



National Dugong and Turtle Protection Plan 2014–2017

Marine turtles and dugong that breed and forage in the tropical waters of northern Australia, the Torres Strait and around the world are listed protected species under the *Environment Protection and Biodiversity Conservation Act 1999* (EPBC Act).

These iconic species have survived in tropical coastal habitat for many thousands of years and are an integral part of the traditional lives and culture of many Indigenous peoples. Marine turtles and dugong are also identified as values of the Great Barrier Reef Marine Park World Heritage Area, which provides them valuable habitat.

Marine turtles

Of the seven species of marine turtles in the world, six occur in Australian waters. Under the EPBC Act they are all listed as both threatened and migratory. The six species are the flatback, green, hawksbill, leatherback, loggerhead and olive ridley turtles. Northern Australia has some of the largest marine turtle nesting areas in the Indo-Pacific region, including the world's only nesting populations of the flatback turtle. More information about marine turtles can be found at www.environment.gov.au/topics/marine/marine-species/marine-turtles

Dugong

Dugong are listed as migratory under the EPBC Act. Dugong populations occur in tropical and subtropical waters around the world, including in the shallow coastal waters of northern Australia from the QLD/ NSW border to Shark Bay, WA. They are also found in warm shallow seas where seagrass beds are found in other parts of the Indian and Pacific Ocean. As they undertake long-distance



Credit: Paradise Ink

movements, Australia shares dugong populations with neighbouring countries. More information about dugong can be found at www.environment.gov.au/marine/marine-species/dugongs

Dugong and Turtle Protection Plan

To enhance the protection of our iconic marine turtles and dugong in Far North Queensland and the Torres Strait, the Australian Government has committed \$5.3 million over three years for delivery of a Dugong and Turtle Protection Plan under the Reef 2050 Plan and Reef Trust. The plan addresses threatening processes that impact on the long-term recovery and survival of these protected migratory species. Information about the Reef 2050 Plan and Reef Trust is available at www.environment.gov.au/marine/gbr/reef-trust

The Dugong and Turtle Protection Plan includes the following seven core elements:

1. \$2 million for a Specialised Indigenous Ranger Programme for strengthened enforcement and compliance and marine conservation in Queensland and the Torres Strait

The programme is being delivered by the Department of the Prime Minister and Cabinet. More information is available at www.indigenous.gov.au/news-and-media/announcements/minister-scullion-2-million-strengthen-compliance-powers-indigenous

2. \$2 million for an Australian Crime Commission investigation into the illegal poaching, transportation and trade of turtle and dugong meat in the Great Barrier Reef and Torres Strait

A fact sheet about the investigation by the commission's Wildlife and Environmental Crime Team is available at <https://www.crimecommission.gov.au/sites/default/files/Wildlife%20%26%20Environmental%20Crime%20Team%20FACTSHEET%20281114.pdf>

3. \$700 000 for marine debris clean-up initiatives

Information about the Great Barrier Reef marine debris clean-up initiative is available at www.environment.gov.au/minister/hunt/2014/mr20141113a.html

4. \$600 000 to support the Cairns and Fitzroy Island Turtle Rehabilitation Centre

The Reef Trust will support the work of the centre to rehabilitate sick and injured turtles and return them to the marine environment.

Information about the Cairns and Fitzroy Turtle Rehabilitation Centre is available at www.saveourseaturtles.com.au/about-ctrc.html and www.fitzroyisland.com/newsroom/meet-patients-cairns-turtle-rehabilitation-centre

5. Working with Indigenous leaders to provide for traditional use and reef protection

The Great Barrier Reef Marine Park Authority is working with Traditional Owners to develop Traditional Use of Marine Resources Agreements to provide for traditional use and deliver reef protection. This may also include voluntary no take agreements.

Information about the agreements is available at www.gbrmpa.gov.au/our-partners/traditional-owners/traditional-use-of-marine-resources-agreements

6. Federal legislation tripling the penalties for poaching and illegal transportation of turtle and dugong meat

The *Environment Legislation Amendment Act 2015* amends various sections of the EPBC Act and the *Great Barrier Reef Marine Park Act 1975* (Marine Park Act) to provide additional protection for turtles and dugong. The amendments triple the maximum penalties for various criminal offences related to the killing, injuring, taking, trading, keeping or moving of turtles and dugong under the EPBC Act and for criminal offences and civil penalty provisions which apply to the taking of, or injury to, turtles and dugong where they are a protected species under the Marine Park Act.

The tripling of maximum penalties does not impact on the rights of Native Title holders under the *Native Title Act 1993* to hunt turtle and dugong for personal, domestic or non-commercial communal needs.

Information about the legislation is available at www.aph.gov.au/Parliamentary_Business/Bills_Legislation/Bills_Search_Results/Result?bId=r5128

7. A national approach to dugong and turtle management

Refers to the nationally co-ordinated management of turtle and dugong in Australia. This includes the development of EPBC Act policy documents and guidelines such as updating the *Recovery Plan for Marine Turtles of Australia 2003*, Marine Turtle Referral Guidelines and policy guidelines for dugong and seagrass habitats.

Marine turtle recovery plan

Recovery plans set out research and management actions to halt the decline of, and support the recovery of, threatened species and their habitat.

The Australian Government is currently developing a new marine turtle recovery plan in consultation with scientists, Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people, state and territory governments and the community. The recovery plan will provide updated information about marine turtle populations (stocks) in Australian waters, including recovery actions to address key threats to marine turtle stocks and their habitats.

The draft marine turtle recovery plan is due to be released for public comment in 2016.

The *Recovery Plan for Marine Turtles in Australia 2003* is available at www.environment.gov.au/resource/recovery-plan-marine-turtles-australia

EPBC Act referral guidelines

The Australian Government is currently developing EPBC Act policy guidelines for actions that may impact on marine turtles, dugong and seagrass habitat.

EPBC policy guidelines are public policy documents that provide guidance on the practical application of EPBC Act in relation to protected species.