



Great Barrier  
Reef Foundation

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Committee Secretary  
Senate Standing Committees on Environment and Communications  
PO Box 6100  
Parliament House  
Canberra ACT 2600

via email: [ec.sen@aph.gov.au](mailto:ec.sen@aph.gov.au)

Dear Committee Secretary

The Great Barrier Reef Foundation ('the Foundation') welcomes the opportunity to make a submission to this Senate Inquiry into the Great Barrier Reef 2050 Partnership Program.

The Foundation is wholeheartedly committed to the protection and restoration of the Great Barrier Reef and contributing to the best possible outcomes under the Reef 2050 Plan.

Established nearly 20 years ago, the Foundation operates through three strategic pillars to achieve our vision of a resilient Reef for future generations.

1. Raising funds for research and on ground conservation that addresses threats to the Great Barrier Reef
2. Designing and delivering projects in partnership with the private and public sector that protect and restore the Reef.
3. Bringing hope to the future of the Great Barrier Reef through our communications and our projects.

Everything we do is centred around these three strategic pillars and we are extremely confident in our ability to deliver the Reef Partnership Program. We are also extremely confident we can leverage these funds further through our proven fundraising ability and are excited about this opportunity. As part of the Foundation's existing operations, we already have a range of fundraising announcements in the pipeline for the next six months. In fulfilling our role to raise funds for projects grounded in science, technology, engineering and on-ground action, we are committed to ensuring as much money as possible goes directly to the Reef.

Since the Australian Government announcement, we have been focused on planning and working with stakeholders to ensure we have a comprehensive and transparent process to deliver this program funding over six years, with projects planned to commence in 2019. We believe we are well prepared to deliver this important work and our strong track record in fundraising and project delivery demonstrates this.



At the Great Barrier Reef Foundation, we believe climate change is the biggest threat to the Great Barrier Reef as outlined in the Great Barrier Reef Outlook Report. This is a critical point and we work with scientists and researchers to ensure the projects we support are doing everything possible to mitigate the impacts of climate change.

We support the Paris Agreement and believe every individual, business and government, both in Australia and internationally, has an important role to play in achieving these targets. The Great Barrier Reef Foundation is acting by prioritising projects that build the Reef's resilience and participating in constructive dialogue on Reef protection strategies.

As the lead charity for the Great Barrier Reef, we recognise the role and responsibility to engage with Australians and people around the world; to share with them the status and outlook of coral reefs and to enlist their support in ensuring a future for these precious ecosystems. We do this through citizen science and community action programs, through strategic communications and through leadership reports such as the recent valuation of the Great Barrier Reef commissioned through Deloitte Access Economics.

Over the past two decades we have been working in partnership with leading scientists, the Great Barrier Reef Marine Authority, Federal and State governments, Traditional Owners and community organisations to ensure a holistic and dynamic response to protecting the Reef and look forward to substantially building on these efforts in future. Our major focus continues to be driving collaboration to implement the Reef 2050 Plan.

As the organisation nominated by the Federal Government to administer the Great Barrier Reef 2050 Partnership Program, we are currently working with the Department of Environment and Energy to finalise terms of the grant agreement. As part of this process we have provided extensive material to the Department about our organisational capacity, experience, expertise and commitment to the efficient and effective distribution of funds under the Partnership Program.

While we appreciate the significance of the largest ever single grant to protect the Reef, we also recognise that substantially more investment is required over the long term to ensure the Reef can survive and thrive for many generations to come. We have a track record of raising significant funding for the Reef, more than \$90 million over the last decade, and we will focus on raising more funds to leverage these taxpayer dollars and ensure the Reef benefits from the maximum impact possible through the Reef Partnership Program.

Please find attached responses to the Senate Committee Terms of Reference which demonstrate our capacity to successfully execute the responsibilities under the Partnership Program and through our fundraising efforts secure even more financial investment to protect and restore the reef.

If you have any further questions, we would be pleased to provide further information to the Committee.

Yours sincerely,

Anna Marsden  
MANAGING DIRECTOR





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## RESPONSE TO THE SENATE COMMITTEE TERMS OF REFERENCE

The Committee has requested information related to the 2018–19 Budget Measure *Great Barrier Reef 2050 Partnership Program*, with reference to:

- a. the delivery of the Reef 2050 Plan, including through the Great Barrier Reef 2050 Partnership Program and through other avenues;
- b. the proficiency of the Great Barrier Reef Foundation and its capacity to deliver components of the Reef 2050 Plan;
- c. the proficiency of other organisations and their capacity to deliver components of the Reef 2050 Plan;
- d. the process of granting funding to the Great Barrier Reef Foundation for the Great Barrier Reef 2050 Partnership Program, the terms of agreement for funding, and the ongoing administration of funding;
- e. the prior activities and operations of the Great Barrier Reef Foundation, including research, public-policy advocacy and fund-raising;
- f. the establishment, governance and membership of the Great Barrier Reef Foundation, including the management of conflicts of interest and commercial interests; and
- g. any other related matters.

Our response to each of these matters is detailed below.

### **a. The delivery of the Reef 2050 Plan, including through the Great Barrier Reef 2050 Partnership Program and through other avenues**

The Reef 2050 Long-Term Sustainability Plan (the 'Reef 2050 Plan') was released in March 2015 by the Australian and Queensland governments following consultation with Traditional Owners, scientists and industry, as well as local, regional and international communities. It builds on the previous 25-year strategic plan for the Great Barrier Reef World Heritage Area developed in 1994 and was unanimously endorsed by the World Heritage Committee at its 29<sup>th</sup> Session in Bonn, Germany in 2015.

The Reef 2050 Plan reflects the deep commitment of both governments, the Traditional Owners and stakeholders within the Great Barrier Reef region to achieving positive outcomes through a collaborative and evidence-based approach. It incorporates legislative reform, regulation, investment, a comprehensive policy platform and significant community support. The Investment Framework for the Reef 2050 Plan identifies \$1.28 billion needs to be spent on action over the next five years and where additional funding is most needed, including strategies for mobilising private sector and philanthropic investment.

The new Great Barrier Reef 2050 Partnership Program will be delivered via a grant agreement between The Reef Trust and the Great Barrier Reef Foundation. This collaborative agreement has



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been established to implement key actions and achieve key outcomes of the Reef 2050 Plan in line with the priorities identified in the Investment Framework and underpinned by innovation and science.

This will be achieved through grant funding of \$443.3 million for the period 2018-19 to 2023-24 to deliver outcomes under the following five Partnership components:

- water quality improvement
- crown-of-thorns starfish control
- reef restoration and adaptation science
- Indigenous and community engagement
- Integrated monitoring and reporting.

In line with the Reef 2050 Plan, the expected outcomes of this Partnership are:

- Improved management of the Great Barrier Reef World Heritage Area and relevant activities in the adjacent catchments
- Protection of attributes that contribute to the Outstanding Universal Value of the World Heritage Area, including species, habitats and Indigenous values
- Management of key threats to the Great Barrier Reef World Heritage Area, including poor water quality and crown-of-thorns starfish outbreaks.

**b. The proficiency of the Great Barrier Reef Foundation and its capacity to deliver components of the Reef 2050 Plan**

Since being established in 2000, the focus of the Great Barrier Reef Foundation has been single and clear - saving the Great Barrier Reef. Everything we do is focused on restoring this wonder of the natural world and keeping it safe for our children and grandchildren. This is our lifeblood and our dedicated Queensland based team of experts work tirelessly to meet this challenging goal.

As the lead charity for the Reef, we take very seriously our responsibility to raise funds for scientific, engineering, technology and on-ground solutions for the Reef. Our organisation and role reflect the UNESCO World Heritage Convention recommendation to establish a national foundation that raises money to protect world heritage sites.

The Foundation has the unique capacity to raise further corporate and philanthropic dollars to support the Reef and further leverage and amplify the Reef Partnership funding. We have a track record of raising significant funding for the Reef, more than \$90 million over the last decade, and we will continue to do that to leverage these government funds.

Over this same period the Foundation has designed and managed a \$100 million project portfolio. Projects within this portfolio range from micro-scale (\$10,000) to large-scale (\$35 million), and from foundational scientific research, to the development of tools for reef managers, to on-ground conservation activities (Raine Island Recovery Project, Reef Islands and ReefBlitz).

We are uniquely placed to broker constructive partnerships for program delivery for the Reef. We are a 'connector' around this national and international natural icon with an intimate understanding of the space and the stakeholders and are deeply embedded in the Great Barrier Reef community. The



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Foundation has a long-standing, strong and trusted working relationship and partnership with the Great Barrier Reef Marine Park Authority, formalised via an MOU in 2017. It is a member of the Reef 2050 Advisory Committee. We are also a member of the International Coral Reef Initiative and our projects have global reach in addition to benefitting the Great Barrier Reef.

Through our projects we have fostered trusted relationships and united key institutions with a cooperative approach to achieve outcomes and innovations that would not otherwise have been possible, such as eReefs, the *Raine Island Recovery Project*, the pioneering 'larval reseeded' project and the *Sun Shield for the Reef* project, to name just a few.

Project examples:

#### **Restoring the World's Largest Green Turtle Rookery**

Remote Raine Island, 620 km north west of Cairns, is host to one of the greatest animal migrations on Earth. As many as 60,000 female green turtles migrate thousands of kilometres to lay their eggs here in a peak breeding season.

Featuring in Sir David Attenborough's Great Barrier Reef documentary series, this marine sanctuary is not only the world's largest green turtle rookery, it's also the most important seabird rookery in the Great Barrier Reef World Heritage area and home to apex predators, pristine coral reefs and diverse populations of fish and other precious marine life.

But all this is in danger. Years of monitoring showed that the northern Great Barrier Reef green turtle population is in decline and, without action, headed for collapse.

The Foundation played a leading role to initiate the Raine Island Recovery project, which is listed as a standalone action within the Reef 2050 Plan. This five year, \$7.95m public private partnership between BHP, the Queensland Government, the Great Barrier Reef Marine Park Authority, the Wuthathi Nation and Kemer Kemer Meriam Nation (Ugar, Mer, Erub) Traditional Owners with the Foundation is protecting and restoring the island's critical habitat to ensure the future of key marine species including green turtles (*nam* - the common language word for turtle), seabirds and other marine species.

Into its third year, this project has successfully increased the available nesting area for green turtles by 20%, resulting in enhanced nesting success and flow on effects to increased numbers of hatchlings of this endangered species. Adult turtle mortality has been reduced through the installation of fencing and engineering works undertaken to remove common areas of entrapment. In 2017 the Raine Island team witnessed the first recorded breeding observation in 30 years of the critically endangered Herald Petrel. Through this project we have also supported just under 600 days of paid employment for Traditional Owners, many of these focused on building capacity of Indigenous Rangers.



#### eReefs

The \$35m eReefs project developed a series of near-real time reef monitoring and modelling tools providing data on past, current and projected future condition of the Great Barrier Reef. This large-scale and complex project was conceived through the Foundation and delivered through a collaboration between CSIRO, AIMS, the Bureau of Meteorology and the Queensland Government, with funding from the Australian Government, Queensland Government, Science Industry Endowment Fund and BHP. The extensive network of implementing and funding partners ensured broad support and strong end-user buy-in, evident by its use in developing water quality targets, generating Reef water quality report cards, identifying the rivers contributing most to crown-of-thorns starfish outbreaks, and assessing the feasibility of novel reef interventions such as Reef Havens. Contributing significantly to efforts to manage, protect and preserve the Great Barrier Reef over the long-term, eReefs has become a critical decision-making tool and is now transitioning into a fully operational system, used routinely by both Federal and State Governments as well as the research community.

While this large federal government investment is a positive step forward, even greater financial investment is required to protect and restore the Reef. As we move through this Reef Funding Partnership process, the raising of private funds will continue to be a focus and responsibility of the Foundation, so we can amplify the impact of this positive government announcement. Over the next six years, this significant government and private funding investment will support the delivery of key actions under the Reef 2050 Plan and help ensure the future health of the Reef.

As outlined in our [Constitution](#), the key purpose and objects of the Foundation are as follows:

Section 5.1 The principal purpose of the Company is to support the protection and enhancement of tropical reefs (especially the Great Barrier Reef) and adjoining coral coasts for the benefit of the world community including through the funding and provision of research, information and education.

Section 5.2 Without limiting the generality of Article 5.1, in support of the principal purpose, the objects of the Company are to:

- (a) undertake and provide funding to support efforts that contribute to the environmental protection, enhancement, preservation and conservation of the world's tropical coral reefs in general and the Great Barrier Reef in particular, and adjoining coral coasts;
- (b) undertake and provide funding to support activities that foster environmental protection, enhancement, preservation and conservation of the world's tropical coral reefs in general and the Great Barrier Reef in particular, and adjoining coral coasts, for the public good;
- (c) acquire and use land on Australia's tropical reefs and adjoining coral coasts as environmental, conservation and natural heritage areas and parks and national parks;
- (d) foster better understanding of the need for environmental protection and conservation of the Great Barrier Reef in the general public;



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- (e) meet the requirement of the World Heritage Convention, Article 17 of which states: “the States Parties to this Convention shall consider or encourage the establishment of national public and private foundations or associations whose purpose is to invite donations for the protection of the cultural and natural heritage as defined in Articles 1 and 2 of the Convention”;
- (f) undertake research and provide grants for research that:
  - (i) assists in establishing acceptable levels of use and minimise human impact so the Australia’s reefs are used in a sustainable manner for the benefit of the world community;
  - (ii) contributes to the protection and enhancement of the natural heritage of the Great Barrier Reef World Heritage Area; and to co-ordinate and where possible synthesise relevant research and data;
- (g) provide a database facility that enhances access to relevant research for researchers, reef managers, industry and the world community and provide funding for that purpose;
- (h) provide education about Australia's tropical reefs and adjoining coral coasts;
- (i) foster better understanding and communication about Australia’s coral coasts between the world community, industry, researchers and reef managers;
- (j) achieve a sustainable financial base for the Company; and
- (k) establish and maintain a public fund to be called “The Great Barrier Reef Foundation Public Fund” for the specific purpose of supporting the environmental purposes and objects of the Company. The Fund is established to receive all gifts of money or property for this purpose and any amount received because of such gifts must be credited to its bank account. The Fund must not receive any other money or property into its account and must comply with subdivision 30-E of ITAA and the Rules.

**c. The proficiency of other organisations and their capacity to deliver components of the Reef 2050 Plan**

The Foundation is not in a position to investigate or comment on the proficiency or capacity of other organisations to deliver components of the Reef 2050 Plan. However, we do note the strong and effective working partnerships that we have in place with organisations such as the Great Barrier Reef Marine Authority, the Australian Institute of Marine Science, CSIRO, the Federal Department of Environment and Energy, the Queensland Government’s Office of the Great Barrier Reef, our research partners, and a wide range of other Reef stakeholders all of whom will play an important role in delivering on components of the Reef 2050 Plan.

It is our firm belief that through the Reef 2050 Partnership Program many trusted and effective Reef-facing organisations will be enabled to collaborate on projects for the benefit of the Great Barrier Reef.



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As outlined above, the Foundation's track record for partnerships and its network mean it is very well placed to deliver the Reef Partnership Program.

**d. The process of granting funding to the Great Barrier Reef Foundation for the Great Barrier Reef 2050 Partnership Program, the terms of agreement for funding, and the ongoing administration of funding**

*The process*

The Australian Government selected the Foundation to administer this program through their federal budget process. We have been working with federal and state governments for the past decade and have a strong record of program and fundraising delivery.

Further questions regarding the process would need to be directed to the government.

*The terms of agreement*

- The Partnership with the Foundation is being established through a grant agreement.
  - The Foundation will be required to report regularly to the Department on the program's delivery and outcomes.
- Over the coming months, the Foundation will work closely with the Department of Environment and Energy and Great Barrier Reef Marine Park Authority to ensure this investment will be delivered to best effect through a range of government and non-government delivery partners.
- The Foundation will work with and consult a diverse range of Reef stakeholders to deliver on-ground action to benefit the Reef. The Foundation's work actively supports and aligns with the Reef 2050 Plan.

*The ongoing administration of the funding*

The ongoing administration of the funding will be done in total partnership with the Australian Government and an independent expert Partnership Management Committee established to oversee the management of the funds and to track their progress.

The Reef Trust – Great Barrier Reef Foundation Partnership Grant Guidelines outline the terms of agreement for the funding arrangement, including the requirements for ongoing administration and acquittal of the grant. This includes the requirement that the grant be undertaken in accordance with the Commonwealth Grants Rules and Guidelines.

This agreement contains components for evaluation of the Partnership, confidentiality and privacy provisions, disclosure of information provisions, and conflict of interest declaration requirements.





**e. The prior activities and operations of the Great Barrier Reef Foundation, including research, public-policy advocacy and fund-raising**

The Foundation is extremely proud of the contribution we have made to date in our research, communication and fundraising efforts. As an independent, not-for-profit organisation, the Foundation is apolitical and does not engage in public-policy advocacy.

As outlined previously in this submission, the Foundation has raised funds totalling more than \$90 million over the past decade and designed and managed a \$100 million portfolio of Reef projects.

We regularly update our website with the latest news about the outcomes from funded projects, and in 2016 published 'Research with Impact' which summarises the impact of 24 projects either completed or in progress through the Foundation. Some of the key research project activities include:

*World first to unlock coral DNA*

The genetic code of nine Great Barrier Reef coral species and their associated algae and microbes has been unlocked – a world-first achieved with genomics research and the international ReFuGe 2020 consortium. This valuable information is already being used to help understand the behaviours and uniqueness of corals and inform research into which may be more thermally tolerant and which corals are more prolific in repopulation.

*Largest water chemistry observing system in the Southern Ocean*

The Future Reef project is generating invaluable observations of changes in the Great Barrier Reef's water chemistry along its entire length for the first time. It's the largest monitoring project of ocean chemistry in the southern hemisphere and the first large-scale project of its kind along the Great Barrier Reef. It has resulted in the first comprehensive ocean acidification dataset for the entire Reef and is informing important forecasting into the longer term effects of climate change.

*Robo-Protector for the Reef – RangerBot*

As the winner of the people's choice for the 2017 Google Impact Challenge, the RangerBot team has made a quantum technology leap, creating the only fully autonomous, affordable, multi-function underwater vehicle for effectively detecting and addressing threats to coral reefs such as:

- Coral Health – detection of bleaching and indicators of coral health;
- Water Quality – measurements of temperature, salinity, turbidity and pH; and
- Pests – detection and eradication of the coral eating Crown of Thorns starfish.

Five prototype units have been developed and are being deployed for final user-testing in the Great Barrier Reef, with a total cost per unit of just over \$10,000.

*Powerful tools for Reef managers – Resilience Mapping*

The Resilience Mapping project brought together experts from AIMS, CSIRO, UQ and GBRMPA to develop a tool for identifying the reefs in the Cairns region most important for driving recovery following an event such as coral bleaching or crown-of-thorns starfish (COTS) outbreak. The project



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successfully integrated the eReefs model with ecosystem and connectivity models and satellite derived, coral habitat maps to predict COTS outbreaks and the impacts of future climate change and water quality scenarios on coral cover on the 230 reefs in the region. This project is an important component of GBRMPA's Reef Integrated Monitoring, Modelling and Reporting Program.

**f. The establishment, governance and membership of the Great Barrier Reef Foundation, including the management of conflicts of interest and commercial interests**

The Great Barrier Reef Foundation is a not for profit public company limited by guarantee, incorporated under the *Corporations Act 2001*. The Foundation is registered with, and regulated by, the Australian Charities and Not-for-profit-Commission and governed by a board of directors. The Foundation is included on Australia's Register of Environmental Organisations. Ultimate responsibility for the governance of the Foundation rests with the board of directors.

The board's primary role is to ensure that the Foundation's activities are directed towards achieving its purpose: the raising and provision of funding to support research contributing to the environmental protection, enhancement, preservation and conservation of tropical reefs (especially the Great Barrier Reef) and adjoining coral coasts.

The Board comprises representatives of Australian business, science and philanthropy, reflecting the charter to bring all sectors together for the benefit of the Great Barrier Reef. Current Board members are listed on the Foundation website: <https://www.barrierreef.org/the-foundation/our-governance>

All members of the board of directors are appointed in accordance with the constitution and are themselves members of the company. Non-executive directors serve in an honorary capacity and do not receive remuneration for their role. Directors and senior staff have formal duties under company law and are kept apprised of these, using professional advice when necessary. There are conflict of interest provisions in the constitution and in company law, applicable to the directors, together with an internal policy.

The Foundation's constitution governs the regulation of meetings and proceedings of the board of directors, together with the procedures for appointment and replacement of directors. The board regularly reviews the skills and experience necessary for its activities and currently considers it appropriate that there is the following mix: business management, ecological and scientific, financial, legal, marketing and philanthropic.

In addition to those matters required by the constitution and company law, the board's principal roles are to:

- approve the annual budget
- receive and review regular and comprehensive financial and investment reports
- oversee risk management analysis
- make financial decisions with respect to research projects
- prepare and approve policy statements
- determine strategic and long-term objectives.



The board delegates the day to day management of the Foundation to the Managing Director and oversees and monitors her performance in that regard.

Communication of the Foundation's affairs to members, supporters and the public is widely undertaken. There is direct communication through newsletters and the provision of the annual report to members as well as broader communication through media and digital channels including web and social media. In the past six months, Foundation-driven communications has achieved a global reach of over 1.2 billion.

The process of selecting the priority research projects for funding is rigorous and is overseen by the Foundation's International Scientific Advisory Committee. Members of the International Scientific Advisory Committee (ISAC) are leaders in Reef research and management.

**g. Any other related matters**

Since the Australian Government funding announcement, the Foundation has been working to establish a transparent process for the Reef Funding Program. We are working closely with the relevant government departments to establish this and commence the process of establishing and administering grant applications for the important projects this will support.

We are already in a planning and review phase with the Department of Environment, Great Barrier Reef Marine Park Authority, Office of the Great Barrier Reef, and Reef and science stakeholders to map out the projects and delivery mechanisms that will ensure this investment will be delivered to best effect. The projects resulting from this new partnership are designed to be implemented from 2019 onwards. We will look to build on and accelerate the impact of the good work already underway as well as seek out new ideas and initiatives for the Reef. Our major focus continues to be driving collaboration to implement the Reef 2050 Plan.

A webpage has been developed where interested potential applicants for future funding can register and then be added to our email communication list for the Reef Partnership Program. From 1 July the Foundation will start regularly communicating with each interested, registered party. The website is <https://www.barrierreef.org/contact/register-your-interest>

All registered parties and other stakeholders will be regularly updated about how the application and grant making process will work at every step. Stakeholders have been asked to provide their insight and feedback and encouraged to contact the Foundation directly and speak to one of the team if they have any questions or feedback. We have instigated this process to demonstrate our transparency and commitment to providing answers and taking on board suggestions for improvement.