Caring for the Great Barrier Reef

A Timeline of significant events highlighting the proud history of Traditional Owner work and achievements

PRE-COLONISATION

Caring for country undertaken by individuals and clan groups with responsibility for their land and sea estates, under the guidance of elders and other knowledge-holders. These cultural rights and practices continue to underpin contemporary land and sea management.

PRE-COLONISATION

COLONISATION

1788 European Colonisation begins

1824 1st European fishery in Moreton Bay

1825 Queensland settlement begins

1850'S Commercial net fishing begins in Moreton Bay

1859 Queensland colony created

1897 The Aboriginal Protection and Restriction of the Sale of Opium Act

1901 Majority of Aboriginal people had been removed onto reserves.

1939 Aboriginals Preservation and Protection Act 1939

1969 Aborigines' and Torres Strait Islanders' Affairs Act 1965

1970-1979

1971 Aborigines Act and Torres Strait Islanders Act

1972 UN World Heritage Convention (WHC) Adopted

1974 Australian Government signs the UN World Heritage Convention

1975 Federal Racial Discrimination Act 1975

1975 Great Barrier Reef Marine Park Act 1975

1976 Fisheries Act 1976 (Qld)

1977 Community Development Employment Projects (CDEP)

1977 Torres Strait Treaty

1978 Indigenous interests recognised in GBRMPA Cairns Section Zoning plan

1979 Caring for Country movement begins

1979 The Emerald Agreement

1980-1989

1981 Great Barrier Reef Marine Park inscribed on World Heritage List

1983 Palm Island Ranger Service established

1984 First Aboriginal Land Council formed - Carpentaria Land Council Aboriginal Corporation

1990 - Cape York Land Council Aboriginal Corporation

1994 - North Queensland Land Council

1994 - Torres Strait Regional Authority

2005 - Queensland South Native Title Services Ltd

1984 Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Heritage Protection Act

1984 Torres Strait Fisheries Act 1984

1985 GBRMPA Traditional Knowledge and the Marine Environment Workshop

1987 The Royal Commission into Aboriginal Deaths in Custody (1987-91)

1988 First Aboriginal person appointed to the GBRMPA Great Barrier Reef Consultative Committee

1988 GBRMPA Policies on sustainable take of green turtles and dugongs by Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people developed

1988 Commonwealth Employment Program in Natural and Cultural Resource Management (CEPANCRM), and Aboriginal Rural Resource Iniative (ARRI)

Funding outcome from RCIADIC encouraging reconnection with country and resources

1989 Northern Aboriginal Fisheries Conference

1990-1999

1991 Aboriginal Land Act 1991 (Qld) and the Torres Strait Islander Land Act 1991 (Qld)

1991 Ecological Sustainable Development Working Group Fisheries Report

1991 Council of Aboriginal Reconciliation established

1992 Mabo v Queensland High Court of Australia Decision

1992 Turning the Tide: Conference on Indigenous Peoples and Sea Rights

1992 UN Convention on Biological Diversity

Signed by Australia, ratified in the EPBC Act 1999

1993 Native Title Act (C'lth)

1993 Julayinbul Statement on Indigenous Intellectual Property Rights

1993 Resource Assessment Commission Coastal Zone Inquiry: Final Report

1993 Cape York Land acquisition program established

1994 GBR 25 Year Strategic Plan

1994 Torres Strait Regional Authority established

1994 Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Coastal Reference Group established

1994 GBR Marine Park Act 1975 amended to include Aboriginal representation

1995 Indigenous Policy and Liaison Unit (IPLU) GBRMPA established

1995 Indigenous Land Corporation (now the Indigenous Land & Sea Corporation)

1996 First Indigenous GBRMPA Board Member appointed

1997 GBR Ministerial Council directive: Co-management arrangements for dugong be developed with Indigenous Peoples.

1997 Indigenous Protected Areas (IPAs) program established

1997 Sea Forum convened focusing on use and management of dugongs

1998 Marine Strategy for Torres Strait released

1998 Review of Aboriginal Involvement in the Management of the Wet Tropics World Heritage Area

1998 Australia's Oceans Policy

1998 Yanner Native Title High Court Decision

1998 Sea Forum II: T.O. governance rights and responsibilities into GBR planning and management

1999 Mer Islanders claim traditional fishing rights under the Torres Strait Treaty.

1999 Native Title Indigenous Land Use Agreements Regulations 1999 (Cth)

1999 Environment Protection and Biodiversity Conservation Act 1999

2000-2019

2000 Hopevale Aboriginal Council launches Turtle and Dugong Hunting Management Plan

2000 EPBC Act Indigenous Advisory Committee formed

2000 Croker Island High Court Decision

2000 Four GBRMPA Reef Advisory Committees established with Indigenous representation.

Conservation, Biodiversity World Heritage RAC, Fisheries RAC, Tourism and Recreation RAC, Water Quality and Coastal Development RAC

2000 UN Permanent Forum on Indigenous Issues (UNPFII)

2001 Traditional Owner groups worked with GBRMPA for traditional reef names

2002 North Australian Indigenous Land and Sea Management Alliance (NAILSMA) established

2003 Recovery Plan for Marine Turtles in Australia

2003 Great Barrier Reef Marine Park Zoning Plan 2003

2003 National Indigenous Fishing Conference, Perth

2003 National Recreational and Indigenous Fishing Survey

2004 Puchiwu Fishing Cooperative at Lockhart River

2004 Marine Parks Act 2004 (Qld)

2004 Budj Bim Cultural Landscape 1st culturally important place included on the National Heritage List.

6 July 2019 - Budj Bim Cultural Landscape became the first site in Australia to be added to the UNESCO World Heritage List purely for its Aboriginal cultural importance.

2004 GBRMPA Representative Areas Program

2004 Managing Sea Country Together Report

2004 Marine And Coastal Committee Taskforce on Marine Turtle and Dugong populations

2005 1st GBRMP Traditional Use of Marine Resources Agreement (Girringun)

2008 - Girringun TUMRA (2nd agreement)
2008 - Wuthathi TUMRA
2009 - Kuuku Ya'u People's Marine Park ILUA
2011 - Girringun TUMRA (3rd Agreement)
2011 - Port Curtis Coral Coast TUMRA
2013 - Lama Lama TUMRA
2013 - Yuku Baja Muliku TUMRA
2014 - Yirrganydji TUMRA
2014 – Woppaburra TUMRA
2016 – Gungganji TUMRA
2018 - Mundaburra TUMRA
2021 - Darumbal TUMRA

2005 Torres Strait Island and Sea Management Strategy

2005 The Wet Tropics Regional Agreement (2005)

2005 National Indigenous Land and Sea Country Workshop

2006 Wild River Rangers (renamed Qld Indigenous Land and Sea Rangers)

2007 UN Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples (UNDRIP) endorsed by Australian government

2007 Working on Country Program

2008 NAILSMA Dugong and Marine Turtle Program (2005-2008)

2008 GBRMPA Land and Sea Country Indigenous Partnerships Program

2008 Thuwathu / Bujimulla Sea Country Plan

2010 Torres Strait Regional Sea Claim Native Title

2010 Saltwater People Network Planning Forum 2010

2011 Cape York Turtle and Dugong Taskforce established

2011 T.O. Sea Country Turtle and Dugong Workshop, Cairns

2012 National Indigenous Sea Country Workshop

2012 First GBR Saltwater Women's Gathering

2012 Statement of Outstanding Universal Value for the GBR amended to include Indigenous cultural values

2012 Reactive Monitoring Mission Report,
2012 Decision 36 - request strategic assessment, long-term plan, targets and review of ports with view to list 'in danger'
2015 Not listed in danger - Reef 2050 Plan and Investment Framework
2021 Decision 44 - impacts of climate change - adopt Paris Agreement, invite Reactive Monitoring Mission
2022 Reactive Monitoring Mission visit GBR

2013 First World Indigenous Network Conference - Darwin

2013 Qld T.O. Sea Country Turtle and Dugong Workshop

2013 Reef Rescue Land and Sea Country Indigenous Partnerships Sponsorship Program

2013 Recovery Plan for Marine Turtles in Australia 2017-2020

2014 Indigenous Sea Country Policy Group - Sea Country Management Policy Framework

2014 Reef 2050 Long Term Sustainability Plan Indigenous Targets developed

2015 Reef 2050 Long Term Sustainability Plan released

2015 FAO Voluntary Guidelines for Securing Sustainable Small-Scale Fisheries in the Context of Food Security and Poverty Eradication

2016 Indigenous Heritage Expert Group (IHEG) GBRMPA established

2016 Reef 2050 Indigenous Implementation Plan

2016 The Land and Sea Management Strategy for Torres Strait (2016-2036)

2016 Girringun Sea Country Forum (Mission Beach)

2017 Daintree Handover Traditional Owners Negotiation Committee

2017 Queensland's Sustainable Fishing Strategy

2017 Qld Senior Rangers Workshop 2017, Yirrganydji country

2018 GBRF Traditional Owner Advisory Group established

GBR Traditional Owners Program Logic, Reef 2050 GBR T.O. Workshop Reef wide Forum

2018 T.O. Aspirations Project Report

The Next Generation of Reef 2050 Actions

2019 Strong Peoples Strong Country Framework

2019 Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Heritage Strategy finalised by GBRMPA and Traditional Owners

2019 Human Rights Act 2019 QLD Cultural rights Aboriginal peoples and Torres Strait Islander peoples

2019 GBR Regulations 2019 Part 4 TUMRAs

2019 Reef Trust Partnership T.O. Workshop

2020-current

2020 Australian Institute for Marine Studies Indigenous Partnerships Plan

2021 GBRF Healing Country Statement

2021 Handback of 4 National Parks to Eastern Kuku Yalanji people for joint management

2021 Expansion of Sea Country Indigenous Protected Areas (IPA) Program

2021 National First People's Gathering on Climate Change (Gathering)

2022 Healthy Water Forum

2022 Reef 2050 Traditional Owner Implementation Plan and ReefTO website and other communication products launched

2024 ReefTO Taskforce established

2025 Sea Country Forum held in Gimuy (Cairns)

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