



Australia's draft Sustainable Ocean Plan – at a glance

Proposed national vision to 2040: We commit to working together for a better ocean future; one where our coasts and ocean are healthy and resilient; where we make sustainable use of ocean resources; and where all can share in the benefits that flow from it, now and in the future.

National priorities: Focus areas



First Nations perspective

Climate action

Proposed outcome: We have a better understanding of the impacts of climate change on the ocean and we are equipped to respond; ocean ecosystems and species are resilient and can adapt to the changing climate; and ocean ecosystems and ocean industries make a major contribution to Australia's net zero emissions target through ocean-based climate action.



The ocean is a living ancestor and a sacred entity, embodying our ancestral spirits and teachings. Respecting this ecosystem is a pledge taken with our ancestors. Engaging in discussions around climate action ensures a voice for the spirits that have safeguarded the ocean for time immemorial.

Summary of opportunities for collective national action

- Elevate the role of ocean-based climate action in advancing Australia's net zero by 2050 target, as well as domestic and international climate adaptation effort.
- Scale-up nature-based solutions to climate change.
- Develop detailed assessments of climate risks to coasts and the ocean.
- Establish mechanisms to deliver near-real-time ocean climate information at relevant scales for governments, industries and decision-makers.
- Build resilience and work to adapt ocean ecosystems and ecosystem services to climate change impacts.
- Develop specific adaptation plans for the ocean and coasts.

Protect and restore

Proposed outcome: The ocean is healthy; species and ecosystems are increasingly protected, resilient and recovering; and key threats are being addressed effectively.



Protecting and restoring the ocean is a sacred duty to a living ancestor deserving of respect and care. The ocean provides not just food but a connection to our stories, dances and ceremonies. Our commitment is to ensure this connection remains unbroken for all generations to come.

Summary of opportunities for collective national action

- Review the National Representative System of Marine Protected Areas and its foundational policies to strengthen effective management of these areas and align with our commitments under the Global Biodiversity Framework.
- Explore options to improve formal recognition of, and support for, First Nations-led ocean and coastal protection and management.
- Drive a national approach to the restoration of coastal and marine ecosystems, identifying national restoration priorities and capacity building.
- Investigate 'ecological engineering' to encourage the establishment of novel habitats for native species.
- Reduce ocean pollution (including plastics and other sources) directly and by advancing the circular economy, and better respond to maritime incidents.
- Ratify and implement the High Seas Biodiversity Treaty, including leading the establishment of marine protected areas on the high seas.

First Nations

Proposed outcome: First Nations people are a central part of the ocean economy and have a genuine and representative role in sea Country decision-making and ocean policy development and implementation.



By integrating the ancient, holistic perspectives of First Nations people, we recognise the ocean is more than a resource to be managed but also a living entity with which we are deeply interconnected. This shift fosters a profound sense of shared guardianship, where Indigenous wisdom and contemporary science converge, guiding us towards a future where the ocean's health and humanity's wellbeing are harmoniously aligned.

Summary of opportunities for collective national action

- Support the establishment of a First Nations-led national representative body, and provide support to existing bodies, to ensure meaningful First Nations input into sea Country matters.
- Support the establishment and operation of First Nations-led and co-owned sustainable businesses on sea Country and strong First Nations participation in the ocean economy.
- Foster partnerships with industry and address barriers to accessing finance.
- Empower First Nations people to be the drivers of actions that allow them to care, benefit from and manage their sea Country.

Industry

Proposed outcome: Current and emerging ocean businesses are environmentally sustainable, socially responsible and economically prosperous for current and future generations.



Ocean industries need to operate in harmony with the natural world, guided by the principles of sustainability and respect for all living beings. With today's challenges, we must remain vigilant to ensure that every stakeholder treads softly on this shared journey, respecting the sacredness of resources and our traditions.

Summary of opportunities for collective national action

- Co-design industry roadmaps to support sustainable growth of ocean industries.
- Harmonise arrangements that present a barrier to operations at the national scale.
- Create greater investment and industry certainty for emerging ocean industries and technologies.
- Support initiatives that showcase the importance of ocean industries to Australia.
- Promote the development and use of a cultural-licence-to-operate framework.
- Support businesses to transition to low-emission or sustainable operations.



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National priorities: Enablers



First Nations perspective

Collaboration

Proposed outcome: We have a more collaborative and coordinated approach to the management of our ocean and ocean economy within and across jurisdictions and sectors; Australia is a leader in the global protection and sustainable management of the ocean; and we are effectively addressing shared transboundary challenges with regional and global partners.



Collaboration is a sacred gathering, where voices come together to weave the future of the ocean. It involves every stakeholder embracing the ocean's cultural heartbeat, nurturing a deep reverence for its heritage.

Summary of opportunities for collective national action

- Build on existing mechanisms and potentially establish new forums to drive agreement, cooperation and harmonisation between jurisdictions and sectors.
- Encourage and empower people outside of government to progress conversations and form partnerships to support their targeted needs.
- Collaborate on the development of a marine planning approach with agreed national high-level principles to guide implementation of jurisdictional frameworks.
- Boost international engagement on ocean priorities to support Australia's global commitments, transboundary cooperation and shared regional priorities.

Knowledge

Proposed outcome: We have adequate baseline and current-state data on key ocean issues and systems to support conservation and sustainable use actions; a culture of sharing ocean knowledge more freely; and a strong understanding within the broader community of the value of our ocean and how to engage with it sustainably.



Knowledge of the ocean is both a cherished trust and a communal responsibility, deeply embedded in our cultural and spiritual existence. By embracing a culture of freely sharing ocean knowledge, strategies are guided by the whispers of our ancestors and the lessons of the land.

Summary of opportunities for collective national action

- Establish national marine baseline, mapping and long-term research and monitoring programs.
- Agree approaches to setting national ocean science and research priorities, including data needs and standards.
- Move towards a national marine park monitoring program to monitor the effectiveness of protected and conserved areas.
- Develop an integrated national platform to support ocean data-sharing.
- Increase First Nations-led research and consider and respect First Nations Knowledge alongside western science.
- Support the development of innovative solutions and technologies.
- Support the elevation of ocean literacy through educational programs, resources and educator support.
- Maintain and expand programs that connect communities with the ocean.

Equity and inclusion

Proposed outcome: Benefits from ocean resources are shared and decision-making on how we use and manage the ocean is inclusive and fair for all Australians, now and for future generations.



Equity and inclusion in ocean management reflect the deeply held values of communal stewardship, ensuring that benefits from ocean resources are shared and decision-making processes are inclusive and reflective of the belief that we are all custodians of the earth, bound by a responsibility to care for each other.

Summary of opportunities for collective national action

- Work to improve ocean governance so equity principles are embedded in decision-making.
- Strive for decision-making to consider the connection between human health and wellbeing and ocean health, where relevant.
- Ensure future ocean-climate policies are inclusive and consider people and communities most vulnerable to climate change within the region.
- Establish ocean youth forums or advisory groups to empower young people to be advocates for the ocean and engage with government on the development of ocean policy.
- Collect data across ocean-related sectors to understand and improve women's employment in ocean-related sectors.
- Support a just transition of the workforce as the ocean economy is decarbonised.
- Continue to address transnational crime including illegal, unreported and unregulated fishing and modern slavery.
- Ensure access to marine resources for First Nations people for traditional use and ocean businesses.
- Empower First Nations youth to become leaders and future-decision-makers in their community and in national decision-making.

Finance

Proposed outcome: We have a financial system that actively and positively contributes to the protection and restoration of ocean ecosystems and sustainable ocean activities, and is based on clear and internationally aligned standards and frameworks.



We all recognise the ocean's economic significance, but it is also our moral duty to ensure that its value is not measured in currency alone. Our traditions, stories and ceremonies also influence its wealth.

Summary of opportunities for collective national action

- Explore developing a national investment prospectus for a nature-positive ocean including the identification of opportunities for, and barriers to, private-sector investment.
- Build private-sector capability to assess and disclose nature-related risks and opportunities.
- Continue cooperation with like-minded countries to garner support for the Taskforce on Nature-related Financial Disclosures framework, nature-based solutions and private investment into protecting, managing and repairing the environment.
- Continue cooperation with like-minded countries to develop consistent global standards and alignment of sustainable finance frameworks across different jurisdictions.