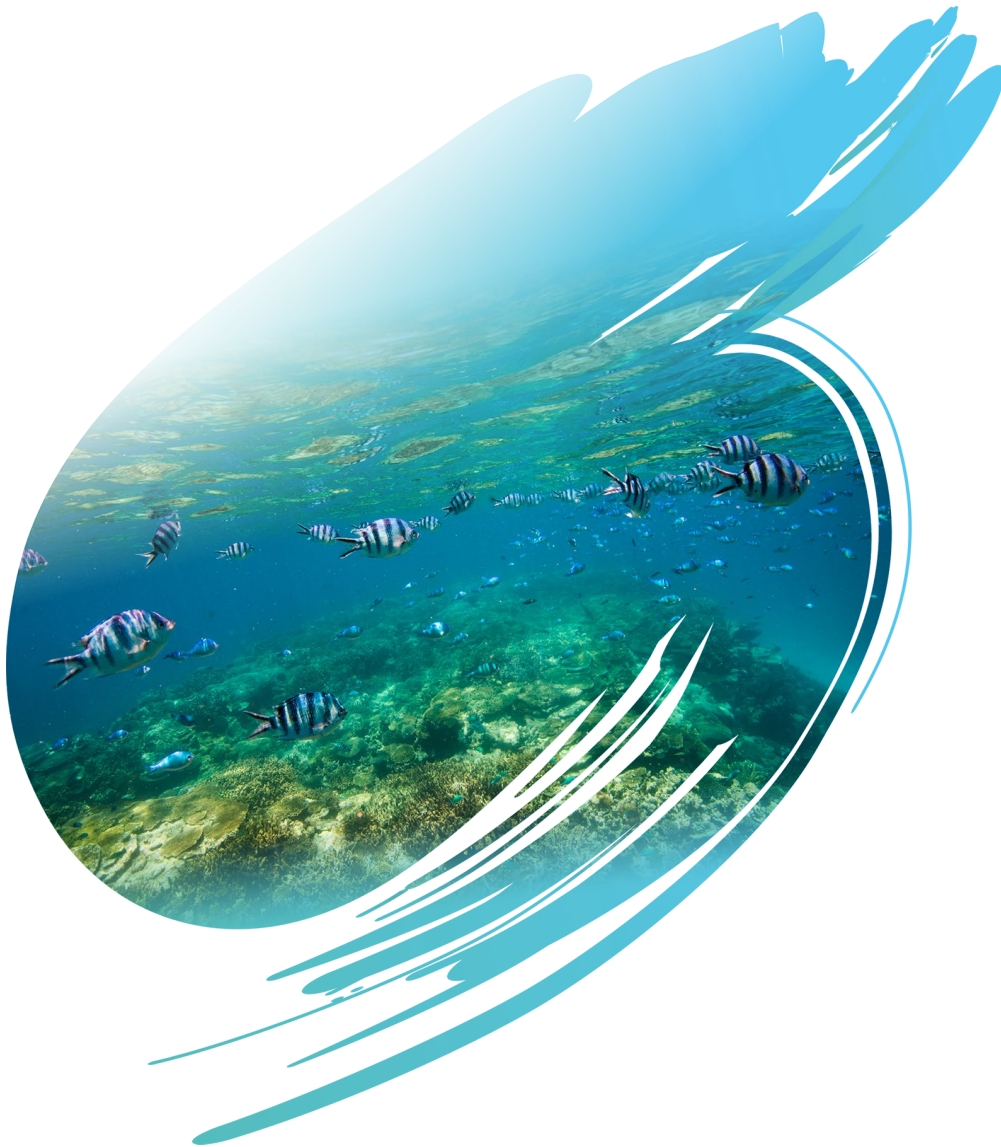


# Reef Trust Partnership



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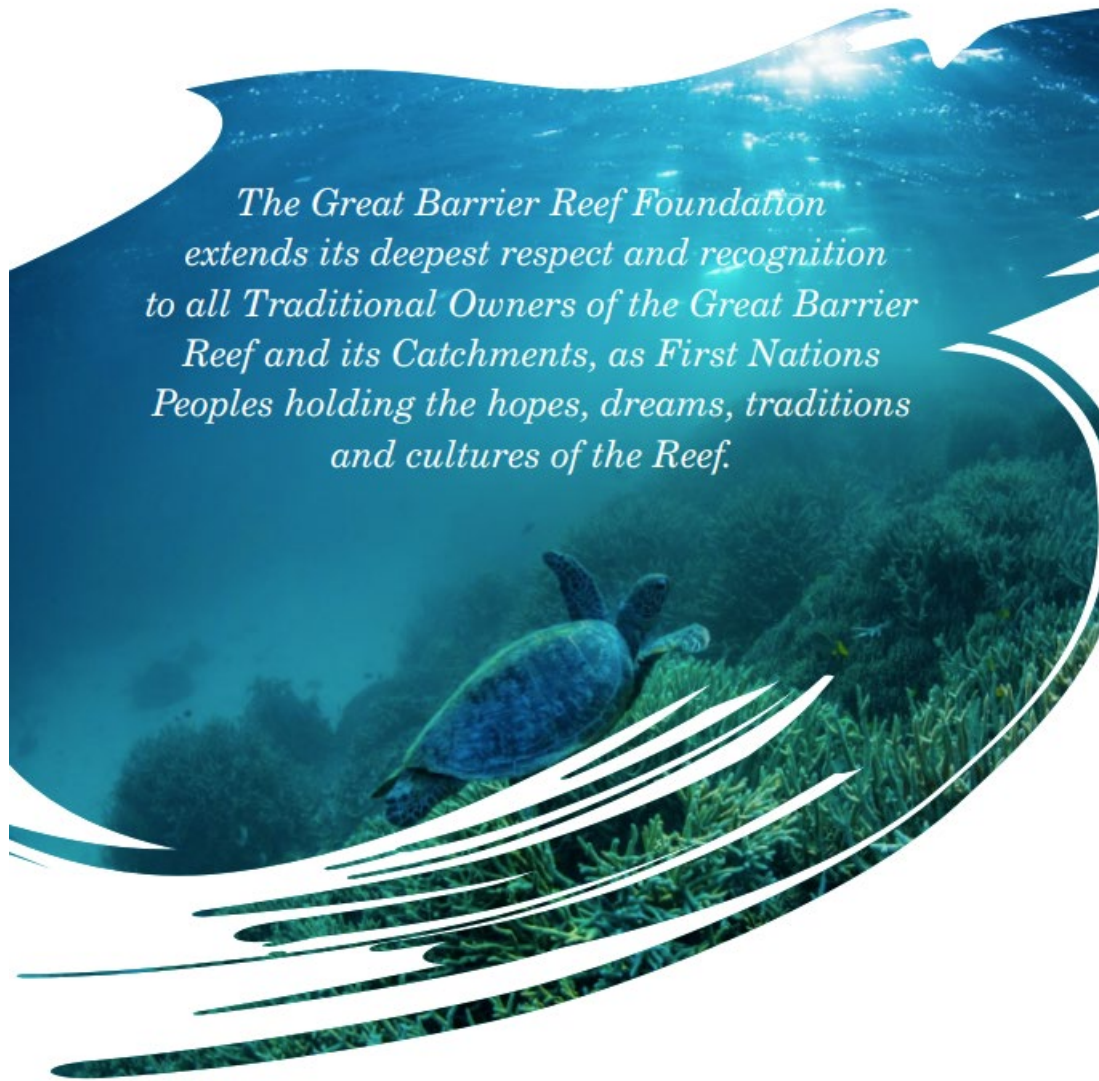
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## Acronyms and Glossary

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AIMS	Australian Institute of Marine Science
CAP	Community Action Plan
CAP Leaders	Community Action Plan Leaders
CCIP	COTS Control Innovation Program
Co-Design Groups	Formerly referred to as Traditional Owner Technical Working Groups.
Component	A term used in the Grant Agreement to describe the six different focus areas under the Partnership: Water Quality, Crown-of-Thorns Starfish Control, Reef Restoration and Adaptation Science, Integrated Monitoring and Reporting, Traditional Owner Reef Protection, and Community Reef Protection
COTS	Crown-of-Thorns Starfish
DMS	Data Management System
DES	Queensland Department of Environment and Science
DIN	Dissolved inorganic nitrogen
DSS	Decision support system
FS/FSS	Fine sediments / Fine suspended sediments
GBR	Great Barrier Reef
The Foundation/GBRF	Great Barrier Reef Foundation
GBRMPA	Great Barrier Reef Marine Park Authority
GBRWHA	Great Barrier Reef World Heritage Area
IMR	Integrated Monitoring and Reporting (Component of the Reef Trust Partnership)
JCU	James Cook University
LMAC	Local Marine Advisory Committee
M&E	Monitoring and Evaluation
NESP	National Environmental Science Program
NRM	Natural resource management
Partnership	Reef Trust Partnership
Partnership Activities	An overarching term for the key deliverables of the RTP portfolio, described as Activities and listed in each Annual Work Plan. Programs and Projects ladder up into the Partnership Activities.
QUT	Queensland University of Technology
R&D	Research and Development
RIMREP	Reef 2050 Integrated Monitoring and Reporting Program
RRAP	Reef Restoration and Adaptation Program
RRAS	Reef Restoration and Adaptation Science
RRRC	Reef and Rainforest Research Centre
RTP	Reef Trust Partnership
SCU	Southern Cross University
TAG	(Water Quality) Technical Advisory Group
TOAG	Traditional Owner Advisory Group
TWG	Traditional Owner Technical Working Group. NB: As of the start of 2021-2022, these groups will be referred to as Co-Design Groups, working across the Traditional Owner Reef Protection Component.
UQ	The University of Queensland
WQIP	Reef 2050 Water Quality Improvement Plan



*The Great Barrier Reef Foundation  
extends its deepest respect and recognition  
to all Traditional Owners of the Great Barrier  
Reef and its Catchments, as First Nations  
Peoples holding the hopes, dreams, traditions  
and cultures of the Reef.*

This Work Plan was approved by the Great Barrier Reef Foundation Board on 5 June 2025.

# Annual Work Plan 2025-2026: Summary

This is the seventh Annual Work Plan for the Reef Trust Partnership (RTP). Outlining the investment priorities for the eighth year of the \$437.8m landmark Reef Trust Partnership (a partnership between the Australian Government and the Great Barrier Reef Foundation). It represents the seventh year of on-ground and on-water delivery.

The RTP Annual Work Plan 2025-2026 details work continuing across a small number of projects in the portfolio for the COTS Control, Traditional Owner and Community Reef Protection Components. All work within the Water Quality Component will conclude by 30 June 2025. COTS Control, Traditional Owner and Community Reef Protection Component activities continue until 30 June 2026.

**Budget: \$10.499m**

## **Annual Work Plan activities at a glance:**

### **COTS Control Component (budget \$2.27m)**

- Finalise and communicate the outcomes from eight research translation projects that operationalise and integrate COTS Control Innovation Program (CCIP) outputs into the on-water COTS Control Program.
- Prioritise and deliver bridging research to support the COTS Control Program and maintain readiness should funding become available for a CCIP Phase 2.

### **Traditional Owner Reef Protection Component (budget \$6.94m)**

- Co-evaluation with Traditional Owner governance members on RTP projects and activities and distribute findings to both Traditional Owner groups and key Reef partners to promote outcomes and learnings.
- Continued delivery of all existing programs including implementation of the Healthy Country Grants program and Country based monitoring 'stepping stone' activities.
- Establish Futures Fund sustainable funding model in partnership with the Reef 2050 Traditional Owner Implementation Plan Taskforce.

### **Community Reef Protection Component (budget \$1.289m)**

- Finalising the on-ground implementation of Community Climate Action and Citizen Science projects.
- Delivering accessible tools and resources that support community Reef protection work.
- Working with partners to share stories of achievements and learnings to increase visibility and awareness of community-led Reef protection work.
- Working with partners on transition planning to ensure enduring outcomes for community Reef protection work beyond RTP, with a focus on legacy pathways for network-building projects.

## **Across the Portfolio:**

- There will be a continued focus on building and nurturing strategic partnerships across the Portfolio as Components fully close out and transition to elsewhere in the Reef system.
- The RTP will continue to support system readiness for TO governance and power sharing arrangements as a number of complementary Traditional Owner Reef Protection workstreams are activated in the coming years from management partners.
- At a Portfolio level, formal RTP transition planning and legacy capture processes will continue to ensure the momentum created through the RTP is not lost at the end of each Component's activities.
- The final RTP Evaluation was delivered on 31 January 2025 for the Water Quality, COTS Control, Reef Restoration and Adaptation Science and Integrated Monitoring & Reporting Components. Traditional Owner and Community Reef Protection full evaluations will occur closer to their close out date of 30 June 2026.

# Crown-of-Thorns Starfish (COTS) Control Component

**Partnership Budget: \$60.7m** (includes an additional \$2.9m of funds derived from interest earned on the RTP investment to specifically fund CCIP bridging activities)

**2025-2026 budget: \$2.27m** (includes RTP funding plus \$0.94m co-investment for CCIP bridging activities)





**Purpose:** To expand efforts to control Crown-of-Thorns Starfish (COTS) to reduce coral mortality from COTS outbreaks, in order to protect high ecological and economic value coral reefs in line with GBRMPA's COTS Control Strategy.

## Priorities under the Partnership Investment Strategy

- Support existing in-water COTS control and drive improved efficiency
- Lead a step change in surveillance for early COTS detection and early intervention
- Explore alternative control methods to address COTS management at a broad scale in the future

## End-of-Partnership Outcomes

The Reef Trust Partnership's COTS Control Component has resulted in:

 <p>Reduced coral mortality from COTS outbreaks at high-value reefs</p>	 <p>Improved methods to manage COTS at scale have been identified</p>	 <p>Expanded delivery partners involved in COTS management (Traditional Owner enterprises)</p>	 <p>Strategy for long term funding is available for influencing/advocacy</p>
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## COTS focus in 2025-2026:

Last year, activity focused on finalising technical reports, publications and communications on the outcomes from CCIP's three-year R&D Phase (2021-2024), as well as the completion of an independent expert evaluation which found that all contractual end of Partnership outcomes had been achieved, and in many cases exceeded. Work also commenced on investing in eight research translation projects and planning for the future of COTS research. Major outputs include the delivery of a CCIP Synthesis & Impact Report as well as the development of an Investment Case for a new five-year COTS R&D program. At the same time, CCIP partners and stakeholders worked together to secure additional short-term funding for ongoing COTS research to bridge the gap while investment in a longer-term COTS R&D program is being considered. This bridging research investment includes funding from interest earned through the RTP Grant, as well as co-investment secured through DCCEEW and AIMS.

In 2025-2026, activity will focus on two areas. First, eight research translation projects will be finalised and their outcomes will be communicated to stakeholders. These outcomes include the successful integration of new detection and monitoring technologies (e.g. eDNA, robotics, AI), decision support tools and modelling in COTS Control Program systems and processes. Second, CCIP partners and COTS managers will work together to prioritise investment in new bridging research that will maintain cross-institutional collaboration, deliver priority research that supports the COTS Control Program, and ensure readiness for a longer-term R&D program should funding become available. This will include dedicated work to coordinate activities across related programs through the CCIP Steering Committee and engagement with Traditional Owners to support their priority bridging activities.



# COTS Control Annual Work Plan: 2025-2026

Major categories of activity, deliverables and budget for 2025-2026 are shown in Table 5.

Table 1: COTS Control Component investment areas and budget for 2025-2026

Partnership Activity	Description	Budget
<p>COTS Control Innovation Program – Bridging Activities</p> <p>Funded through the RTP</p>	<p>Activities will include overseeing the final delivery of eight research translation projects that integrate and apply CCIP outputs in COTS Control Program systems and processes, as well as prioritising and managing coordinated investment in new bridging research that supports ongoing improvement in COTS management. Activity will also focus on building partnerships with Traditional Owners.</p> <p><b>Deliverables:</b> Finalise delivery of eight research translation projects and communicate their outcomes. Prioritise and invest in new bridging COTS research. Coordinate investments across partners and related programs with guidance from the CCIP Steering Committee. Engage with Traditional Owner governance group to allocate bridging funds for TO priority activities.</p>	\$1.33m
<p>COTS Control Innovation Program – Bridging Activities</p> <p>Funded through co-investment from DCCEW and AIMS</p>	<p>Activities will focus on prioritising and managing coordinated investment in new bridging research that supports ongoing improvement in COTS management.</p> <p><b>Deliverables:</b> Deliver EOI process to allocate funding for bridging research. Contract and kick-off a suite of new bridging projects. Oversee and coordinate project delivery with other investments. Report to funders and partners on progress and outcomes.</p>	\$0.94m
TOTAL INVESTMENT		\$2.27m



# Traditional Owner Reef Protection Component

Partnership Budget: \$51.8m<sup>1</sup>

2024-2025 budget: \$11.657m

**Purpose:** To improve the engagement of Traditional Owners in the protection of the Great Barrier Reef World Heritage Area.

## Priorities under the Partnership Investment Strategy

- Land and sea action and investment planning
- Active Traditional Owner-led Reef protection activities
- Indigenous innovation, leadership and collaboration
- Sustainable Funding (Futures Fund)

## End-of-Partnership Outcomes

The Reef Trust Partnership's Traditional Owner Reef Protection Component will result in:



<sup>1</sup> The [Investment Strategy](#) describes the Foundation's commitment to allocate a minimum of \$42m to Traditional Owner-led Reef protection actions under the Reef Trust Partnership. This includes a minimum of 10% from each of the Water Quality, COTS Control, Reef Restoration and Adaptation Science, and Integrated Monitoring and Reporting Component budgets towards co-designed Traditional Owner-led activities. When combined with the \$12m allocated towards Indigenous Reef Protection in the [Grant Agreement](#), this equates to \$51.8m.

## **Progress on our journey**

An early learning of the RTP program was that having meaningful and respectful partnerships with Traditional Owners was essential for co-design to occur. The governance framework of 22 positions (held by 19 Traditional Owners) has been maintained with minimal changes of personnel since the structure was originally established, and signifying the enduring success achieved by applying these partnerships principals. It is this continuity of advice and trust that continues to provide the direction for the program.

The co-designed geographical focus has also been innovative by factoring in the connected waterways and wetlands of the Reef Catchment. This is not only doubling the number of Traditional Owner groups who can become program partners and actively contribute to improving the health of the Reef but also supports Traditional Owner groups to reduce negative impacts of land use impacts on their Country closer to the source.

The connection and relationship with place have been non-negotiables for Traditional Owners since well before the Reef was created. The Reef in our contemporary space continues to be a dynamic biocultural land and seascape with enduring connections to Traditional Owners that sustain ongoing cultural practice, custom and responsibilities. It sits at the heart of so many people's identity, health and wellbeing.

It is this foundational understanding and the intrinsic value of Traditional Owner intergenerational knowledge development and management of the Reef that will continue to drive the work that the Foundation undertakes in partnership with Traditional Owners moving forward. As different environmental and social urgencies emerge with the escalation of climate change and failure for First Nations peoples to obtain Constitutional recognition, we have these underlying principles to keep us on track and motivated in our work together.

Through the RTP program directly funding Traditional Owner groups, they control when, where and how they manage their Country. The co-designed program has ensured that the Foundation is delivering a best practice approach in management of the Reef and one that is being looked to by many others around Australia and internationally. This community-up approach comes with bespoke, local solutions that meet the needs of Country and People and requires adequate resourcing.

The delivery extension to June 2026 for this RTP Component has provided an opportunity to fully consider and capitalise on the impacts of the program, capture the lessons learned and provide advice for future programs. As the RTP shifts into evaluating and reporting on final outcomes of projects and the program, the Foundation will focus on ensuring the impact achieved can be sustainable in prioritising communication of these experiences and findings, both to Traditional Owners and other critical Reef management partners.

## **Key achievements to date include:**

- Delivering outcomes for land, sea and community with more than 8,462 Traditional Owners involved in the delivery of 94 Reef protection projects led by 65 Traditional Owner groups.
- Advocating for changed processes that see Traditional Owners involved and consulted in Water Quality planning processes at a State and Reef level, including the Scientific Consensus Statement and Water Quality Improvement Plan.
- Traditional Owner governance members have contributed 868+ hours to co-designing the partnership.
- Diving deep into understanding the co-design approach that was created in partnership between the Foundation and Traditional Owners and sharing learnings with external parties.
- Gaining a deeper understanding of the supporting governance and operational features that Traditional Owner groups require to maintain their own long-term monitoring and reporting
- Launching the [Our Reef Stories](#) website which now hosts the RTP project stories and learnings through self-determined ways that uplift Traditional Owner communities and creates a shared understanding in the broader community of the work being done with the assistance of RTP funding.
- Increase in opportunities and the support provided to Reef Traditional Owners attending and speaking at national and international conferences, delivering on a long-held aspiration held by Traditional Owners for many years.

## *Reef Trust Partnership*















- Delivering three Traditional Owner designed peer-to-peer learning forums showcasing innovations, learnings and experiences achieved through RTP with other groups - most recently the Traditional Owner Grants Gathering 2025.
- Elevating Indigenous women voices and creating advocacy for gender equity in environmental programs, with Women's' Leadership programs supporting participation of over 330 women.
- Supporting Traditional Owner Youth in their learning and leadership aspirations. Nine youth projects have been funded resulting in over 3,898 young people being engaged in on-Country activities.

### **As we move into 2025-2026, we will:**




- Support grant recipients implementing on-ground Traditional owner-led projects, through the Helping Country, Community Action Plans and Blue Carbon grants
- Increase our focus on training and capacity building for existing and emerging Traditional Owner leadership in both Reef and catchment related areas
- Invest in the identified 'stepping stone' activities that assist Traditional Owners in their biocultural monitoring and reporting ambitions, including identifying a minimal standard for partnership working with the Foundation and Traditional Owners in this space
- Continue to work with Traditional Owners and Reef 2050 partners to advance Traditional Owner leadership in the governance and management of the Great Barrier Reef
- Continue to showcase impact stories from a strategic communication lens that places Traditional Owner voices at the centre of stories
- Support Traditional Owners in presenting and disseminating key learnings of RTP at conferences and workshops
- Review and report on the implementation of the pilot project of the *Strong Peoples–Strong Country* Framework
- Support Traditional Owner groups to enhance their foundational structures and systems for self-determined Country based monitoring and data sharing commitments
- Capture and share learnings, evaluate outcomes and impact and support transition to future models of Traditional Owner funding delivery, including investing in an independent analysis of the cultural and social return on RTP investment for Traditional Owners
- Continue to develop relationships and critical partnerships with Traditional Owners for the Reef and its catchments
- Work within existing co-design governance arrangements to establish transition pathways for the RTP, including formalising partnership arrangements with the Reef 2050 Traditional Owner Taskforce and determining future arrangements for the Traditional Owner Futures Fund.

# Traditional Owner Reef Protection Seven-Year Plan

Table 2: Traditional Owner Reef Protection Partnership Activities and Budgets

Partnership Activity		Rationale	Description	Budget
<b>Indigenous innovation, leadership and collaboration</b>				<b>\$5m</b>
   	Traditional Owner Partnership Governance	The Traditional Owner Reef Protection Component provides an unprecedented opportunity for Reef Traditional Owners to action key recommendations and priorities for the management of Country that have been consistently identified and documented over the past two decades.	The Partnership is committed to a process of co-design, co-delivery and co-evaluation with Traditional Owners of the Reef.	
	Leadership and capacity-building		This activity will support leadership activities that build and strengthen the capacity and capability of Traditional Owners to actively participate in the Partnership and into the future.	
	Strategic communication and engagement	Traditional Owner engagement in the Partnership aims to strengthen leadership, active participation and decision-making, with co-designed programs and projects delivering improvements to equitable outcomes and maximising co-benefits.	Effective communication and engagement of Reef Traditional Owners remains a critical priority throughout the Partnership.	
	Co-design action framework		This activity involves the development of a Reef co-design (co-benefit) framework with Traditional Owners, Reef 2050 partners and the broader community.	
<b>Traditional Owner Futures Fund</b>				<b>\$10m</b>
   	Establish a Traditional Owner Futures Fund	Independent and sustainable financing is needed to support governance, future leadership activities (such as student scholarships) and strategic investments which build Traditional Owner capacity and capability in Reef management.	This activity aims to provide a sustainable funding stream for Traditional Owner Reef protection activities through the \$10m allocated to this fund and invested in term deposits.	
<b>Active Traditional Owner-led Reef protection activities</b>				<b>\$36.8m</b>
  	Crown-of-Thorns starfish control	<p>There is a recognised need for Traditional Owner groups to be directly involved in decision-making and management of reefs and activities on their Sea Country.</p> <p>There is a need to create culturally appropriate pathways for Traditional Owners to increase employment opportunities, build partnerships, co-design programs, diversify skillsets and lead economic enterprises related to COTS surveillance and control.</p>	This work supports activities that improve Traditional Owner innovations and participation in crown-of-thorns starfish control and facilitates training and service delivery partnerships.	\$5.3m
  	Reef monitoring and reporting	Traditional Owners are the keepers of Indigenous knowledge and cultural values and have observed dramatic changes on their country. The <i>Strong Peoples-Strong Country</i> framework provides the basis for	Traditional Owner knowledge forms a critical part of building a holistic understanding of the condition and trend of Reef values. This work aims to implement the <i>Strong Peoples-Strong Country</i> framework, including negotiation of data-sharing	\$3.5m

## Reef Trust Partnership

Partnership Activity		Rationale	Description	Budget
		<p>understanding the Reef as a biocultural ecosystem and requires investment to develop indicators to understand the condition and status of Indigenous heritage in the Reef.</p> <p>There is a need to resource Traditional Owners to build capacity and diversify skill sets to enable recording and appropriate sharing of Indigenous knowledge and information.</p>	agreements, audit of monitoring skills, tools and assets and development and implementation of education and employment pathways.	
	Healthy water	<p>Traditional Owners require better engagement in the Reef 2050 Water Quality Improvement Plan and related funding opportunities. The inclusion of Indigenous values in current water quality programs are needed to improve decision-making.</p>	<p>This work aims to improve Traditional Owner access to, and active participation in, water quality projects through grants, a water literacy toolkit and assistance from a coordinator.</p> <p>Adoption of co-design approaches in the Reef Trust Partnership Water Quality Component will improve active participation and maximise benefits for Traditional Owners.</p>	\$17m
	Reef restoration and adaptation	<p>Traditional Owners hold inherent rights to the Reef and have successfully cared for their traditional country since time immemorial. Over the last century, they have witnessed increased pressures and a changing environment. This carries with it a deep sadness for the loss of their Country's healthy. Traditional Owners must therefore form part of the solution to improve the health of the Reef.</p> <p>There is a need to create culturally appropriate pathways and make resources available for Traditional Owners to diversify skillsets, build capacity, contribute to and lead research, and formalise education and employment pathways to heal country and people.</p>	<p>This work aims to improve Traditional Owner leadership, access to and active participation in Reef restoration and adaptation projects, as well as the appropriate uptake of Traditional Owner innovation and ICIP by mainstream partners.</p>	\$9m
	Early investment: Stage 1 grants program	<p>Country-based planning and implementation provides a structured approach for groups to articulate and understand the values and aspirations of their Land and Sea Country for improved management.</p> <p>There is a need for Indigenous heritage including biocultural systems, culturally significant species and important habitats to be mapped and monitored.</p>	<p>This initial open grant round was launched in early 2019 and addresses three key focus areas:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Country-based planning</li> <li>2. Implementation of existing Country-based plans</li> <li>3. Junior ranger activities.</li> </ol>	\$2m
Total Traditional Owner Reef Protection Component Budget:				\$51.8m

# Traditional Owner Reef Protection Annual Work Plan: 2025-2026

Table 3: Traditional Owner Reef Protection Component Partnership Activities and Budget 2025-2026

Partnership Activity	Description	Budget
<b>Indigenous innovation, leadership and collaboration</b>		
Traditional Owner program governance	<p>Ongoing delivery of Traditional Owner Reef Trust Partnership governance arrangements.</p> <p><b><i>Deliverables:</i></b></p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Elevate the Traditional Owner Advisory Group to a Board appointed committee and meet up to four times a year.</li> <li>2. The established Traditional Owner Technical Working Groups to meet in accordance with their terms of reference.</li> </ol>	\$0.662m
Leadership and capacity building	<p>This program area will support leadership activities that build and strengthen the capacity and capabilities of Traditional Owners to actively participate and provide leadership in the Partnership.</p> <p><b><i>Deliverables:</i></b></p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Coordinate the attendance of Traditional Owners at opportunities and events to further strengthen leadership resilience in performance of governance duties.</li> <li>2. Support youth initiatives and programs that foster emerging leaders in their career and cultural aspirations in the Reef space.</li> </ol>	\$1.118m
Strategic communication and engagement	<p>Effective communication and engagement of Reef Traditional Owners with an emphasis on elevating Traditional Owner voices throughout the Reef and Catchment regions.</p> <p><b><i>Deliverables:</i></b></p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Create new RTP legacy products that share learnings and achievements for the future benefit to Traditional Owners.</li> <li>2. Promote legacy products, including the Traditional Owner Grants Gathering Report and evaluation project reports, to Traditional Owner groups and strategic Reef partners.</li> </ol>	\$0.726m
Co-design action framework	<p>Continue to develop the Reef co-design (co-benefit) framework with Traditional Owners, strategic Reef partners and the broader community with a focus on delivering high quality co-evaluation.</p> <p><b><i>Deliverables:</i></b></p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Co-design experiences published. Toolkit pieces identified and developed</li> <li>2. Co-evaluation plan completed, including an Independent Evaluation against the RTP M&amp;E Plan and a Cultural Social Return on Investment analysis.</li> </ol>	\$0.421m

## Reef Trust Partnership

Partnership Activity	Description	Budget
Traditional Owner Futures Fund	<p>This activity aims to provide a sustainable funding stream for Traditional Owner Reef protection activities through the \$10m allocated to this fund and invested in term deposits. There is no expenditure required for this area as we work with the Reef 2050 Taskforce to identify the future vision.</p> <p><b>Deliverables:</b></p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Work with the Reef 2050 Traditional Owner Taskforce to consolidate management of Futures Fund by June 2026.</li> <li>2. Funds invested in a term deposit.</li> </ol>	\$0.0m
Active Traditional Owner-led reef protection activities	<p>Ongoing management of Traditional Owner-led project grants including the implementation of the Helping Country grant round.</p> <p><b>Deliverables:</b></p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Evaluation of Traditional Owner-led projects supported through grants.</li> <li>2. Manage Traditional Owner-led grant projects from RTP Community Action Plans and the Blue Carbon program.</li> <li>3. Support delivery and contract management of the Helping Country Grants</li> <li>4. Support Traditional Owner groups to establish foundational project readiness for Country based monitoring.</li> </ol>	\$1.757m
Traditional Owner water quality improvement (Healthy Water)	<p>This work continues to improve Traditional Owner access to and active participation in water quality projects, science and career pathways.</p> <p><b>Deliverables:</b></p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Opportunities for future direction setting with key government and water quality partners is undertaken.</li> <li>2. Engagement of project coordinators to facilitate Traditional Owner leadership and participation.</li> <li>3. Launch the Healthy Water (literacy) Toolkit incorporating Traditional Owner Resources.</li> <li>4. Work with Traditional Owners to understand and promote features of the Traditional Owner Healthy Water RTP component.</li> </ol>	\$0.511m
Traditional Owner Integrated monitoring and reporting	<p>Traditional Owner knowledge forms a critical part of building a holistic understanding of the condition and trend of Reef values. This work sees Traditional Owner communities strengthen their self-determined monitoring and reporting actions including in driving data sovereignty.</p> <p><b>Deliverables:</b></p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Evaluation of the Strong People–Strong Country Framework is undertaken.</li> <li>2. Future directions and possible partnerships needed to support Traditional Owners in Integrated monitoring and reporting are explored.</li> <li>3. Work with Traditional Owners to understand and promote features of the Traditional Owner IMR RTP component, and particularly the experiences of the Strong Peoples-Strong Country pilot groups.</li> <li>4. Engagement of two project managers to facilitate Traditional Owner leadership and participation.</li> </ol>	\$0.481m



## Reef Trust Partnership

Partnership Activity	Description	Budget
Traditional Owner crown-of-thorns starfish control	<p>This work supports activities that aim to improve Traditional Owner participation in COTS control and facilitates training and service delivery partnerships.</p> <p><b><i>Deliverables:</i></b></p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Work with Traditional Owners to understand and promote features of the Traditional Owner COTS RTP component.</li> <li>2. Engagement of a project manager to positively facilitate Traditional Owners' active engagement and participation in COTS research and governance.</li> </ol>	\$0.105m
Traditional Owner Reef restoration and adaption science	<p>This work aims to improve Traditional Owner access to and active participation in Reef Restoration and Adaptation projects.</p> <p><b><i>Deliverables:</i></b></p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Provide contract management support to the AIMS career pathways project, and other capacity building opportunities.</li> <li>2. Identify and develop innovation case studies from the Healing Country grants for reef restoration and resilience on-Country Traditional Owner-led projects.</li> <li>3. Project Manager engaged to positively facilitate Traditional Owners' active leadership and participation in RRAS related projects and programs.</li> </ol>	\$1.159m
TOTAL INVESTMENT		\$6.94m

# Community Reef Protection Component

Partnership Budget: \$10.349m

2025-2026 budget: \$1.289





**Purpose:** To improve the engagement of the broader community in the protection of the Great Barrier Reef World Heritage Area.

## Priorities under the Partnership Investment Strategy:

- Strengthening and accelerating on-ground action
- Building understanding, hope and action
- Connecting community with decision-making
- Fostering enduring outcomes through funding, next generation participation and partnerships

## End-of-Partnership Outcomes

The Reef Trust Partnership's Community Reef Protection Component will result in:

 <p>A suite of tools for funding and models of community action are available and useful</p>	 <p>Community project contributions are recognised, valued and celebrated</p>	 <p>Projects are delivering effective outcomes for the Reef and community (including other RTP component outcomes)</p>	 <p>Community informs decision making through collaborative planning and community data use</p>
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## Progress on the journey

We are now halfway through this critical decade for responding to the climate and biodiversity crisis to shape a better future for Reefs and Reef communities. One of the five Reef 2050 Plan Human Dimensions objectives is that 'People and communities take individual and collective action to maintain Reef resilience'.

The Community Reef Protection Component is responding to the aspirations of individuals and organisations to meet this challenge by working with partners to elevate the quantity and quality of engagement in delivering outcomes for the Reef and Reef communities.

The seven-year work plan focuses on strengthening local leadership, collaborating to pilot new approaches and accelerating proven approaches to deliver targeted local change, and better connect the collective contributions as part of a broader systems movement.

The final year of activities focuses on wrapping up current projects, sharing achievements and learnings, and maximising the potential for legacy into the future.

### **Achievements to date include:**












- Enabling locally led environmental and community outcomes, with 94 community on-ground projects and 7 place-based pilots strengthening coordination.
- Improving collaboration by supporting a diverse range of over 530 partners, working towards breaking down barriers for the greater potential of community-led work through innovation in how work is designed and delivered.
- Boosting community contribution pathways to grow the movement now and in the future. Projects have recorded over 77,000 participant engagements and almost half of people (45%) were new to activities, and one-third (38%) were youth.
- Supporting a range of environmental outcomes through 162 environmental initiatives delivering 230,883 actions. Actions include the removal of more than 260,000 pieces of marine debris, clearing weeds across 14 hectares, planting 5,705 trees and 85,975 corals for habitat restoration, and 886 wildlife conservation interventions such as protecting turtle nests and remediating fish barriers. There have been 16 behaviour change programs prompting changes in litter source reduction, beach protection activities and emissions reduction efforts.
- Building capacity in the system, with partners supporting their communities to connect with, contribute to, and lead work through 1,961 training, education and outreach events, 263 leadership and capacity building events, and over 6,400 communication activities.
- Demonstrating pathways to impact for community data and knowledge, with 114 examples of community data informing planning, formal reporting and on-ground actions.
- Working with partners to sharpen design for impact and building 14 new community project models ready for growth to show the powerful potential of community-led efforts in delivering meaningful change for the Reef and Reef communities.
- Piloting the first standardised toolkit for community Reef stewardship monitoring with the IMR PROTECT team.

### **The 2025-2026 activities will include:**





- Finalising the on-ground implementation of Community Climate Action and Citizen Science projects, including working with partners to share outcomes and maximise the potential for ongoing benefits.
- Ensuring legacy for projects that connect multiple partners through networks supporting community Reef protection work including the Australasian Coastal Restoration Network, Queensland Marine Turtle Network, and Cairns-Port Douglas Reef Hub.
- Delivering accessible tools and resources that support community Reef protection work and shape how the Foundation and other partners embed the commitment to community-led conservation in the future. This includes: finalising a Community Stewardship for the Reef Toolkit with the IMR PROTECT team, delivering a snapshot of key trends for exemplar models for community conservation programs and funding models globally and in Australia, and producing a community synthesis report that celebrates the collective work towards Reef 2050 and the learnings to take forward.
- Working with partners to share stories of achievements and learnings to increase visibility and awareness of community-led Reef protection work through conferences, events and communication products.
- Working with partners on transition planning to ensure enduring outcomes for community Reef protection work beyond RTP.

# Community Reef Protection Seven-Year Plan

Table 4: Community Reef Protection Component Partnership Activities and Budget

Partnership Activity	Rationale	Outcome	Budget
 Citizen science 	Citizen science engages the community in data collection and sharing to increase understanding about the condition of Reef habitats and species. There is greater potential for citizen science to inform decision-making and enhance social and ecological benefits.	This activity is supporting strategic and collaborative citizen science data collection, reporting and application to enable community-led solutions to build Reef and community resilience.	\$2.965m
 Local-scale coral restoration and stewardship 	Assisted coral recovery is a tool to build Reef and community resilience in the face of climate change.	This activity is supporting the development of a Cairns-Port Douglas Reef Hub to connect people to share, learn, and pilot new collaborative approaches to care for reefs in the face of climate change. Investment is also enabling on-ground projects to accelerate coral recovery and site stewardship and share learnings.	\$1.1m
 Local action   	Collaborative community-led action, informed by local knowledge, has a valuable role to play in building local Reef and community resilience in the face of climate change. This program taps into collective knowledge and networks of GBRMPA's Local Marine Advisory Committees spanning the Queensland coast.	This activity is supporting projects that engage communities in a range of practical local solutions to Reef threats. Insights from two project funding rounds highlighted an interest in a shared theme of climate action and remaining investment was consolidated in the Community Climate Action program to strengthen impact.	\$1.57m
 Integrated decision-making: Community Action Plans	Boosting collective impact requires greater knowledge exchange, more cohesive approaches, enhanced communication of community actions and seeking new ways to resource this community-led work at the scale required to support broader efforts to shape a better future for the Reef.	This activity is supporting Community Action Plans along the length of the Great Barrier Reef to enhance local Reef protection and community outcomes through collaborative planning and delivery of on-ground action.	\$1.49m
 Community Climate Action 	Climate change is the greatest threat to the Great Barrier Reef. This is a critical decade for responding to the climate and biodiversity crisis. We must both urgently reduce emissions and build climate resilience. Yet many Australians do not connect personal action on climate change with protecting the Reef.	This activity is enabling projects that accelerate community-led climate action for the Reef through local scale actions to reduce emissions, mitigate impact and build resilience in the face of a changing climate, as well as contribute to empowering a broader movement (combined budget of \$3.4m with local action investment).	\$2.15m

## *Reef Trust Partnership*

 	Communicate case studies and stories of hope	There is recognition that greater efforts are needed to shine a light on the collective impact of community efforts to care for the Reef and the incredible people driving this work.	This activity will capture and share community-driven solutions from a range of people and projects to celebrate achievements, share learnings and inspire increased engagement.	\$0.274m
  	Support enduring investment and partnership models	Lack of a cohesive measurement tool for community Reef and catchment stewardship and limitations in stable and significant funding for community Reef protection activities have been identified as key barriers to achieving more efficient and enduring outcomes.	This activity is strengthening tools for measuring and sharing Reef stewardship, and for enabling pathways for resourcing community-led Reef protection activities in order to facilitate more efficient and enduring outcomes.	\$0.3m
  	Empowering community heroes	Capacity building initiatives can strengthen individual, organisational, and sector-wide capacity to support place-based, sector-based and youth leadership activities and ultimately, community stewardship outcomes.	This activity is supporting activities to strengthen capacity of individuals and organisations to accelerate community leadership now and in the future.	\$0.5m
TOTAL COMMUNITY REEF PROTECTION COMPONENT BUDGET:				\$10.349m

# Community Reef Protection Annual Work Plan: 2025-2026

Table 5: Community Reef Protection Component investment areas and budget for 2025-2026

Partnership Activity	Description	Budget
Citizen science projects	Two remaining citizen science for change projects will be completed. Activities will focus on communicating learnings about community data impact pathways. <i>Deliverables: Sharing learnings and achievements to maximise legacy.</i>	\$0.034m
Local coral recovery and stewardship program	The Cairns-Port Douglas Reef Hub will progress through transition planning advice from the Hub Steering Group and input from the broader network and one coral restoration project will be completed. <i>Deliverables: Sharing learnings and achievements to maximise legacy.</i>	\$0.017m
Local action projects	Final stages of delivery and reporting on projects for enabling local community climate action is consolidated into the Community Climate Action program. <i>Deliverables: See Community climate action section.</i>	\$0.262m
Community Action Plans and data integration	CAPs and CAP projects are completed. The focus will be working with partners to share achievements, document ongoing ripple effects of place-based coordination efforts and learnings to support enduring outcomes. <i>Deliverables: Sharing learnings and achievements to maximise legacy.</i>	\$0.0m
Community climate action	Remaining projects will be delivered and reported on to accelerate community climate action for the Reef through a range of locally relevant approaches including social innovation and behaviour change solutions for emissions reduction, and on-ground actions that protect, enhance and restore critical coastal habitats for climate resilience. <i>Deliverables: The focus will be on delivering and reporting, as well as working with project partners to maximise outcomes and share stories of impact.</i>	\$0.446m
Communicating case studies and stories of hope	Outcomes and impacts from community projects will be shared and celebrated to demonstrate progress, acknowledge community efforts, share learnings, and motivate others to get involved. <i>Deliverables: Working with project partners, case studies, presentations, and stories from projects will be developed and shared through multiple formats.</i>	\$0.082m
Enduring investment and partnership models for Reef protection	Resources to enhance tools and models to enable community Reef protection will be finalised with partners and be accessible. <i>Deliverables: Resources to enable community stewardship will be shared, including the community Reef stewardship toolkit developed with the IMR PROTECT project, a funding toolkit, and a review of exemplar models for community program and funding. Tailored social science support will continue.</i>	\$0.091m
Community leadership development support	Community leadership to support Reef protection will be designed with partners to enable post RTP transitions and maximise enduring outcomes. <i>Deliverables: Activities will focus on working with partners to enable legacy to support Reef protection outcomes beyond RTP.</i>	\$0.357m
TOTAL INVESTMENT		\$1.289