

THE NATIONALS
for Regional Australia

OUR PLAN FOR
**THE GREAT
BARRIER REEF**

**GETTING
IT DONE** ✓
for Regional Australia

Key points

The Coalition is committed to protecting and preserving Australia’s iconic environment for future generations.

The Great Barrier Reef is one of the natural wonders of the world. As the world’s largest coral reef system, it forms part of our natural heritage and is central to the economy of our tropical north.

While there is no better managed reef, the Great Barrier Reef World Heritage Area is under pressure from climate change, land-based run-offs, coastal development and marine debris.

The COVID-19 pandemic has also hit Reef communities hard, severely disrupting tourism.

The Morrison Government is committed to the future of the Great Barrier Reef – and the livelihoods that depend on it.

We’ve invested an extra \$1 billion to protect the Reef, and moved quickly to protect the jobs of 64,000 Queenslanders who rely on the \$6.4 billion Reef economy.

The Coalition knows a strong economy and a sustainable environment go hand-in-hand.

Only the Coalition’s strong economic management will ensure our environment and our Reef communities get the support they need.

We have now invested **more than \$3 billion in the Coalition’s Reef 2050 Plan** since 2015 – “unprecedented” funding, according to the World Heritage Committee.

We are backing world-leading marine science, and the deployment of new climate adaptation technology and we are making major investments in water quality and state-of-the-art, on-water management to reduce threats from crown-of-thorns starfish. We’re protecting key species such as dugongs, turtles and whales, and we’re stamping out illegal fishing.

We are improving the health of the Reef and backing the economic future of its extensive network of communities, tourism operators and hospitality providers. Only a re-elected Coalition Government can guarantee this protection and support.

The Coalition Government’s \$1 billion Reef package includes:

- \$579.9 million for water quality – working with land managers to remediate erosion, improve land condition and reduce nutrient and pesticide runoff.
- \$252.9 million for reef management and conservation – additional support for the Great Barrier Reef Marine Park Authority (GBRMPA) to reduce threats from crown-of-thorns starfish, implement advanced health monitoring systems and prevent illegal fishing.
- \$95.6 million to research and deploy world-leading reef resilience science and adaptation strategies.
- \$74.4 million for Traditional Owner and community-led projects including species protection, habitat restoration, citizen science programs and marine debris reduction.

The Great Barrier Reef is already the best managed reef in the world. The Coalition is proud of our achievements, and our long-term 2050 Reef plan.

But as we emerge from the pandemic, there's more work to do – including supporting the recovery of our world-class tourism sector.

Since March 2020, we have provided more than \$20 billion of support to the tourism and hospitality sector through JobKeeper, the Cash Flow Boost and targeted sectoral programs. **Our Tourism Industry Activation and Reef Protection Initiative has kept operators' boats on the Reef, providing more than 690 days of Reef activity and more than 4,800 days of employment, with tourism operators and their staff planting over 22,000 coral fragments.**

A re-elected Coalition Government will continue to back our tourism recovery through:

- \$75 million for Round 3 of the \$258 million Consumer Travel Support Program to **support travel agents and tour service providers** as they help drive the recovery of Reef tourism.
- \$60 million for targeted marketing, including to **accelerate the return of international tourism and backpackers to the Reef.**
- \$15 million to expand the **Tourism Industry Activation and Reef Protection Initiative**, leading to more marine tourism operators undertaking water conservation and environmental and monitoring activities to ensure tourism sites are well maintained and ready to welcome back guests.
- \$12.4 million to **extend fee relief to local tourism businesses** in the Great Barrier Reef Marine Park impacted by the pandemic, building on our previous fee relief for Reef businesses which saved them tens of millions, ensuring their continued operation and securing local jobs.

Our Plan

1. Investing in the Great Barrier Reef

The Great Barrier Reef is the world's best managed reef.

Only the Coalition Government will keep it that way.

We understand not only the importance of protecting the Reef, but of ensuring the Reef economy stays strong and resilient for generations to come.

The Coalition is providing record funding to deliver improved water quality, programs to protect our native species, and science and research to support reef resilience and partnerships with Traditional Owners to protect the region.

Our Reef 2050 Long-Term Sustainability Plan is enhancing the Reef's health while allowing ecologically sustainable development. It's backed by strong scientific research and analysis. Our reef monitoring and health reporting is frequent, detailed and transparent, far exceeding the scrutiny of other reefs.

The Coalition's investments in marine science are already benefitting ocean ecosystems and coastal communities. Australia is at the cutting edge of global efforts to help coral reefs adapt to climate change. By accelerating our restoration and adaptation projects, we're improving coral resilience and helping to secure the Reef's future.

For example, more than 200 Australian marine scientists are working on how to protect and rebuild coral reefs on an industrial scale. This puts us at the centre of global efforts on reef restoration and, importantly, we're sharing these solutions with our Pacific neighbours.

Oceans, coral reefs and connected coastal ecosystems like seagrass meadows, mangroves and wetlands play a vital role in removing carbon dioxide from our atmosphere. Our Great Barrier Reef ecosystem is one of the world's most powerful blue carbon sites.

Through the Reef Trust Partnership, we've collected 45,000 seagrass seeds from 5,000 seagrass flowers in the Whitsundays to support seagrass restoration at Pioneer Bay and we've established a seagrass nursery to provide seed stock for seagrass restoration activities.

Working together is the key to our continued success. Critical to our approach is the coordination of Reef business operators, farmers, Traditional Owners and community groups. Each has a vital role to play in protecting and managing the Reef.

Our investment is working – water quality on the Reef is improving. By working with landholders across almost 1.8 million hectares, hundreds of tonnes of dissolved inorganic nitrogen have been stopped from entering the Reef. **The Coalition Government's plan for the Reef will further accelerate action to reduce rural and urban land-based impacts.**

A re-elected Coalition Government will:

- Continue to work with landholders and stakeholders to improve water quality and reduce run-off into the reef.

- Maintain our world-class management of the marine park.
- Continue our science and research programs to manage the impacts of climate change and boost reef resilience. We will share this knowledge internationally for the betterment of all reefs.
- Partner with the community and Traditional Owners to deliver on-water conservation and marine protection.

Water Quality on the Reef

A re-elected Coalition Government will deliver \$579.9 million to:

- remediate eroding gullies, streambanks and other sources of water pollution.
- support farmers and land managers to voluntarily reduce land-based runoff into the Reef by adopting more efficient farming practices.
- ensure water quality measures remain informed by the best science.
- fund projects that address pollution from urban areas.

World-leading Reef management

A re-elected Coalition Government will deliver \$252.9 million to secure the future of our highly successful crown-of-thorns starfish control program and support reef compliance and protection, building on our success in culling more than 275,000 crown-of-thorns starfish.

Engaging with the community and Traditional Owners

A re-elected Coalition Government will provide \$74.4 million in new grants for community and Traditional Owner-led projects that will:

- protect the reef through increasing weed and pest control.
- restore habitats and protect species on both the coastline and in the water.
- conduct citizen science and community education programs.
- engage community organisations and locals in marine debris clean-ups.

World-leading science and reef resilience research

A re-elected Coalition Government will:

- invest \$95.6 million to accelerate research aimed at helping the reef adapt to climate change and roll out the next phase of our Reef Restoration and Adaptation Program, including bringing forward reef seeding and stabilisation to boost coral resilience to a changing climate.
- provide \$63.6 million for the Australian Institute of Marine Science (AIMS), supporting thousands of jobs and businesses, including:
- \$26.5 million to remediate the Australian Institute of Marine Science Cape Cleveland wharf, south of Townsville and \$1.5 million in ongoing funding to maintain it.

- \$37.1 million to increase AIMS' capability to deliver the critical marine science that protects and preserves oceans and coral reefs.
 - Part of this capability building includes \$5.3 million for design work on a replacement for the AIMS research vessel, RV Cape Ferguson.

2. Strong support for tourism recovery

The Coalition is backing our tourism sector to recover strongly from the pandemic, delivering economic growth and more jobs to our regions.

The Reef economy is worth \$6.4 billion and supports 64,000 jobs. Before the pandemic, Tropical North Queensland tourism supported more than 18,000 jobs - over 13 per cent of

the region's workforce. In 2019, tourists spent nearly \$4 billion in the region, up 3 per cent on the previous year.

We are backing in Tropical North Queensland to return to \$4 billion in tourism spending by 2025.

Under our THRIVE 2030 tourism strategy, a re-elected Coalition Government plans to grow domestic and international visitor spending by a combined **\$230 billion by 2030**.

On the Reef, we're providing immediate relief for tourism operators by suspending fee payments for visitors. About 650 operators are relieved from collecting these charges. As well, we're allowing 1,500 permit-holders to renew their Reef permits for free.

In a normal year, the Reef hosts two million visitors. Our fee relief is making tickets \$7 cheaper per person per day, while tourism numbers recover. Reef tourists have already saved tens of millions in fees, leaving more to spend at local hospitality and tourism venues.

Our ongoing subsidies for GBRMPA's budget mean fees and taxes for Reef-based industries will continue to be waived. To help strengthen the Reef's post-COVID recovery, these discounts will remain until at least June 2023.

A re-elected Coalition Government will continue to support the recovery of the Australian tourism sector and implement our THRIVE 2030 Strategy. Support to Tropical North Queensland includes:

- \$75 million for Round 3 of the \$258 million Consumer Travel Support Program to support travel agents and tour service providers.
- \$60 million to accelerate international tourist and backpacker arrivals through targeted marketing initiatives.
- \$6.8 million for increased data capture and analysis to improve planning and to establish an online employment and skills platform to promote career opportunities in tourism.

A re-elected Coalition Government will continue to support Reef businesses, including:

- providing \$12.4 million to **extend fee relief to local tourism businesses** in the Great Barrier Reef Marine Park impacted by the pandemic, building on our previous fee relief for Reef businesses which saved them tens of millions, ensuring their continued operation and securing local jobs.
- \$15 million to expand the **Tourism Industry Activation and Reef Protection Initiative**, leading to more marine tourism operators undertaking water conservation, environmental and monitoring activities to ensure tourism sites are well maintained and ready to welcome back guests.

3. Gearing up regional tourism

The Coalition Government is investing \$60 million to help return international visitors to the regions hardest hit by border closures.

A re-elected Coalition Government will deliver:

- \$15 million for Tourism Tropical North Queensland to **attract tourists back to North Queensland** and to **promote the Great Barrier Reef**.
- \$45 million for Tourism Australia to target the **return of international tourists to regional destinations**, with:
 - \$15 million for advertising in overseas markets to support regions most reliant on international tourists.
 - \$25 million for Tourism Australia to work with partners including trade wholesalers, the airlines and the media to drive international demand for key regions.
 - \$5 million to extend Business Events Australia's highly successful bid fund – which has already helped win 57 events for Australia.

4. Supporting small and family tourism businesses

Tourism businesses are at the heart of many local economies and communities.

More than 100,000 tourism-related businesses are in regional Australia, where around 44 cents of every visitor dollar is spent.

Across Tropical North Queensland, Townsville and the Whitsundays, over 6,500 businesses rely on tourism. More than half of these employ fewer than 20 people and over 40 per cent are owner-operated.

The Coalition has always backed small businesses so they can focus on doing what they do best – **running and growing their businesses and creating jobs for Australians**.

As part of over **\$314 billion in direct economic support** during the pandemic, JobKeeper supported around 1 million small businesses, providing targeted support for Reef tourism operators.

The Coalition is making it easier for Australians to start and grow a small business. Our Government has delivered the lowest small business tax rate in over 50 years, with a reduction from **30 per cent in 2013-2014 to 25 per cent in 2021-22**. Around 2.3 million small businesses have benefited, including many in Tropical North Queensland.

A re-elected Coalition Government will:

- **Keep taxes at record lows** so that businesses across Tropical North Queensland keep more of what they earn.
- **Further cut red tape** for small business owners to boost cash flow and ensure they can focus on running their business.
- Help small businesses **upskill staff** with targeted skills development incentives.
- Create new incentives for small businesses to **embrace the digital age**.
- Ensure small businesses have **access to affordable, reliable energy**.

- Invest in the **mental health** of small business owners.
- Extend **more support to female entrepreneurs** and small business owners.

Our Record

As part of our plan for a stronger future – and a stronger environment – the Coalition has invested almost \$6 billion since 2019 to tackle plastics pollution, protect threatened species and support the Great Barrier Reef and the health of our oceans.

Preserving the Reef for future generations

Like reefs all over the world, the Great Barrier Reef is under pressure. But the Coalition has always been deeply committed to its future and the communities that depend on it.

In 1979, the then Coalition Government proclaimed the protection of 12,000 square kilometres of the Reef's Capricornia section and announced the prohibition of Oil and Gas drilling on the Reef. This was the start of the Great Barrier Reef Marine Park.

Two years later, the Coalition declared an additional 36,000 square kilometres for the Cairns section, resulting in the world's largest marine park at the time, and declaration of World Heritage status for the Reef.

Since 2013, the Coalition has invested more than \$3 billion to recapture the Reef's vitality and ensure its long-term protection.

We're accelerating better management practices and delivering our Reef 2050 Plan.

Labor's plan for the Reef, the 64,000 jobs that depend on it and the \$6.4 billion Reef economy, is to invest almost **\$840 million less** than the Coalition.

We've also recently listed new marine parks at Christmas Island and Cocos (Keeling) Islands in the Indian Ocean, covering around 744,000 square kilometres and harbouring some of the rarest marine life on earth.

More than 4 million square kilometres of our waters are now covered by Australian marine parks, with 45 per cent of Australia's waters protected.

Real action to protect our Reef

Since 2015, the Coalition has invested more than \$3 billion in the Great Barrier Reef through the Reef 2050 Plan. This record support has:

- **Stopped hundreds of tonnes of dissolved inorganic nitrogen from entering the Reef** by working with landholders across almost 1.8 million hectares.
- **Culled more than 275,000 crown-of-thorns** starfish covering 247 reefs and suppressed primary outbreaks and protected 672,000 hectares.
- **Cleaned up 44.6 tonnes of marine debris** from beaches up and down the Reef.
- **Planted 1,700 hectares of trees** in Reef catchments.
- Delivered a coral IVF program with nearly 10 million coral larvae released across four of Lizard Island's reefs.

- Grown coral species with increased tolerance to warmer temperatures.
- **Doubled the safe nesting area** on Raine Island, enabling 640,000 more turtle hatchlings to begin life on the Reef.
- Built scientific knowledge with our **Eye on the Reef system** which now has more than **10,500 surveys** in the database.
- Collected **18 million coral larvae** in the Whitsundays to grow new corals that can restore damaged areas.
- Increased **critical turtle nesting habitat on Lady Elliot Island by 125 per cent.**
- Continued funding world-leading science and research through James Cook University, CSIRO, Australian Institute of Marine Science and GBRMPA, University of Queensland and Southern Cross University.
- Invested to develop new technology that combines satellite imagery and underwater mapping to create the most detailed 3D biological terrain maps of the Reef yet.

Building on strong foundations

In 2018, the Coalition Government invested an extra \$443 million in the **Reef's health and resilience**, partnering with the Great Barrier Reef Foundation.

This is an **investment in the future of the Reef and in Australian jobs.**

It reinforces the Coalition's commitment to the environmental, economic, social and cultural importance of the Reef.

So far, this partnership has resulted in:

- 334 projects across the reef and raised an additional \$230 million from the private sector, delivered by working with 428 different organisations across regional Queensland.
- delivery of more than 50 Traditional Owner-led projects as part of the largest ever investment in traditional owner-led reef protection efforts in the world.
- the prevention of 187.7 tonnes of dissolved inorganic nitrogen, 37 tonnes of sediment and 229 kilograms of pesticides from entering the Reef.
- a new strategic partnership to **deliver crown-of-thorns starfish control** that, for the first time, is suppressing the spread of crown-of-thorns at its source.

Our strong plan for the Reef builds on the Coalition's existing environmental policies:

- the National Landcare Program **supporting conservation efforts across the country.**
- **protecting threatened species and restoring habitats** through the Environment Restoration Fund.
- **keeping oceans healthy and resilient** through our \$100 million Oceans Leadership Package and marine bioregional plans.

- investing in new technology to better detect, collect and dispose of **deadly ghost nets** lost at sea or abandoned by foreign fishing vessels.
- **expanding Australia's Indigenous Protected Areas**, for both land and sea country, bringing total protection to **more than 115 million hectares**.
- ongoing investment in low emissions technologies and energy efficiency measures to **support households, businesses and the environment**.

Backing in the tourism recovery

The Coalition Government has backed our tourism sector to recover strongly from the pandemic, with more jobs in our regions.

Since March 2020, the Coalition has provided more than \$20 billion to support the tourism and hospitality sector with JobKeeper, the Cash Flow Boost and targeted programs:

- Under the Tourism Industry Activation and Reef Protection Initiative, **17 marine tourism operators** have undertaken **thousands of hours of Reef conservation activities**:
 - more than **690 days of activity** on the Reef.
 - more than **4,800 days of employment** for staff.
 - more than **6,000 hours of operation** and more than **2,300 hours of site stewardship**.
 - more than **2,000 surveys uploaded** to our Eye on the Reef system, providing data on the current state of the Reef.
 - more than **22,000 coral fragments planted**.
 - more than **63,000 pest snails removed** and more than **1,000 crown-of-thorns starfish removed**.
- Launching the largest support package for the tourism and aviation industry in Australia's history, including:
 - the Tourism Aviation Network Support Program, which provided **discounts on tens of thousands of airfares per week** to selected regional locations. Almost **60,000 of these came to Tropical North Queensland**.
 - the Regional Airline Network Support Program and Domestic Aviation Network Support program, which supported Cairns airline operators and kept routes to Cairns open.
- Allocated **\$258 million** through the Consumer Travel Support Program for **more than 3,200 travel agents** to continue to operate and process refunds for customers.
- \$139.6 million to **support Australia's zoos, aquariums and wildlife parks** to care for their animals and ensure they remained viable and ready to welcome visitors back, including **Cairns ZOOM and Wildlife Dome** and **Cairns Aquarium**.
- \$50 million for the Recovery for Regional Tourism program to support regions reliant on international tourism, funding **projects to keep and create jobs, improve tourism**

offers, increase demand and attract visitors. This included four projects run by Tourism Tropical North Queensland:

- \$4.4 million for a destination marketing strategy to **drive year-round domestic tourism.**
- \$1.3 million for local industry to **adapt and reinvigorate their products and experiences** to better suit domestic markets.
- \$2 million **travel incentive – 8,000 tour vouchers of \$250 each for visitors** to Tropical North Queensland.
- \$2.2 million for a strategy to develop **new aviation routes** from key interstate markets into Cairns and **attract new leisure and business events.**
- \$33.5 million for the Sustaining Tourism at Australia’s Iconic World and National Heritage Sites Initiative. This **supports heritage upgrades, conservation work and infrastructure upgrades** at national and world heritage sites.
- Renewing the **Reef HQ Aquarium in Townsville** with over \$80 million invested since 2019 to upgrade and maintain aquarium equipment and renovate Reef HQ.
- Invested more than \$220,000 into the Wet Tropics Sustainable Tourism Plan to **encourage visitors without compromising the protection of these ecosystems.**
- More than \$6.9 billion to **around 150,000 small and medium businesses** in Queensland through the Cash Flow Boost.
- The Morrison Government has also delivered a **\$50 million Tourism Icons Package** to support the development of five iconic tourism projects – creating new jobs and helping to diversify local economies – including \$8 million for the next stage of the **Wangetti Trail** from the **Mowbray River to Palm Cove.**

The Risk of Labor

This election provides a clear choice, with real consequences for Australia.

The pandemic has been very tough for our country.

However, on almost every measure – economic growth, jobs growth, debt levels, fatality rates or vaccine rates – Australia’s recovery is leading the world.

Treasury predicted unemployment could reach 15 per cent. It has fallen to 4 per cent – the lowest in 48 years.

The recent Budget included the biggest turnaround in our finances in over 70 years. Australia is one of a small number of countries to maintain a AAA credit rating from all three major ratings agencies.

Our country still faces many challenges and there is much more to be done.

Labor would put the protection of the Great Barrier Reef and the recovery of the Reef economy at risk.

When Labor was last in government, they mismanaged the Reef to the point where, on Labor’s watch in 2012, the Reef came to the attention of the World Heritage Committee for “unprecedented” levels of proposed coastal development, and an “absence of substantial progress” against the Committee’s Reef management requirements.

The Coalition and our \$3 billion of investment are helping to rectify this to ensure we meet the Committee’s requirements.

Labor doesn’t support the small and medium businesses that are the backbone of our tourism sector.

More than 12,000 tourism businesses were lost under Labor from 2010 to 2013.

Under Labor, Tourism Australia funding flatlined between 2008 and 2013.

The Coalition’s comprehensive Reef 2050 Plan is backed by a \$3 billion investment, including an additional \$1 billion in this year’s Budget.

Labor’s so-called “commitment to the Reef” is 10 paragraphs on a website.

Labor has no Reef policy and no vision for Reef communities.

They are now promising less than half of the Reef investment that they promised at the last election.

Under Labor, millions of cubic metres of maintenance dredge material was dumped in the Great Barrier Reef Marine Park. In 2015, the Coalition government brought this to a stop.

The Coalition also banned oil and gas operations on the Reef.

A Labor-Greens government will demonise farmers and introduce harsher run-off policies. This will drastically impact agricultural industries along the Reef. Only the Coalition understands that farmers are doing the hard work, working with scientists and the

community, to improve water quality. We will not endanger the livelihoods of responsible land holders. On the contrary, they are key partners to improving water quality.

The Queensland Government had sought to renew its Coral Fishery Wildlife Trade Operation, which had resulted in a 705 per cent increase in harvested coral pieces since 2007.

The State Labor Government’s inability to work closely with its fishers has led to failures around sustainability requirements for export. Fisheries have lost their export permits, placing pressure on commercial fishing businesses.

A Labor-Greens government would decimate our commercial fishing industry.

A vote for the Coalition is a vote for our \$1 billion commitment to protecting one of the world’s most precious ecosystems.

A vote for Labor means \$840 million less for Reef funding, resulting in job losses, reduced crown-of-thorns management, less Indigenous engagement, poorer species protection and the risk of a World Heritage in-danger listing.

COALITION	LABOR
<p>Record Reef funding Additional \$1 billion commitment to the Reef, taking total funding since 2015 to an unprecedented \$3 billion.</p>	<p>Reef funding Labor has committed just \$163 million to the Reef - \$840 million less than the Coalition, and less than half their 2019 election commitment.</p>
<p>Reef Trust partnership Funded 334 projects delivering critical conservation to the Reef.</p>	<p>Reef partnership Labor say they will end this funding, placing vital projects at risk.</p>
<p>Supporting Traditional Owners Delivering 50 co-designed Traditional Owner-led Reef protection projects because the Coalition recognises the unique traditional knowledge, experience and value of Traditional Owners.</p>	<p>Labor Reef plan ignores Traditional Owners Less funding means fewer opportunities for the valuable Reef work of Traditional Owners.</p>

Cost

Funding for the Coalition's Great Barrier Reef Plan is already provided for within budget estimates.

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 For further details of The Nationals' Plan go to: www.nationals.org.au