including with schools, universities, museums and non-government organisations) to inspire people of all ages to become involved in marine park management and protection	 Partially completed or implemented
Evidence This action was assessed as partially completed. Although some documentary evidence of partnerships and utilisation of new technologies was identified, these efforts did not encompass	

¹⁵ Coral Sea Marine Park Management Plan:

<https://australianmarineparks.gov.au/static/e7290288ff51dcc1604d8caa2679ea70/amp-document-coral-sea-management-plan-2018.pdf>

¹⁶ Coral Sea Marine Park Management Plan 2018 – Zoning and rules factsheet:

<https://australianmarineparks.gov.au/static/bab1fc211178fca6d04dc6b20af6ea4f/amp-document-factsheet-coral-sea-management-plan.pdf>

¹⁷ Coral Sea Marine Park website:

<https://australianmarineparks.gov.au/parks/coral-sea-marine-park/>

¹⁸ Island Access Guidelines – 'For the authorisation of commercial tourism and general use activities on islands in the Coral Sea, Ashmore Reef and Cartier Island Marine Parks':

<https://australianmarineparks.gov.au/static/ed6be964a0102950d36a12fa6f094e76/amp-document-amp-guideline-tourism-and-general-use-island-access.pdf>

¹⁹ Island Access Flyer – 'Help protect islands in the Coral Sea Marine Park': Internal document

the full range of intended partnerships. Additionally, stakeholder feedback on the effectiveness of these initiatives in inspiring public involvement in marine park management and protection was mixed.

Evidence from desktop review:

The desktop review provided evidence of two key communication and engagement partnerships, one of which utilised modern technology:

- The *‘Diving into the deep, the unique habitats of the Coral Sea’* project by JCU, which sought to use technologies such as acoustic tracking and underwater cinematography to better understand the Coral Sea Marine Park’s deep-water reef habitats and engage the community via a series of promotional and educational videos (funded via OMPG 2).²⁰
- OMPG rounds 2, 3 and 4 funded projects conducted by Cairns Aquarium and Reef Research Centre to create multiple products related to the Coral Sea Marine Park’s ecological habitats, including two new living exhibits of coral, education signage and displays of marine mammals as well as the employment and training of First Nations employees and development of culturally focused interpretative signage about Sea Country in the Coral Sea Marine Park.^{21 22 23 24}

However, the evaluation did not identify any evidence of partnerships with schools or museums.

Evidence from engagement:

Most stakeholders were found to have limited awareness of partnerships to inspire involvement in marine management and protection. Of those stakeholders who were aware of the partnership with Cairns Aquarium, many provided positive feedback about this collaboration and noted that the relevant exhibits were likely to go some way to educating and informing the broader public about the Coral Sea Marine Park. However, some stakeholders felt that there had been limited exploration of new partnership opportunities beyond this.

In addition, many stakeholders felt that the intended impact of this action (i.e. inspiring people of all ages to become involved in marine park management and protection) was challenging and “unrealistic” to achieve and measure. As such, these stakeholders did not feel that the action had been completely implemented as intended.

²⁰ *Our Marine Parks Grant program – Round 2 (2020):*

<https://australianmarineparks.gov.au/static/2b7aff986015d07009d5d04fd9b13d48/our-marine-park-grants-round-two-projects.pdf>

²¹ *FIP Coral Sea Review Report: Internal document*

²² *Our Marine Parks Grant program – Round 2 (2020):*

<https://australianmarineparks.gov.au/static/2b7aff986015d07009d5d04fd9b13d48/our-marine-park-grants-round-two-projects.pdf>

²³ *Our Marine Parks Grant program – Round 3 (2022):*

<https://australianmarineparks.gov.au/static/34e05cdfb4b82c5919f6d4d7779b57b0/our-marine-park-grants-round-three-projects-v2.pdf>

²⁴ *Our Marine Parks Grant program – Round 4 (2024):*

<https://australianmarineparks.gov.au/static/e1332c53cb5a0ea7099e14e8d6a616f0/amp-round-4-grant-recipients.pdf>

Action	Completion status
A4. Establish network advisory committees to ensure users and interested stakeholders have on-going input into the management of Australian Marine Parks A8. Establish a Coral Sea Marine Park advisory committee to support and collaborate with the Director in management	 Partially completed or implemented
Evidence These actions were assessed as partially completed. While the desktop review provided evidence of an advisory committee being established in a timely manner, stakeholder feedback indicated that the committee may not have had the intended input into marine park management. Evidence from the desktop review: The desktop review found that the Coral Sea Marine Park Advisory Committee (CSMPAC) was appointed by the Director of National Parks (the Director) in 2019 with 10 members.²⁴ The CSMPAC has been convened twice annually since 2019, with communiqués published after each meeting to document discussions.²⁵ In May 2025, a Joint Australian Marine Parks Advisory Committee (AMPAC) meeting was held in Brisbane to facilitate knowledge sharing, networking, and cross-network guidance for the upcoming review phase actions.²⁶ Evidence from engagement: CSMPAC members expressed their appreciation for the opportunity to engage with Parks Australia and receive information about management of the Coral Sea Marine Park via the advisory committee. CSMPAC members also reported that the joint meetings with members of other Australian Marine Park Advisory Committees (AMPACs) had been beneficial. However, both CSMPAC members and Parks Australia staff expressed concerns about the effectiveness of the operation of the current model. More specifically: - CSMPAC members expressed reservations about the committee's ability to provide interested stakeholders with a mechanism for ongoing, meaningful input into the management of the Coral Sea Marine Park. CSMPAC members generally felt the committee has not provided an effective 'advisory' mechanism for different sectors, with some members feeling that it was more of a 'tick-box' exercise. - Additionally, CSMPAC members reported feeling unsure if their expertise and the input they had shared had meaningfully impacted on marine park management, as they received limited feedback in relation to the outcomes of committee discussions. Some members also expressed an expectation and desire to be consulted on key significant issues affecting the Coral Sea Marine Park (e.g. the potential for space debris to fall into the Coral Sea Marine Park), which they felt was not currently occurring. - Parks Australia staff raised concerns about the high costs and administrative burden associated with running the CSMPAC, which was felt to reduce the relative value of the	

²⁵ Coral Sea Marine Parks Advisory Committee webpage:
<https://australianmarineparks.gov.au/management/partnerships/advisory-committees/coral-sea-marine-park-advisory-committee/>

²⁶ Temperate East Marine Parks Advisory Committee:
<https://australianmarineparks.gov.au/management/partnerships/advisory-committees/temperate-east-marine-parks-advisory-committee/>

committee process. In addition, they reported that there was a lack of clarity around the intended role and purpose of the CSMPAC – i.e. whether it was to provide expert input and guidance into the management of the Coral Sea Marine Park, or whether it was intended to be a platform for members to represent the interests of their respective groups in the management of the park.

Further information in relation to the operation of AMPACs (including the CSMPAC) over the course of the management plan and key learnings for the future are presented in the *'Overall findings Across Marine Parks'* report.

Action	Completion status
A5. Develop a customer focused approach to tracking the aspirations and concerns of stakeholders in relation to marine parks	 Partially completed or implemented
Evidence	
This action was assessed as partially completed. While a formal approach to seeking feedback was developed via the CSMPAC, this was not found to be applicable to the breadth of relevant stakeholders, and only some felt that there were adequate mechanisms in place to track their aspirations and concerns in relation to the Coral Sea Marine Park. Evidence from desktop review: As discussed in relation to A4 and A8 (above), the CSMPAC was established in 2019 as the key formal mechanism for tracking the aspirations and concerns of stakeholders in relation to marine parks.²⁷ While no other formal mechanisms/ approaches were identified, internal documentation provided by Parks Australia noted the informal establishment of relationships with certain stakeholders, such as relevant state government departments, established Traditional Owner groups, key research institutions, and other interest groups identified by the CSMPAC.²⁸ Evidence from engagement: While the establishment of the CSMPAC was the key formal feedback mechanism established over the course of the plan, CSMPAC members felt that there was limited scope for them to raise aspirations and concerns via this mechanism (due to limited time to raise issues during formal meetings). Some also felt that when concerns were raised from CSMPAC members, there was limited feedback to show if and how these concerns had been considered by Parks Australia staff. Amongst other stakeholders, feedback was mixed. While a few who had strong collaborative relationships with Parks Australia felt positively about the extent to which their aspirations and concerns were addressed, a few other stakeholders, including recreational fishers, reported limited interactions with or opportunities to provide feedback to Parks Australia, and hence felt more negative in relation to this action.	

²⁷ Coral Sea Marine Parks Advisory Committee: webpage
<https://australianmarineparks.gov.au/management/partnerships/advisory-committees/coral-sea-marine-park-advisory-committee/>

²⁸ Parks Australia Coral Sea self-assessment: Internal document

Action	Completion status
A6. Develop information on marine park to encourage increased awareness and understanding of marine park values and management arrangements (to be evaluated together with A1 and A2 above)	 Completed
Evidence This action was assessed as completed, with outputs relating to this action found to be delivered in a timely manner. However, stakeholders felt that there was scope for additional efforts to further improve achievement of this action. Evidence from desktop review: The desktop review identified a range of online information resources to encourage increased awareness of marine park values, management activities and management arrangements, as outlined in response to A2 and A3 (above). Evidence from engagement: As discussed in relation to A2 and A3, stakeholders provided broadly positive views in relation to the communication and educational materials that had been developed. However, stakeholders also felt that more could be done to better support an increased understanding of marine park values and management arrangements.	

Action	Completion status
A7. Provide infrastructure in and adjacent to the marine park, such as signs and marker buoys, to increase understanding of marine park values and rules, particularly at sites that are regularly visited	 Partially completed or implemented
Evidence This action was assessed as partially completed. While the desktop review identified some examples of work to install infrastructure in the Coral Sea Marine Park, most stakeholders felt this infrastructure was likely to have limited impact on awareness of marine park rules and values. Evidence from desktop review: The desktop review identified the following examples of infrastructure provision in and around the Coral Sea Marine Park: An OMPG2 funded project conducted by The Cod Hole and Ribbon Reef Operators Association Inc (CHARROA) to develop and install an Environmentally Friendly Mooring System (EFMS) for their tourism industry members to access the Coral Sea Marine Park. The project successfully installed 13 moorings at various dive locations.²⁹	

²⁹ CHARROA – Final Report (2025): Internal document

- Self-reported evidence via internal documentation provided by Parks Australia noting the installation of 21 Protected Area Design (PAD) signs, visitor information and visitor logbooks on the 21 vegetated islands in the Coral Sea Marine Park.³⁰

Evidence from engagement:

Most stakeholders were aware of at least some efforts by Parks Australia to install infrastructure, and acknowledged the success of these activities given the inherent challenges in installing and maintaining infrastructure in a remote areas such as the Coral Sea Marine Park – particularly when there was very limited visitation to much of the park. However, these stakeholders felt it was unlikely that this infrastructure had meaningfully increased understanding of marine park values and rules, particularly given limited visitation to these areas.

Action	Completion status
A9. Work with the Great Barrier Reef Marine Park Authority, and other Commonwealth and state government agencies, through their communication activities, to increase understanding	 Partially completed or implemented
Evidence The action was assessed as partially completed. The desktop review was able to find only limited evidence of collaborative communication activities, and stakeholder feedback also suggested that minimal activities had taken place. Evidence from desktop review: The desktop review only identified one example of collaborative communication activities undertaken between Parks Australia and other agencies in relation to the Coral Sea Marine Park: the co-production of the ‘<i>Alliance Coral Sea</i>’ newsletter in partnership with the France-New Caledonia Government, which provides information about the sustainable management of the park.³¹ Evidence from engagement: Feedback from both Parks Australia staff and external stakeholders suggested that some collaborative communication had been undertaken in partnership with the Great Barrier Reef Marine Park Authority (GBRMPA), including through signage and some online information materials. However, Parks Australia staff noted that the wording of this action (particularly the focus on GBRMPA) was “too specific” and did not reflect the full scope of their collaborative communication activities, such as those undertaken with the New Caledonian government. In addition, one external stakeholder reported that it was sometimes unclear whether communication about the Coral Sea Marine Park and surrounding areas came from Parks Australia or from GBRMPA, and that clearer branding (or co-branding on joint communication activities) could help to address this.	

³⁰ CS Network Internal Self Assessment: Internal document

³¹ Alliance Coral Sea newsletter:

https://australianmarineparks.gov.au/static/52f2c63d6e7794331826e198f215c6d2/alliance-coral-sea_english.pdf

5. Findings: Tourism and Visitor Experience Program

*This chapter presents assessments of the implementation of the **Tourism and Visitor Experience Program** of the Coral Sea Marine Park Management Plan.*

5.1. Overall findings about the efficacy of program implementation

Grade



Significant
concerns

The Tourism and Visitor Experience Program was assessed as having 'significant concerns', with the overall outcomes of the management program rated as 'partially met', 'not met' and 'unknown'. Of the nine planned actions, two were assessed as 'completed', six were deemed 'partially completed' and one 'not commenced'.

However, the evaluation found that this assessment does not indicate poor performance by Parks Australia. Instead, it reflects the limited relevance of this program to the values of the Coral Sea Marine Park and the appropriate decision to focus resources and efforts on programs that are more aligned with the region's specific needs and priorities.

Strengths and achievements

The evaluation found that the Tourism and Visitor Experience Program in the Coral Sea Marine Park was less of a priority due to the limited opportunities for tourism and visitation in the region. Despite this, a few strengths were identified. Notably, the collaboration with Cairns Aquarium (previously highlighted under the Communication, Education and Awareness Program) was identified as one of the few onshore tourism initiatives across the Australian marine park networks. This partnership was considered an innovative and effective approach to engaging the community with the Coral Sea Marine Park without requiring direct visitation. Additionally, tourism stakeholders reported the availability of high-quality diving experiences within the park; however, Parks Australia's role in promoting these activities appeared to be minimal.

Barriers, challenges and limiting factors

Stakeholders identified a range of barriers, challenges and limiting factors in implementing the Tourism and Visitor Experience Program. These were primarily related to the geographical nature of the Coral Sea Marine Park, specifically:

- The distance between the mainland and the Coral Sea Marine Park, which made it more costly and time-consuming to visit. Tourism stakeholders reported that it took approximately twelve hours to reach the outskirts of the Coral Sea Marine Park by boat from the Queensland coast, meaning that multi-day live-a-board packages were the only options for visitation, requiring a higher financial and time commitment.
- The proximity of the Great Barrier Reef Marine Park and its position between the Coral Sea Marine Park and the mainland. Some stakeholders reported that, as a high-profile destination, the GBRMP likely 'absorbed' much of the tourism activity departing from the Queensland coast, with visitors and operators potentially having reduced interest in travelling further into the lesser-known and more remote Coral Sea Marine Park.

- Challenging and unpredictable weather conditions across the Coral Sea Marine Park, which made it riskier and less appealing for tourism operators compared with other locations.

In addition, stakeholders reported that low public awareness of the Coral Sea Marine Park likely limited interest in tourism opportunities and visitation.

5.2. Outcome effectiveness

Outcome	Outcome effectiveness	Trend rating
O2. High-quality visitor experiences that are appealing, engaging and raise awareness of the natural and cultural values of marine parks	 Partially met	 Trend stable
Evidence		
This outcome was assessed as partially met, with limited data available to evaluate the quality of visitor experiences in the Coral Sea Marine Park. While some stakeholders believed that visitors to the park were likely to have high-quality experiences, they were unaware of any specific efforts by Parks Australia to directly promote, measure or track visitor satisfaction. Evidence from desktop review: The very low number of licensed tourism operators within the Coral Sea Marine Park, due to its remote offshore location and position outside areas typically frequented by commercial tourism businesses, presents significant challenges for achieving the objective of increasing tourism activities or achieving high-quality visitor experiences. Evidence from engagement: Stakeholders generally felt that this action had not been fully implemented and were unaware of any initiatives by Parks Australia to measure or enhance visitor experience quality. However, this was not perceived as a shortcoming of management activities, as feedback consistently highlighted the Coral Sea Marine Park's remote offshore location as a major barrier to its viability as a more mainstream tourism destination. Tourism operator stakeholders noted that the Coral Sea Marine Park's high-quality dive sites could provide positive visitor experiences, but Parks Australia's role in promoting these opportunities appeared minimal. Additionally, the Cairns Aquarium was identified as an important onshore tourism initiative where visitors could learn about the Coral Sea Marine Park. However, no data measuring visitor satisfaction for this initiative was identified.		
Outcome	Outcome effectiveness	Trend rating
O3. Increased visitation to marine parks	Unknown	Unknown
Evidence		
Due to the absence of robust, quantifiable measures for tracking visitation to marine parks, this outcome was assessed as unknown.		

Anecdotally, tourism stakeholders noted that, based on their own operations and their contextual knowledge, visitation was likely to have been low over the course of the management plan.

Outcome	Outcome effectiveness	Trend rating
O4. Social and economic benefits from the contribution of marine parks to Australia's visitor economy	 Not met	 Trend stable
Evidence		
This outcome was assessed as not met. As outlined in O2 (above) and the actions below, there was limited evidence of tourism activities in the Coral Sea Marine Park, which limited opportunities for contributing social and economic benefits to Australia's visitor economy.		

5.3. Specific management plan actions

The tables below present the completion status and supporting evidence collected during the evaluation for each management plan action within the Tourism and Visitor Experience Program.

Action	Completion status
A10. Develop a sustainable tourism and visitor experience strategy for Australian Marine Parks	 Completed
Evidence	
Overall, this action was assessed as completed in a timely manner, with the desktop review identifying evidence of the timely development of the 'Australian Marine Parks Tourism Strategy 2021–26'.³²	

Action	
A11. Work with national, state and local tourism authorities and operators to maximise the value of sustainable ecotourism opportunities associated with marine parks	 Partially completed or implemented
Evidence	
Overall, this action was assessed as partially completed. While the desktop review identified evidence of some collaborations with tourism authorities and operators to maximise the value of sustainable ecotourism opportunities, most stakeholders were not aware of these efforts and felt there had been limited direct engagement with tourism operators and authorities in this regard.	

³² Australian Marine Parks Tourism Strategy 2021-26: Internal document

Evidence from desktop review:

In addition to the relevant activities described in A7 (above), the desktop review identified the following evidence of collaborations to maximise the value of tourism opportunities:

- A project funded under Our Marine Parks Grants Round 1 (OMGP1) to support the Eastern Tuna and Billfish Fishery (ETBF) achieve sustainability certification with the Marine Stewardship Council. ETBF is one of Australia's largest tuna fisheries extending across multiple marine parks/ networks, including the Coral Sea Marine Park.³³
- A project funded under Our Marine Parks Grants Round 2 (OMPG2) to install 13 Environmentally Friendly Mooring Systems (EFMS) to enable easier access by tourism operators at a range of diving locations across the Coral Sea Marine Park. These moorings were installed in collaboration with The Cod Hole and Ribbon Reef Operators Association Inc (CHARROA).³⁴
- Projects funded under Our Marine Park Grants Rounds 2, 3 and 4 to install a range of educational displays and signage at the Cairns Aquarium and the Reef Research Centre. These projects aimed to improve understanding of the Coral Sea Marine Park's attributes, management, biodiversity, pressures and natural, cultural, socio-economic and heritage values, as well as to support positive tourism experiences.^{35 36 37}
- Internal documentation from Parks Australia indicating support for tourism operators to ensure they met a high standard of operation and that biosecurity risks associated with island visitation were minimised.³⁸
- Internal documentation from Parks Australia noting collaboration with government agencies, industry bodies and tourism operators due to COVID-19, including the ceasing of face-to-face engagement and plans to support stakeholders to plan and develop content to improve visitor information during this period.³⁹

Evidence from engagement:

One tourism stakeholder reported that their organisation had received a grant to install eco-friendly moorings in the Coral Sea Marine Park. However, other stakeholders expressed limited awareness of Parks Australia's efforts to engage directly with tourism operators to support sustainable ecotourism and felt that more could be done in this area.

³³ Our Marine Parks Grant program – Round 1 (2018):

<https://australianmarineparks.gov.au/static/952ab41977e4ddd5bf09098cec6dc858/round-1-project-details-and-descriptions.pdf>

³⁴ CHARROA – Final Report (2025): Internal document

³⁵ Our Marine Parks Grant program – Round 2 (2020):

<https://australianmarineparks.gov.au/static/2b7aff986015d07009d5d04fd9b13d48/our-marine-park-grants-round-two-projects.pdf>

³⁶ Our Marine Parks Grant program – Round 3 (2022):

<https://australianmarineparks.gov.au/static/34e05cdfb4b82c5919f6d4d7779b57b0/our-marine-park-grants-round-three-projects-v2.pdf>

³⁷ Our Marine Parks Grant program – Round 4 (2024):

<https://australianmarineparks.gov.au/static/e1332c53cb5a0ea7099e14e8d6a616f0/amp-round-4-grant-recipients.pdf>

³⁸ CSMPAC meeting 2 communique (2019):

<https://australianmarineparks.gov.au/static/f0f2bc0af75a1d3db4d535c032df6094/amp-document-csmpac-meeting-two-communique.pdf>

³⁹ CSMPAC meeting 4 communique (2020):

<https://australianmarineparks.gov.au/static/9e95d528aab75f7cde545ad238b2efd8/amp-document-csmpac-meeting-four-communique.pdf>

Action	Completion status
A12. Develop a commercial tourism authorisation system to encourage best-practice and eco-accredited businesses operating in Australian Marine Parks	 Completed
Evidence	
Overall this action was assessed as completed , with the desktop review identifying evidence of an online permit and licensing application system that enabled authorisation for commercial tourism activities and other activities. ⁴⁰	

Action	Completion status
A13. Work with Tourism Australia and state and regional tourism authorities and the fishing industry to market and promote Australian Marine Parks, including opportunities to promote locally and sustainably caught seafood	 Partially completed or implemented
Evidence	
Overall, this action was assessed as partially completed . Only one example was identified in the desktop review, and stakeholders were unaware of any work done to promote visitation of the Coral Sea Marine Park.	
Evidence from desktop review:	
The desktop review identified only one example of promoting sustainably caught seafood – that is, funding for ETBF as described in A11 (above).	
However, no other evidence of marketing or promotion of the Coral Sea Marine Park to visitors was identified via the desktop review. In addition, an internal self-assessment conducted by Parks Australia staff noted that no work had commenced ⁴¹ and no collaboration with Tourism Australia was identified.	
Evidence from engagement:	
Parks Australia staff also acknowledged that activities under this action had not commenced – however, they reported that this action had been justifiably a lesser priority due to its limited relevance to the values of the Coral Sea Marine Park.	
Similarly, stakeholders, including tourism stakeholders, reported that they were unaware of any direct involvement by Parks Australia in promoting tourism in Australian Marine Parks (AMPs) more broadly, or the Coral Sea Marine Park specifically.	

⁴⁰ Australian Marine Parks - Permit and licence applications (publication date unknown):
<https://onlineservices.environment.gov.au/parks/australian-marine-parks>

⁴¹ CS Network Internal Self Assessment: Internal document

Action	Completion status
A14. Monitor visitor trends and levels of satisfaction with marine park experiences and products	 Not commenced
Evidence This action was assessed as not commenced, as no reliable desktop review evidence was identified. Evidence from desktop review: The desktop review identified self-reported evidence from the Parks Australia team that their only current mechanism for monitoring visitor numbers were logbooks for visitors to sign on the 21 vegetated islands in the Coral Sea Marine Park.⁴² However, this self-reported evidence noted that this was not a reliable proxy to measure visitor numbers in the Coral Sea Marine Park, and most visitation was not measured.⁴³ In addition, no evidence of levels of visitor satisfaction was identified.	

Action	Completion status
A15. Promote culturally sensitive tourism by encouraging tourism operators to liaise with Traditional Owners	 Partially completed or implemented
Evidence Overall, this action was assessed as partially completed. The desktop review identified some evidence of efforts by Parks Australia to encourage tourism operators to liaise with Traditional Owners, but stakeholders reported limited awareness or impact of such efforts. Evidence from desktop review: The desktop review found that the main mechanism for encouraging tourism operators to liaise with Traditional Owners was a prompt that appeared on the webpage when submitting an application via the assessments and authorisations process.⁴⁴ Additionally, the desktop review identified that the authorisations process requires tourism operators entering Habitat Protection Zone 1 (Ashmore and Boot Reefs) to consult with the Traditional Owners of that Sea Country, the Mer GedKem Le. Operators are then required to forward a copy of the relevant correspondence to the Authorisations team at Parks Australia.⁴⁵	

⁴² CS Network Internal Self Assessment: Internal document

⁴³ T2 desktop review data request log – Coral Sea: Internal document

⁴⁴ Screenshots of questions prompting engagement and consideration of impact on First Nations communities through application process provided by email to ORIMA Research

⁴⁵ T2 desktop review data request log – Coral Sea: Internal document

Additionally, one direct example of promotion of culturally sensitive tourism identified in the desktop review was the OMPG4- funded project with the Cairns Aquarium and the Reef Research Centre, which provided specific funding for the training and employment of First Nations peoples to promote culturally focused visitor information about Sea Country and biodiversity in the Coral Sea Marine Park.⁴⁶

Evidence from engagement:

Tourism stakeholders reported that they already made efforts to collaborate with Traditional Owners where practicable, but were not aware of specific efforts by Parks Australia to facilitate or encourage this collaboration. One tourism stakeholder reported that there was a growing expectation amongst the tourism market that operators would have a baseline level of cultural understanding, sensitivity and First Nations engagement in their work, and so many operators undertook this independently of formal encouragement from Parks Australia.

Action	Completion status
A16. Work with tourism operators and First Nations peoples to recognise and promote cultural values and cultural tourism opportunities	 Partially completed or implemented
Evidence	
Overall, this action was assessed as partially completed. The desktop review identified collaboration with one tourism operator – the Cairns Aquarium – to promote First Nations engagement. Evidence from desktop review: The desktop review identified the following projects conducted by the Cairns Aquarium and the Reef Research Centre to promote First Nations engagement: Projects funded through Our Marine Parks Grants Rounds 2, 3 and 4 (OMPG2) to improve knowledge an understanding of the Coral Sea Marine Park's values – including its cultural values for First Nations peoples – via the installation of a range of educational displays at the Cairns Aquarium.^{47 48 49}	

⁴⁶ Our Marine Parks Grant program – Round 4 (2024):

<https://australianmarineparks.gov.au/static/e1332c53cb5a0ea7099e14e8d6a616f0/amp-round-4-grant-recipients.pdf>

⁴⁷ Our Marine Parks Grant program – Round 2 (2020):

<https://australianmarineparks.gov.au/static/2b7aff986015d07009d5d04fd9b13d48/our-marine-park-grants-round-two-projects.pdf>

⁴⁸ Our Marine Parks Grant program – Round 3 (2022):

<https://australianmarineparks.gov.au/static/34e05cdfb4b82c5919f6d4d7779b57b0/our-marine-park-grants-round-three-projects-v2.pdf>

⁴⁹ Our Marine Parks Grant program – Round 4 (2024):

<https://australianmarineparks.gov.au/static/e1332c53cb5a0ea7099e14e8d6a616f0/amp-round-4-grant-recipients.pdf>

- An Our Marine Parks Grant Round 4 (OMPG4) funded project undertaken by the Cairns Aquarium to support the training and employment of First Nations peoples (as discussed in A15 above).⁵⁰

In addition, self-reported evidence from Parks Australia indicated that they had supported engagement efforts made by Cairns Aquarium to contact Traditional Owners in both the Yarrabah and Girringun Aboriginal Corporations as part of this project.⁵¹

Evidence from engagement:

Stakeholder feedback in relation to this action was limited and mixed. More specifically, the following views were identified:

- A couple of tourism sector stakeholders noted some challenges engaging Traditional Owners to develop cultural tourism experiences, and felt that this action was overly prescriptive, potentially overlooking practical considerations such as feasibility and availability.
- One tourism stakeholder reported that there could be challenges in identifying the most appropriate Traditional Owner groups to engage with due to the lack of clarity about tradition ownership of particular areas and the complexity of local politics. They also reported that Parks Australia had not provided any support to navigate these challenges.
- One stakeholder with knowledge of the grant provided to Cairns Aquarium noted some challenges in hiring and retaining staff for their First Nations engagement role, but reported positive experiences overall.

Action	Completion status
A17. Promote visitor experiences that foster curiosity and appreciation of natural and heritage values in the marine park, for example diving at Osprey Reef	 Partially completed or implemented
Evidence	
Overall, this action was assessed as partially completed. The desktop review identified some efforts to promote visitor experiences relating to natural and heritage values, however most stakeholders were unaware of these efforts and Parks Australia acknowledged that promotion of tourism opportunities in general had not been a priority. Evidence from desktop review: In addition to the promotion of the Coral Sea Marine Park via educational displays in the Cairns Aquarium (as noted against A3, A11 and A16, above) the desktop review identified the following evidence of the promotion of visitor experiences:	

⁵⁰ Our Marine Parks Grant program – Round 4 (2024):

<https://australianmarineparks.gov.au/static/e1332c53cb5a0ea7099e14e8d6a616f0/amp-round-4-grant-recipients.pdf>

⁵¹ T2 desktop review data request log – Coral Sea: Internal document

- Visitor experiences being promoted on the Parks Australia website under the 'Explore' section corresponding to each marine park.⁵² This includes a link to a specific webpage dedicated to Osprey Reef.⁵³
- The '*Island Access Guidelines*' and flyer developed by Parks Australia for visitors, which outlines allowed and recommended activities when visiting the islands in the Coral Sea Marine Park in accordance with the marine park's natural values.^{54 55}
 - Self-reported evidence that the '*Island Access Guidelines*' are subject to review every year and published on the AMP website.⁵⁶
 - Article published on AMP 'News' webpage promoting protection of Coral Sea Marine Park islands, including the '*Island Access Guidelines*'.⁵⁷
- The installation of 13 Environmentally Friendly Mooring Systems (EFMS) to enable easier access by tourism operators at a range of diving locations across the Coral Sea Marine Park. These moorings were installed through an OMPG2-funded project by CHARROA.⁵⁸

Evidence from engagement:

Of the external stakeholders who provided feedback in relation to this action, most reported being unaware of any efforts by Parks Australia to directly promote, or assist in the promotion of, visitor experiences in the Coral Sea Marine Park. In addition, Parks Australia staff reported that promoting visitor experiences in the Coral Sea Marine Park had not been a high priority compared with other program areas, and also noted that they had limited influence over how tourism operators promoted marine parks. In line with this, tourism stakeholders reported that, as far as they were aware, Parks Australia had not played a role in supporting tourism promotion.

Action	Completion status
A18. Work with the Great Barrier Reef Marine Park Authority, and other Commonwealth and state government agencies and the tourism industry to support tourism initiatives, events and attractions that promote visitor experiences in the marine park	 Partially completed or implemented
Evidence Overall, this action was assessed as partially completed . The desktop review identified only limited examples of collaboration with the Great Barrier Reef Marine Park Authority (GBRMPA)	

⁵² Coral Sea Marine Park website:

<https://australianmarineparks.gov.au/parks/coral-sea-marine-park/>

⁵³ Osprey Reef webpage:

<https://australianmarineparks.gov.au/parks/coral-sea-marine-park/explore-coral-sea-marine-park/osprey-reef/>

⁵⁴ *Island Access Guidelines* – 'For the authorisation of commercial tourism and general use activities on islands in the Coral Sea, Ashmore Reef and Cartier Island Marine Parks':

<https://australianmarineparks.gov.au/static/ed6be964a0102950d36a12fa6f094e76/amp-document-amp-guideline-tourism-and-general-use-island-access.pdf>

⁵⁵ *Island Access Flyer* – 'Help protect islands in the Coral Sea Marine Park': Internal document

⁵⁶ CS Network Internal Self Assessment: Internal document

⁵⁷ Coral Sea Marine Park islands protected (2026):

<https://australianmarineparks.gov.au/news/coral-sea-marine-park-islands-protected/>

⁵⁸ CHARROA – Final Report (2025): Internal document

and other government agencies, and it was often unclear if this related to tourism initiatives. Stakeholders were also unable to provide evidence to support the completion of this action.

Evidence from desktop review:

The desktop review identified the following evidence of implementation:

- Self-reported evidence by Parks Australia of staff attending an information stall at the Bondi Ocean Lovers Festival in February 2025, during which Parks Australia staff engaged with recreational users and representatives from the tourism industry about the Coral Sea Marine Park.⁵⁹
- Internal documentation provided by Parks Australia indicated a working relationship with GBRMPA, including engagement under a Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) and attendance by GBRMPA representatives as observers at Coral Sea Marine Park Advisory Committee (CSMPAC) meetings.^{60 61} However, no evidence was found to explicitly determine whether these engagements were related to tourism initiatives, events and attractions.
- Self-reported evidence indicating a working relationship with Queensland Department of Environment, Tourism, Science and Innovation (DETSI), including quarterly meetings related to visitor activities on the Great Barrier Reef and other “project and program work”.⁶² No evidence was found to explicitly determine whether these engagements were related to tourism initiatives, events and attractions in the Coral Sea Marine Park.

Evidence from engagement:

Stakeholders were not aware of any collaborative initiatives or activities to promote visitor experiences in the Coral Sea Marine Park, and were thus unable to comment on the effectiveness of these activities.

⁵⁹ CS Network Internal Self Assessment: Internal document

⁶⁰ CS Network Internal Self Assessment: Internal document

⁶¹ Coral Sea Commonwealth Marine Reserves-GBRMPA MOU: Internal document

⁶² CS Network Internal Self Assessment: Internal document

6. Findings: Indigenous Engagement Program

*This chapter presents assessments of the implementation of the Indigenous **Engagement Program** of the Coral Sea Marine Park Management Plan.*

6.1. Overall findings about the efficacy of program implementation

Grade	
 Significant concerns	The Indigenous Engagement Program was assessed as having 'significant concerns', with the overall outcomes of the management program rated as 'partially met'. Of the eight planned actions, six were deemed 'partially completed' and two 'not commenced'. It is important to note that feedback from First Nations perspectives for this program was very limited, with only one First Nations partner participating in the stakeholder engagement phase of the evaluation specifically in relation to the Coral Sea Marine Park. In addition, Parks Australia staff reported a range of challenges and complexities in implementing this program area which indicated that this assessment does not necessarily reflect a lack of effort on the part of Parks Australia.

Strengths and achievements

When interpreting these findings, it is important to note that only one First Nations partner participated in the consultation process.

The evaluation identified initial efforts to engage with the Meriam peoples of Murray (Mer) Island, with Parks Australia staff reporting a gradual increase in their capacity to foster these relationships over the course of the plan, supported by the establishment of a role dedicated to First Nations engagement.

Barriers, challenges and limiting factors

Parks Australia staff and other stakeholders reported a range of challenges which limited the feasibility of delivering the actions outlined under the Indigenous Engagement Program area in the Coral Sea Marine Park. These included:

- **The extent of engagement already being undertaken by the Great Barrier Reef Marine Park Authority (GBRMPA) with many of the relevant groups along the mainland coast** – Parks Australia staff reported that, given the location of the Great Barrier Reef Marine Park between the Coral Sea Marine Park and the Queensland coast, GBRMPA already undertook a range of park management partnerships with the Traditional Owner and First Nations Ranger groups who might also have Sea Country connections that extend out into the more remote Coral Sea Marine Park. They reported concerns that trying to engage with these groups who were already meaningfully engaged in park management through GBRMPA could potentially duplicate and confuse these efforts.
 - Parks Australia staff also reported that the only remaining Traditional Owner group not already engaged by GBRMPA was the Murray (Mer) Island Traditional Owners. Parks Australia staff noted that the phrasing of many of the actions in this program

area, however, implied that multiple groups should be engaged, suggesting that the actions were not reflective of the local reality for the Coral Sea Marine Park. This was felt to unduly constrain implementation success.

- **The more limited number of Sea Country claims in the Coral Sea Marine Park compared with other marine park networks** – which meant that opportunities for engaging with Traditional Owners in the Coral Sea Marine Park were limited and efforts were primarily focussed on one group, the Traditional Owners on Murray (Mer) Island.
- **Time and logistical challenges in building relationships with Traditional Owners on Murray (Mer) Island** – Parks Australia staff reported that the distance of Murray (Mer) Island from the mainland and the need for face-to-face engagement to build meaningful partnerships meant that the process of establishing relationships with the relevant Traditional Owners was slow. However, they reported that a trip to Murray (Mer) Island to further this engagement was planned in the future.
- **Ambiguous and/ or overlapping Sea Country boundaries** – some non-Indigenous stakeholders reported that that specific boundaries of Sea Country and Traditional Ownership across the remote Coral Sea Marine Park and adjacent Great Barrier Reef were unclear, and reported instances of multiple First Nations communities claiming Traditional Ownership of the same areas. Specifically, stakeholders gave examples where government agencies or tourism operators had engaged what was noted as being the incorrect Traditional Owner groups for areas off the Queensland coast. These findings suggest the importance of having clear and accurate mapping and identification of appropriate Traditional Owner groups in the region.

6.2. Outcome effectiveness

Outcome	Outcome effectiveness	Trend rating
O5. Marine Park management contributes to social, cultural and economic benefits for Traditional Owners	 Partially met	 Trend stable
Evidence		
This outcome was assessed as partially met, based on desktop evidence indicating that some progress had been made towards meeting the outcome as outlined in the plan. Evidence from desktop review: As outlined in A22 below, the key activity that contributed to the social and cultural benefits of Traditional Owners was collaboration with the Meriam peoples in surveys of the Ashmore and Boot Reefs. Evidence from engagement: Parks Australia staff reported that the process of building partnerships and projects to benefit Traditional Owners in the Coral Sea Marine Park had been slow due to challenges in correctly identifying relevant Traditional Owner groups and the logistical difficulty of meeting directly with First Nations groups on Country, particularly those living in the Torres Strait (Zenadth Kes). However, they reported that they were in the process of building these partnerships and were working towards conducting more targeted projects to benefit Traditional Owners in the future.		

Outcome	Outcome effectiveness	Trend rating
O6. Increase understanding of traditional knowledge, map cultural values and manage significant sites	 Partially met	 Trend getting better
Evidence		
This outcome was assessed as partially met. While there was some desktop evidence, the limited of feedback from First Nations partners made it challenging to reliably assess the effectiveness of this outcome. Evidence from desktop review As outlined in A22, the key activities that contributed to an understanding of Traditional Knowledge and Cultural Values was collaboration with the Meriam peoples in surveys of the Ashmore and Boot Reefs. Limited collaborative management was identified to support in the management of culturally significant sites. Evidence from engagement: Parks Australia reported ongoing efforts to identify relevant Traditional Owner groups and map their corresponding Sea Country areas within the Coral Sea Marine Park.		

6.3. Specific management plan actions

The tables below present the completion status and supporting evidence collected during the evaluation for each management plan action within the Indigenous Engagement Program.

Action	Completion status
A19. Develop an Australian Marine Parks First Nations engagement and cultural heritage strategy, to improve understanding of cultural heritage, link management with Sea Country plans and maximise employment and enterprise opportunities for Traditional Owners	 Not commenced
Evidence	
This action was assessed as not commenced as an Indigenous engagement and cultural heritage strategy has not been established. While no direct feedback was received from the engagement process specific to the Coral Sea Marine Park, First Nations partners from other regions suggested that a dedicated strategy could address current shortcomings in engagement activities. They felt that such a strategy should include a requirement for clear and comprehensive mapping of Traditional Owners across different marine parks to ensure the appropriate inclusion and engagement of relevant groups. Furthermore, they highlighted the importance of mandating the involvement of Traditional Owner groups from the early stages of projects and establishing a framework to support the implementation of co-management practices, ensuring sustained engagement in management and decision-making processes.	

Action	Completion status
A20. Develop agreements to support First Nations Ranger programs to deliver management in marine parks	 Not commenced
Evidence Overall, this action was assessed as not commenced as evidence of Ranger programs was not identified via either the desktop review or engagement process. No stakeholders with involvement in First Nations Ranger programs took part in the evaluation, and therefore no stakeholder feedback was provided in relation to this action. However, Parks Australia staff reported that the Great Barrier Reef Marine Park Authority (GBRMPA) had already initiated First Nations ranger programs for management of the Great Barrier Reef Marine Park. Given that the Great Barrier Reef is located closer to the coast and the corresponding Traditional Owner and First Nations Ranger groups, they felt that engaging these same groups to manage the Coral Sea Marine Park would potentially duplicate the work of GBRMPA and create unnecessary confusion while not meaningfully contributing to park management or First Nations engagement.	

Action	Completion status
A21. Provide information to First Nations peoples about marine park management	 Partially completed or implemented
Evidence This action was assessed as partially completed, with a couple of examples of information provision identified via the desktop review. Evidence from desktop review: The following examples of information provision to First Nations peoples were identified via the desktop review: • School-based Sea Country education programs and access to training and development opportunities for First Nations peoples. However, limited detail was available about these initiatives in the documentary evidence.⁶³ • As discussed in A16 (above), Our Marine Park Grant (OMPG) 4 provided funding for the Cairns Aquarium to provide training and employment opportunities for First Nations peoples in marine science-based industries. This initiative also included the provision of visitor information about Sea Country and biodiversity in the Coral Sea Marine Park through the	

⁶³ Coral Sea foundation review: internal document

creation of two living exhibits, which facilitated knowledge sharing with the general community, including First Nations peoples.⁶⁴

- The 'Jewel in the Coral Sea' project, in which eight Traditional Owners took part in a voyage to Ashmore and Boot Reefs and participated in surveys of the reef to learn about some aspects of marine park management.⁶⁵ Learnings from this voyage were communicated to Murray (Mer) Island community members through a presentation and poster.⁶⁶

Action	Completion status
A22. Collaborate with Traditional Owners and Indigenous Ranger groups and relevant partners to undertake marine park management such as surveillance, monitoring and threat mitigation including marine debris removal, and implement actions identified in Sea Country plans where applicable	 Partially completed or implemented
Evidence	
Overall, this action was assessed as partially completed. The desktop review identified some efforts to collaborate with First Nations peoples in management activities, but no specific collaborations with First Nations Ranger groups were identified. Evidence from desktop review: The following examples of collaborative management activities were identified in the desktop review. The commencement of these activities from the start of the management plan in 2018 suggests that outputs were delivered in a timely manner: • Collaboration between Parks Australia, Meriam Traditional Owners from Murray (Mer) Island and James Cook University (JCU) to develop a shared understanding of Ashmore and Boot Reefs, including both their ecological and cultural significance (2018).⁶⁷ This project involved a voyage enabling Traditional Owners to visit the reefs. A further collaboration with the Meriam peoples and JCU occurred in 2023, as part of the 'Jewel in the Coral Sea' project.⁶⁸ • The evaluation identified some documentary evidence indicating that discussions were conducted with Meriam Traditional Owners about partnerships to manage Sea Country in the Coral Sea Marine Park. However, no specific details were identified about the timing, methods, or outcomes of these consultations.⁶⁹	

⁶⁴ Our Marine Park Grants round four projects:

<https://australianmarineparks.gov.au/static/e1332c53cb5a0ea7099e14e8d6a616f0/amp-round-4-grant-recipients.pdf>

⁶⁵ James Cook University paper – The Jewel in the Coral Sea the cultural and ecological significance of Ashmore and Boot Reefs: <https://australianmarineparks.gov.au/static/a116de61231ac20b3548fd0a626e8445/the-jewel-in-the-coral-sea.pdf>

⁶⁶ Email chain: Internal document

⁶⁷ Managing Sea Country in Australia's Coral Sea Marine Park: <https://parksaustralia.gov.au/news/managing-sea-country-australias-coral-sea-marine-park/>

⁶⁸ The Jewel in the Coral Sea: the cultural and ecological significance of Ashmore and Boot Reefs:

<https://australianmarineparks.gov.au/static/a116de61231ac20b3548fd0a626e8445/the-jewel-in-the-coral-sea.pdf>

⁶⁹ Coral Sea Foundation review: Internal document

- Collaboration with the Tangaroa Blue Foundation to support removal of marine debris, funded by OMPG3.⁷⁰ This project involved collaboration with Gunggandji-Mandingalbay Yidinji Peoples Prescribed Body Corporate Ranger to conduct the marine debris clean-ups.

Evidence from engagement:

Some non-Indigenous stakeholders stated that, although there had been some efforts to engage with Traditional Owners, these had been limited.

However, as noted at A20 (above), Parks Australia staff reported that the offshore nature of the Coral Sea Marine Park and greater focus on the GBRMP had reduced their scope for engaging Traditional Owners and First Nations peoples in collaborative management activities.

Action	Completion status
A23. Identify opportunities and mechanisms to engage Traditional Owners and First Nations Rangers in the management of marine parks	 Partially completed or implemented
Evidence Overall, this action was assessed as partially completed. While the desktop review identified efforts to establish opportunities and mechanisms to engage Traditional Owners and First Nations Rangers in marine park management across all Australian Marine Parks (AMPs), limited specific mechanisms or plans for the Coral Sea Marine Park were identified. Evidence from desktop review: The desktop review only identified one project undertaken during the life of the management plan which involved First Nations Rangers – the OPMG3 funded marine debris clean-up voyage (referenced in the actions above), which included collaboration with Gunggandji-Mandingalbay Yidinji Peoples Prescribed Body Corporate Rangers. The following evidence of opportunities to engage with First Nations peoples and communities were identified across all AMPs: • The development of ‘<i>Indigenous Engagement Principles</i>’ in collaboration with First Nations representatives to support engagement of Traditional Owners in the management of all AMPs, including the Coral Sea Marine Park.⁷¹ • Consultation with First Nations representative bodies regarding a draft science strategy for AMPs. Additionally, an outline for a work program to develop a ‘<i>Sea Country Management Framework</i>’, along with associated guidelines and policies, was identified.⁷²	

⁷⁰ Our Marine Park Grants:

<https://australianmarineparks.gov.au/management/partnerships/our-marine-parks-grants/>

⁷¹ Indigenous engagement principles: <https://australianmarineparks.gov.au/management/programs/indigenous-engagement-program/indigenous-engagement-principles/>

⁷² Coral Sea Marine Park Advisory Committee Meeting #7 Communique:

<https://view.officeapps.live.com/op/view.aspx?src=https%3A%2F%2Faustralianmarineparks.gov.au%2Fstatic%2Fae41da669c3c2665bb8167380f318471%2Famp-document-Communique-7.docx&wdOrigin=BROWSELINK>

- Parks Australia’s participation and presentation at a two-day workshop led by the University of Technology Sydney (2023), which explored options to enhance First Nations engagement in Commonwealth fisheries. Supported by the Department of Agriculture, Fisheries and Forestry (DAFF), the Australian Fisheries Management Authority, and funded by the Fisheries Research and Development Corporation, the workshop focused on national engagement strategies and key principles to guide them.⁷³
 - The Australian Marine Science Association (AMSA) held a conference on Yugambeh Country on the Gold Coast from 2–7 July 2023. The conference focused on the theme of ‘*Science in Sea Country*’.⁷⁴ Parks Australia staff collaborated with Traditional Owners to present at the conference, highlighting the value of co-design and place-based management approaches with First Nations peoples. The conference provided a platform for building connections, sharing knowledge, fostering inspiration, and encouraging collaboration between First Nations and western scientists.
 - Parks Australia sponsorship of the Australian Sea Country Conference conducted 24–26 September 2024 on Larrakia Country. The conference enabled connection and knowledge sharing between Traditional Owners, Parks Australia and the Department of Climate Change, Energy, the Environment and Water about marine park management.⁷⁵
- Beyond some collaborations funded by OMPGs (noted in relation to relevant actions above), no specific mechanisms to engage First Nations communities in management of the Coral Sea Marine Park were identified.

Action	Completion status
A24. Partnerships with Traditional Owners and First Nations groups to manage Sea Country in relevant AMPs	 Partially completed or implemented
Evidence	
Overall, this action was assessed as partially completed . Evidence from the desktop review for this action was consistent with that presented in relation to A22 (above), which suggested that only some initial activities had occurred.	

⁷³ Six month management report: Internal document

⁷⁴ AMSA Conference 2023 – *Science in Sea Country* webpage: <https://www.amsa.asn.au/amsa-home/amsa-annual-conferences/2023-gold-coast/>

⁷⁵ TEMPAC Meeting 11 paper: Internal document

Action	Completion status
A25. Implement cultural awareness training for Parks Australia staff in association with Traditional Owners	 Partially completed or implemented
Evidence This action was assessed as partially completed, with the desktop review identifying some evidence of cultural awareness training taking place.. Evidence from desktop review: - All Parks Australia staff are required to complete cultural awareness training in accordance with annual requirements set by DCCEW.⁷⁶ - Self-reported evidence by Parks Australia indicated that training had also been made available to Coral Sea Marine Park Advisory Committee (CSMPAC) members.⁷⁷	

Action	Completion status
A26. Establish protocols for researchers working with Parks Australia to guide engagement with Traditional Owners	 Partially completed or implemented
Evidence Overall, this action was assessed as partially completed. The review identified evidence supporting the establishment of a range of protocols which may guide engagement with Traditional Owners. However, it was unclear whether these protocols had specifically guided researchers working with Parks Australia staff or were more broadly applied to Parks Australia staff engaging with First Nations peoples or groups, such as Traditional Owners: Evidence from desktop review: - Parks Australia collaborated with the Biodiversity and Conservation Division and the Heritage, Reef and Ocean Division at the Australian Government Department of Climate Change, Energy the Environment and Water (DCCEEW), as well as Terri Janke and Company to develop a principle-based Indigenous Cultural and Intellectual Property (ICIP) protocol, as well as toolkits, templates and training for staff.⁷⁸ - A Land and Sea Country Mapping Tool was developed to support consultations with Sea Country Managers. This tool collates data layers, relating to Land and Sea management, Native Title, Cultural Heritage, Indigenous Ranger groups, IPAS, Land Councils and Aboriginal community-controlled organisations.⁷⁹	

⁷⁶ Progress reports Years 1 & 2: Internal document

⁷⁷ Coral Sea foundation review: Internal document

⁷⁸ TEMPAC Meeting 7 report (2021) – date ICIP protocols were developed are unknown. Internal document

⁷⁹ TEMPAC Meeting 7 report (2021) – date ICIP protocols were developed are unknown. Internal document

- Parks Australia attended and presented at a Sydney-led workshop supported by the Department of Agriculture, Fisheries and Forestry and the Australian Fisheries Management Authority in November 2023. This workshop focused on options to advance Indigenous engagement in Commonwealth fisheries. Parks Australia presented their approach to partnering with First Nations peoples across the marine parks.⁸⁰

In addition, all authorisations for use of Ashmore and Boot Reefs in the Torres Strait (Zenadth Kes) require prior contact with Murray (Mer) Island Traditional Owner.⁸¹

⁸⁰ TEMPAC Meeting 10 report (2023): Internal document

⁸¹ Coral Sea Marine Park Advisory Committee Meeting 2# Communique:

<https://australianmarineparks.gov.au/static/f0f2bc0af75a1d3db4d535c032df6094/amp-document-csmpac-meeting-two-communique.pdf>

7. Findings: Marine Science Program

*This chapter presents assessments of the implementation of the **Marine Science Program** of the Coral Sea Marine Park Management Plan.*

7.1. Overall findings about the efficacy of program implementation

Grade



Good with some concerns

The Marine Science Program was assessed as ‘good with some concerns’, with the overall outcomes of the management program rated as ‘partially met’. Of the eleven planned actions, five were assessed as ‘completed’ or ‘ongoing’ and six as ‘partially completed’.

The evaluation identified significant improvements over the life of the plan, particularly in the development of baseline ecological datasets and enhanced collaboration between Parks Australia and other stakeholders to strengthen marine park management. However, scope for improvement was also identified, particularly in relation to the implementation of clear evidence-based decision-making.

Strengths and achievements

The Coral Sea Marine Park demonstrated significant achievements in enhancing understanding of its ecological values, supported by substantial data on ecological baselines. Parks Australia staff reported that the Marine Science Program had been a key strength of the management plan implementation, and marine science stakeholders also expressed positive views on the progress made with the resources available. Both Parks Australia staff and relevant stakeholders noted that there had been a substantial increase in understanding of the ecological values and makeup of the Coral Sea Marine Park since the commencement of the management plan, compared with the very limited data available prior to 2018. In particular, a range of collaborations with the science community and government agencies and organisations was highlighted in the evaluation as a key strength of this management program.

Barriers, challenges and limiting factors

Despite this, a number of limiting factors were identified. Desktop evidence revealed a lack of socio-economic baseline data and limited understanding from stakeholders on how baseline data was applied more generally to inform decision-making in marine park management, which lead to assumptions amongst some stakeholders that decisions had been made for political rather than scientific reasons. Existing data was primarily ecologically focused, leaving gaps in understanding of the broader social and economic dimensions of the Coral Sea Marine Parks’ values and pressures.

Stakeholders noted that there was very little marine science data available for the Coral Sea Marine Park upon establishment of the management plan in 2018. In addition, despite the amount of progress made in collecting data in the park over the life of the plan, some marine science stakeholders felt that there were still less opportunities available for data collection in the Coral Sea Marine Park compared with other AMPs due to its offshore location, which increased the time and costs associated with undertaking data collection expeditions. Parks Australia staff noted that these barriers also limited the availability of citizen science opportunities in the Coral Sea Marine Park.

7.2. Outcome effectiveness

Outcome	Outcome effectiveness	Trend rating
O7. Increase understanding of marine park values, pressures and adequacy of responses	 Partially met	 Trend getting better
Evidence The evaluation determined that this outcome was partially met. This assessment was based on the development of baseline data, identified through the desktop review – however, stakeholder feedback on the extent to which understanding of marine park values, pressures, and the adequacy of responses had increased was mixed. Evidence from desktop review: The desktop review evidenced multiple efforts to Increase understanding of marine park values and pressures, detailed below in the evidence for A27. These efforts, however, were largely restricted to the establishment of baseline datasets. Without longitudinal data on any changes relating to marine park values over the course of the plan, a robust assessment of the adequacy of management responses was not possible. Furthermore, the translation of these efforts into increased understanding of marine park values, pressures and the adequacy of responses amongst marine park users and interest groups has not been robustly surveyed. Evidence from engagement: Parks Australia staff and marine scientist stakeholders reported that the understanding of marine park values, pressures and responses within their own organisations had increased substantially since the start of the plan. However, they anticipated that general awareness of these areas among marine park users and the broader public was unlikely to have changed significantly. Other stakeholders, including tourism, recreational fishing and commercial fishing stakeholders, reported that they had not seen any information on these topics from Parks Australia and, as a result, there was limited understanding of marine park values and pressures among their respective communities/ groups. Among some of these stakeholders, limited information in relation to marine science outcomes lead to assumptions that evidence-based decision making and management was limited.		

Outcome	Outcome effectiveness	Trend rating
O8. Improve understanding of the effectiveness of marine park management in protecting park values	 Partially met	Unknown
Evidence This outcome was assessed as partially met. While there was no desktop evidence identified pertaining to this outcome, some stakeholders who participated in the research reported an improved understanding of the effectiveness of marine park management in protecting park values. Evidence from engagement: Some stakeholders reported an increase in understanding of the effectiveness of marine park management within the Coral Sea Marine Park, citing that this was largely due to partnerships and collaborations with Parks Australia which involved the sharing of information on park management. However, other stakeholders, particularly recreational and commercial fishing stakeholders, reported that they had not seen any information from Parks Australia which demonstrated the effectiveness of park management in protecting the Coral Sea Marine Park values. Some stakeholders also noted that the limited amount of data available when the marine park was established, and the lack of opportunities to clearly compare differences between protected and non-protected areas in the park, also reduced their understanding of efficacy of marine park management. As a result, these stakeholders felt unsure about whether Parks Australia's management had meaningfully contributed to the protection of marine park values.		

Outcome	Outcome effectiveness	Trend rating
O9. Informed decision-making and improved evidence-based decisions	 Partially met	 Trend getting better
Evidence The evaluation found that this outcome was partially met. Stakeholder feedback was limited and mixed, with only a few external stakeholders feeling confident in Parks Australia's evidence-based decision-making. Evidence from engagement: Stakeholder evidence related to this outcome was limited. However, a few of the stakeholders who were able to comment acknowledged that Parks Australia had made efforts to invest in scientific data to support informed decision-making. In addition, both stakeholders and Parks Australia staff reported that the lack of data on the Coral Sea Marine Park prior to the implementation of the management plan meant that many initial decisions about the park's management were made with limited evidence, but that decisions had become progressively more evidence-based over time as more data was collected. In addition, both stakeholders and Parks Australia staff reported that the lack of data on the Coral Sea Marine Park prior to the		

implementation of the management plan meant that many initial decisions about the park's management were made with limited evidence, but that decisions had become progressively more evidence-based over time as more data was made available.

However, some other stakeholders who provided comments in relation to this outcome reported that they had not seen clear information from Parks Australia to explain the rationale and evidence for management decisions. This was particularly evidence among recreational fishing stakeholders, who felt that some management decisions, particularly the implementation of protection zones, had been made in response to political pressure rather than being based on the evidence.

7.3. Specific management plan actions

The tables below present the completion status and supporting evidence collected during the evaluation for each management plan action within the Marine Science Program.

Action	Completion status
A27. Establish ecological, social and economic baselines to support evidence-based decision-making and adaptive management	 Partially completed or implemented
Evidence	
Overall, this action was assessed as partially completed. Considerable documentary evidence of ecological baselines being established was identified and all datasets were established in a timely manner. However, there was less evidence from both the desktop review and stakeholder engagement of the establishment of social and economic baselines. In addition, stakeholder feedback about the use of baseline data to support decision-making and adaptive management was mixed. Evidence from desktop review: In addition to the collaborative monitoring activities undertaken with First Nations peoples (as outlined in Chapter 6), the following evidence from the desktop review indicated the timely establishment of ecological baseline data sets: • A survey of biodiversity and geomorphic habitats in the Coral Sea Marine Park (2020).⁸² • A multi staged environmental assessment of islands, islets and cays of the southern and central reef systems of the Coral Sea Marine Park undertaken by Parks Australia in partnership with the Queensland Parks and Wildlife Service (QPWS) (2019–2024).⁸³ This included: ○ An environmental assessment of islets and cays of Tregrosse and Lihou Reefs in 2021.⁸⁴	

⁸² NESP Post Survey Report for the Coral Sea Australian Marine Park:

https://www.nespmarine.edu.au/system/files/Lucieer_Post_Survey_Report_CoralSea_AMP_Milestone12.pdf

⁸³ Coral Sea Marine Park Environmental assessment of islands, islets and cays of the central reef systems. Coral Sea Islands Health Project Report 2024:

<https://australianmarineparks.gov.au/static/e11e651c69dd01c53a68e8454a44cb88/csmp-environmental-assessment-of-islands-islets-and-cays-2024.pdf>

⁸⁴ Environmental assessment of islets and cays of Tregrosse and Lihou Reefs, Coral Sea Marine Park, 2021:

<https://australianmarineparks.gov.au/science/scientific-publications/environmental-assessment-islets-and-cays-tregrosse-and-lihou-reefs-coral-sea-marine-park-2021/>

- An environmental assessment of islands, islets and cays of the southern and central reef systems in 2022 and 2023.^{85 86}
- An environmental assessment of islands, islets and cays of the central reef system of the Coral Sea Marine Park (2024).⁸⁷
- A three-year reef health survey conducted in partnership with James Cook University (JCU) and the Australian Research Council (ARC) Centre of Excellence for Coral Reef Studies (2018–2020).⁸⁸ A repeat was conducted in 2022.⁸⁹
- A vegetation assessment and mapping survey of South Islet (Willis Islets) undertaken by Parks Australia.⁹⁰
- Coral Sea Reef Health project that collected in situ measurements of water temperature and current flow through the deployment of 84 Marotte High Sampling (HS) drag- tilt current meters (2021).⁹¹
- Identification of a new genus and species of ocean sleeper from the central Coral Sea, published on the Australian Marine Parks website.⁹²
- Rapid island health assessments on 16 central and southern islets and cays (2022).⁹³
- A survey of diverse benthic and fish assemblages in the Coral Sea Marine Park, undertaken by JCU, funded by Our Marine Park Grant (OMPG) 2 (2022).⁹⁴
- A survey of turtles in the Coral Sea Marine Park (2022–2023).⁹⁵

⁸⁵ *Coral Sea Marine Park environmental assessment of islands, islets and cays of the southern and central reef systems 2022*: Internal document

⁸⁶ *Coral Sea Marine Park environmental assessment of islands, islets and cays of the southern and central reef systems, 2023*:

<https://australianmarineparks.gov.au/science/scientific-publications/coral-sea-marine-park-environmental-assessment-islands-islets-and-cays-southern-and-central-reef-systems-2023/>

⁸⁷ *Coral Sea Marine Park Environmental Assessment of Islands, Islets and Cays of the Central Reef System 2024*:

<https://australianmarineparks.gov.au/science/scientific-publications/coral-sea-marine-park-environmental-assessment-islands-islets-and-cays-central-reef-system-2024/>

⁸⁸ *Coral Sea Marine Park Coral Reef Health Survey Final Report 2021*:

https://australianmarineparks.gov.au/static/74eef1e1ef83233a66b191f4b6d6b3fc/amp-document-Coral-Sea-2021-Coral-Reef-Health-Final-report_sml.pdf

⁸⁹ *Coral Reef Health Survey 2022*:

<https://australianmarineparks.gov.au/science/scientific-publications/coral-reef-health-survey-2022/>

⁹⁰ *Vegetation Assessment and Mapping of South Islet (Willis Islets) Coral Sea Marine Park*:

<https://australianmarineparks.gov.au/science/scientific-publications/vegetation-assessment-and-mapping-south-islet-willis-islets-coral-sea-marine-park/>

⁹¹ *Coral Sea Coral Reef Health: In situ measurements of temperature and current flow 2021*:

<https://australianmarineparks.gov.au/science/scientific-publications/coral-sea-coral-reef-health-situ-measurements-temperature-and-current-flow/>

⁹² *Tempestichthys bettyae, a new genus and species of ocean sleeper from the central Coral Sea*:

<https://australianmarineparks.gov.au/science/scientific-publications/tempestichthys-bettyae-new-genus-and-species-ocean-sleeper-central-coral-sea/>

⁹³ *Coral Sea Marine Park Island Watch Summary Report Feb-March 2022*:

<https://australianmarineparks.gov.au/static/e519bd1dd0dcd8e3da3b801e5e6a9faa/coral-sea-marine-park-island-watch-summary-report-2022.pdf>

⁹⁴ *The Unique Deep Habitats of the Coral Sea Marine Park (2022)*:

<https://australianmarineparks.gov.au/static/6b24aeb6a1a44f01a5d2e1f85a41c531/ompr2-diving-into-the-deep-the-unique-deep-habitats-of-the-coral-sea-marine-park-jcu-report-2022.pdf>

⁹⁵ *Coral Sea Turtle Survey 2022-23*:

<https://australianmarineparks.gov.au/science/scientific-publications/coral-sea-turtle-survey-2022-23/>

- The ‘Coral Reef Health Survey’ (2023–2024) undertaken by JCU.⁹⁶
- Comparison of juvenile coral assemblages between Australia’s Coral Sea and Great Barrier Reef Marine Parks (2020).⁹⁷
- Coral Sea Marine Park Coral Reef Health Survey (2025).⁹⁸
- A social and economic benchmark survey of Australian Marine Parks (2020).⁹⁹
- Reef lagoon benthic habitat mapping in the Coral Sea Marine Park, conducted by JCU as part of OMPG3. This included mapping of a range of reefs, including Lihou Reef.¹⁰⁰

In addition, the ‘Social and Economic benchmarks of the Australian Marine Parks’ (2021) evidenced the establishment of social and economic baselines.¹⁰¹

Evidence from engagement:

In relation to ecological datasets, stakeholders acknowledged the significant efforts and activities undertaken over the course of the management plan to develop baselines. While stakeholders noted some continued gaps or areas for improvement (e.g. in relation to environmental pressures, impact of pressures and management decisions on baselines overtime, or data gaps in relation to particular regions within the marine park), there was a sense that considerable progress had been made with the resources available, particularly given the expense of conducting scientific research given the remoteness of the Coral Sea Marine Park.

However, stakeholders expressed less confidence in the use of baseline data to inform management decisions. They were uncertain about the extent to which data was being applied in decision-making processes and highlighted a lack of transparency regarding the rationale and evidence underpinning zoning decisions in the park. Furthermore, the absence of robust data at the time of the park’s establishment in 2018 meant that zoning decisions were made with limited evidence. Stakeholders also noted that the rigidity of the management plan structure had restricted the ability to adapt park zoning and management in response to new data.

Similarly, Parks Australia staff noted that there was little or no detailed data on the Coral Sea Marine Park available to inform initial decision-making at the time when the park and management plan were established, but that substantial progress had been made over the course of the plan. However, they reported that the current specific wording of the plan and associated actions limited their ability to make adaptive management decisions based on new data collected.

⁹⁶ Coral Sea Marine Park Coral Reef Health Survey 2023 and 2024:

<https://australianmarineparks.gov.au/science/scientific-publications/coral-sea-marine-park-coral-reef-health-survey-2023-and-2024/>

⁹⁷ Comparison of juvenile coral assemblages between Australia’s Coral Sea and Great Barrier Reef Marine Parks:

<https://australianmarineparks.gov.au/science/scientific-publications/comparison-juvenile-coral-assemblages-between-australias-coral-sea-and-great-barrier-reef-marine-parks/>

⁹⁸ Coral Sea Marine Park Coral Reef Health Survey 2025: <https://australianmarineparks.gov.au/science/scientific-publications/coral-sea-marine-park-coral-reef-health-survey-2025/>

⁹⁹ Social and Economic Benchmarks of the Australian Marine Parks: https://api.research-repository.uwa.edu.au/ws/portalfiles/portal/363774544/Navarro_et_al_D6_M12_M13_M17_Social_and_Economic_benchmarks_of_the_AMPs_FINAL.pdf

¹⁰⁰ Our Marine Parks Grant program – Round 3 (2022):

<https://australianmarineparks.gov.au/static/34e05cdfb4b82c5919f6d4d7779b57b0/our-marine-park-grants-round-three-projects-v2.pdf>

¹⁰¹ NESP Social and Economic Benchmarks of the Australian Marine Parks 2021: https://api.research-repository.uwa.edu.au/ws/portalfiles/portal/363774544/Navarro_et_al_D6_M12_M13_M17_Social_and_Economic_benchmarks_of_the_AMPs_FINAL.pdf

Stakeholders were generally less aware of social and ecological datasets being established. However, one stakeholder highlighted that a second iteration of the *'Social and Economic Benchmarks of the Australian Marine Parks'* was underway and scheduled for publication in 2026, which is expected to enhance the achievement of this action.

Action	Completion status
A28. Develop an Australian Marine Parks science strategy to prioritise and encourage research and monitoring of park values, pressures and management effectiveness, and foster science communication and knowledge uptake	 Partially completed or implemented
Evidence This action was assessed as partially completed. While an Australian Marine Parks science strategy was not developed, the <i>'Parks Australia Science Strategy'</i> was published. Due to the delivery of the <i>'Parks Australia Science Strategy'</i> in December 2025 (i.e. during the conduct of this evaluation), evidence could not be obtained to illustrate the extent to which activities had been undertaken in accordance with the strategy, and hence the extent to which the strategy had effectively prioritised and encouraged research and monitoring of park values, pressures and management effectiveness, and fostered science communication and knowledge uptake. Evidence from desktop review: The desktop review provided the following evidence of the development of the completion of the <i>'Parks Australia Science Strategy'</i> in place of the Australian Marine Parks science strategy: • Cited internal documents pertaining to Parks Australia marine science strategy project initiation (2024).¹⁰² • Publication of the <i>'Parks Australia Science Strategy'</i> (2025).¹⁰³ This output was not found to meet the criterion of delivery in a timely manner, as its publication occurred in the seventh year of the management plan, which limited potential for the strategy to be implemented over the course of the plan. Evidence from engagement: Overall, consultations gave context as to why the Australian Marine Parks science strategy was not implemented as originally intended but also suggested limited satisfaction with this modified approach. Specifically, the following views were expressed: • Consultation with Parks Australia staff highlighted challenges associated with the development of a unified science strategy that adequately covered all marine parks while reflecting the nuances of each network/ park. This, along with resourcing constraints, was cited as the rationale for opting to develop the broader Parks Australia Science Strategy instead.	

¹⁰² Parks Australia Project Initiative Document: Cited internal document

¹⁰³ Parks Australia Science Strategy 2025: <https://www.dcceew.gov.au/sites/default/files/documents/parks-australia-science-strategy.pdf>

- Other stakeholders, however, were less satisfied with the adoption of a broader strategy that encompassed both marine and terrestrial parks, as they felt this approach did not adequately capture the specific issues, challenges and priorities of the Coral Sea Marine Park. As such, stakeholders expressed concern about the potential for the strategy to guide scientific activities aligned with the values and pressures unique to the park.

Action	Completion status
A29. Encourage and facilitate knowledge brokering to support collaboration and partnerships with the science community, private enterprise, citizen science organisations and other Commonwealth, state and territory agencies	 Ongoing
Evidence This action was assessed as ongoing. The desktop review identified evidence of knowledge brokering activities across the range of intended partner types (i.e. members of the science community, private enterprise, citizen science initiatives and other government agencies) consistently through the life of the plan. In addition, stakeholder feedback relating to this action was mostly positive. Evidence from desktop review: The desktop review identified a number of collaborative efforts to encourage knowledge brokering. These activities were also found to take place throughout the course of the management plan, suggesting consistent efforts. Specifically, the following activities were identified: - The inception of the Coral Sea Marine Park Advisory Committee (CSMPAC) in 2019, which has convened 1-2 times a year since. This has included guest attendance from other organisations at CSMPAC meetings.¹⁰⁴ - Continued Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) with JCU and Great Barrier Reef Marine Park Authority (GBRMPA) to undertake annual assessments to expand the understanding of patterns of resilience for coral reef communities in the Coral Sea Marine Park and continue ongoing monitoring of responses to coral bleaching.¹⁰⁵ - Collaboration on field operations and all management programs between QPWS, GBRMPA and Parks Australia under the reef joint field management program.¹⁰⁶ - Collaboration with Australian Hydrographic Office (AHO) under the HydroScheme Industry Partnership Program (HIPP).¹⁰⁷ - A 2025 collaboration with Seamap Australia to compile all publicly available surveyed bathymetry within the Australian Marine Parks.¹⁰⁸	

¹⁰⁴ CSAMPAC Communique 13:

<https://australianmarineparks.gov.au/static/2426aad4622cb78627664b352d99dd30/csm pac-communique-13.pdf>

¹⁰⁵ Coral Sea internal self-assessment document: Internal document

¹⁰⁶ Coral Sea internal self-assessment document: Internal document

¹⁰⁷ HydroScheme Industry Partnership Program: <https://www.hydro.gov.au/NHP/hipp.htm>

¹⁰⁸ Bathymetry of Australian Marine Parks:

<https://metadata.imas.utas.edu.au/geonetwork/srv/eng/catalog.search#/metadata/fb451be4-9de1-4bc2-8fd6-0f285f90916f>

Evidence from engagement:

Parks Australia staff reported that there were limited opportunities for citizen science in the Coral Sea Marine Park due to its distance offshore and challenging conditions, and – beyond the Reef Life Surveys referenced in A34 and A36 – no formal evidence of these opportunities were identified in the desktop review. However, a couple of external stakeholders identified the long running game fishing tagging program as a positive example of a citizen science initiative in the Coral Sea Marine Park, suggesting that knowledge brokering with citizen science organisations had taken place to at least some extent. Nonetheless, other external stakeholders felt that there was scope for further collaboration with the tourism and recreational fishing sectors to support further citizen science (for example, through hosting scientists and researchers on tourist vessels with support from Parks Australia).

Overall, external stakeholders provided positive feedback in relation to Parks Australia's collaborations to support marine science, and Parks Australia staff felt that relationship building with government bodies and researchers had been a key strength over the course of the plan. When considering knowledge brokering via the CSMPAC specifically, members acknowledged that while some marine science information was shared through this mechanism, knowledge brokering was felt to be limited overall due to their limited awareness of the full extent of marine science initiatives undertaken to support the implementation of the management plan.

Action	Completion status
A30. Establish an authorisation system for scientific research and monitoring by third parties and encourage data to be made publicly available through appropriate information portals such as the Australian Ocean Data Network (AODN)	 Completed
Evidence	
This action was assessed as completed. The evaluation found that an authorisation system for scientific research and monitoring by third parties was developed and was operationalised in a timely manner. Data sharing arrangements were also established via the publicly accessible Australian Ocean Data Network (AODN). Evidence from desktop review: • The Australian Marine Parks Online Permit Portal Application launched in 2018.¹⁰⁹ This included a condition to enable data to be publicly available in portals such as the AODN portal. • Publication of Coral Sea Marine Park Marine Science projects on the Australian Marine Parks website.¹¹⁰ • Publication of data from the Coral Sea Marine Park made publicly available on the 'Seamap Australia' website.¹¹¹	

¹⁰⁹ Australia Marine park permits: <https://onlineservices.environment.gov.au/parks/australian-marine-parks/permits>

¹¹⁰ Australian Marine Parks Scientific Publications: <https://australianmarineparks.gov.au/science/scientific-publications/>

¹¹¹ Seamap Australia Coral Sea Marine Park webpage: <https://seamapaustralia.org/region-reports/coral-sea-coral-sea/>

Action	Completion status
A31. Collaborate with the science community (including through the National Marine Science Plan Committee and National Environmental Science Program) and other marine park users to assist in improving the understanding of marine park values, pressures and management effectiveness	 Ongoing
Evidence This action was assessed as ongoing. The evaluation found evidence of collaborations with the science community and some community groups (i.e. the National Marine Science Committee [NMSC] and National Environmental Science Program [NESP]) through joint science initiatives and research collaborations. In addition, stakeholders provided positive feedback about Parks Australia's collaborations with the science community and associated improvements in understanding of park values, pressures and management effectiveness. Evidence from desktop review: The desktop review provided the following evidence of strategic collaboration with the science community: • Parks Australia membership to the NMSC.¹¹² • Collaboration with the NESP.¹¹³ • Collaboration with the AODN and the Integrated Marine Observing System (IMOS).¹¹⁴ The desktop review provided the following evidence of collaboration with the science community through marine science initiatives and research collaborations: • A range of marine science initiatives specific to the Coral Sea Marine Park, as outlined in A27 above. • Marine Science initiatives funded through OMPGs applicable across all Marine Parks/ Networks. ○ Delivery of an online tracking tool for the Reef Life Survey website and a coffee table book to showcase dive opportunities in Australian Marine Parks (funded by OMPG2).¹¹⁵ ○ A project conducted with Macquarie University to identify where the Environmental Protection and Biodiversity Conservation (EPBC) Act listed species occur within Australian Marine Parks (funded by OMPG2).¹¹⁶	

¹¹² National Marine Science Committee – About page: <https://www.marinescience.net.au/aboutnmsc/>

¹¹³ Parks Australia science partnerships page – National Environmental Science Program: <https://australianmarineparks.gov.au/science/science-marine-parks/national-environmental-science-program-nesp/>

¹¹⁴ Parks Australia website science partnerships page – Integrated Marine Observing System: <https://australianmarineparks.gov.au/science/science-marine-parks/integrated-marine-observing-system-imos/>

¹¹⁵ Our Marine Park Grants Round Two Projects: <https://australianmarineparks.gov.au/static/2b7aff986015d07009d5d04fd9b13d48/our-marine-park-grants-round-two-projects.pdf>

¹¹⁶ Ibid

Evidence from engagement:

Stakeholders from the science community reported positive experiences collaborating with Parks Australia, and felt that these collaborations had contributed to increased understanding of park values and pressures in the Coral Sea Marine Park over the life of the plan. In particular, stakeholders acknowledged the extent of collaborative marine science efforts that had been undertaken.

However, a few stakeholders expressed concerns about the extent to which the data generated through these collaborations was being utilised to support evidence-based decision-making.

Action

A32. Collaborate with the science community and other government agencies to increase the use of innovative and effective technology and systems including sensor technology

Completion status

**Partially completed
or implemented**

Evidence

This action was assessed as **partially completed**. The desktop review identified some evidence of collaborations with the scientific community to support the use of innovative technologies, and stakeholder feedback in relation to this action was positive but identified scope for greater support for innovative technologies.

Evidence from desktop review:

In addition to activities listed in A27 which utilised innovative technologies, the desktop review identified evidence of the following collaborations:

- Self-reported evidence in internal documentation provided by Parks Australia of an aeroglobe project employing photogrammetry and analysis of island vegetation and change using AI technology.¹¹⁷
- An OMPG4 funded project which surveyed the ecological connectivity reef fish, sharks, seabirds and invertebrates across the Coral Sea Marine Park using a combination of visual and video surveys, animal tracking and advanced genetic analyses.¹¹⁸

Evidence from engagement:

Only a few stakeholders – particularly marine science stakeholders – were aware of Parks Australia's work to collaborate on the use of innovative technologies. These stakeholders felt that Parks Australia's efforts in this space were generally positive, but that this was still an emerging area and there was scope to further support uptake of innovative technologies and systems.

¹¹⁷ Coral Sea internal self-assessment document: Internal document

¹¹⁸ Grants round four: webpage

<https://australianmarineparks.gov.au/management/partnerships/our-marine-parks-grants/grants-round-four/>

Action	Completion status
A33. Monitor social and economic uses and their benefits and impacts on the marine parks	 Partially completed or implemented
Evidence The action was assessed as partially completed. Initial baseline social and economic monitoring has been conducted, with a second round of monitoring scheduled for completion and publication in 2026. Evidence from the desktop review: The evaluation found that monitoring efforts across the Coral Sea Marine Park have predominantly focused on ecological aspects, with less emphasis on social and economic uses. Despite this, the desktop evidence identified a social and economic benchmark survey of the Australian Marine Parks, with final publication of the survey data in 2021.¹¹⁹ A repeat of this survey is underway, with publication projected for 2026.	

Action	Completion status
A34. Monitor the condition of important habitats such as reef systems at Osprey, Coringa-Herald and Lihou Reefs, and their vulnerability to climate change	 Completed
Evidence The action was assessed as completed. The evaluation found evidence of a range of monitoring activities of the condition of important habitats and their vulnerability to climate change, conducted in a timely manner between 2018–2022. Evidence from desktop review: In addition to activities noted in A27, the desktop review identified evidence of a range of activities which monitored the condition of important habitats in the Coral Sea Marine Park: A three year reef health survey conducted in partnership with James Cook University and the ARC Centre of Excellence for Coral Reef Studies (2018–2020).¹²⁰ This included surveying of Osprey and Lihou Reefs.	

¹¹⁹ Social and Economic Benchmarks of the Australian Marine Parks: https://api.research-repository.uwa.edu.au/ws/portalfiles/portal/363774544/Navarro_et_al_D6_M12_M13_M17_Social_and_Economic_benchmarks_of_the_AMPs_FINAL.pdf

¹²⁰ Coral Sea Marine Park Coral Reef Health Survey Final Report 2021: https://australianmarineparks.gov.au/static/74eef1e1ef83233a66b191f4b6d6b3fc/amp-document-Coral-Sea-2021-Coral-Reef-Health-Final-report_sml.pdf

- A project that investigated changes in the incidence of coral injuries during mass bleaching across Australia’s Coral Sea Marine Park (2022).¹²¹
- Reef Life Surveys monitoring biodiversity changes across the Coral Sea Marine Park over the last decade, including the impacts of marine heatwaves (2022).¹²² This included surveying of Osprey, Coringa-Herald and Lihou Reefs.
- Investigation into differential bleaching susceptibility among coral taxa and colony sizes, relative to bleaching severity across Australia’s Great Barrier Reef and Coral Sea Marine Parks (2020).¹²³
- Assessment of the 2024 marine heatwave on five reefs in the central Coral Sea Marine Park.¹²⁴

Action	Completion status
A35. Monitor the impact of invasive species on marine park values and the effectiveness of management	 Ongoing
Evidence	
The action was assessed as ongoing. The desktop review identified a range of efforts undertaken to monitor the impact of invasive species on the Coral Sea Marine Park which were delivered in a consistent and timely manner. In addition, stakeholders reported positive perceptions of Parks Australia’s efforts to monitor and address the impacts of invasive species in the Coral Sea Marine Park. Evidence from desktop review: • Annual island health assessments undertaken by Parks Australia annually since 2019, which include surveying for introduced and invasive species.¹²⁵	

¹²¹ Changes in the incidence of coral injuries during mass bleaching across Australia’s Coral Sea Marine Park (2022): <https://australianmarineparks.gov.au/science/scientific-publications/changes-incidence-coral-injuries-during-mass-bleaching-across-australias-coral-sea-marine-park/>

¹²² Reef Life Survey, Biodiversity change across the Coral Sea Marine Park over the past decade including impacts of severe heatwaves (2022): <https://reeflifesurvey.com/publications/biodiversity-change-across-the-coral-sea-marine-park-over-the-past-decade-including-impacts-of-severe-heatwaves/>

¹²³ Differential bleaching susceptibility among coral taxa and colony sizes, relative to bleaching severity across Australia’s Great Barrier Reef and Coral Sea Marine Parks: <https://australianmarineparks.gov.au/science/scientific-publications/differential-bleaching-susceptibility-among-coral-taxa-and-colony-sizes-relative-bleaching-severity-across-australias-great-barrier-reef-and-coral-sea-marine-parks/>

¹²⁴ Assessment of the 2024 marine heatwave on five reefs in the central Coral Sea Marine Park: <https://australianmarineparks.gov.au/science/scientific-publications/assessment-2024-marine-heatwave-on-five-reefs-central-coral-sea-marine-park/>

¹²⁵ Coral Sea Island and Reef Health Reports: <https://australianmarineparks.gov.au/science/scientific-publications/coral-sea-island-and-reef-health-reports/>

- Rapid health assessments undertaken by Parks Australia Staff in 16 Coral Sea Marine Park Island cays. These assessments used the QPWS and Partnerships Island Watch Tool to detect of pest incursions and other threats or changes to natural values (2022).¹²⁶
- Environmental Assessment of Islands, Islets and Cays of the Southern and Central Reef Systems which monitored the impact of invasive species including weeds, ants, scale and hawk moth (2023).¹²⁷
- Contribution to the Department of Agriculture, Fisheries and Forestry's (DAFF) response to invasive marine bivalves in 2025.¹²⁸
- Evidence from an internal self-assessment conducted by Parks Australia which identified the following:¹²⁹
 - Targeted collaboration with the Bureau of Meteorology (BOM) to manage the threat of invasive species at South Willis Island.
 - An ecological restoration project undertaken in efforts to reduce (and eradicate) three invasive weeds on two islands in the Coral Sea Marine Park to restore nesting and roosting seabird and shorebird habitat.
 - The annual Coral Sea Reef Health surveys (as cited in A27) that include the assessment of signs of invasive species e.g. crown-of-thorns starfish (COTS), diadema urchins and sponges.

Evidence from engagement:

Stakeholders reported generally positive perceptions of Parks Australia's work to monitor and address the impacts of invasive species in the Coral Sea Marine Park, citing the island pest removal projects and processes to monitor incoming vessels for invasive species.

However, a couple of stakeholders felt that Parks Australia could be more proactive in identifying potential future invasive species threats and aiming to mitigate these, rather than waiting for invasive species to be present in the park before taking action.

Action	Completion status
A36. Collaborate with the Great Barrier Reef Marine Park Authority, other Commonwealth and state government agencies, marine park users and the science sector to support long-term monitoring (e.g., monitoring of coral reefs, protected species and effects of fishing on marine parks)	 Partially completed or implemented
Evidence The action was assessed as partially completed. Although only limited desktop evidence was available to evaluate the extent of collaboration between Parks Australia and stakeholders in	

¹²⁶ Parks Australia Island Watch Summary Report 2022:

<https://australianmarineparks.gov.au/static/e519bd1dd0dcd8e3da3b801e5e6a9faa/coral-sea-marine-park-island-watch-summary-report-2022.pdf>

¹²⁷ Coral Sea Marine Park Environmental Assessment of Islands, Islets and Cays of the Southern and Central Reef Systems (2023): <https://australianmarineparks.gov.au/static/d9680f019e796edb1963726e3bc205cd/island-voyage-report-2023.pdf>

¹²⁸ Australian Government response manual for invasive marine bivalves:

<https://www.marinepests.gov.au/sites/default/files/Documents/response-manual-invasive-marine-bivalves-empplan.pdf>

¹²⁹ Coral Sea internal self-assessment: Internal document

supporting long-term monitoring efforts, stakeholder feedback on this action was generally positive.

Evidence from desktop review:

As referenced in A27 and A34, the desktop review identified evidence of a range of collaborations through which long-term monitoring activities have been undertaken, including with GBRMPA, the Queensland Parks and Wildlife Service, James Cook University, the National Environmental Science Program (NESP), and citizen science organisations such as Reef Life Surveys.

Evidence from engagement:

The few stakeholders with direct knowledge of Parks Australia's collaborations in relation to long-term monitoring felt that these efforts had been effective. In particular, ongoing partnerships with GBRMPA and QPWS were identified as important collaborations which had increased the capacity of both Parks Australia and partner agencies to conduct long-term monitoring across the Coral Sea Marine Park and adjacent areas.

Action	Completion status
A37. Investigate opportunities to extend citizen science programs	 Partially completed or implemented
Evidence This action was assessed as partially completed. The evaluation found limited evidence of efforts to investigate new citizen science initiatives. Furthermore, stakeholder feedback regarding the achievability and effectiveness of efforts to explore new citizen science opportunities in the Coral Sea Marine Park was mixed. Evidence from the desktop review: The desktop review identified evidence of the investigation of opportunities to extend citizen science programs in two marine parks, including the Coral Sea Marine Park. This was evidenced by the journal article '<i>Assessment of Multiple Citizen Science Methods and Carbon Footprint of Tourists in Two Australian Marine Parks</i>' (2024).¹³⁰ Internal documentation from the self-assessment conducted by Parks Australia noted some limitations to citizen science activities and their efficacy over the course of the plan, including: • Reliance on the Reef Life surveys as the main source of citizen science efforts in the Coral Sea Marine Park, which had been undertaken in an 'ad-hoc' manner and without input from the Coral Sea Marine Park regional team within Parks Australia, which was felt to potentially impact on data quality. • Issues with the GBRMPA '<i>Eye on Reef</i>' App which may have impacted the ease of use and efficacy of this app in supporting citizen science activities.	

¹³⁰ *Assessment of Multiple Citizen Science Methods and Carbon Footprint of Tourists in Two Australian Marine Parks*: <https://www.mdpi.com/2071-1050/16/24/11019>

Evidence from engagement:

Beyond those discussed at A29, stakeholders reported limited awareness of efforts by Parks Australia to expand opportunities for citizen science in the Coral Sea Marine Parks, and Parks Australia staff reported that there were challenges in supporting citizen science activities in a marine park like the Coral Sea which was so far offshore and frequently experiencing challenging weather conditions. However, some stakeholders, including tourism and recreational fishing stakeholders, felt that there was scope for greater collaboration between their networks and Parks Australia to support citizen science initiatives.

8. Findings: Assessments and Authorisations Program

*This chapter presents assessments of the implementation of the **Assessments and Authorisations Program** of the Coral Sea Marine Park Management Plan.*

8.1. Overall findings about the efficacy of program implementation

Grade



Overall, the Assessments and Authorisations Program was assessed as 'good'. The outcome of the management program was assessed as 'fully met'. Five out of seven of the planned actions were 'completed' or 'ongoing', one was 'partially completed', and one was assessed as 'not commenced'. Positive stakeholder feedback was provided.

While A40 (develop an effective and efficient process to assess new technologies and gear types to allow for the use of new equipment during the life of this plan if appropriate) was assessed as 'not commenced', this was not considered to be a significant gap as other evidence was provided of new technologies and gear types being adopted where appropriate – suggesting that the non-completion of this action did not impede the overall aims of the management program.

Strengths and achievements

The evaluation identified a range of strengths and achievements in relation to the Authorisations and Assessment management program, including the:

- **Development of a range of policies, processes and procedures followed by the Director of National Parks and Parks Australia** – to support the implementation of the planned actions and achievement of the outcome (as discussed in section 8.3 below).
- **Introduction and use of the online portal for submitting applications** – which was felt to improve the ease of the application process for park users over the course of the plan and assist in providing timely assessments.

Barriers, challenges and limiting factors

A number of challenges and barriers were identified by stakeholders, including:

- **Limited awareness of assessment and authorisation activities** – some key stakeholders, including Parks Australia Staff and Coral Sea Marine Park Advisory Committee (CSMPAC) members, reported challenges in accessing clear information giving an overview of current authorisations in the Coral Sea Marine Park. These stakeholders expressed a desire for this information to be shared with them directly, to support their understanding of marine park management decisions and activities. Additionally, if possible, some CSMPAC stakeholders expressed a desire to have an opportunity to provide feedback on authorisation decisions, particularly for non-standard applications (such as the application by the Australian Space Agency (ASA) to deposit space debris in the park).

- **Challenges in aligning authorisations with those required by the Great Barrier Reef Marine Park Authority (GBRMPA)** – while Parks Australia and GBRMPA stakeholders reported progress in improving the experiences of those applying for authorisations across the two parks, some other stakeholders reported that there was room for improvement in the efficiency and ease of this process.

8.2. Outcome effectiveness

Outcome	Outcome effectiveness	Trend rating
O10. Assessments and authorisations ensure ongoing protection of marine park values through the management of activities in marine parks	 Fully met	 Trend getting better
Evidence		
This outcome was assessed as fully met, with a positive trend identified over the course of the plan to date. Evidence from engagement: At the overall level, stakeholders felt that the assessments and authorisation processes and decisions had been largely effective in protecting marine park values. External stakeholders appreciated the balanced approach taken to assessments and authorisations, with environmental marine park values felt to be protected without unduly constraining other social or economic activities where possible. The Parks Australia Coral Sea Marine Park regional team similarly indicated that they felt that assessments and authorisations had been effective in supporting the protection of marine park values, with their team providing input into assessment and authorisation processes.		

8.3. Specific management plan actions

The tables below present the completion status and supporting evidence collected during the evaluation for each management plan action within the Assessments and Authorisations Program.

Action	Completion status
A38. Develop and apply best-practice approaches to regulation and decision-making in the authorisation of activities within marine parks. This includes developing policy to ensure assessment and authorisation requirements are clearly articulated and that decision-making is robust, consistently applied, and transparent to all marine park users	 Completed
Evidence	
Overall, this action was assessed as completed. Considerable documentary evidence of the timely development and application of best practice approaches was identified, and while some stakeholders felt that the transparency of information about authorisation decisions could be improved, moderate to positive ratings were given in relation to this action overall.	

Evidence from desktop review:

The desktop review identified a number of activities undertaken over the course of the management plan to achieve this action. Firstly, the desktop review identified the following evidence of best-practice approaches being developed for regulation and decision-making:

- Compilation of the *'Australian Marine Parks Assessment and Authorisations Policy'* (2021), which outlines the approach to authorisation and assessment of allowable activities among all marine parks in accordance with the management plans.¹³¹
- Commentary within the *'Guiding Actions'* within this policy that highlighted how decision-making would align with best-practice approaches.

Additional documentary evidence was identified to suggest that authorisation decisions were robust, consistently applied and transparent, specifically:

- The robust nature of authorisation decisions was evidenced by the following documents which outlined clear decision-making criteria and processes:
 - An internal checklist outlining the decision-making criteria for authorisation of activities within marine parks.¹³²
 - A *'Peer Review Permit Checklist'* outlining the steps taken in the peer review process for authorisations.¹³³
 - A data quality check register which documents the data quality checks undertaken on application and authorisation data to ensure their accuracy.¹³⁴ This also included information about the staff responsible for conducting these checks from 2020–2022.
- Consistency in the application of decision-making criteria was evidenced by:
 - Park's Australia's *'Assessments and Authorisations – Standard Operating Procedure'*, which documented the assessment process and how to move through each step when doing the assessment process as an administrative officer.¹³⁵
 - A flowchart demonstrating the assessment process for internal use by Parks Australia staff.¹³⁶
 - A guide to assessing commercial tourism operations for internal use by Parks Australia staff.¹³⁷
- Transparency in authorisation decisions was evidenced by:
 - The development of the *'Australian Marine Parks Authorisation Consultation Guide'*.¹³⁸
 - The standard operating procedures for Australian Marine Parks (AMPs) assessments and authorisations.¹³⁹
 - The public record of permits and activity licences issued by the Director of National Parks (the Director) since 2018.¹⁴⁰

¹³¹ *Australian Marine Parks Assessment and Authorisations Policy.*

<https://australianmarineparks.gov.au/static/6f5d83193c7046f4d03dff87df2dcefd/amp-document-dnp-policy-authorisations-and-assessments.pdf>

¹³² 24 - 0.1 - Checklist: Internal document

¹³³ 25 - 0.5 - Peer Review Permit review checklist: Internal document

¹³⁴ 19 - 0.4 MP Assessments and Authorisations - CRM Procedure 02 - Data Quality Checks: Internal document

¹³⁵ *Assessments and Authorisations - Standard Operating Procedure: Internal document*

¹³⁶ *Assessment process - flowchart: Internal document*

¹³⁷ *Guide to assessing commercial tourism operations: Internal document*

¹³⁸ *Australian Marine Parks Authorisation Consultation Guideline: Internal document*

¹³⁹ *Assessments and Authorisations - Standard Operating Procedure: Internal document*

¹⁴⁰ *Authorisations webpage:*

<https://australianmarineparks.gov.au/access-use/authorisations/>

- The publicly available outline of the Authorisation and Assessments program.¹⁴¹

The delivery of activities was found to start within the first few years of the management program, suggesting the timely completion of this activity.

Evidence from engagement:

Only some stakeholders had experienced applying for and obtaining authorisations, and most of these stakeholders were broadly positive about assessment and authorisations processes. Parks Australia assessments and authorisations staff also provided positive feedback, noting that they employed a risk-based process that was tailored to the circumstances of individual applicants/ marine parks and had the flexibility to be updated in collaboration with other agencies as required.

However, some stakeholders expressed a desire for additional transparency about the nature and number of assessments granted within the Coral Sea Marine Park. This suggests that there is scope to better communicate this information with stakeholders, particularly members of the Coral Sea Marine Park Advisory Committee (CSMPAC).

Action	Completion status
A39. Collaborate with industry to investigate innovative technologies and systems (including vessel monitoring systems) that can assist businesses and individuals to comply with regulatory requirements	 Completed
Evidence	
Overall, this action was assessed as completed. Considerable documentary evidence of the investigation and implementation of innovative technologies was identified, as well as some evidence of collaboration with industry. Of the few stakeholders who were able to give feedback in relation to this action, most gave moderate to positive ratings. Evidence from desktop review: The desktop review identified the investigation and implementation of the mandatory Vessel Monitoring System (VMS) as the key innovative compliance technology introduced over the course of the plan, supported by collaboration with industry (such as fisheries management agencies). More specifically, the desktop review found that: 1. The Electronic and VMS Assistance Program was first introduced, which provided \$5.5 million in grant funding through relevant states and territory fisheries management agencies to support initiatives that increase the uptake of electronic and vessel monitoring systems by commercial fishers.¹⁴² 2. VMS installation became mandatory in 2024 for all commercial vessels operating in or transiting through AMPs.¹⁴³ This includes an automatic alert service that will alert non-	

¹⁴¹ Authorisations & assessments program: web page
<https://australianmarineparks.gov.au/management/programs/authorisations-assessments-program/>

¹⁴² Electronic & vessel monitoring systems assistance program webpage:
<https://australianmarineparks.gov.au/about/fisheries-assistance/electronic-vessel-monitoring-systems-assistance-program/>

¹⁴³ Mandatory Vessel Monitoring Systems (VMS) for commercial fishers in Australian Marine Parks webpage:
<https://australianmarineparks.gov.au/access-use/commercial-approvals/commercial-fishing/mandatory-vessel-monitoring-systems-vms-commercial-fishers-australian-marine-parks/>

compliant vessels that enter an AMP (i.e. if a vessel enters an AMP with primary gear that is non-compliant in the AMP).¹⁴⁴

Evidence from engagement:

Many stakeholders had limited feedback in relation to this action, but those to whom it was relevant provided moderate to positive ratings overall. Some CSMPAC members also reported awareness of the use of drones for monitoring across the Coral Sea Marine Park, which they viewed as a positive use of innovative technology. Additionally, Parks Australia staff reported that a range of technologies had been implemented over the course of the plan to assist with compliance, including the VMS monitoring systems and sound traps. Some stakeholders also referred to the trialling of Bluebottle vessels to support compliance across AMPs, however no evidence was found of Bluebottles being used in the Coral Sea Marine Park specifically.

Action	Completion status
A40. Develop an effective and efficient process to assess new technologies and gear types to allow for the use of new equipment during the life of this plan if appropriate	 Not commenced
Evidence	
This action was assessed as not commenced. Based on the self-assessment of the Temperate East Network Management Plan, Parks Australia deemed this action to not be relevant or required for the management plan as there were existing effective processes to assess the impacts and suitability of new technologies and gear types.¹⁴⁵ Parks Australia staff clarified that the assessment of new fishing gear types in particular was not relevant for the management plans, as these would need to be assessed by other Commonwealth or state/ territory regulators, including fishery departments, before being assessed by Parks Australia.	

Action	Completion status
A41. Develop a guarantee of service for the regulated community that includes a commitment to work with key marine park users and interest groups whose interests are likely to be affected by regulatory decisions	 Completed
Evidence	
Overall, this action was assessed as completed, with documentary evidence of a timely guarantee of service identified. However, there were mixed views amongst stakeholders in relation to the adequacy of consultation regarding regulatory decisions. Evidence from desktop review: The desktop review found that a guarantee of service had been developed, as referenced in:	

¹⁴⁴ Australian Marine Parks Compliance Report, Q1 2023:

<https://australianmarineparks.gov.au/static/e3c8ac92cec8e2c57dec4ea1cd44c048/amp-compliance-qtr-report-1-julsep-2023.pdf>

¹⁴⁵ Parks Australia Temperate east self-assessment: Internal document

- Sections 5.1 and 7.5 of the ‘Australian Marine Parks Assessment and Authorisations Policy’ (2021) – which included a commitment to work with marine park users in relation to new class approvals.¹⁴⁶
- ‘The Director of National Parks Corporate Plan’ 2024–2025.¹⁴⁷
- The Australian Marine Parks Indigenous Engagement Program, which outlines how Parks Australia will support Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples to undertake marine park management, such as monitoring and threat mitigation activities and surveillance.¹⁴⁸

Evidence from engagement:

Parks Australia staff reported engaging with park users and other government agencies in relation to assessments and authorisations. This included working with other regulators to align authorisation and assessment processes where possible, as well as working with applicants to reduce regulatory burden where appropriate.

However, mixed feedback was received from the external stakeholders who were able to comment on the effectiveness of consultation regarding regulatory decisions. In particular, commercial fishing stakeholders felt that they had been insufficiently consulted on regulatory decisions which impacted on their activities in the Coral Sea Marine Park and, as a result, reported lower levels of trust in the assessment and authorisation process. Additionally, members of the CSMPAC reported a desire for greater transparency and a chance to engage in relation to “unusual” authorisations or regulatory decisions, noting that they did not feel that they had adequate opportunity to comment when the potential for space debris to fall in the Coral Sea Marine Park had been under consideration by Parks Australia.

Action	Completion status
A42. Develop a customer focused online authorisation system for marine park users that includes publishing authorisations issued by Parks Australia on its website	 Completed
Evidence	
Overall, this action was assessed as completed. The desktop review identified documentary evidence of an online portal for permit and licence applications for marine park users¹⁴⁹ and the publication of authorisations granted since 2018 online.¹⁵⁰	

¹⁴⁶ Australian Marine Parks Assessment and Authorisations Policy:
<https://australianmarineparks.gov.au/static/6f5d83193c7046f4d03dff87df2dcefd/amp-document-dnp-policy-authorisations-and-assessments.pdf>

¹⁴⁷ Director of National Parks Corporate Plan 2024-2025:
<https://www.dcceew.gov.au/sites/default/files/documents/dnp-corporate-plan-2024-25.pdf>

¹⁴⁸ Australian Marine Parks Indigenous Engagement Program webpage
<https://australianmarineparks.gov.au/management/programs/indigenous-engagement-program/>

¹⁴⁹ Australian Marine Parks - Permit and license applications, online portal
<https://onlineservices.environment.gov.au/parks/australian-marine-parks>

¹⁵⁰ Authorisations webpage
<https://australianmarineparks.gov.au/access-use/authorisations/>

Action	Completion status
A43. Issue authorisations—a permit, class approval, activity licence or lease—for activities in the marine park assessed as acceptable either by the Director or another government or industry policy, plan or program accepted by the Director	 Ongoing
Evidence Overall, this action was assessed as ongoing as there was clear documentary evidence of authorisations being assessed and issued in a timely manner, and of the few stakeholders who provided feedback in relation to this action, most felt it had been implemented effectively. Evidence from desktop review: The desktop review identified evidence of a number of authorisations being issued by the Director for the Coral Sea Marine Park since 2018.¹⁵¹ Documentary evidence of the policies and processes in place to ensure appropriate and timely assessments was also identified, including via: • The ‘<i>Assessments and Authorisations Standard Operating Procedure</i>’ document, which outlines the assessment process for licences and permits.¹⁵² • A flowchart outlining the process of assessment of approvals, permits or licenses.¹⁵³ • The ‘<i>Australian Marine Parks Assessment and Authorisations Policy</i>’.¹⁵⁴ In particular, this document highlights how the Director will endeavour to conclude assessments and make decisions within 40 business days of receiving an application. • An internal guidance document in relation to petroleum activities in AMPs, which outlines the process for consulting with the Director on authorisations for the energy sector.¹⁵⁵ Evidence from engagement: Of the few stakeholders who were able to comment on the authorisations process, most provided positive feedback about their experiences. Specifically, these stakeholders reported that they were not aware of any issues and did not have any concerns with the authorisations process.	

¹⁵¹ Authorisations webpage

<https://australianmarineparks.gov.au/access-use/authorisations/>

¹⁵² 17 - 0.2 MP Assessments and Authorisations - Standard Operating Procedure: Internal document

¹⁵³ 21 - Authorisations Manual - flowchart for assessment of approval, permit or licence: Internal document

¹⁵⁴ Australian Marine Parks Assessment and Authorisations Policy:

<https://australianmarineparks.gov.au/static/6f5d83193c7046f4d03dff87df2dcefd/amp-document-dnp-policy-authorisations-and-assessments.pdf>

¹⁵⁵ 03 - Guidance note - Petroleum Activities and Australian Marine Parks: Internal document. Refer to p. 8 “Consulting with the Director of National Parks”

Action	Completion status
A44. Work with the Great Barrier Reef Marine Park Authority and Queensland government agencies to improve experiences and consistency of approaches for people seeking authorisations	 Partially completed or implemented
Evidence Overall, this action was assessed as partially completed. While there was clear documentary evidence of activities undertaken in collaboration with the Great Barrier Reef Marine Park Authority (GBRMPA) to improve the experience and consistency of approaches for those seeking authorisations, no such activities with Queensland government agencies were identified – however, stakeholder feedback indicated that GBRMPA was the more relevant collaborative partner in terms of authorisations and assessments. In addition, some stakeholders reported some appetite for future improvements to the assessment and authorisation process across agencies to improve the experience for marine park users. Evidence from desktop review: The desktop review identified clear evidence of collaborative activities with GBRMPA to improve the experience and consistency of approaches for authorisations, including: • A signed Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) from 2024 between Parks Australia and GBRMPA to undertake projects of mutual interest, including a dedicated project to improve the efficiency, efficacy and transparency of assessments and authorisations. • Internal email chains between Parks Australia and GBRMPA discussing changes to both agencies' assessment and permit systems and how to share learnings and align processes across agencies.¹⁵⁶ However, the review did not identify evidence of activities undertaken with Queensland government agencies to improve the experience and consistency of approaches for authorisations. Evidence from engagement: Parks Australia staff reported working closely with GBRMPA to enhance consistency in the authorisations process for park users. Only a few stakeholders were able to provide feedback directly relevant to this particular action. Stakeholders with knowledge of GBRMPA's collaboration with Parks Australia reported that positive progress had been made in aligning and streamlining the assessment and authorisation process for park users across the two agencies. However, some other stakeholders reported that the process of applying for authorisations could be time-consuming and inefficient when applying to undertake activities across both parks. These stakeholders felt that the assessment and authorisations process across Parks Australia and GBRMPA could be better streamlined to reduce the administrative burden on marine park users.	

¹⁵⁶ Internal email chain provided to ORIMA Research

9. Findings: Parks Protection and Management Program

*This chapter presents assessments of the implementation of the **Parks Protection and Management Program** of the Coral Sea Marine Park Management Plan.*

9.1. Overall findings about the efficacy of program implementation

Grade



Good

The Parks Protection and Management Program was assessed as 'good', with the overall outcome of the management program rated as 'substantially met'. Of the nine planned actions, eight were assessed as 'completed' or 'ongoing' and the remaining one was assessed as 'partially completed'.

Overall, the evaluation found that there had been positive progress against this program area which was reflected in stakeholder feedback. However, stakeholders also noted there was scope to more effectively communicate with them about the activities conducted under this program to enhance awareness.

Strengths and achievements

The evaluation highlighted key strengths in the implementation of this program, particularly through the development and adherence to tangible processes and strategies that supported the protection and management of the marine park. This was evidenced by the implementation of initiatives such as the risk-based assessment and the critical incident strategy, detailed in A45, 46 and 47 (below).

Parks Australia staff reported that this program area had been a key focus for them over the course of the plan, and reported good collaboration with the Australian Maritime Safety Authority (AMSA), Queensland Parks and Wildlife Service (QPWS) and the Great Barrier Reef Marine Park Authority (GBRMPA), including in responding to incidents in the Coral Sea Marine Park.

Barriers, challenges and limiting factors

The evaluation found that there was a lack of knowledge and awareness among some stakeholders about the activities under this program. This suggests that continuing to strengthen collaboration and improve communication with stakeholders could enhance the program's impact and support greater shared responsibility for marine park management.

9.2. Outcome effectiveness

Outcome	Outcome effectiveness	Trend rating
O11. Impact of pressures on marine park values are minimised as far as reasonably practicable	 Substantially met	 Trend getting better
Evidence This action was assessed as substantially met. Whilst actions to support park protection were found to have been undertaken (as evidenced in the below actions), longitudinal, robust data to measure the impact of pressures on marine park values was not identified. However, most stakeholders felt that the impact of pressures on marine park values had been minimised as far as reasonably practical over the life of the plan.		

9.3. Specific management plan actions

The tables below present the completion status and supporting evidence collected during the evaluation for each management plan action within the Parks Protection and Management Program.

Action	Completion status
A45. Apply a risk-based assessment process to prioritise park protection and management actions	 Completed
Evidence Overall, this action was assessed as completed, with the risk-based assessment process being developed and applied in a timely manner. Evidence from desktop review: The following evidence was identified through the desktop review: • A Risk Management Matrix which was included in the ‘<i>Australian Marine Parks Assessment and Authorisation Policy</i>’ (2021).¹⁵⁷ • The inclusion of an objective in the ‘<i>Network-wide National Environmental Science Program</i>’ project to analyse risks posed by pressures to the values of marine parks.¹⁵⁸ • The development of a set of guidelines for applying risk-based assessment principles to commercial tourism activities.¹⁵⁹	

¹⁵⁷ Australian Marine Parks Authorisation and Assessments Policy:

<https://australianmarineparks.gov.au/static/6f5d83193c7046f4d03dff87df2dcefd/amp-document-dnp-policy-authorisations-and-assessments.pdf>

¹⁵⁸ Marine Biodiversity Hub: Project ss2 – Interpreting pressure profiles:

<https://www.nespmarine.edu.au/project/project-ss2-%e2%80%93-interpreting-pressure-profiles.html>

¹⁵⁹ Australian Marine Parks Guideline for the authorisation of commercial tourism and general use activities on islands in the Coral Sea, Ashmore Reef and Cartier Island Marine Parks:

Action	Completion status
A46. Develop an Australian Marine Parks critical incident strategy in collaboration with the Australian Maritime Safety Authority (AMSA) and other responsible agencies to respond to critical incidents	 Completed
Evidence Overall, this action was assessed as completed, with the output being delivered in a timely manner. Evidence from desktop review: The desktop review identified the following evidence: • The ‘<i>Network-wide AMP Environmental Incident and Emergency Response Strategy</i>’ was developed in 2018 and updated in 2021 in collaboration across networks with AMSA and relevant agencies.¹⁶⁰ This strategy outlines the responsibilities, involvement and collaboration of Commonwealth agencies when responding to critical incidents. • Implementation and collaboration was evident through incident response exercise training conducted jointly between Parks Australia and a number of state/ territory and Commonwealth Government agencies and departments.¹⁶¹	

Action	Completion status
A47. Develop a mooring and anchoring strategy to protect marine park values and improve visitor experience	 Completed
Evidence This action was assessed as completed in a timely manner, as evidenced through the desktop review. Evidence from desktop review: The ‘<i>Australian Marine Parks Mooring Policy</i>’ was developed and finalised in 2021.¹⁶²	

<https://australianmarineparks.gov.au/static/2ea34f9e9eab525d42b187b163cd4801/amp-document-amp-guideline-tourism-and-general-use-island-access.pdf>

¹⁶⁰ Australian Marine Parks -Strategy Environmental Incident and Emergency Response Strategy:

<https://australianmarineparks.gov.au/static/4d3102f2098731e86292992d9f15b739/amp-document-mpa-environmental-incident-and-emergency-response-strategy.pdf>

¹⁶¹ AMP Incident and Exercise Register: Internal document.

¹⁶² Australian Marine Parks Mooring Policy:

<https://australianmarineparks.gov.au/static/179c407a2f3aedc78a01ad6ca7b8835e/amp-document-amp-mooring-policy.pdf>

Action	Completion status
A48. Support the removal of marine debris and ghost nets from marine parks through partnerships with Commonwealth, state and territory government agencies and other organisations involved in the management of marine debris	 Ongoing
Evidence Overall, this action was assessed as ongoing, with the desktop review finding evidence of Parks Australia supporting the removal of marine debris and ghost nets from the Coral Sea Marine Parks via a range of partnerships. Most stakeholders with direct knowledge of these initiatives felt that effective collaboration had been achieved to support this removal. Evidence from desktop review: The desktop review identified the following evidence: • The Ghost Nets Initiative was deployed, which involved collaboration across Commonwealth and state agencies including the Australian Fisheries Management Authority (AFMA), Maritime Border Command under the Australian Border Force, other organisations and First Nations Ranger groups. A grant program to support research into innovative solutions to detect, collect and dispose of ghost nets was also supported.¹⁶³ • The ‘<i>Australian Marine Park Marine Debris Strategy</i>’ was developed which outlined Commonwealth level collaborations and partnerships to respond to marine debris.¹⁶⁴ • Marine debris cleanups undertaken as part of the annual island health surveys.¹⁶⁵ • An outcomes report from the Coral Sea Marine Park Marine Debris Clean-up Voyage (2022) funded by Our Marine Park Grant (OMPG) 3, which visited a total of 22 islands in the park to conduct clean-up activities.¹⁶⁶ Evidence from engagement: Stakeholders with knowledge of Parks Australia’s marine debris removal partnerships reported positive perceptions of these partnerships, including those with GBRMPA, the Queensland Parks and Wildlife Service and the Tangaroa Blue Foundation. These stakeholders also reported an appetite for further collaborations with Parks Australia on marine debris removal projects.	

¹⁶³ Ghost Nets and Marine Debris Initiative: <https://australianmarineparks.gov.au/management/partnerships/ghost-nets-and-marine-debris-initiative/>

¹⁶⁴ Australian Marine Park Marine Debris Strategy: Internal document

¹⁶⁵ Coral Sea Island and Reef Health Reports

<https://australianmarineparks.gov.au/science/scientific-publications/coral-sea-island-and-reef-health-reports/>

¹⁶⁶ Coral Sea Marine Park Marine Debris Clean-up Voyage 2022:

<https://australianmarineparks.gov.au/static/a742404debe0df590a1bd8ee568dee8b/coral-sea-marine-park-marine-debris-clean-up-voyage-2022.pdf>

Action	Completion status
A49. Contribute to actions, where appropriate, that support Australia's obligations under international agreements and national environmental law (e.g., World Heritage Convention, Ramsar Convention, recovery plans, wildlife conservation plans and threat abatement plans)	 Ongoing
Evidence This action was assessed as ongoing as outputs have been delivered and most stakeholders felt that appropriate actions had been undertaken to support Australia's obligations. Evidence from desktop review: The desktop review identified the following evidence: - Island Health Environmental Assessments conducted through the Coral Sea Marine Park Island Health Project in line with Ramsar Convention required monitoring, reflecting areas that are considered globally significant and habitats used by globally endangered species.¹⁶⁷ - Input and review of AMSA's successful proposal to the International Maritime Organisation to extend an existing 'Particularly Sensitive Sea Area' to include a portion of the Coral Sea Marine Park.¹⁶⁸ Evidence from engagement: Most stakeholders felt that the current management of the Coral Sea Marine Park sufficiently supported Australia's obligations under international agreements and national environmental law. However, a couple of conservation and marine science stakeholders felt that the influence of commercial fishing groups had resulted in insufficient protection of some areas with high ecological value. In contrast, some recreational and commercial fishing stakeholders felt that the management and planning of the marine park was overly focused on meeting international obligations and conservation commitments at the expense of other considerations, such as social and economic uses of the park.	

¹⁶⁷ Environmental Assessment reports including: 2019 Environmental Assessment of the Coringa Islets and Herald Cays in the CSMP; 2021 Environmental Assessment of islets and cays of Tregrosse and Lihou Reefs; 2022 Environmental Assessment of islands, islets and cays of the southern and central reef systems; 2023 Environmental Assessment of Islands, Islets and Cays of the Southern and Central Reef Systems; 2024 Environmental Assessment of Islands, Islets and Cays of the Central Reef System: Internal documents.

¹⁶⁸ Proposal for extension of the Great Barrier Reef and Torres Strait PSSA to include the south west part of the Coral Sea: <https://www.amsa.gov.au/sites/default/files/2023-11/mepc68-10-1.pdf>

Action	Completion status
A50. Enable infrastructure such as moorings to protect coral reefs and enhance visitor safety, such as at Osprey Reef	 Completed
Evidence Overall, the action was found to be completed. The desktop review identified evidence of infrastructure being delivered at key sites. However, stakeholder feedback identified challenges with installing and maintaining infrastructure in the Coral Sea Marine Park due to its remote location. Evidence from desktop review: The desktop review identified the following evidence of the establishment and maintenance of infrastructure: • The Marine Protected Area Infrastructure Register that includes the infrastructure located in the Coral Sea Marine Park at a range of key visitor sites.¹⁶⁹ • A grant provided to decommission and replace cooperatively managed, environmentally sensitive moorings to protect habitats and enable safe access to the reefs by the public and tourism operators.¹⁷⁰ • A publication announcing the instalment of Ramsar Convention-compliant signage as part of the management and monitoring voyage of 2022.¹⁷¹ • A report on the OMPG2 funded project conducted by The Cod Hole and Ribbon Reef Operators Association Inc (CHARROA) to develop and install an Environmentally Friendly Mooring System (EFMS) for their tourism industry members to access the Coral Sea Marine Park. The project successfully installed 13 moorings at various dive locations.¹⁷² Evidence from engagement: Stakeholders reported awareness of some efforts to install eco-friendly moorings in the Coral Sea Marine Park, including in partnership with tourism operators. However, some stakeholders noted that there were inherent challenges in installing and maintaining this type of infrastructure in the remote Coral Sea Marine Park.	

¹⁶⁹ Marine Protected Area Infrastructure Register of Infrastructure: Internal document

¹⁷⁰ Our Marine Park Grants Round Two Projects – grant provided to the Cod Hole and Ribbon Reef Operators Association Inc: <https://australianmarineparks.gov.au/static/2b7aff986015d07009d5d04fd9b13d48/our-marine-park-grants-round-two-projects.pdf>

¹⁷¹ Coral Sea Marine Park Ramsar site management initiatives in 2022 article: <https://www.dcceew.gov.au/water/wetlands/publications/wetlands-australia/march-2023/coral-sea-marine-park-ramsar-site-management-initiatives%20-2022>

¹⁷² CHARROA – Final Report (2025): Internal document

Action	Completion status
A51. Collaborate with and support other agencies that undertake invasive and protected species management and marine debris removal (e.g. biosecurity assessments, research, removal of ghost nets)	 Ongoing
Evidence This action was assessed as ongoing, with activities found to be delivered in a timely manner. Documentary evidence was found of collaborations with other agencies to undertake invasive and protected species management and marine debris removal, and most stakeholders who were aware of such collaborations reported that they had been effective. Evidence from desktop review: The desktop review identified the following evidence of collaboration to undertake invasive and protected species management and marine debris removal: • The ongoing Environmental Assessments and 2022 Clean-Up Voyage as referenced in A48 and A49 – which involved monitoring and management of invasive and protected species as well as marine debris removal. • Published reports from island health surveys (as referenced in A48), which have included marine debris cleanups.¹⁷³ • A biosecurity flyer developed in partnership with Queensland Government to promote pest prevention.¹⁷⁴ Evidence from engagement: Stakeholders who were aware of Parks Australia’s collaborations to support this action provided positive feedback. In particular, the fee-for-service arrangement with QPWS to undertake wildlife surveys and reef health checks (including invasive species monitoring and marine debris removal) was reported as a positive example of effective collaboration. Parks Australia staff also reported receiving training and ongoing advice from QPWS in relation to undertaking surveys on islands. In addition, CSMPAC members reported awareness of other collaborations with Commonwealth agencies for ecological restoration work in the Coral Sea Marine Park, including pest and weed removal on islands and marine debris removal, which they perceived positively. Others who were less aware of activities in this area felt more information could be provided on the initiatives and their outcomes.	

¹⁷³ Coral Sea Island and Reef Health Reports

<https://australianmarineparks.gov.au/science/scientific-publications/coral-sea-island-and-reef-health-reports/>

¹⁷⁴ Be Pest-free in the Coral Sea flyer:

<https://australianmarineparks.gov.au/static/df453ef292de11cc56778bd5a5042c08/amp-document-be-pest-free-in-the-coral-sea.pdf>

Action	Completion status
A52. Work with the Great Barrier Reef Marine Park Authority and other Commonwealth and state government agencies to respond to environmental incidents and accidents	 Ongoing
Evidence	
This action was found to be ongoing. The desktop review identified evidence of appropriate joint incident response exercises when required, and most stakeholders felt that these joint exercises had been effective in responding to environmental incidents and accidents. Evidence from desktop review: The desktop review found that joint incident responses were actioned in collaboration with GBRMPA and other Commonwealth and state agencies when appropriate, as well as a whole-of-government training exercise, as evidenced by the AMP-wide Incident and Exercise Register.¹⁷⁵ Evidence from engagement: Stakeholders reported positive experiences collaborating with Parks Australia to respond to incidents and concerns in the Coral Sea Marine Park. One of the specific examples provided by stakeholders included collaboration with GBRMPA to respond to a broken-down coal carrier near the border of the Coral Sea and Great Barrier Reef Marine Parks.	

Action	Completion status
A53. Collaborate with Traditional Owners and First Nations Ranger groups to undertake management actions	 Partially completed or implemented
Evidence	
This action was assessed as partially completed, with some evidence of collaboration identified in the desktop review. However, stakeholder feedback suggested that there were challenges in engaging and collaborating with First Nations partners to undertake management actions. Evidence from desktop review: The desktop review identified a few examples of collaboration with Traditional Owners and First Nations Ranger groups, including: • The grant to Tangaroa Blue Foundation as referenced in A48 for their involvement in management through the 2022 Clean-up Voyage, which involved Gunggandji-Mandingalbay Yidinji Rangers.	

¹⁷⁵ AMP Incident and Exercise Register: Internal document.

- Collaboration with and support of researchers at James Cook University (JCU) to investigate the cultural and ecological significance of reefs, including collaboration and capacity building activities with the Meriam people to conduct ecological surveys.^{176 177}

Evidence from engagement

Stakeholders reported limited awareness of collaborations with Traditional Owners and First Nations Ranger groups to undertake management activities in the Coral Sea Marine Park.

As outlined in Chapter 6, Parks Australia staff identified a range of logistical and resource constraints in developing collaborations with Traditional Owners and First Nations Ranger groups but felt that progress was being made.

¹⁷⁶ James Cook University paper – *The Jewel in the Coral Sea the cultural and ecological significance of Ashmore and Boot Reefs*: <https://australianmarineparks.gov.au/static/a116de61231ac20b3548fd0a626e8445/the-jewel-in-the-coral-sea.pdf>

¹⁷⁷ Parks news article – *Managing Sea Country in Australia's Coral Sea Marine Park*: <https://parksaustralia.gov.au/news/managing-sea-country-australias-coral-sea-marine-park/>

10. Findings: Compliance Program

*This chapter presents assessments of the implementation of the **Compliance Program** of the Coral Sea Marine Park Management Plan.*

10.1. Overall findings about the efficacy of program implementation

Grade
 Good Overall, the grade for the actions in the Compliance program was assessed as 'good'. The outcomes of the management program were assessed to be 'partially', 'substantially' and 'fully' met. Of the six planned actions, all were assessed as 'completed' or 'ongoing'. Stakeholders identified several strengths and achievements of the Compliance Program, including the effective use of new technologies. However, they also raised some key challenges, such as difficulties in measuring voluntary compliance and the practical barriers to enforcement in remote offshore parks.

Strengths and achievements

The evaluation identified a range of strengths and achievements in relation to the Compliance Program, including:

- **Use of new technologies to support compliance** – including the implementation of Vessel Monitoring Systems (VMS) for all commercial vessels operating in or transiting through Australian Marine Parks (AMPs), which stakeholders reported had been effective in supporting compliance among commercial marine park users. In addition, the trial and subsequent use of 'Bluebottles' (i.e. autonomous vessels used to detect illegal fishing activity) in other AMP Networks was felt to present a promising opportunity for the use of innovative technologies to support compliance across the park in the future.
- **Effective collaborations with other Commonwealth agencies to support compliance** – with stakeholders reporting that collaborations with the Australian Fisheries Management Authority (AFMA), the Australian Maritime Safety Authority (AMSA) and the Great Barrier Reef Marine Park Authority (GBRMPA) had been particularly effective in monitoring and enforcing instances of non-compliance across the Coral Sea Marine Park.

Barriers, challenges and limiting factors

However, some challenges and barriers were also identified by stakeholders, including:

- **Challenges monitoring and enforcing compliance across the remote and large Coral Sea Marine Park** – the remote and expansive nature of the Coral Sea Marine Park was found to create practical challenges for compliance, monitoring and enforcement activities. Large geographic distances, limited on-water presence, and resource constraints could reduce the visibility of non-compliant activities and limit Parks Australia's ability to consistently monitor park usage.
- **Limited available data to measure some intended outcomes** – there was limited evidence of data collection and analysis to support measurement of outcomes related to awareness of

marine park rules, levels of voluntary compliance and a decrease in non-compliance over the more recent years of the plan.

- **Limited awareness of compliance communication targeted at recreational fishers** – with recreational fishing stakeholders reporting that they had not seen any proactive communication from Parks Australia relating to compliance and permitted activities in the Coral Sea Marine Park. In addition, one recreational fishing stakeholder reported that the online/ GPS maps showing the boundaries of zones where fishing was permitted could be unclear, which could potentially lead to some recreational fishers accidentally fishing in non-permitted zones if they were not familiar with the area.
- **The range of government departments and agencies responsible for marine compliance** – Parks Australia staff noted that Parks Australia was not solely or primarily responsible for some elements of compliance and enforcement in marine parks. For example, deterrence and penalties for illegal foreign fishing were noted as being the responsibility of the Australian Border Force (ABF) and the Department of Agriculture, Fisheries and Forestry (DAFF). As such, it was felt that achievement of some outcomes in this management program area was not possible for Parks Australia to achieve alone.

10.2. Outcome effectiveness

Outcome	Outcome effectiveness	Trend rating
O12. Improved user awareness of marine park rules	 Partially met	 Trend stable
Evidence Based on the available evidence, the evaluation assessed this outcome as partially met. A range of compliance communication and education activities were identified through the desktop review. However, the evaluation was unable to identify any data to assess the effectiveness of these activities or any associated changes in user awareness of marine park rules, and a few stakeholders reported limited awareness of compliance communications from Parks Australia beyond the resources available on the Parks Australia website or within the management plan itself. Evidence from desktop review: The desktop review identified a number of communication and engagement activities undertaken by Parks Australia to promote understanding of marine park rules and how to comply, as outlined in A57 (below). While these should go some way to improving user awareness of marine park rules, ultimately the desktop review did not identify any data which evaluated the effectiveness of these communication activities or measured changes in user awareness over time. Evidence from engagement: In addition to the evidence presented in A57 (below), some stakeholders felt there was likely to be improved awareness of marine park rules amongst users as a result of the communication and engagement activities undertaken by Parks Australia; however, stakeholder feedback on this point was mixed. Some stakeholders reported that the lack of data collected on awareness of marine park rules amongst users made it difficult to assess whether user awareness of marine park rules had quantifiably improved over the life of the plan. In addition, stakeholders reported that low overall awareness of AMPs amongst recreational users could be indicative of similarly low		

awareness of AMP rules amongst these users. As a result, many stakeholders expressed uncertainty about the extent to which this outcome had been met.

Outcome	Outcome effectiveness	Trend rating
O13. Increased levels of voluntary compliance and self-regulation by marine park users	 Substantially met	 Trend stable
Evidence		
Based on the available evidence, the evaluation assessed this outcome as substantially met. This assessment was based on the low numbers of non-compliance incidents identified in the desktop review and positive feedback from stakeholders. Evidence from desktop review: The review identified high overall levels of compliance by marine park users, as outlined further in O14 (below). While this likely suggests that voluntary compliance was therefore high over the course of the plan, the review was unable to identify any data which specifically measured or tracked levels of voluntary compliance and self-regulation by park users over time. Evidence from engagement: Stakeholders also reported that they felt there were generally high levels of voluntary compliance and self-regulation amongst marine park users, based on their observations of low levels of non-compliance incidents across the park. However, some stakeholders (including Parks Australia staff) reported that this outcome was hard to accurately assess as it was difficult or impossible to measure the number of marine park users who chose to <i>not</i> undertake an illegal activity, or those who were non-compliant without being detected.		

Outcome	Outcome effectiveness	Trend rating
O14. High overall levels of compliance with the rules by marine park users	 Fully met	 Trend stable
Evidence		
The evaluation assessed this outcome as fully met based on desktop review evidence of low non-compliance and positive stakeholder feedback. Evidence from desktop review: The review identified evidence of low levels of non-compliance across the marine park, including: AMP compliance reports, which illustrated relatively consistently low numbers of non-compliance incidents in the Coral Sea Marine Park.¹⁷⁸		

¹⁷⁸ Compliance program: webpage.

<https://australianmarineparks.gov.au/management/programs/compliance-program/>

- The 2022–2024 ‘*Treatment Progression Register*’, which provides comprehensive documentation of compliance activities undertaken across all marine park networks.¹⁷⁹
- Parks Australia incident data.

Evidence from engagement:

Most stakeholders reported that overall levels of compliance with marine park rules were high amongst themselves and other park users they knew/ in their networks.

Outcome	Outcome effectiveness	Trend rating
O15. A decrease in the number of non-compliances	 Partially met	 Trend stable
Evidence Based on the identified evidence, the evaluation assessed this outcome as partially met. While stakeholders felt that compliance and enforcement efforts were likely to have supported a reduction in non-compliance, a stable trend was identified in the available data. Evidence from desktop review: As discussed in O14 (above), the evaluation found that there were relatively consistent numbers of non-compliance incidents in the Coral Sea Marine Park.¹⁸⁰ Given that incidents were low throughout the management plan, it is noted that further reductions may be challenging to achieve. Evidence from engagement: In the absence of data, most stakeholders were also unsure about the completion of this outcome. However, some Parks Australia staff raised concerns about the validity of the outcome measure, highlighting that a reduction in recorded non-compliances does not necessarily indicate improved compliance. Instead, it could reflect less effective monitoring and enforcement efforts. For example, an increase in identified non-compliance incidents may result from enhanced surveillance and detection activities, rather than an actual rise in non-compliant behaviour.		

¹⁷⁹ 2022–2024 FY *Treatment Progression Register*: Internal document

¹⁸⁰ Compliance program: webpage.

<https://australianmarineparks.gov.au/management/programs/compliance-program/>

10.3. Specific management plan actions

The tables below present the completion status and supporting evidence collected during the evaluation for each management plan action within the Compliance Program.

Action	Completion status
A54. Apply a risk-based approach to compliance planning, targeted enforcement and compliance auditing	 Ongoing
Evidence Overall, the implementation of this action was found to be ongoing. Considerable documentary evidence of the development and application of a risk-based approach to compliance planning, enforcement and auditing was identified. However, scope for improvement was identified in relation to the timeliness and consistency of activities. Evidence from desktop review: The desktop review identified a number of activities undertaken over the course of the management plan to achieve this action. These suggest that a risk-based and data-informed approach to compliance planning and consultation and have been undertaken throughout the life of the plan. However, the evaluation also found that the consistency of published compliance reporting could be enhanced to support compliance measurement and transparency throughout the plan period. More specifically, the desktop review identified the following evidence of the development of a risk-based approach to compliance and use of this approach in compliance planning: • The ‘Coral Sea Marine Park Compliance Plan’, which describes the nature and scope of compliance activities to be undertaken in this time including an outline of the risk-based approach taken to compliance activities.¹⁸¹ • The 2024 internal document ‘Australian Marine Parks Internal procedure: Compliance Risk Assessments (Marine)’ which outlines the methodology for compliance risk assessments and evaluation. In particular, this document provides a detailed outline of the intended methodology for applying risk analysis to compliance activities. Additionally, outlining the process for compliance evaluation is likely to support in compliance auditing activities.¹⁸² • The 2024 internal document ‘Australian Marine Parks Internal Procedure: Marine Compliance Operations Standard Operating Procedure (SOP)’, which consolidates all marine park compliance procedures, including specific guidance on how to deal with specific compliance issues or tasks.¹⁸³ • The ‘Australian Marine Park Enforcement Guidelines’ (2025), which outline the process for assessing, investigating and responding to reported non-compliance incidents.¹⁸⁴ These enforcement guidelines aim to assist in the decision-making process for the Authorisations and Compliance Section of the Marine and Island Parks Branch (MIPB) in responding to reported contraventions.	

¹⁸¹ Coral Sea Marine Park Compliance Plan 2026/27 & 2027/28 FYs: Internal document

¹⁸² Australian Marine Parks Internal procedure: Compliance Risk Assessments (Marine), 2024: Internal document

¹⁸³ Australian Marine Parks Internal Procedure: Marine Compliance Operations Standard Operating Procedure (SOP), 2024: Internal document

¹⁸⁴ Australian Marine Park Enforcement Guidelines, 2025: Internal document

- The internal document '*Director of National Parks Internal Procedure – Appointing Wardens and Rangers (Marine and Terrestrial)*' which outlines the expected regulatory capabilities of Wardens and Rangers and minimum required qualifications to ensure they are able to meet these capabilities.¹⁸⁵

The desktop review also identified the following evidence of a risk-based approach being applied in targeted enforcement activities:

- The establishment of a telephone hotline and email address to enable marine park users to report suspicious or illegal activity, thereby supporting targeted enforcement in response to these reports.¹⁸⁶
- The 2022–2024 RA '*Treatment Progression Register*', which provides comprehensive documentation of compliance treatments undertaken across all marine park networks.¹⁸⁷

Action	Completion status
A55. Collaborate with Australian, state and territory government agencies by sharing assets and information	 Ongoing
Evidence Overall, this action was assessed as ongoing. Clear documentary evidence of consistent collaborations was identified, and feedback from most stakeholders was positive. Evidence from desktop review: Overall, the desktop review identified adequate evidence of collaborations with Australian, state and territory organisations to share assets and information in support of compliance. Commencement of these activities in the first few years of the management plan (i.e. as early as 2020) and evidence of continuing agreements also showed that these activities have been completed in a timely and consistent manner. More specifically, the desktop review identified the following contracts, agreements or collaborations with Australian, state and territory government agencies: • A signed Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) between the Director of National Parks (the Director) and the Australian Maritime Safety Authority (AMSA) regarding the provision of aircraft to support incident monitoring and compliance surveillance in AMPs.¹⁸⁸ • An activities schedule under the MOU between Parks Australia and AFMA to provide a range of services to support compliance in AMPs, including the VMS.¹⁸⁹	

¹⁸⁵ *Director of National Parks Internal Procedure – Appointing Wardens and Rangers (Marine and Terrestrial): Internal document*

¹⁸⁶ *Compliance program: webpage.*

<https://australianmarineparks.gov.au/management/programs/compliance-program/>

¹⁸⁷ *2022–2024 FY Treatment Progression Register: Internal document*

¹⁸⁸ *Memorandum of understanding about the provision of aircraft on an opportunity basis between the Australian Maritime Safety Authority and Director of National Parks (2020): Internal document*

¹⁸⁹ *AFMA VMS MOU Activity Schedule for 2024/25 and 2025/26 FYs: Internal document*

- A signed MOU between GBRMPA and the Director of National Parks for a range of collaborative management activities, including compliance activities.¹⁹⁰
- A 2021 email chain between Parks Australia and the Queensland Police Service (QPS) regarding potential collaboration on compliance monitoring and enforcement activities in the Coral Sea Marine Park.¹⁹¹ Proposed activities under this collaboration included joint patrols using QPS vessels and multi-agency patrols, with the potential for a future formal MOU to allow QPS to conduct work on behalf of Parks Australia.

Evidence from engagement:

Overall, most stakeholders felt that effective collaboration had occurred between Parks Australia and other government agencies. Specifically:

- Parks Australia staff reported that collaboration was supported by a range of processes and agreements including MOUs and other informal agreements. Specifically, Parks Australia staff cited formal MOUs with various fisheries management agencies, the national VMS group, Maritime Border Command and AMSA, as well as an informal agreement with GBRMPA. In addition, Parks Australia staff reported that their collaborations with GBRMPA and the Queensland Parks and Wildlife Service had strengthened over the life of the plan and enabled information-sharing and joint activities in support of compliance across the Coral Sea Marine Park.
- External stakeholders were aware of strong relationships between Parks Australia and a number of government agencies to support compliance. Specifically, stakeholders gave the example of the effective collaboration between GBRMPA and Parks Australia. However, one stakeholder felt that there was scope to undertake more strategic collaboration on compliance across the two parks.

Action	Completion status
A56. Investigate the use of new technologies and warning systems to assist in the detection of potential illegal activities	 Completed
Evidence	
Overall, this action was assessed as completed, as the desktop review identified consistent evidence of new technologies and warning systems being investigated over the course of the plan. Evidence from desktop review: The desktop review showed that new technologies and warning systems had been investigated, trialled or implemented consistently over the course of the plan, with activities largely taking place between 2021 and 2024. Specifically, the following evidence was identified: • Implementation of the VMS, which is now required to be installed on all commercial fishing vessels and communicates satellite networks to land-based receiving stations. The unit	

¹⁹⁰ Memorandum of Understanding between Director of National Parks and Great Barrier Reef Marine Park Authority, 2024: Internal document

¹⁹¹ Internal email chain provided to ORIMA Research

transmits data on vessel location, course and speed, providing real time information on commercial fishing activities to vessels, fishery managers and marine park compliance teams. From 1 July 2024, VMS were mandatory for all commercial vessels.¹⁹²

- Implementation of an alert service in partnership with AFMA. This alert service is a free service tool that will send an alert via email to an onboard computer and/ or an SMS message to a nominated phone.¹⁹³
- A trial of 'Bluebottles' – autonomous vessels that can monitor areas using day/ night infrared cameras, radar and satellite communication, to monitor marine park areas for non-compliant activities.¹⁹⁴ These vessels have subsequently been implemented to support compliance.
- A trial of acoustic recorders/ sound traps to monitor marine park areas for non-compliant activities.¹⁹⁵
- Trials of Uncrewed Aerial Vehicles (UAV), a type of drone, to monitor across marine park areas for non-compliant activities, including across the Great Barrier Reef and Coral Sea Marine Parks.^{196 197 198}

Action	Completion status
A57. Work with marine park users to promote understanding of the rules for activities and how to comply	 Completed
Evidence	
Overall, this action was assessed as completed. Consistent documentary evidence of communication to promote understanding of rules and desired compliance behaviours was identified and most stakeholders felt that communication had been effective. However, feedback from recreational fishing stakeholders indicated that this communication may have had limited reach amongst this audience. Evidence from desktop review: The desktop review identified a range of activities undertaken to promote marine park rules and understanding of how to comply among marine park users, which were shown to be undertaken consistently throughout the life of the management plan. Specifically, these included:	

¹⁹² VMS system monitoring: <https://australianmarineparks.gov.au/access-use/commercial-approvals/commercial-fishing/mandatory-vessel-monitoring-systems-vms-commercial-fishers-australian-marine-parks/>

¹⁹³ Alert service in partnership with Australian Fisheries Management Authority: <https://australianmarineparks.gov.au/alert-service/>

¹⁹⁴ 'Bluebottles to sting illegal fishers in Australian Marine Parks' (2021): webpage <https://australianmarineparks.gov.au/news/bluebottles-sting-illegal-fishers-australian-marine-parks/>

¹⁹⁵ 'New technology to monitor Australian marine parks' (2022): webpage <https://minister.dcceew.gov.au/plibersek/media-releases/new-technology-monitor-australian-marine-parks>

¹⁹⁶ Australian Marine Parks drone trial project plan (2021): internal document

¹⁹⁷ 'Australian Marine Park Surveillance RPAS' (2023): webpage <https://hoveruav.com.au/resource-centre/australian-marine-park-surveillance/>

¹⁹⁸ Signed service contract between Hover UAV Pty Ltd and the Director of National Parks, 2023: Internal document

- A factsheet published by Parks Australia about the Coral Sea Marine Park Management Plan in 2018, including an overview of the rules for various activities with links directing readers to more detailed further information.¹⁹⁹
- A factsheet about AMPs and permitted activities for commercial fishers, developed by Parks Australia.²⁰⁰
- A document outlining permitted petroleum activities in AMPs, prepared by the National Offshore Petroleum Safety and Environmental Management Authority (NOPSEMA) in collaboration with Parks Australia.²⁰¹ This document was published in 2020.
- An email chain between Parks Australia and the Bureau of Meteorology (BOM), in which the two agencies discuss alterations to a permit agreement to ensure that activities undertaken by BOM in the Coral Sea Marine Park comply with regulations.²⁰²

Evidence from engagement:

Overall, many stakeholders for whom it was relevant felt that marine park rules and compliance requirements had been effectively communicated with marine park users, supporting the success of this action. Specifically, stakeholders provided the following positive examples of the promotion of marine park rules and how to comply:

- Information provided on the Parks Australia website – e.g. downloadable maps or information in relation to the location and boundaries of different marine park zones. However, stakeholders also noted that this information could be challenging to access when on the water/ in marine parks, which presented a barrier to compliance.
- Information provided ‘in situ’ in relevant locations, such as on islands in the Coral Sea Marine Park.

However, recreational fishing stakeholders reported that it could be challenging for recreational fishers to get clear information about zones and permitted activities, and reported limited awareness of proactive communication activities in relation to compliance from Parks Australia.

While most stakeholders were unable to provide feedback in relation to how effectively Parks Australia had worked with marine park users in the development and delivery of these activities (that is, the quality or adequacy of this engagement), general positive perceptions from stakeholders in relation to this action suggest that it was nonetheless completed in an appropriate manner.

¹⁹⁹ Coral Sea Management Plan 2018 zoning and rules:

<https://australianmarineparks.gov.au/static/bab1fc211178fca6d04dc6b20af6ea4f/amp-document-factsheet-coral-sea-management-plan.pdf>

²⁰⁰ Commercial fishing in Australian Marine Parks factsheet:

<https://australianmarineparks.gov.au/static/2c26f0c718876001f2d2cab11834e537/amp-document-commercial-fishing-factsheet.pdf>

²⁰¹ Petroleum activities and Australian Marine Parks guidance note:

<https://www.nopsema.gov.au/sites/default/files/documents/2021-03/A620236.pdf>

²⁰² Internal email chain provided to ORIMA Research

Action	Completion status
A58. Work with the Great Barrier Reef Marine Park Authority and other Commonwealth and state government agencies in compliance planning, including implementing actions to deter illegal activities and encourage voluntary compliance	 Ongoing
Evidence Overall, this action was assessed as ongoing. The desktop review identified a range of instances of joint compliance planning. However, stakeholder feedback indicated that there was scope to improve the effectiveness of joint compliance planning. Evidence from desktop review: The desktop review identified some activities undertaken in partnership with GBRMPA and other agencies for compliance planning. These included: • The 2022–2024 ‘<i>Treatment Progression Register</i>’, as referenced in A55 above. • An internal email chain outlining communication between the Department of Climate Change, Energy, the Environment and Water (DCCEEW) and the Australian Defence Force (ADF) in relation to streamlining a permit process for the HydroScheme 2026 surveys across AMPs.²⁰³ • A number of internal email chains between Parks Australia and GBRMPA discussing planned and potential actions to support surveillance and compliance in the Coral Sea Marine Park. These include proposed joint surface patrols to identify and report any non-compliant activities. These patrols were proposed to take place in 2021.²⁰⁴ Evidence from engagement: Stakeholders reported strong working relationship between Parks Australia and GBRMPA in relation to compliance. However, some stakeholders indicated that collaborations could be made more effective by taking a more strategic approach which anticipated the future needs and challenges of compliance in the Coral Sea Marine Park.	

Action	Complete status
A59. Collaborate with the Great Barrier Reef Marine Park Authority and other Commonwealth and state government agencies in surveillance, including water and aerial patrols	 Ongoing
Evidence Overall, this action was assessed as ongoing. Clear documentary evidence of timely and consistent collaborations was identified, and feedback from most stakeholders was positive. Evidence from desktop review: Overall, the desktop review identified a range of evidence of Parks Australia collaborating with GBRMPA and other Commonwealth and state agencies in surveillance. In addition to the evidence	

²⁰³ Internal email chain provided to ORIMA Research.

²⁰⁴ Internal email chain provided to ORIMA Research

of compliance collaborations outlined in A58 and A55, the review identified the following specific evidence of collaborative surveillance activities:

- A range of compliance reports with data regarding how many aerial, surface and vessel patrols were completed across each AMP between 2023-2025.^{205 206 207}
- A spreadsheet outlining all aerial and surface patrols which have taken place in the Coral Sea Marine Park since 2018, including those undertaken in collaboration with GBRMPA.²⁰⁸

Evidence from engagement:

Most stakeholders reported that joint surveillance activities undertaken in partnership with GBRMPA had been highly effective in supporting monitoring and compliance efforts across both the Coral Sea and Great Barrier Reef Marine Parks.

²⁰⁵ *Quarterly Compliance Report July, August and September 2023: Internal document*

²⁰⁶ *2024/2025 Compliance Operations Annual Summary': Internal document*

²⁰⁷ *Monthly Compliance Report November 2025: Internal document*

²⁰⁸ *Coral Sea Marine Park surveillance and patrol spreadsheet: Internal document*

11. Conclusion

The evaluation of the Coral Sea Marine Park Management Plan highlighted **positive progress in implementing actions and achieving intended outcomes** across its seven management programs. **Strengths** included the development of robust frameworks and policies, substantial ecological baseline data collection, and effective assessment, authorisation and compliance activities. Effective collaborations with some stakeholders, including the science community and key state and Australian government agencies, were identified as key drivers of success. However, **challenges** such as the remote offshore nature of the park, misalignment between some program areas and parks values, needs and priorities, and challenges balancing the protection of ecological, social and economic values limited overall implementation effectiveness.

More specifically, the evaluation established the following grades for management programs within the Coral Sea Marine Park Management Plan:

- **‘Good’** – assigned to the ‘Assessments and Authorisations’, ‘Parks Protection and Management’ and ‘Compliance’ management programs. Strong results in these programs were supported by effective partnerships and collaborations as well as the development of a range of policies, processes and procedures to support management activities.
- **‘Good with some concerns’** – assigned to the ‘Marine Science’ management program. While the evaluation identified improvements over the life of the plan, particularly in the development of baseline ecological datasets and enhanced collaboration between Parks Australia and other stakeholders, scope for improvement was also identified, particularly in relation to the implementation of clear and transparent evidence-based decision-making.
- **‘Significant concerns’** – assigned to the ‘Communication, Education and Awareness’, ‘Tourism and Visitor Experience’ and ‘Indigenous Engagement’ management programs. While some progress was made in these programs, key challenges and limitations were identified in each. In relation to the ‘Communication, Education and Awareness’ and ‘Tourism and Visitor Experience’ management programs, the evaluation found that these grades reflected the low relevance of these programs to the values of the Coral Sea Marine Park, and the decision to focus efforts and resources on other programs more aligned to the park’s specific needs and priorities. In relation to the ‘Indigenous Engagement’ management program, the evaluation identified the need for more consistent engagement with Traditional Owners.

A range of **key learnings and recommendations for the development of the future Coral Sea Marine Park Management Plan have been identified** and should be considered in the management plan review process. These are detailed in Chapter 3 of this report. Specific findings in relation to the **strengths and weaknesses of each management program** area also provide insight into how to **maximise the effectiveness of implementation** for the next Coral Sea Marine Park Management Plan, and should be considered where actions and outcomes remain consistent. These are outlined in Chapters 4-10 of this report.

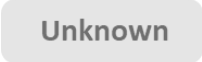
APPENDIX A: Performance assessment tools

Completion status categories (at the individual action level)

 Completed	 Ongoing	 Implemented with modifications	 Partially completed or implemented	 Not commenced
Action was specific and has been fully implemented as described.	Action is an ongoing requirement that has been consistently implemented as described.	Action has been fully implemented, but in a way other than was described in the plan.	Action has been partially implemented but is not yet complete as per the description in the plan.	No progress has been made against the action.

Implementation effectiveness rating categories at the management program level

Grade	Threshold
 Good	Management actions and outcomes have been largely delivered as planned, with no significant gaps; or Management is efficient and effective due to adequate enabling services being in place; and Targets for at least three-quarters of stakeholder feedback performance measures have been fully or substantially met.
 Good with some concerns	Most management actions and outcomes have been delivered as planned but some important actions were not delivered; or Some management activities are not adequate, leading to decreased efficiency or effectiveness; and Targets for at least half of stakeholder feedback performance measures have been fully or substantially met.
 Significant concerns	Some aspects of management plan actions and outcomes have been adequately delivered, but many important actions have not been fully delivered; or Some enabling management activities are adequate, yet many are not, leading to substantially reduced efficiency or effectiveness; and/or Targets for between a quarter and a half of stakeholder feedback performance measures have been fully or substantially met.
 Critical	Failure to deliver most planned management actions and outcomes; or Many management actions are not adequate, leading to greatly reduced efficiency or effectiveness; and/or Targets for less than a quarter of stakeholder feedback performance measures have been fully or substantially met.

	There is insufficient information or data available to make a judgement.
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Outcome effectiveness rating categories

Grade	Result
 Fully met	All of the success measures/targets were fully met.
 Substantially met	All of the success measures/targets were fully or substantially met.
 Partially met	Half of the success measures/targets were fully or substantially met or most/all of the measures/targets were at least partially met.
 Not met	At best, half or less than half of the success measures/targets were partially met.
	There is insufficient information or data available to make a judgement.

Trend rating categories (outcomes)

Trend	Threshold
 Trend stable	There has been no change in the status of this matter over the life of this plan.
 Trend getting worse	There has been a negative trend in the status of this matter over the life of this plan.

 Trend getting better	There has been a positive trend in the status of the matter over the life of this plan.
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Stakeholder engagement metrics

Stakeholder engagement metrics are proposed as a key measurement to determine performance against management plan actions and outcomes.

The ORIMA team will produce a stakeholder engagement plan and collect qualitative feedback from a range of relevant stakeholders about the extent to which actions and outcomes have been implemented or achieved. Stakeholder responses will be aggregated, with the approximate proportion of stakeholders who consider key outputs or outcomes to have been effectively implemented or achieved summarised as shown below.



Most – More than three quarters of stakeholders consulted



Many – More than half of the stakeholders consulted



Some – Around a third of the stakeholders consulted



A few – Less than a quarter of stakeholders consulted

APPENDIX B: Performance Information Matrix

Performance Information Matrix – Coral Sea Marine Park

Type (action or outcome)	Actions/ Outcomes	Output(s)	Target/ measure of success	Indicator(s)	Data source(s)
	<i>Management Plan Actions and Outcomes</i>	<i>Outputs to achieve actions</i>	<i>Criteria for success</i>	<i>Evidence of success</i>	<i>Data sources for measuring indicators</i>
Management program – Communication, Education and Awareness					
Management Plan Actions	A1. Develop a marketing and communication strategy for Australian Marine Parks to raise awareness and understanding of marine park values and the contribution marine parks make to enhancing Australia's wellbeing	- Marketing and communication strategy developed. - Communication products developed in accordance with strategy. - Communication activities/ initiatives undertaken in accordance with strategy.	- Completion of outputs in a timely manner. - Most key stakeholders assess that marketing and communication has been effective in increasing awareness and understanding of marine parks and their values among key audiences.	- Documentary evidence of development and implementation of communication strategy. - Key stakeholder feedback concerning the effectiveness of marketing and communication.	- Administrative data/ desktop review. - Stakeholder engagement conducted by ORIMA.
	A2. Develop online information resources to facilitate awareness of marine park values, management arrangements and visitor opportunities	Online information resources developed that address: awareness of marine park values; management arrangements; and visitor opportunities.	- Completion of outputs in a timely manner. - Most stakeholders assess that online information resources have been effective in addressing key information components.	- Documentary evidence that the developed information resources cover the key information components. - Key stakeholder feedback concerning the effectiveness of online information resources.	- Administrative data/ desktop review. - Stakeholder engagement conducted by ORIMA.

Type (action or outcome)	Actions/ Outcomes	Output(s)	Target/ measure of success	Indicator(s)	Data source(s)
	A3. Maximise the use of new technologies and partnerships (including with schools, universities, museums and non-government organisations) to inspire people of all ages to become involved in marine park management and protection	- Education partnerships with schools, universities, museums and non-government organisations. - Use of new technologies in partnerships.	- Whether partnerships have been established. - New technologies have been integrated into partnership opportunities where possible. - Most key stakeholders assess that partnerships and use of technology have been effective in inspiring people of all ages to become involved in marine park management and protection.	- Documentary evidence that partnerships have been established. - Documentary evidence of the adoption/ use of new technologies. - Key stakeholder feedback concerning the effectiveness of partnerships and use of technology.	- Administrative data/ desktop review. - Stakeholder engagement conducted by ORIMA.
	A4. Establish network advisory committees to ensure users and interested stakeholders have on-going input into the management of Australian Marine Parks (to be assessed together with Activity 9 below – same assessment criteria)	- Establishment and operation of the Coral Sea Marine Park Advisory Committee (CSMPAC). - Effective operation of the CSMPAC.	- Timely establishment of the Australian Marine Parks Advisory Committee (AMPAC). - Most AMPAC members express that they have had ongoing input into the management of the marine park. - Most AMPAC members and Parks Australia staff express	- Documentary evidence to show establishment and operation of AMPAC. - Feedback from AMPAC members and Parks Australia staff.	- Administrative data/ desktop review. - Stakeholder engagement conducted by ORIMA.

Type (action or outcome)	Actions/ Outcomes	Output(s)	Target/ measure of success	Indicator(s)	Data source(s)
			satisfaction with the AMPAC's effectiveness in supporting the implementation of the management plan.		
	A5. Develop a stakeholder focused approach to tracking the aspirations and concerns of stakeholders in relation to marine parks	Strategy developed for tracking aspirations and concerns of stakeholders in relation to marine parks.	- Whether strategy development is complete and tracking is in place. - Most stakeholders express that their aspirations and concerns have been considered over the course of the plan.	- Documentary evidence of strategy development and ongoing tracking. - Key stakeholder feedback.	- Administrative data/ desktop review. - Stakeholder engagement conducted by ORIMA.
	Actions specific to the Coral Sea				
	A6. Develop information on the marine park to encourage increased awareness and understanding of marine park values and management arrangements (to be evaluated together with Actions 1 and 2 above)	- Information developed with the aim of increasing awareness and understanding of marine park values and management arrangements. - Viewership or readership of media outputs.	- Completion of outputs in a timely manner. - Most key stakeholders consider that information has been effective in increasing awareness and understanding of marine park values and management arrangements.	- Documentary evidence of information developed. - Key stakeholder feedback concerning the effectiveness of outputs in encouraging increased awareness and understanding of marine park values	- Administrative data/ desktop review. - Stakeholder engagement conducted by ORIMA.

Type (action or outcome)	Actions/ Outcomes	Output(s)	Target/ measure of success	Indicator(s)	Data source(s)
				and management arrangements.	
	A7. Provide infrastructure in and adjacent to the marine park, such as signs and marker buoys, to increase understanding of marine park values and rules, particularly at sites that are regularly visited	Infrastructure developed with the aim of increasing awareness and understanding of marine park values and rules, particularly at regularly visited sites.	- Infrastructure has been installed in regularly visited sites. - Most stakeholders assess infrastructure as being effective in increasing understanding of marine park values and rules.	- Documentary evidence to show extent of infrastructure provision in and adjacent to the marine park. - Documentary evidence that infrastructure has been installed in regularly visited areas. - Key stakeholder feedback concerning the effectiveness of new infrastructure in increasing understanding of marine park values and rules.	- Administrative data/ desktop review. - Stakeholder engagement conducted by ORIMA.
	A8. Establish a Coral Sea Marine Park advisory forum/s or other engagement mechanisms to support and collaborate with the Director in management (To be evaluated together with Activity 4 above – same assessment criteria)	Establishment and operation of the CSMPAC.	- Timely establishment of the AMPAC. - Most AMPAC members consider that they have had ongoing input into the management of the marine park.	- Documentary evidence to show establishment and operation of AMPAC. - Feedback from AMPAC members and Parks Australia staff.	- Administrative data/ desktop review. - Stakeholder engagement conducted by ORIMA.

Type (action or outcome)	Actions/ Outcomes	Output(s)	Target/ measure of success	Indicator(s)	Data source(s)
	A9. Work with the Great Barrier Reef Marine Park Authority, and other Commonwealth and state government agencies, through their communication activities, to increase understanding	Partnership arrangements and collaboration initiatives established with the Great Barrier Reef Marine Park Authority, and other Commonwealth and state government agencies.	- Whether partnership arrangements and collaboration initiatives have been established. - Most stakeholders assess that partnerships have been effective in increasing understanding.	- Documentary evidence to show partnerships/ initiatives have been established. - Stakeholder feedback.	- Administrative data/ desktop review. - Stakeholder engagement conducted by ORIMA.
Management Plan Outcomes	O1. Increased awareness, understanding and support for marine parks	N/A	- Survey-based metrics show an increase in public awareness, understanding and support for the plan. - Most stakeholders report that awareness, understanding and support for the marine park has increased within their networks/ organisations/ interest groups.	- Relevant survey questions addressing awareness, understanding and support. - Key stakeholder feedback.	- National Environmental Science Program (NESP) 2021 boat ramp surveys (awareness of AMPs) and more recent surveys (repeat survey currently in field). - Stakeholder engagement conducted by ORIMA.

	Actions/ Outcomes	Output(s)	Measure of success	Indicator(s)	Data source(s)/ collection method(s)
Management program – Tourism and visitor experience					
Management Plan Actions	A10. Develop a sustainable tourism and visitor experience strategy for Australian Marine Parks	Sustainable tourism and visitor experience strategy developed.	Completion of strategy in a timely manner.	Documentary evidence of strategy development.	Administrative data/ desktop review.
	A11. Work with national, state and local tourism authorities and operators to maximise the value of sustainable ecotourism opportunities associated with marine parks.	Partnership arrangements and collaboration initiatives established with tourism authorities and operators to maximise sustainable ecotourism opportunities.	- Completion of outputs in a timely manner. - Most key stakeholders feel there has been an increase in the value of sustainable ecotourism experiences over the life of the plan.	- Documentary evidence of working with national/ state/ local authorities and operators. - Key stakeholder feedback.	- Administrative data/ desktop review. - Stakeholder engagement conducted by ORIMA.
	A12. Develop a commercial tourism authorisation system to encourage best-practice and eco-accredited businesses operating in Australian Marine Parks	- Commercial tourism authorisation system developed. - Authorisations granted to operators in accordance with system.	- Completion of system in a timely manner. - Most stakeholders feel the system encourages best-practice and eco-accredited businesses operating in Australian Marine Parks.	- Documentary evidence of the commercial tourism authorisation system. - Key stakeholder feedback.	Administrative data/ desktop review (system documentation and authorisation records).
	A13. Work with Tourism Australia and state and regional tourism authorities and the fishing industry to market and promote Australian Marine Parks, including opportunities to promote locally and sustainably caught seafood	Delivery of marketing assets showcasing and promoting Australian Marine Parks and locally and sustainably caught seafood.	- Outputs delivered in a timely and consistent manner. - Most stakeholders feel marketing assets have been effective in promoting marine	Documentary evidence of production of marketing assets relating to marine parks and locally and sustainably caught	- Administrative data/ desktop review (marketing/ promotion analytics and data.) - Stakeholder engagement

	Actions/ Outcomes	Output(s)	Measure of success	Indicator(s)	Data source(s)/ collection method(s)
		• Collaborations with Tourism Australia and state and regional tourism authorities and the fishing industry.	parks and locally and sustainably caught seafood.	seafood (including reach of these). • Stakeholder feedback.	conducted by ORIMA.
	A14. Monitor visitor trends and levels of satisfaction with marine park experiences and products	• Visitor trends monitoring implemented. • Levels of satisfaction with marine park experiences and products monitored.	• Ongoing and comprehensive monitoring undertaken regarding visitor trends and satisfaction with marine park experiences and products.	• Documentary evidence of visitor numbers being recorded over time. • Visitor satisfaction trends of experiences and products recorded (either quantitatively and/ or qualitatively).	• Administrative data/ desktop review (e.g. tourism authorisation holder logbooks for levels of access to the Coral Sea Marine Park).
	A15. Promote culturally sensitive tourism by encouraging tourism operators to liaise with Traditional Owners	• Actions taken to encourage tourism operators to liaise with Traditional Owners to promote culturally sensitive tourism.	• Outputs delivered. • Most operators feel they have been appropriately encouraged to engage with Traditional Owners. • Most First Nations partners feel Parks Australia has taken appropriate steps to encourage tourism operators to liaise with Traditional Owners.	• Documentary evidence of actions taken to encourage tourism operators to liaise with Traditional Owners to promote culturally sensitive tourism. • Feedback from Traditional Owners and tourism operators.	• Stakeholder engagement conducted by ORIMA (with tourism operators/ Traditional Owners).

	Actions/ Outcomes	Output(s)	Measure of success	Indicator(s)	Data source(s)/ collection method(s)
	A16. Work with tourism operators and First Nations peoples to recognise and promote cultural values and cultural tourism opportunities	• Collaboration with tourism operators and First Nations peoples to promote cultural tourism opportunities.	• Most First Nations partners and Tourism industry stakeholders feel Parks Australia has taken appropriate and effective steps to recognise and promote cultural values and cultural tourism opportunities.	• Documentary evidence of collaboration with tourism operators and First Nations peoples to promote cultural tourism opportunities. • Feedback from First Nations partners and tourism operators.	• Administrative data/ desktop review. • Stakeholder engagement conducted by ORIMA (with First Nations peoples/ Traditional Owners and other tourism operators).
	Actions specific to the Coral Sea				
	A17. Promote visitor experiences that foster curiosity and appreciation of natural and heritage values in the marine park, for example diving at Osprey Reef	• Promotion of visitor experiences that foster curiosity and appreciation of natural and heritage values in the marine park. • Promotional content relates to the natural and heritage value of the marine park.	• Visitor experiences relating to natural and heritage values of marine parks are promoted. • Most key stakeholders assess that this promotion is fostering curiosity and appreciation of natural and heritage values.	• Documentary evidence of promotion of visitor experiences relating to natural and heritage values of marine parks. • Feedback from stakeholders.	• Administrative data/ desktop review (including visitor surveys, tourism analytics, website and social metrics). • Stakeholder engagement conducted by ORIMA.
	A18. Work with the Great Barrier Reef Marine Park Authority, and other Commonwealth and state government agencies and the tourism industry to support tourism initiatives, events and attractions that promote visitor experiences in the marine park	• Partnerships and collaborations with the Great Barrier Reef Marine Park Authority, and other Commonwealth and state government	• There has been an increase in initiatives, events and attractions that promote visitor experiences in the marine park.	• Documentary evidence of partnerships and collaborations with the Great Barrier Reef Marine Park Authority, and other	• Administrative data/ desktop review (including visitor surveys, tourism datasets, website and social metrics).

	Actions/ Outcomes	Output(s)	Measure of success	Indicator(s)	Data source(s)/ collection method(s)
		agencies and the tourism industry to support tourism initiatives in the marine park.	Most stakeholders assess that effective support has been provided for these initiatives, events and attractions.	- Commonwealth and state government agencies and the tourism industry to support tourism. - Feedback from key stakeholders.	Stakeholder engagement (with representatives from the Great Barrier Reef Marine Park Authority, other Commonwealth and state government agencies and the tourism industry) conducted by ORIMA.
Management Plan Outcomes	O2. High-quality visitor experiences that are appealing, engaging and raise awareness of the natural and cultural values of marine parks	N/A	- Visitors to the marine park report high-quality experiences. - Visitors report an increased awareness of the natural and cultural values of marine parks. - Most relevant stakeholders report that visitor experiences delivered are appealing, engaging and raise awareness of the natural and cultural values of marine parks.	- Experience and satisfaction ratings from visitors to marine parks. - Feedback from stakeholders.	- Administrative data/ desktop review (including visitor surveys, tourism datasets). - Stakeholder engagement conducted by ORIMA.
	O3. Increased visitation to marine parks	N/A	Year-on-year increase in visitation.	Documentary evidence of visitor	Administrative data/ desktop review

				numbers (compared annually).	(including visitor monitoring indicators, tourism analytics).
	O4. Social and economic benefits from the contribution of marine parks to Australia's visitor economy	N/A	- Increased economic contribution of marine park tourism. - Most stakeholders perceive social and economic benefits from the contribution of marine parks to Australia's visitor economy.	- Documentary evidence of economic contribution of marine park tourism. - Feedback from key stakeholders.	- Administrative data/ desktop review (e.g. economic impact analysis/ tourism datasets). - Stakeholder engagement conducted by ORIMA.

	Actions/ Outcomes	Output(s)	Measure of success	Indicator(s)	Data source
Management program – Indigenous Engagement					
Management Plan Actions	A19. Develop an Australian Marine Parks First Nations engagement and cultural heritage strategy, to improve understanding of cultural heritage, link management with Sea Country plans and maximise employment and enterprise opportunities for Traditional Owners	- First Nations engagement and cultural heritage strategy developed and implemented. - Activities/ initiatives undertaken in accordance with strategy to improve understanding of cultural heritage, link management with Sea Country plans and maximise employment and enterprise	- Strategy delivered in a timely manner. - Most First Nations partners feel strategy is aligned with Sea Country plans. - Most First Nations partners feel strategy has increased understanding of cultural heritage and employment and enterprise opportunities.	- Documentary evidence of strategy completion and implementation. - Feedback from Traditional Owners.	- Administrative data/ desktop review (e.g. economic impact analysis/ tourism datasets, grant program information). - First Nations engagement (with Traditional Owners) conducted by ORIMA.

	Actions/ Outcomes	Output(s)	Measure of success	Indicator(s)	Data source
		opportunities for Traditional Owners.			
	A20. Develop agreements to support First Nations Ranger programs to deliver management in marine parks	Agreements established to support First Nations Ranger programs in marine parks.	- Agreements in place in timely manner. - Increasing First Nations Ranger representation in the management of marine parks.	- Documentary evidence of agreements to support First Nations Ranger programs in marine parks. - Feedback from First Nations partners.	- Administrative data/ desktop review. - First Nations engagement (with First Nations Rangers, community and Traditional Owners) conducted by ORIMA.
	A21. Provide information to First Nations peoples about marine park management	Information developed and shared with First Nations peoples about marine park management (e.g. newsletters, workshops, briefings).	- Completion of outputs in a timely manner. - Most First Nations partners report information has been provided in an appropriate way.	- Documentary evidence of information provision. - Feedback from First Nations partners.	- Administrative data/ desktop review. - First Nations engagement (with First Nations Rangers, First Nations community and Traditional Owners) conducted by ORIMA).
	Actions specific to the Coral Sea				
	A22. Collaborate with Traditional Owners, First Nations Ranger groups, relevant partners and Indigenous advisory committees to undertake marine park management such as surveillance, monitoring, threat mitigation, marine debris removal, and implement actions identified in Sea Country plans where applicable	Collaborative management activities delivered with First Nations partners (Traditional Owners, First Nation Ranger groups, relevant partners and First Nations advisory committees).	- Outputs delivered in a timely manner. - Most First Nations partners feel appropriate and effective collaboration has occurred.	- Documentary evidence of collaborative management activities. - Feedback from Traditional Owners, First Nations Ranger groups, relevant partners and	- Administrative data/ desktop review. - First Nations engagement (with Traditional Owners, First Nations Ranger groups, relevant partners and Indigenous advisory committees)

	Actions/ Outcomes	Output(s)	Measure of success	Indicator(s)	Data source
		Implement actions identified in Sea Country plans where applicable.		Indigenous advisory committees.	conducted by ORIMA).
	A23. Identify opportunities and mechanisms to engage Traditional Owners and First Nations Rangers in the management of the marine park	Formal identification of partnership opportunities and mechanisms for engagement of Traditional Owners and First Nations Rangers in marine park management.	- Completion of outputs in a timely manner. - First Nations partners feel appropriate and adequate efforts have been made to identify opportunities and mechanisms to engage Traditional Owners and First Nations Rangers in the management of the marine park.	- Documentary Evidence of formal identification of partnership opportunities (including the provision of grants). - Feedback from Traditional Owners, First Nations Rangers and the First Nations community.	- Administrative data/ desktop review. - First Nations engagement (with First Nations Rangers, First Nations community and Traditional Owners) conducted by ORIMA.
	A24. Partnerships with Traditional Owners and First Nations groups to manage Sea Country in relevant AMPs	Traditional Owners and First Nations Groups have been engaged in partnerships in relevant marine park management.	- Delivery of partnerships in a timely manner. - First Nations partners feel appropriate and adequate efforts have been made to partner in management of Sea Country.	- Documentary evidence of partnerships (including the provision of grants). - Feedback from Traditional Owners and First Nations groups.	- Administrative data/ desktop review. - First Nations engagement (with Traditional Owners and First Nations groups) conducted by ORIMA.
	A25. Implement cultural awareness training for Parks Australia staff in association with Traditional Owners	Cultural awareness training delivered to Parks Australia staff in collaboration with Traditional Owners.	- Output delivered in a timely manner. - Traditional Owners feel they were appropriately involved in training.	Documentary evidence of proportion of staff who received training.	- Administrative data/ desktop review (e.g. training attendance data). - First Nations engagement (with

	Actions/ Outcomes	Output(s)	Measure of success	Indicator(s)	Data source
				Feedback from Traditional Owners and Parks Australia Staff.	Traditional Owners) and engagement with Parks Australia staff conducted by ORIMA.
	A26. Establish protocols for researchers working with Parks Australia to guide engagement with Traditional Owners	Protocols developed and implemented to guide researchers working with Parks Australia in engaging with Traditional Owners.	Output delivered in a timely manner.	Documentary evidence of protocol development.	Administrative data/ desktop review (e.g. training attendance data).

Management Plan Outcomes	O5. Marine Park management contributes to social, cultural and economic benefits for Traditional Owners	N/A	- Documentary evidence that the management plan contributes to social, cultural and economic benefits for Traditional Owners. - Most First Nations partners feel social/ cultural/ economic benefits have been achieved from marine park management.	- Documentary evidence. - Feedback from Traditional Owners.	- Administrative data/ desktop review. - Engagement with Traditional Owners conducted by ORIMA.
	O6. Increase understanding of traditional knowledge, map cultural values and manage significant sites	N/A	Documentary evidence of initiatives to increase traditional knowledge, map cultural values and manage significant sites.	- Documentary evidence. - Feedback from First Nations partners.	- Administrative data/ desktop review. - Engagement with Traditional Owners and First Nations partners conducted by ORIMA.

			Most First Nations partners feel efforts to increase traditional knowledge, map cultural values and manage significant sites have been sufficient.		
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	Actions/ Outcomes	Output(s)	Measure of success	Indicator(s)	Data source
Management program – Marine science					
Management Plan Actions	A27. Establish ecological, social and economic baselines to support evidence-based decision-making and adaptive management	Baseline datasets established (ecological, social, economic).	- Outputs delivered in a timely manner. - Evidence of baselines utilisation in decision-making to support adaptive management.	- Documentary evidence of baseline datasets/ reports. - Evidence of use of datasets – including references to baseline data in decision-making.	- Administrative data/ desktop review. - Stakeholder engagement conducted by ORIMA.
	A28. Develop an Australian Marine Parks science strategy to prioritise and encourage research and monitoring of park values, pressures and management effectiveness, and foster science communication and knowledge uptake	- Science strategy developed. - Activities/ initiatives undertaken in accordance with strategy to prioritise and encourage research and monitoring of park values, pressures and management effectiveness. - Activities/ initiatives undertaken in	- Outputs delivered in a timely manner. - Strategy has been implemented over the course of the plan to prioritise research and monitoring activities across key areas. - Most stakeholders consider that research priorities align with the strategy, and that	- Documentary evidence of marine parks science strategy. - Feedback from key stakeholders.	- Administrative data/ desktop review. - Stakeholder engagement conducted by ORIMA.

	Actions/ Outcomes	Output(s)	Measure of success	Indicator(s)	Data source
		accordance with strategy to foster science communication and knowledge uptake.	science communication and knowledge uptake have been fostered.		
	A29. Encourage and facilitate knowledge brokering to support collaboration and partnerships with the science community, private enterprise, citizen science organisations and other Commonwealth, state and territory agencies	- Knowledge brokering activities delivered. - Collaborations and partnerships with the science community, private enterprise, citizen science organisations and other Commonwealth, state and territory agencies.	- Outputs delivered consistently over the course of the plan. - Most stakeholders feel effective knowledge brokering has taken place.	- Documentary evidence that partnerships have been established (e.g. collaborative knowledge sharing activities with the science community, private enterprise, citizen science organisations and other Commonwealth, state and territory agencies.) - Feedback from key stakeholders.	- Administrative data/ desktop review. - Stakeholder engagement (with science community, private enterprise, citizen science organisations and other Commonwealth, state and territory agencies) conducted by ORIMA.
	A30. Establish an authorisation system for scientific research and monitoring by third parties and encourage data to be made publicly available through appropriate information portals such as the Australian Ocean Data Network	- Research authorisation system developed and operational. - Data-sharing arrangements established.	- Output delivered in a timely manner. - Increased number of research projects made public.	- Documentary evidence of research authorisation system. - Documentary evidence of research projects made public.	Administrative data/ desktop review.
	A31. Collaborate with the science community (including through the National Marine Science Plan Committee and National Environmental	Joint science initiatives and research collaborations delivered to assist in	Outputs delivered over the course of the plan.	Documentary evidence of joint science initiatives and	Administrative data/ desktop review (e.g. via research project reports).

	Actions/ Outcomes	Output(s)	Measure of success	Indicator(s)	Data source
	Science Program) and other marine park users to assist in improving the understanding of marine park values, pressures and management effectiveness	improving the understanding of marine park values, pressures and management effectiveness.	Most stakeholders feel collaborations with the science community have assisted in improving the understanding of marine park values, pressures and management effectiveness.	research collaborations. Feedback from stakeholders (science community).	Stakeholder engagement conducted by ORIMA.
	A32. Collaborate with the science community and other government agencies to increase the use of innovative and effective technology and systems including sensor technology	Collaborations with the scientific community and government agencies to support the use of innovative and effective technology and systems including sensor technology.	- Most stakeholders feel collaborations with the science community have increased use of innovative and effective technologies and systems over the course of the plan. - Evidence of increased use of innovative and effective technologies and systems over the course of the plan.	- Documentary evidence of joint initiatives to increase the use of innovative and effective technology and systems including sensor technology. - Feedback from key stakeholders (science community).	- Administrative data/ desktop review. - Stakeholder engagement conducted by ORIMA.
	Actions specific to the Coral Sea				
	A33. Monitor social and economic uses and their benefits and impacts on the marine park	- Social and economic monitoring being conducted. - Analysis conducted on benefits and impacts.	Output delivered in a timely and consistent manner.	Documentary evidence of social/economic impact monitoring.	Administrative data/ desktop review.

	Actions/ Outcomes	Output(s)	Measure of success	Indicator(s)	Data source
	A34. Monitor the condition of important habitats such as reef systems at Osprey, Coringa-Herald and Lihou Reefs, and their vulnerability to climate change	Monitoring of important habitats conducted, with attention to vulnerabilities to climate change.	Output delivered in a timely and consistent manner.	Documentary evidence of habitat monitoring.	Administrative data/ desktop review.
	A35. Monitor the impact of invasive species on marine park values and the effectiveness of management	Impact of invasive species on marine park values and the effectiveness of management monitored.	Output delivered in a timely and consistent manner.	Documentary evidence of invasive species monitoring.	- Administrative data/ desktop review. - Stakeholder engagement conducted by ORIMA.
	A36. Collaborate with the Great Barrier Reef Marine Park Authority, other Commonwealth and state government agencies, marine park users and the science sector to support long-term monitoring (e.g., monitoring of coral reefs, protected species and effects of fishing on marine parks)	Long-term monitoring partnerships and programs with the Great Barrier Reef Marine Park Authority, other Commonwealth and state government agencies, marine park users and the science sector delivered.	- Outputs delivered and maintained over life of plan. - Most relevant stakeholders agree that collaborative long-term monitoring programs have been supported and sustained.	- Documentary evidence of monitoring partnerships. - Stakeholder feedback.	- Administrative data/ desktop review. - Stakeholder engagement (with the Great Barrier Reef Marine Park Authority, other Commonwealth and state government agencies, marine park users and the science sector) conducted by ORIMA.
	A37. Investigate opportunities to extend citizen science programs	Expanded or new citizen science programs considered.	Output delivered.	Documentary evidence of investigations to extend citizen science programs.	Administrative data/ desktop review.

Management Plan Outcomes	O7. Increase understanding of marine park values, pressures and adequacy of responses	N/A	- Survey-based metrics show an increase in understanding of marine park values, pressures and adequacy of responses. - Most stakeholders report that awareness, understanding of marine park values, pressures and adequacy of responses has increased within their networks/ organisations/ interest groups.	- Relevant survey questions addressing understanding of marine park values, pressures and adequacy of responses. - Stakeholder feedback.	- Park user surveys - National Environmental Science Program (NESP) 2021 boat ramp surveys and more recent surveys (repeat survey currently in field). - Stakeholder engagement conducted by ORIMA.
	O8. Improve understanding of the effectiveness of marine park management in protecting park values	N/A	- Survey-based metrics show improved understanding of the effectiveness of marine park management in protecting park values. - Most stakeholders report an improved understanding of the effectiveness of marine park management in	- Relevant survey addressing understanding of the effectiveness of marine park management in protecting park values. - Stakeholder feedback.	- Park user surveys. - Stakeholder engagement conducted by ORIMA.

			protecting park values within their networks/ organisations/ interest groups.		
	O9. Informed decision-making and improved evidence-based decisions	N/A	Most stakeholders report informed decision-making and improved evidence-based decisions.	Stakeholder feedback.	Stakeholder engagement conducted by ORIMA.

	Actions/ Outcomes	Output(s)	Measure of success	Indicator(s)	Data source
Management program – Assessments and Authorisations					
Management Plan Actions	A38. Develop and apply best-practice approaches to regulation and decision-making in the authorisation of activities within marine parks. This includes developing policy to ensure assessment and authorisation requirements are clearly articulated and that decision making is robust, consistently applied, and transparent to all marine park users	- Regulatory policy and procedural guidance developed and implemented based on best-practice approaches. - Clear decision-making criteria established and applied (e.g. robust, consistent, transparent).	- Output delivered in a timely manner. - Most stakeholders report that decisions are robust, consistent and transparent.	- Documentary evidence of development and application of best-practice approaches to regulation and decision-making. - Stakeholder feedback.	- Administrative data/ desktop review (e.g. regulatory policy documentation). - Stakeholder engagement conducted by ORIMA.
	A39. Collaborate with industry to investigate innovative technologies and systems (including vessel monitoring systems) that can assist businesses and individuals to comply with regulatory requirements	Investigations of innovative compliance technologies and systems to assist businesses and individuals to comply with regulatory requirements.	- Outputs delivered over course of the plan. - Most stakeholders agree there has been adequate action taken to investigate innovative	- Documentary evidence of collaborations. - Stakeholder feedback.	- Administrative data/ desktop review (e.g. compliance data). - Stakeholder engagement (with businesses and individuals) conducted by ORIMA.

	Actions/ Outcomes	Output(s)	Measure of success	Indicator(s)	Data source
		• Collaboration initiatives with industry in relation to compliance technologies and systems.	technologies and systems (including vessel monitoring systems) that can assist businesses and individuals to comply with regulatory requirements.		
	A40. Develop an effective and efficient process to assess new technologies and gear types to allow for the use of new equipment during the life of this plan if appropriate	• Process and criteria developed for assessment of new gear/ technology to be used.	• Output delivered in a timely manner. • Most stakeholders express the process is effective and efficient in assessing new technologies and gear types to allow for the use of new equipment during the life of this plan.	• Documentary evidence of process. • Stakeholder feedback.	• Administrative data. • Stakeholder engagement conducted by ORIMA.
	A41. Develop a guarantee of service for the regulated community that includes a commitment to work with key marine park users and interest groups whose interests are likely to be affected by regulatory decisions	• Service guarantee developed and publicly available.	• Output delivered in a timely manner. • Most key marine park users and interest groups agree that they have been appropriately consulted regarding regulatory decisions.	• Documentary evidence of service guarantee publication. • Key stakeholder feedback.	• Administrative data/ desktop review. • Stakeholder engagement (marine park users and interest groups) conducted by ORIMA.
	A42. Develop a customer focused online authorisation system for marine park users that includes publishing authorisations issued by Parks Australia on its website	• Online authorisation system developed and operational. • Authorisations published online.	• Output delivered in a timely manner. • Transparent publication of all authorisations.	• Documentary evidence of system development. • Documentary evidence of	• Administrative data/ desktop review.

	Actions/ Outcomes	Output(s)	Measure of success	Indicator(s)	Data source
				authorisations published.	
	Actions specific to the Coral Sea				
	A43. Issue authorisations—a permit, class approval, activity licence or lease—for activities in the marine park assessed as acceptable either by the Director or another government or industry policy, plan or program accepted by the Director	Authorisations issued for activities in the marine park that are assessed as acceptable by the Director or align with an approved government or industry policy, plan or program accepted by the Director.	Outputs delivered in a timely manner.	- Documentary evidence. - Stakeholder feedback.	- Administrative data/ desktop review (e.g. evidence of authorisations: permits, class approvals, activity licences or lease). - Stakeholder engagement (marine park users and interest groups) conducted by ORIMA.
	A44. Work with the Great Barrier Reef Marine Park Authority and Queensland government agencies to improve experiences and consistency of approaches for people seeking authorisations	- Collaborations with the Great Barrier Reef Marine Park Authority and Queensland government agencies to improve experiences of people seeking authorisations. - Consistent approaches achieved for authorisations.	- Output delivered. - Most relevant stakeholders believe consistency of experiences has increased.	- Documentary evidence of alignment between AMP and GBRMPA/ QLD authorisation processes. - Stakeholder feedback.	- Administrative data/ desktop review (e.g. evidence of collaboration to increase consistency of authorisation processes). - Stakeholder engagement conducted by ORIMA.
Management Plan Outcomes	O10. Assessments and authorisations ensure ongoing protection of marine park values through the management of activities in marine parks	N/A	Most stakeholders feel assessments and authorisations have ensured ongoing	Stakeholder feedback.	Stakeholder engagement conducted by ORIMA.

			protection of marine park values through the management of activities in marine parks.		
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	Actions/ Outcomes	Output(s)	Measure of success	Indicator(s)	Data source
Management program – Parks protection and management					
Management Plan Actions	A45. Apply a risk-based assessment process to prioritise park protection and management actions	Risk-based assessment process developed and applied to prioritise park protection and management actions.	Output delivered in a timely manner.	Documentary evidence of framework development.	Administrative data/ desktop review (e.g. risk assessment reports).
	A46. Develop an Australian Marine Parks critical incident strategy in collaboration with the Australian Maritime Safety Authority (AMSA) and other responsible agencies to respond to critical incidents	- Critical incident strategy developed and implemented. - Collaboration with AMSA and relevant agencies established.	Output delivered in a timely manner.	Documentary evidence of strategy completion.	Administrative data/ desktop review (e.g. strategy documentation and incident response reports).
	A47. Develop a mooring and anchoring strategy to protect marine park values and improve visitor experience	Mooring and anchoring strategy developed and implemented in consideration of marine park values and visitor experience.	Output delivered in a timely manner.	Documentary evidence of strategy completion.	Administrative data/ desktop review (e.g. strategy documentation).
	A48. Support the removal of marine debris and ghost nets from marine parks through partnerships with Commonwealth, state and territory government agencies and other	Marine debris partnerships and removal programs delivered.	- Outputs delivered in a timely manner. - Most stakeholders believe effective collaboration achieved to support	Documentary evidence of collaborative initiatives or programs to support the removal of	Administrative data/ desktop review (e.g. debris removal data, evidence of partnerships).

	Actions/ Outcomes	Output(s)	Measure of success	Indicator(s)	Data source
	organisations involved in the management of marine debris		removal of marine debris and/ or ghost nets.	marine debris and ghost nets. • Feedback from stakeholders.	• Stakeholder engagement conducted by ORIMA.
	A49. Contribute to actions, where appropriate, that support Australia's obligations under international agreements and national environmental law (e.g., World Heritage Convention, Ramsar Convention, recovery plans, wildlife conservation plans and threat abatement plans)	• Actions that support Australia's obligations under international agreements and national environmental law.	• Outputs delivered. • Most stakeholders feel appropriate actions have been taken to support Australia's obligations under international agreements and national environmental law.	• Documentary evidence of actions taken to support Australia's obligations under international agreements and national environmental law. • Feedback from stakeholders.	• Administrative data/ desktop review (e.g. International/ national reporting documentation). • Stakeholder engagement conducted by ORIMA.
	Actions specific to the Coral Sea				
	A50. Enable infrastructure such as moorings to protect coral reefs and enhance visitor safety, such as at Osprey Reef	• Infrastructure (e.g., moorings) established and maintained.	• Outputs delivered at key visitor sites. • Most key stakeholders report improvements to reef protection and/ or visitor safety.	• Documentary evidence of infrastructure delivered. • Key stakeholder feedback.	• Administrative data/ desktop review (e.g. infrastructure records). • Stakeholder engagement conducted by ORIMA.
	A51. Collaborate with and support other agencies that undertake invasive and protected species management and marine debris removal (e.g., biosecurity assessments, research, removal of ghost nets)	• Collaborations to support other agencies that undertake invasive and protected species management and marine debris removal.	• Outputs delivered in a timely manner. • Most stakeholders express there have been effective joint programs concerning invasive and protected species	• Documentary evidence of collaborative programs. • Key stakeholder feedback.	• Administrative data/ desktop review (e.g. program documentation). • Stakeholder engagement conducted by ORIMA.

	Actions/ Outcomes	Output(s)	Measure of success	Indicator(s)	Data source
			management and marine debris removal.		
	A52. Work with the Great Barrier Reef Marine Park Authority and other Commonwealth and state government agencies to respond to environmental incidents and accidents	Joint incident responses.	- Joint incident responses actioned when appropriate. - Most key stakeholders feel effective collaboration has taken place to respond to environmental incidents and accidents.	- Documentary evidence of joint incidence responses. - Key stakeholder feedback.	- Administrative data/ desktop review (e.g. incident reports). - Stakeholder engagement conducted by ORIMA.
	A53. Collaborate with Traditional Owners and First Nations Ranger groups to undertake management actions	Collaborative management activities implemented with Traditional Owners and First Nations Ranger groups.	- Outputs delivered. - Most Traditional Owner and First Nations Ranger partners report adequate involvement in management actions.	- Documentary evidence of collaborative management actions. - Feedback from Traditional Owners and First Nations Ranger groups.	- Administrative data/ desktop review. - First Nations engagement conducted by ORIMA.
Management Plan Outcomes	O11. Impact of pressures on marine park values are minimised as far as reasonably practicable	N/A	- Documentary evidence of minimisation of pressures on marine park values. - Most stakeholders feel the impact of pressures on marine	- Documentary evidence. - Stakeholder feedback.	- Administrative data/ desktop review. - Stakeholder engagement conducted by ORIMA.

			park values has been minimised as far as reasonably practicable.		
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	Actions/ Outcomes	Output(s)	Measure of success	Indicator(s)	Data source
Management program – Compliance					
Management Plan Actions	A54. Apply a risk-based approach to compliance planning, targeted enforcement and compliance auditing	Risk-based compliance approach developed and applied.	Output delivered in a timely manner.	Documentary evidence of risk-based compliance planning, enforcement and auditing.	Administrative data/ desktop review.
	A55. Collaborate with Australian, state and territory government agencies by sharing assets and information	Collaborations with Australian, state and territory government agencies by sharing assets and information.	- Outputs delivered in a timely and consistent manner. - Most stakeholders report effective collaboration has occurred.	- Documentary evidence of sharing of assets and information with other government agencies (Australian and state/ territory). - Stakeholder feedback.	- Administrative data/ desktop review. - Stakeholder engagement conducted by ORIMA.
	A56. Investigate the use of new technologies and warning systems to assist in the detection of potential illegal activities	New technologies assessed, trialled or implemented to assist in the detection of potential illegal activities.	Outputs delivered consistently.	Documentary evidence of assessment, trialling or implementation of new technologies to assist in the detection of potential illegal activities.	Administrative data/ desktop review.

	A57. Work with marine park users to promote understanding of the rules for activities and how to comply	Promotion of rules and activities relating to how to comply.	- Outputs delivered consistently. - Most relevant stakeholders feel they have been adequately engaged regarding marine park rules and how to comply.	- Documentary evidence of efforts to work with marine park users to promote understanding of the rules for activities and how to comply. - Stakeholder feedback.	- Administrative data/ desktop review. - Stakeholder engagement conducted by ORIMA.
	Actions specific to the Coral Sea				
	A58. Work with the Great Barrier Reef Marine Park Authority and other Commonwealth and state government agencies in compliance planning, including implementing actions to deter illegal activities and encourage voluntary compliance	- Joint compliance planning undertaken with focus on deterring illegal activities and encouraging voluntary compliance. - Actions Implemented towards this end.	- Outputs delivered in a timely and consistent manner. - Most stakeholders consider joint compliance planning to be effective.	- Documentary evidence of shared compliance planning. - Stakeholder feedback.	- Administrative data/ desktop review. - Stakeholder engagement (with the Great Barrier Reef Marine Park Authority and other Commonwealth and state government agencies) conducted by ORIMA.
	A59. Collaborate with the Great Barrier Reef Marine Park Authority and other Commonwealth and state government agencies in surveillance, including water and aerial patrols	Joint surveillance actions, including water and aerial patrols.	- Outputs delivered in a timely and consistent manner. - Most stakeholders consider joint surveillance actions to be effective.	Documentary evidence of joint surveillance actions, including water and aerial patrols.	- Administrative data/ desktop review (e.g. patrol logs Surveillance collaboration actions/ reports/ evidence). - Stakeholder engagement (with the Great Barrier Reef Marine Park Authority and other

					Commonwealth and state government agencies) conducted by ORIMA.
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Management Plan Outcomes	O12. Improved user awareness of marine park rules	N/A	- Survey-based metrics show an increase in awareness of marine park rules. - Most stakeholders report that awareness of marine park rules has improved.	- Relevant survey responses addressing awareness of marine park rules. - Stakeholder feedback.	- Park user surveys - National Environmental Science Program (NESP) 2021 boat ramp surveys and more recent surveys (repeat survey currently in field). - Stakeholder engagement conducted by ORIMA.
	O13. Increased levels of voluntary compliance and self-regulation by marine park users	N/A	- Evidence of increased voluntary compliance and self-regulation by users of marine parks. - Most stakeholders perceive voluntary compliance to have increased.	- Survey based metrics of voluntary compliance attitudes and behaviours (including self-regulation). - Documentary evidence of self-regulation. - Stakeholder feedback.	- Park user surveys. - Administrative data/desktop review (e.g. compliance monitoring records/audits). - Stakeholder engagement conducted by ORIMA.
	O14. High overall levels of compliance with the rules by marine park users	N/A	- High levels of compliance over course of plan. - Most stakeholders perceive compliance	Survey based metrics of compliance attitudes and behaviours.	- Park user surveys. - Administrative data/desktop review (e.g. compliance

			with the rules to be high.	- Documentary records of rates of compliance/ non-compliance (e.g. investigations). - Stakeholder feedback.	monitoring records/audits). Stakeholder engagement conducted by ORIMA.
	O15. A decrease in the number of non-compliances	N/A	- Decreasing trend in non-compliance incidents over the course of the plan. - Most stakeholders consider non-compliance to be decreasing.	- Documentary records of number of non-compliances throughout the life of the plan. - Stakeholder feedback.	- Administrative data/ desktop review (e.g. compliance monitoring records/audits). - Stakeholder engagement conducted by ORIMA.