Report on findings from the independent evaluation of the implementation of the North-west Marine Parks Network Management Plan

Director of National Parks
Australian Government Department of Climate Change, Energy, the Environment and Water

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ORIMA pays respect to First Nations peoples past and present, their cultures and traditions and acknowledges their continuing connection to Land, Sea and Community.

The ORIMA Research team would like to acknowledge and thank all the participants from across Australia who were involved in the research. Their willingness to share their experiences, engage in open and honest discussions, and reflect on strategies for improvement was critical to informing the research findings presented in this report.

ORIMA Research is privileged to have had our First Nations Community Interviewer artwork completed by ***Tristan Pwerl Duggie****. The artwork depicts ORIMA Research's core values of conducting work in an ethical manner with honesty, integrity, respect, and humility. The painting represents ORIMA's First Nations Community Interviewers humbly visiting the country and Community of other First Nations Peoples, sitting courteously with, listening with integrity, and respectfully sharing the views and thoughts of First Nations Peoples.*

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Executive Summary

BACKGROUND AND METHODOLOGY

The Australian and state and territory governments **designate 'Marine Protected Areas' (MPAs)** – regions of the ocean where human activity is restricted and regulated to protect marine life and ecosystems. MPAs include **marine parks managed by state and territory governments** and **Australian Marine Parks (AMPs) managed by the Commonwealth Government**.

Form Commonwealth managed marine parks, the Environment Protection and Biodiversity Conservation Act (EPBC Act) mandates the preparation of **'management plans' to guide the governance and regulation** of each AMP/ AMP network. These plans contain **seven 'management programs'**, each of which covers a number of priority areas listing planned outcomes and specific actions to be undertaken.

ORIMA Research was commissioned to conduct an **independent evaluation of the implementation of the management plan for the North-west Marine Parks Network** (herein referred to as the North-west Network) which is set to expire in mid-2028. The methodology for this evaluation adopted a multi-phased approach, as depicted in ***Figure 1*** below.

Figure 1: Overview of evaluation methodology

The evaluation framework identified two core evidence sources:

- **Documentary evidence** – sourced through administrative data provided by Parks Australia and a desktop review conducted by ORIMA researchers.
- **Stakeholder and First Nations peoples engagement** – undertaken by ORIMA researchers. A total of n=57 stakeholders and First Nations peoples participated in the evaluation and spoke from either a perspective specific to the North-west Network, or from a national perspective with relevance to the Network.

FINDINGS RELATING TO OVERALL EVALUATION QUESTIONS

The **North-west Network demonstrated positive progress** in implementing the actions and achieving the intended outcomes across its management programs.

Overall, the evaluation identified a range of **strengths and achievements** in relation to the implementation of the North-west Management Plan, including the:

- **Development of robust and structured frameworks, strategies and policies** – such as the *'Communication, Education and Awareness Strategy'* and the *'Australian Marine Parks Assessment and Authorisations Policy'*.

- **Progress in ecological baseline data collection** – which provided critical insights into the natural values and pressures within the North-west Network.
- **Collaboration and partnerships with a range of key stakeholders** – which leveraged expertise and resources to improve marine park management.
- **Effective assessments and authorisations activities** – supported by the timely implementation of a range of policies, procedures and partnerships to support achievement of the relevant actions and outcomes.

However, a number of **limitations** were also identified through the evaluation, including:

- **Remote and offshore nature of the parks** – the isolated and deep-sea nature of some parks in the North-west Network made implementation challenging, particularly in relation to tourism, monitoring, compliance, and communication and stakeholder engagement.
- **Engagement with Traditional Owners, First Nations partners, organisations and users was not fully effective** – while a range of efforts was identified to meaningfully engage First Nations peoples, a few First Nations partners reported that actions were not inclusive of all relevant First Nations partners or Traditional Owners with the necessary Cultural and Sea Country Knowledge, or did not effectively enable co-management approaches.
- **Gaps in data for some programs areas** – limited data on progress of some actions and outcomes within the management plan was identified as a barrier to assessing the effectiveness of the management plan's implementation and making evidence-based management decisions.
- **Appropriately balancing protection of ecological, social and economic values** – this was found to be an ongoing challenge, due to the diversity of viewpoints identified in relation to the balance of protection for ecological and other values. However, clearly and transparently communicating the evidence-based rationale for management decisions should go some way to addressing these concerns.
- **Limited effectiveness of the North-west Marine Parks Advisory Committee (NWMPAC) process** – both NWMPAC members and Parks Australia staff raised concerns about the effectiveness of the current advisory committee model. However, the need for ongoing and in-depth engagement of a range of stakeholders was acknowledged, suggesting that a more inclusive and collaborative approach could better capture diverse stakeholder perspectives for consideration in decision-making processes.

FINDINGS RELATING TO SPECIFIC PROGRAMS OF THE NORTH-WEST NETWORK MANAGEMENT PLAN

The **specific program grades indicated positive progress overall**. One program was assessed as 'good', five were assessed as 'good with some concerns' and one was assessed as having 'significant concerns'. None were assessed as 'critical'. Specific findings for each program are outlined below.

Communication, Education and Awareness Program

Good with some concerns

The Communication, Education and Awareness Program was assessed as 'good with some concerns', with the overall outcome of the management program rated as 'partially met'. Of the eight planned actions, four were assessed as 'completed' or 'ongoing' while the remaining four were deemed 'partially completed'.

Although several actions were only partially completed, the evidence suggests that these efforts were reasonable given the remoteness of many marine parks within the network. However, there remains scope to enhance the program's effectiveness, particularly in improving awareness, understanding, and support for marine park management among community members and marine park users, as well as ensuring a balanced and constructive approach and tone to communication with key stakeholder groups.

Tourism and Visitor Experience Program

Good with some concerns

The Tourism and Visitor Experience Program was assessed as 'good with some concerns', with the overall outcomes of the program rated as 'substantially met' and 'partially met'. Of the ten planned actions, two were assessed as 'completed', seven were assessed as 'partially completed' and one was considered 'not commenced'.

Although some actions were only partially completed and not commenced, the evidence suggests that progress had been made on most actions and that efforts were reasonable given the more remote and deep-sea nature of many of the marine parks in the North-west Network.

Indigenous Engagement Program

Significant concerns

The Indigenous Engagement Program was assessed as having 'significant concerns', with the overall outcomes of the management program rated as 'partially met'. Of the eight planned actions, seven were found to be 'partially completed' and one 'not commenced'.

It is important to note that feedback from First Nations partners for this program was limited, with four Traditional Owners from the North-west participating in the evaluation. Nevertheless, opportunities were identified to improve the program's effectiveness, particularly by strengthening co-management approaches that embed early engagement with First Nations communities and ensuring engagement is more appropriate and adequate.

Marine Science Program

The Marine Science Program was assessed as 'good with some concerns', with the overall outcomes of the management program rated as 'partially met'. Of the eleven planned actions, four were

Good with some concerns

assessed as 'completed' or 'ongoing', and seven were assessed as 'partially completed'.

While the evaluation identified strengths and achievements in relation to the establishment of ecological baselines, and the use of new technology and partnerships over the course of the plan, a range of actions and outcomes required further activity to be fully achieved. Particular gaps related to establishment of social and economic baselines, enhancing knowledge brokering and the need to expand monitoring efforts.

Assessments and Authorisations Program

Good

Overall, the grade for the actions in the Assessments and Authorisations Program was assessed as 'good'. The outcome of the management program was assessed to be 'fully met'. Five out of seven of the planned actions were assessed to be 'completed' or 'ongoing', with one found to be 'partially completed or implemented' and one assessed as 'not commenced'.

While one action was assessed as 'not commenced' (A40 - develop an effective and efficient process to assess new technologies and gear types to allow for the use of new equipment during the life of this plan if appropriate), this was not considered a significant gap. Evidence indicated that new technologies and gear types were adopted where appropriate, suggesting the action may not have been required during the plan's implementation. As a result, its non-completion did not impede the overall aims of the management program.

Parks Protection and Management Program

Good with some concerns

The Parks Protection and Management Program was assessed as 'good with some concerns', with the overall outcome of the management program assessed as 'partially met'. Of the nine planned actions, seven were assessed as 'completed' or 'ongoing', while the remaining two were found to be 'partially completed'. For the actions that were only partially completed, the evidence suggests considerable progress had still been made to achieving these.

The development and adherence to tangible processes and strategies that supported the protection and management of marine parks was strong. However, the lack of empirical data on the *effect* of management on park values over the course of the plan limited an assessment of outcome effectiveness.

Compliance Program	
Good with some concerns	Overall, the Compliance Program was assessed as 'good with some concerns'. Of the management program outcomes, one was rated as 'substantially met' and three were rated as 'partially met'. Positive progress had been made on the completion of the planned actions, with five assessed as 'completed' or 'ongoing' and one 'partially completed'.

IMPLICATIONS FOR FUTURE PLAN DEVELOPMENT

Based on the evaluation findings, it is recommended that the following matters be considered when developing the next plan for the North-west Network:

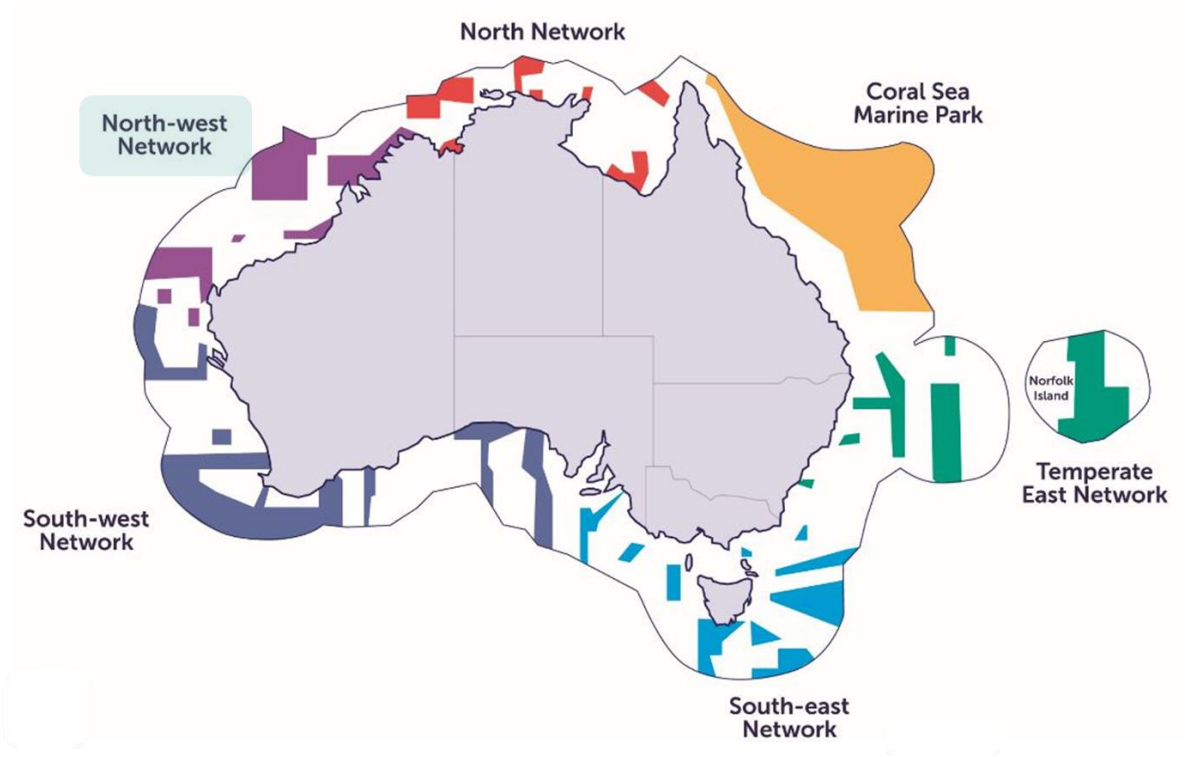
- **Demonstrating how robust evidence has been used, particularly for zoning decisions** – stakeholders reported an expectation that any future management plans would clearly draw from the evidence and data now available. They expected such an approach to be transparent and well-communicated to ensure clarity and rationale for decisions that had been made.
- **Ensuring comprehensive and effective engagement with key stakeholder groups** – by incorporating early, wide-reaching and ongoing engagement with key groups.
- **Addressing the unique needs of localised settings/ parks within the network** – such as by considering specific place-based requirements in consultation with relevant individuals or organisations to reflect unique economic, social, cultural and traditional values, and address the community's distinct needs.
- **Addressing cross-over between program areas** – some stakeholders suggested that certain actions might be better aligned with other programs and that this should be carefully considered in the plan design.
- **Embedding and prioritising First Nations perspectives in the management of Sea Country through**:
    - Adopting co-management approaches that embed early engagement with First Nations communities and opportunities for First Nations partners to shape the priorities.
    - Avoiding "blanket approaches" to cultural engagement, by tailoring strategies to reflect the diverse ways First Nations groups care for Sea Country.
    - Ensuring information is based on up-to-date and impartial mapping of all relevant First Nations peoples and organisations who have cultural governance and ownership of marine parks.
- **Addressing high levels of non-compliance** – including by addressing concerns about the high number of illegal foreign fishing vessels passing through the Network.
- **Improving monitoring, evaluation, and accessibility of management plan actions** – by incorporating key performance indicators (KPIs) and targets to make measuring and evaluating action and outcome performance easier, and raising awareness of the North-west Network Management Plan factsheet to improve usability and accessibility for stakeholders.
- **Considering Australia's '30 by 30' commitment** – including implications of potential changes to zoning arrangements. In doing so, it will be important to clearly communicate the evidence-based need and benefits of commitment to '30 by 30' in an Australian context.

1. Introduction

1.1. Background

The oceans surrounding Australia are foundational to our way of life – offering important places for recreation, supporting industries and jobs and contributing to our food and energy security. To safeguard the health of these waters, and the variety of ocean life that inhabits them, the Australian and state and territory governments designate 'Marine Protected Areas' (MPAs) – regions of the ocean where human activity is restricted and regulated to protect marine life and ecosystems. MPAs Include marine parks managed by state and territory governments and Australian Marine Parks (AMPs) managed by the Australian Government. With the exception of the Coral Sea, AMPs are organised into marine park networks, and include the North-west Marine Parks Network (herein referred to as the North-west Network). Figure 2 shows the six AMPs/ AMP networks, with the North-west Network shown in purple.

Figure 2: Australian Marine Parks



The Director of National Parks (the Director) is a statutory office and Commonwealth corporate entity and is supported by Parks Australia. Parks Australia is a division within the Australian Government Department of Climate Change, Energy the Environment and Water (DCCEEW). One of the Director's roles is to manage AMPs (and all other Commonwealth reserves) in accordance with the *Environment Protection and Biodiversity Conservation Act 1999* (EPBC Act). The EPBC Act mandates the preparation of 'management plans' to guide the governance and regulation of each AMP/ AMP network, to be renewed every ten years. These plans contain a range of 'management programs', each of which covers a number of priority areas listing planned outcomes and specific actions to be undertaken in the pursuit of these outcomes. The seven management programs are: Communication, Education and Awareness; Tourism and Visitor Experience; Indigenous Engagement; Marine Science; Assessments and Authorisations; Parks Protection and Management; and Compliance.

The management plan for the North-west Network is the first to have been developed since the Network was established. This management plan is set to expire in 2028, before which two processes are to be completed:

1. **An independent evaluation of the implementation of the current North-west Network Management Plan** – providing a retrospective look at how the Plan has been implemented in practice since 2018.
2. **The preparation of a new North-west Network Management Plan for the next 10-year cycle** (2028-2038).

ORIMA Research was commissioned to conduct the independent evaluation of the implementation of the current management plan. The evaluation drew on a range of evidence sources, including a review of collated documentary evidence provided by Parks Australia and engagement with a range of stakeholders as well as First Nations peoples. The outcomes of this evaluation, alongside a range of other consultations and activities, will contribute to the second process – the development of a new management plan for the next 10-year cycle.

1.2. Project objectives

The overarching aim of the project was to **conduct an independent evaluation of the implementation of five expiring management plans** (with this report focusing on the evaluation of the implementation of the North-west Network Management Plan). More specifically, the evaluation sought to:

- **Facilitate the generation of a collectively agreed evaluation framework**, and methods for evaluating the management plan's program implementation.
- **Engage with stakeholders and First Nations peoples to understand and define their metrics of satisfaction** with the implementation of the plan.
- **Address a range of key evaluation questions, with a key focus on assessing the performance of planned actions listed in each management program and progress towards the intended outcomes** to assign completion status, trend and effectiveness ratings.
- **Provide recommendations to inform the preparation of the next management plan** (including but not limited to recommendations for goals, desired outcomes and actions).

This evaluation forms just one part of the review of the expiring management plans and development of new plans. Key directions for the review were outlined prior to the evaluation (including ensuring 30% of Australia's ocean is highly protected and limiting intensive activities). Subsequent statutory review processes are also planned.[1]

[1] *Review of the 2018 Australian Marine Park management plans: https://australianmarineparks.gov.au/management/consultations-reviews/review-2018-australian-marine-park-management-plans/*

1.3. Methodology

The methodology for this project adopted a multi-phased approach as depicted in

Figure 3 (below), incorporating sequential stages to ensure a comprehensive and systematic evaluation process.

Figure 3: Methodology overview

1.3.1. Development of evaluation framework

The evaluation framework was developed through an iterative, structured process of drafting, consultation and refinement. Initial development was led by ORIMA, whereby a draft framework was developed based on the North-west Network Management Plan and program logic. This was followed by a series of targeted workshops with Parks Australia, the Australian Marine Parks First Nations Reference Group and Australian Marine Parks Advisory Committee (AMPAC) members. Written feedback from AMPAC members was also provided and incorporated where relevant. This process ensured the framework was methodologically robust, contextually appropriate and aligned with stakeholder expectations.

The evaluation framework identified two core evidence sources:

- **Documentary evidence** – sourced through administrative data provided by Parks Australia and a desktop review conducted by ORIMA Research.
- **Stakeholder and First Nations peoples engagement** – undertaken by ORIMA Research.

More detail about the evaluation framework is provided in Section 1.5.

1.3.2. Desktop review

During the desktop review process, key documents and data sources were collected as evidence to assess the implementation of the North-west Network Management Plan actions and outcomes. Some documents and data sources were supplied by the Parks Australia project team while others were sourced via desktop searches of publicly available information.

Documentary evidence that directly demonstrated the fulfilment of actions and outcomes was prioritised in the desktop review (e.g. policy documentation, official reports or media activities). Where direct evidence was absent or insufficient, indirect evidence was also used (that is, references to activity conducted to fulfil actions and outcomes without clear evidence of the activity itself, such as AMPAC meeting communiqués noting discussion of activities conducted to fulfil actions and outcomes; or self-reported evidence in self-assessment documents). Key findings and evidence points were recorded against the evaluation framework and reviewed to build an initial evidence base for the evaluation of actions and outcomes. For actions and outcomes where insufficient evidence was provided, requests for data were compiled and submitted to Parks Australia.

ETHICS ASSESSMENT AND APPROVAL

1.3.3. Prior to the commencement of the external stakeholder engagement, the project was submitted for review by the ORIMA Research's National Mental Health and Research Committee (NMHRC) approved Human Research Ethics Committee (HREC) to ensure the evaluation was conducted in an ethical, safe and culturally responsive manner. Ethics approval was granted on 4 February 2026: HREC Reference Number 0012026.

1.3.4. Stakeholder and First Peoples engagement

TARGET AUDIENCE

The target audience for the engagement was stakeholders and First Nations peoples with experience or expertise relevant to either the North-west Network specifically or marine parks nationally.

The following stakeholder groups were targeted for engagement:

- Parks Australia staff
- Government agencies (both federal and state/ territory agencies)
- Industry and community groups, such as:
  - Commercial fishing industry representatives
  - Recreational fishing and boating groups
  - Tourism operators
  - Conservation/ environmental organisations
  - Industry representatives (including from shipping, offshore energy and space/ technology industries),
  - Researchers and data custodians, and
  - AMPAC members and members of the Australian Marine Parks First Nations Reference Group.[2]

In addition, engagement was conducted with First Nations peoples and partners, including appropriate Traditional Owner groups and stakeholders who were able to speak about Sea Country as relevant to the evaluation.

SAMPLE DESIGN AND METHODOLOGY

Comprehensive stakeholder mapping was undertaken based on the findings from desk research on relevant individuals and organisations, and consultation with Parks Australia staff, AMPAC committee members and members of the Australian Marine Parks First Nations Reference Group.

Stakeholder engagement was conducted between 26 February and 14 May 2026. A total of **n=195** stakeholders and First Nations peoples participated in the evaluation of the five expiring marine park management plans, via **82 in-depth interviews** of up to one hour[3] and **15 workshops** of up to two hours in duration.[4]

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[2] *AMPAC and First Nations Refence Group members were also consulted during the project establishment and evaluation framework development stages as advisory groups for the project.*

[3] *In a small number of cases, stakeholders elected to complete their interview by providing feedback in writing.*

[4] *Workshop (WS), n=up to 10 people; In-depth interview (IDI), n=up to 4 participants)*

Of the **n=195** total participants, **n=30** individuals spoke from a perspective specific to the North-west Network, and a further **n=27** spoke from a national perspective with relevance to the Network. Each of these participants fell into one or more of the key stakeholder groups identified during the stakeholder mapping phase, with some contributing from multiple key perspectives. The numbers of participants who contributed from each stakeholder perspective are outlined in the table overleaf.

Key perspective		Number of participants who spoke from key perspective
North-west Marine Parks Network	Parks Australia staff	*n=5*
	State government agencies	*n=4*
	First Nations peoples/ organisations	*n=7*
	Researchers/ data custodians	*n=6*
	Industry and community groups: Commercial and recreational fishing representatives	*n=4*
	Industry and community groups: Tourism operators	*n=2*
	Industry and community groups: Conservation/ environmental organisations	*n=1*
	Industry and community groups: Shipping and offshore energy industry	*n=2*
	AMPAC Members	*n=9*
Across all Parks/ Park Networks	Parks Australia staff	*n=9*
	Federal government agencies/ departments	*n=7*
	Industry and community groups: Commercial and recreational fishing representatives	*n=6*
	Industry and community groups: Tourism operators	*n=1*
	Industry and community groups: Conservation/ environmental organisations	*n=4*

ENGAGEMENT APPROACH

To support the discussions, ORIMA developed a comprehensive discussion guide aligned with the evaluation objectives. A flexible and adaptive approach was applied during discussions to ensure the collection of meaningful data and insights, while also allowing stakeholders the opportunity to share their views and perspectives. It was important to establish which evaluation questions were most applicable to each participant. To assist with this, participants were invited to complete a short questionnaire ahead of their interview or workshop to nominate the scope and areas of their involvement in marine parks, as well as to provide initial feedback in relation to relevant management program areas.

ASSUMPTIONS AND LIMITATIONS

In conducting this evaluation, a range of assumptions were made, and several potential research limitations were identified. While action has been taken to ensure the robustness of any

assumptions and minimise the impact of potential limitations on the evaluation, these should nonetheless be considered when interpreting the findings.

More specifically, the **following assumptions** were made:

- **Accuracy of documentary evidence** – the evaluation assumes that administrative data and documentation provided by Parks Australia accurately reflect the timing, scope and completion of reported outputs.
- **Representativeness of consulted stakeholders** – based on the stakeholder mapping conducted, it is assumed that the engaged stakeholders reasonably reflect the diversity of perspectives across user groups, jurisdictions and regions within the network. Where key stakeholder groups were unable to be engaged as part of the evaluation, this has been noted in the limitations section below.

The following **potential research limitations** were identified:

- **Some limitations in the coverage of stakeholder participation** – the stakeholder engagement process faced challenges in ensuring comprehensive representation, with certain groups underrepresented due to factors such as lack of availability to attend sessions, being on leave during the research period, or not responding to participation requests. This was particularly the case for Traditional Owners and specific conservation organisation representatives.
- **Reliance on stakeholder perceptions due to data gaps** – in the absence of consistent, outcome-level monitoring data across program areas, some parts of the evaluation relied more heavily on stakeholder perceptions and qualitative evidence to assess implementation effectiveness and outcomes.
- **Variability in data availability across networks** – the availability and quality of documentary evidence varied between program areas, limiting the ability to assess implementation consistently.

1.4. Understanding this report

STRUCTURE OF REPORT

This evaluation is split across two broad categories:

1. **Findings relating to overall evaluation questions** – this section addresses the broader evaluation questions, focusing on the design of the plan, its assessment and monitoring processes, responsiveness and adaptability, and key considerations for the development of future plans.
2. **Findings relating to program implementation** – in this section, the implementation of each management program is assessed. This involves evaluating the implementation of individual actions, assessing the achievement of intended outcomes, and providing an overall assessment of program implementation. Key strengths, achievements, barriers and limitations are also highlighted.

Based on these findings, the final section of this report (Chapter 11), provides a list of conclusions and a set of key learnings and recommendations.

NOTES ON INTERPRETATION

- All acronyms used in this report have been specified the first time they are used in each chapter.
- When the term ‘stakeholders’ is used, it refers to all types of stakeholders consulted in the project. When findings pertain to a specific group of stakeholders only, this has been specified (e.g. AMPAC members, Parks Australia staff, First Nations peoples and partners).

- The terms ‘none’, ‘a few’, ‘many’, ‘most’ and ‘all’ have been used to refer to the proportion of stakeholders consulted who expressed a certain opinion or perspective. These terms are defined in the ‘Stakeholder engagement metrics’ section of Appendix A.

1.5. Understanding the evaluation framework

There are three components to the evaluation framework, outlined below. To see the full framework, please refer to Appendix B.

OVERALL EVALUATION QUESTIONS

A set of overarching evaluation questions was developed to guide assessment at the whole-of-plan level. These questions were initially drafted by ORIMA and refined through consultation with Parks Australia, the Australian Marine Parks First Nations Reference Group, and AMPAC members.

The key evaluation questions were:

1. **Were the management programs in this management plan implemented effectively?** (Including the extent to which management plan actions and outcomes were achieved according to the performance information matrix, see section below).
2. **To what extent do stakeholders perceive the activities occurring in zones to be consistent with zone objectives**, at an overall level?
3. Based on stakeholder perceptions, **how well aligned was the implementation of the plans with external regulatory settings and management activities?**
4. **To what extent do stakeholders perceive that there was an effective and efficient balance between the use of grants and other implementation mechanisms** in addressing management plan objectives?
5. **What lessons can we learn for future management plans?**

Together, they provide a structure for synthesising findings across programs and plans.

PERFORMANCE INFORMATION MATRIX (PIM)

The Performance Information Matrix (PIM) is the core analytical tool used in the evaluation to systematically assess program implementation.

For each action and outcome in the management programs, the PIM defines a consistent set of measurement components to guide assessment:

- **Outputs** – The tangible deliverables linked to each action (not applicable to outcomes).
- **Measures of success** – The criteria used to determine whether an action or outcome has been achieved.
- **Indicators** – The observable evidence used to assess performance against each measure of success.
- **Data sources** – The data used to assess each indicator (e.g. documentary evidence, stakeholder feedback).

This structure provides a clear connection between planned activities, evidence and evaluative judgement. It ensures consistent and transparent assessment across programs. The full PIM for the North-west Network is provided in Appendix B.

RATING APPROACH AND MEASUREMENT METHODS

A set of standardised rating approaches were developed to assess performance across actions, outcomes and programs. These approaches were designed to align with Parks Australia's reporting requirements and the nature of the management plan. Specifically, the evaluation assigned the following:

- **Action completion status** – drawing on documentary evidence and stakeholder feedback, each action was assessed as 'completed', 'ongoing', 'implemented with modifications', 'partially completed or implemented' or 'not commenced'.
- **Program implementation effectiveness ratings** – the achievement of actions and outcomes at the management program level was assessed as 'good', 'good with some concerns', having 'significant concerns', 'critical' or 'unknown'.
- **Outcome achievement rating** – outcome effectiveness was assessed as 'fully met', 'substantially met', 'partially met' or 'not met'. Trend ratings were also assigned for each outcome (i.e. indicating a positive, negative or stable trend).

Further detail about each rating approach is provided at Appendix A.

Quality and Compliance Statement

This project was conducted in accordance with the international quality standard ISO 20252, the international information security standard ISO 27001, as well as the Australian Privacy Principles contained in the Privacy Act 1988 (Cth). ORIMA Research also adheres to the Privacy (Market and Social Research) Code 2021 administered by the Australian Data and Insights Association (ADIA).

2. North-west Marine Parks Network context

This chapter presents background information about the North-west Marine Parks Network to support understanding of its contextual environment when interpreting evaluation findings.

2.1. About the North-west Marine Parks Network

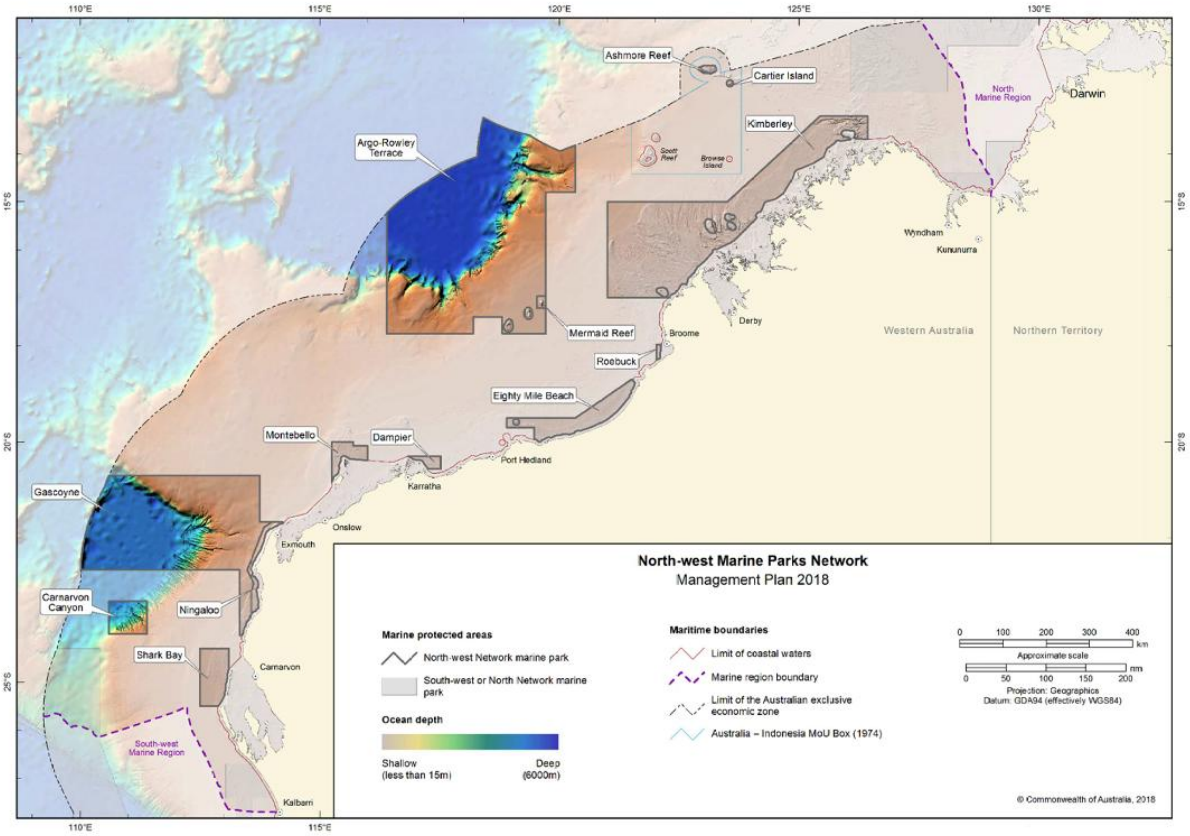
The North-west Marine Region extends from the Western Australia and Northern Territory border to Kalbarri, south of Shark Bay, and covers approximately 1.07 million km^2 of sub-tropical and tropical waters of the Indian Ocean and Timor Sea. Within this region, the North-west Network covers 335,341 km^2 and comprises the following marine parks:

- Shark Bay Marine Park
- Carnarvon Canyon Marine Park
- Ningaloo Marine Park
- Gascoyne Marine Park
- Montebello Marine Park
- Dampier Marine Park
- Eighty Mile Beach Marine Park
- Roebuck Marine Park
- Mermaid Reef Marine Park
- Argo–Rowley Terrace Marine Park
- Kimberley Marine Park
- Ashmore Reef Marine Park
- Cartier Island Marine Park

The network is characterised by shallow-water tropical marine ecosystems, a large area of continental slope and shelf (including the narrowest part of continental shelf on Australia's coastal margin) and deep abyssal plains with depths to 6000 meters. The region experiences extreme tidal regimes, frequent cyclones and seasonally shifting ocean currents that produce warm, low-salinity and nutrient poor surface waters. The southern part of the region transitions between tropical and temperate waters.

The region is comprised of habitats such as coral reefs, soft sediments, canyons and limestone pavements. These habitats support high species diversity and globally significant populations of internationally threatened species. A small number of species are found nowhere else. The region supports biologically important areas for a range of spectacular and unique seabirds, sharks, whales, dolphins, marine turtles and dugong (*Dugong dugon*). The whale shark (*Rhincodon typus*) aggregates at Ningaloo, and every year humpback whales (*Megaptera novaeangliae)* migrate through the region to and from their breeding grounds off the Kimberley coast.

Figure 4: North-west Marine Parks Network[5]



2.2. Values

The Australian Marine Park (AMP) values are the guiding principles for marine park management and decision-making. The North-west Network values include:

- **Natural values** – key ecological features such as reefs, islands, canyons, ancient coastlines, shoals, plateaus and continental slopes that support demersal fish communities as well as a range of protected species such as whale sharks and humpback whales. The Ashmore Reef Ramsar site is a wetland of international importance under the Environment Protection and Biodiversity Conservation Act 1999 (EPBC Act), housing the largest of the atolls in the region, the only vegetated islands in the region (West Island, Middle Island and East Island) and internationally significant populations of seabirds and shorebirds. The site is important for turtles (Green, Hawksbill and Loggerhead) and dugong and has the highest diversity of hermatypic corals on the West Australian coast.
- **Cultural Values** – Sea Country is valued for First Nations cultural identity, health and wellbeing. First Nations peoples continue to assert inherited rights and responsibilities over Sea Country within the North-west Network. It is recognised that spiritual corridors extend from terrestrial areas into nearshore and offshore waters, several marine animals are totems for First Nations people, and that songlines pass through marine parks. Three native title determinations have been made over Sea Country within the Kimberley Marine Park, preserving and continuing First Nations peoples' rights to access Sea Country to hunt, fish, gather and use the resources of the waters for personal, domestic, communal, cultural and spiritual needs. Traditional Indonesian

[5] *North-west Marine Parks Network Management Plan 2018. https://australianmarineparks.gov.au/static/effc79ac7104ae979053131c18e51478/amp-document-North-west-management-plan-2018.pdf*

fishers have also visited and used the northern coast of Australia and its islands and reefs since at least the early eighteenth century.

Heritage values – historic shipwrecks in the region include Australia's earliest historic shipwreck, the British East Indiaman Trial, wrecked in 1622, as well as with many other famous vessels that were lost in the cyclones that devastated fleets working the pearling grounds. The North-west Network also includes a segment of the Ningaloo Coast World Heritage Property and is adjacent to The Western Australia World Heritage Property Shark Bay.

- **Social and economic values** – shipping, port-related activities, commercial fishing, pearling and aquaculture are industries of national economic significance. The North-west Network also provides some opportunity for offshore mining operations. Marine tourism activities, such as charter fishing, snorkelling, diving and wildlife watching are also important commercial activities that offer unique visitor experiences in places like Mermaid Reef and Ningaloo Marine Parks. The Network also supports recreational activities including recreational fishing.

2.3. Pressures

Operating in alignment with marine park values enables the management of marine park pressures. The North-west Network faces a range of pressures including:

- **Climate change** and its complex environmental impacts including changes in temperature, sea level, acidification, ocean currents, increased storm frequency and intensity, species range extensions or local extinctions. Examples of habitat, key ecological features, and species vulnerable to the effects of climate change include Ashmore Reef and Cartier Island and surrounding Commonwealth waters, continental slope demersal fish communities, and species of sea snake, sawfish, shark, dolphin, seabird, marine turtle and dugong.
- **Changes in hydrology** including rivers, estuaries and other waterways potentially discharging increased sediment loads and pollutants into the marine environment, resulting in increased turbidity and siltation, impacting on species that inhabit or spawn in coastal, estuary and offshore waters. Examples of habitat and species vulnerable to changes in hydrology include reef and seagrass habitats and species of sawfish, dolphin and dugong.
- **Extraction of living resources** due to unlawful/ unsustainable fishing practices, and the subsequent disturbance to key ecological features. Examples of habitat, key ecological features, and species vulnerable to such impacts include reef and shoal habitats and species of shark, sawfish, dolphin, marine turtle, sea snake, sea cucumber, trochus, fish and dugong.
- **Habitat modification** can occur directly through physical disturbance or indirectly through the presence of infrastructure. Examples of habitats and species vulnerable to habitat modification pressures include reef, shoal and pinnacle habitats and species of fish, sea snake, marine turtle, dolphin and dugong.
- **Human presence** via activities such as boating, camping, diving and snorkelling which have the potential to impact marine park values directly through contact from collision or indirectly through changes in behaviour from disturbance. Examples of habitats and species vulnerable to human disturbance include reef habitats and species of dolphin, marine turtle and seabird.
- **Invasive species** potentially introduced through vessel ballast and bilge water discharge, vessel biofouling, accidental or deliberate transport and land-based activities creating vulnerability for Islands, reefs and other shallow-water ecosystems and native species. Examples of habitat, key ecological features and species vulnerable to the impacts of invasive species include reef and island habitats, and nesting seabird and marine turtle such as those at Ashmore Reef Marine Park, and the predation threat posed by the tropical fire ant.

- **Marine pollution** includes the emission of noise or light, marine debris (for example, plastics and lost fishing gear), and discharge of oil, chemicals or waste causing contamination of ecosystems, entanglement, or ingestion by marine species. Examples of habitat, key ecological features, and species vulnerable to marine pollution include island, reef, and other shallow water habitats, Ashmore Reef and Cartier Island and surrounding Commonwealth waters and species of sawfish, dolphin, whale, dugong, marine turtle and seabirds.

2.4. Management of the North-west Network

The North-west Marine Parks Network is managed by Parks Australia, on behalf of the Director of National Parks, in collaboration with:

- **Traditional Owners and First Nations peoples.**
- **Government agencies (both Commonwealth and State).**
- **The North-west Marine Parks Advisory Committee (NWMPAC)** – an expert advisory committee representing a range of perspectives relevant to marine park management in the North-west Marine Parks Network. The Committee provides strategic advice to Parks Australia on marine park management issues at a regional level.

3. Findings relating to overall evaluation questions

*This chapter presents the findings **related to the broader evaluation questions**, focusing on plan design, assessment and monitoring, responsiveness and adaptability, and considerations for future plans.*

3.1. Overall findings

Overall, the North-west Network demonstrated positive progress in implementing the actions and achieving the intended outcomes across its management programs. This is reflected in the program grades, with one program assessed as 'good', four assessed as 'with some concerns', two assessed as having 'significant concerns' and none being deemed as 'critical'.

The evaluation identified a **range of strengths and achievements** in relation to the overall implementation of the North-west Management Plan, including the:

- **Development of robust and structured frameworks, strategies and policies** – such as of the '*Communication, Education and Awareness Strategy'* and the '*Australian Marine Parks Assessment and Authorisations Policy'*, both of which provided clear guidance for implementing effective actions throughout the duration of the plan.
    - However, the First Nations Engagement and Cultural Heritage Strategy was noted as not having been completed, and the Australian Marine Parks Science Strategy was only partially completed, with stakeholder feedback suggesting that clearer strategies could go some way to assisting in overcoming shortcomings in these program areas.
- **Progress in ecological baseline data collection** – which provided critical insights into the natural values and pressures within the North-west Network. This data also supported evidence-based decision-making and adaptive management, ensuring actions were informed by robust scientific evidence where possible.
- **Collaboration and partnerships with First Nations communities, the science community, private enterprise and government agencies** – it was noted that there had been improvements in communication and collaboration with a range of stakeholders and organisations to support the plan's implementation, which had been beneficial. For example, support for the Kimberley Indigenous Saltwater Advisory Group (ISWAG) and attendance at ISWAG forums.
- **Effective assessments and authorisations activities** – supported by the timely implementation of a range of policies, procedures and partnerships to support achievement of the relevant actions and outcomes.

However, a number of **limitations** were also identified through the evaluation, including:

- **Remote and offshore nature of the parks** – the isolated and deep-sea characteristics of some parks within the North-west Network posed significant challenges for implementation, particularly in areas such as tourism, monitoring, compliance, communication, and engagement. Limited accessibility, combined with resource constraints, was noted to have made managing these parks challenging.
- **Engagement with Traditional Owners, First Nations partners, organisations and users was not fully effective** – while a range of efforts was identified to meaningfully engage First Nations peoples, it was felt by First Nations partners that meaningful collaboration and best-practice co-management approaches were not always adopted, which reduced the ability of First Nations peoples to contribute their Cultural knowledge and expertise to marine park management. A few

First Nations partners also reported that actions were not always inclusive of all relevant First Nations partners or Traditional Owners with the necessary Cultural and Sea Country Knowledge. Challenges in addressing contested areas and balancing the interests of different groups was acknowledged through the evaluation. To address these challenges, those who participated in the engagement suggested the use of up-to-date, impartial mapping, clear communication between Parks Australia staff and community members and the establishment of informal engagement avenues with First Nations peoples.

- **Gaps in data for some program areas** – limited data on the progress of some actions and outcomes within the management plan' was identified as a barrier to assessing the effectiveness of the management plan's implementation. In addition, the limited collection of specific data, such as socio-economic data and marine park awareness and perceptions data hindered a comprehensive understanding of progress and/ or the ability to assess the broader impacts of marine park management (while also reducing the ability to make informed decisions that balanced environmental, social and economic outcomes). Addressing these data gaps will be important to ensure accurate measures can be obtained of the plan's implementation.
- **Appropriately balancing protection of ecological, social and economic values** – the evaluation found that balancing competing stakeholder interests in the North-west Network will be an ongoing challenge, with a range of diverse views identified in relation to the balance of protection for ecological and other values. For example, some stakeholders felt that additional work was required to effectively protect ecological values (e.g. to support greater protection of biodiversity). However, others felt that the management plan and associated zoning restrictions were overly restrictive (e.g. requiring challenging authorisations processes for simple and non-invasive scientific activities such as water sampling or restricting fishing activities in areas where these activities were not felt to compromise marine park values). While balancing competing stakeholder perspectives will be an ongoing challenge, clearly and transparently communicating the evidence-based rationale for management decisions should go some way to addressing these concerns.
- **Limited effectiveness of the North-west Marine Park Advisory Committee (NWMPAC) process** – both NWMPAC members and Parks Australia staff raised concerns about the effectiveness of the current advisory committee model, with stakeholder feedback suggesting the committees may not be achieving their intended role in contributing to marine park management. However, the need for ongoing and in-depth engagement with a range of stakeholders was acknowledged, suggesting that a more inclusive and collaborative approach could better capture diverse stakeholder perspectives for consideration in decision-making processes.
- **Alignment of regulatory settings for adjoining parks, specifically Ningaloo Reef Marine Park** – stakeholders reported limited awareness amongst park users of the differing regulatory settings and authorisations required across the state and Commonwealth waters at Ningaloo Reef, which they said could be challenging given the large amount of tourism activity in the area.

3.2. Specific findings about management plan design: Level of detail provided, plan flexibility, and efficacy of monitoring and review mechanisms

Overall, stakeholders acknowledged the challenges associated with **striking a balance** between providing adequate detail to support implementation, while also maintaining the required flexibility for a 10-year plan covering a range of marine parks in the North-west Network. Positively, some stakeholders felt that the North-west Network Management Plan provided an appropriate level of detail, with some describing it as their "source of truth". Stakeholders found elements such as zoning maps and overarching rules and regulations particularly valuable for supporting compliance activities.

However, some other stakeholders viewed the plan as "overly generic", which reduced its relevance and applicability and limited place-based actions. Stakeholders reported that actions and outcomes were not always suitable for standardisation across networks, with the approach at times felt to complicate implementation and evaluation.

Mixed feedback was received in relation to the adaptability of the plan. Some stakeholders felt that the plan had not effectively adapted to emerging risks, priorities, and contextual changes, particularly throughout later stages of the plan. This was generally found to be due to the prescriptive nature of some management plan actions and outcomes, or the lack of "future-proofing" of the plan to address changes in the ecological or policy environment over time. Specifically, stakeholders cited examples such as climate change threats, developments of energy and increased use of drones and unmanned vessels for surveillance, which they felt were not adequately addressed. Additionally, some stakeholders, particularly First Nations partners, felt the plan did not adequately respond to evolving community priorities. However, a few stakeholders reported appropriate adaptability of the plan, particularly in relation to the flexibility with which Parks Australia were able to consider and balance potential risks and benefits associated with space activity (and related debris), and develop processes for authorisations and permits.

Some of the specific actions and outcomes in the North-west Network Management Plan were felt to be challenging to achieve or implement, particularly given the acknowledgement by stakeholders of the resource and budget constraints Parks Australia faced when implementing management activities. Examples included A3 ('*maximise the use of new technologies and partnerships to inspire people of all ages to become involved in marine park management and protection'),* some of the actions and outcomes in the Tourism Management Program as well as O11 ('*impact of pressures on marine park values are minimised as far as reasonably practicable'*) from the Parks Protection and Management Program.

Feedback from Parks Australia staff suggests that while the overall structure of the management plan was effective (i.e. with different actions and outcomes listed under specific management program areas), some specific actions had not been placed in the most appropriate programs. For example, A 57 (*'work with marine park users to promote understanding of the rules for activities and how to comply')* was felt to be the responsibility of those communicating with stakeholders and park users in the North-west, and hence could be more suited to the 'Communication, Education and Awareness' program area.

Finally, the evaluation also identified several challenges with the monitoring and review mechanisms, with stakeholders reporting that some actions and outcomes were "vague", ambiguous or lacked clear timeframes for completion. This was felt to make effective assessment difficult. It was suggested that outcomes include focus on productivity, reporting quality, and engagement with park users where possible. Conversely, some actions and outcomes were found to be overly prescriptive, such as in identifying the government agencies and other partners to be engaged in implementation. This was particularly evident in the Compliance and Assessments and Authorisations programs, where Parks Australia staff felt that prescribed partner lists did not always

align with the practical realities of a risk-based approach to implementation and enforcement. In some cases, partners were identified in the plan whom staff felt were not well placed to address the relevant risks.

3.3. Implications for future plan development

Based on the evaluation findings, it is recommended that the following matters be considered when developing the next plan for the North-west Network:

- **Demonstrating how robust evidence has been used, particularly for zoning decisions** – stakeholders reported an expectation that any future management plans would clearly draw from the evidence and data accrued since 2018 to ensure management and zoning decisions were based on ecological, socio-economic and cultural information available.

  They expected such an approach to be transparent and well-communicated to ensure clarity and explain why decisions had been made, which would help to enhance trust in the process of plan development and implementation. In addition, communicating evidence of the effectiveness of zoning and management in protecting and strengthening marine park values – both at the start of and throughout the duration of the plan – would help to foster greater understanding and support for marine park management and may promote greater collaboration within the science community.

- **Ensuring comprehensive and effective engagement with key stakeholder groups** – by incorporating early, wide-reaching and ongoing engagement with key user groups. While some stakeholders felt they had been appropriately engaged, others did not feel that consultation ahead of the plan development, or throughout its duration, had been sufficient or effective.

- **Addressing the unique needs of localised settings/ parks within the network** – by considering specific place-based requirements in consultation with relevant individuals or organisations, to ensure that the structure and program areas within the plan align with the distinct and diverse needs of communities and stakeholders across the network. For instance, tourism was not considered a relevant focus for certain marine parks in the North-west due to their offshore nature, while industry was felt to be more relevant by some in comparison to other Networks (e.g. offshore energy). Should tourism be maintained as a focus, a few stakeholders noted that there may be opportunity for greater tourism activity on land rather than in the offshore parks (e.g. at museums and aquariums).

- **Addressing cross-over between program areas** – as an example, some stakeholders suggested that communication related to compliance should be managed by the communication and/ or regional teams, and suggested this action may therefore be better aligned with the communication, education and awareness management program area.

- **Embedding cultural perspectives and prioritising First Nations perspectives in the management of their Sea Country through:**
  - Adopting co-management approaches that embed early and culturally appropriate engagement with First Nations communities that enable opportunities for First Nations partners to shape the priorities based on the place-based needs and requirements of relevant Sea Country.
  - Avoiding “blanket approaches” to cultural engagement, by tailoring strategies to reflect the diverse ways First Nations groups care for Sea Country, and the unique strengths and resources available to each community (i.e. taking a place-based and community-centric approach tailored to each Traditional Owner group or community).
  - Ensuring information and engagement is based upon up-to-date and impartial mapping of all relevant Traditional Owners, First Nations peoples and organisations who have Cultural

governance and ownership of marine parks, to ensure all relevant partners are invited to engage in marine park management decisions for relevant Sea Country.

  - Providing formal agreements and commitments to First Nations organisations (i.e. rather than Memoranda of Understanding [MOUs]) when collaborating on management activities, wherever possible – to formalise partnerships and recognise the authority and responsibility that First Nations communities and organisations hold in relation to their Sea Country.
  - Additionally, providing more informal avenues for engagement with First Nations community members – to ensure the inclusion of individuals who may not be officially recognised as Traditional Owners (e.g. within State Government Registers) but seek to maintain connection and practise Culture. This may include both formal engagement with Parks Australia (e.g. through advisory or reference groups) or via invitations to be involved in Sea Country management activities and initiatives.

- **Addressing high levels of non-compliance** – including by addressing concerns about the high number of illegal foreign fishing vessels passing through the North-west Network.
- **Improving monitoring, evaluation, and accessibility of management plan actions** – by incorporating key performance indicators (KPIs) and targets to make measuring and evaluating action and outcome performance easier, and raising awareness of the North-west Network Management Plan factsheet to improve usability and accessibility for stakeholders.
- **Considering Australia's '30 by 30' commitment** – including implications of potential changes to zoning arrangements. In doing so, it will be important to clearly communicate the evidence-based need and benefits of commitment to '30 by 30' in an Australian context.

4. Findings: Communication, Education and Awareness Program

*This chapter presents assessments of the implementation of the **Communication, Education and Awareness Program** of the North-west Marine Parks Network Management Plan.*

4.1. Overall findings about the efficacy of program implementation

Grade	
Good with some concerns	The Communication, Education and Awareness Program was assessed as 'good with some concerns', with the overall outcome of the management program rated as 'partially met'. Of the eight planned actions, four were assessed as 'completed' or 'ongoing' while the remaining four were deemed 'partially completed'. Although several actions were only partially completed, the evidence suggests that these efforts were reasonable given the remoteness of many marine parks within the network. However, there remains scope to enhance the program's effectiveness, particularly in improving awareness, understanding, and support for marine park management among community members and marine park users, as well as ensuring a balanced and constructive approach and tone to communication with key stakeholder groups.

Strengths and achievements

As outlined in relation to the specific actions and outcome below, a range of successes were noted for the implementation of this management plan. In particular, targeted communication in relation to key visitor sites (e.g. Ningaloo reef), the development of a wealth of online informational resources, and partnerships to support communication of information to key user groups (e.g. providing zoning information to recreational fishers via the Recfishwest app and collaborating with government and tourism organisations to communicate with marine park visitors).

In addition, stakeholders believed there was an appetite for further information among park users and engaged members of the public and expressed a willingness to assist in sharing and communicating information. This highlights an opportunity for Parks Australia to continue to leverage stakeholder networks and improve communication over the course of the next management plan.

Barriers, challenges and limiting factors

Implementation of this program faced notable weaknesses in its communication efforts with the general community and those not already involved in engagement activities, which stakeholders recognised as being constrained by the following challenges:

- The difficulty of engaging communities in relation to marine parks located far offshore, due to limited visibility of these or interaction with them.
- Limited resources within Parks Australia, with small teams needing to manage various programs and tending to have a stronger focus on terrestrial parks. While Parks Australia undertook initiatives to engage the public, such as meeting with visitor centres, stakeholder feedback indicated that these activities lacked broad reach and visibility beyond those already visiting the parks or engaging with Parks Australia. In addition, Parks Australia staff noted that resourcing

constraints had also limited their ability to track the effectiveness of communication and engagement activities.

- Challenges executing effective stakeholder engagement and consultation, as described in more detail the actions below. A number of challenges engaging with members of the North-west Marine Parks Network Advisory Committee (NWMPAC) and key park user groups such as commercial fishers were identified through the evaluation. In some cases, limited communication or consultation was found to contribute to more negative perceptions of management activities.
- Limited communication and engagement with the broader community – while efforts to engage specific stakeholder groups were noted, the evaluation found that broader community engagement remained an important gap. Many stakeholders highlighted the need for increased public awareness and education about marine parks, including their purpose, management, and benefits. It was felt that improved outreach and communication strategies targeting broader park users and the general public could help foster a greater understanding of marine park values, build support for management decisions, and encourage community participation in conservation efforts.

4.2. Outcome effectiveness

Outcome	Outcome effectiveness	Trend rating
O1. Increased awareness, understanding and support for marine parks	Partially met	Trend getting better

Evidence

Overall, this outcome was assessed as **partially met**. No survey-based metrics were identified and stakeholder feedback indicated that while there had been some progress made in increasing awareness, understanding and support for marine parks, there remained scope for improvement.

Evidence from desktop review:

The National Environmental Science Program (NESP), in partnership with the University of Western Australia (UWA), conducted surveys at boat ramps across Australia in 2021 to establish social and economic benchmarks for Australian Marine Parks (AMPs). These surveys collected data on awareness, understanding and support for AMPs.

While a subsequent round of research is due to be completed and released in 2026, it was not available at the time of this evaluation. As such, it is not currently possible to make a robust assessment of whether awareness, understanding and support have increased over the life of the plan.[6]

Evidence from engagement:

Many stakeholders felt there had been some increase in awareness, understanding and support for marine parks, however this was found to vary across audiences:

[6] *NESP Social and Economic Benchmarks of the Australian Marine Parks Report: https://api.research-repository.uwa.edu.au/ws/portalfiles/portal/363774544/Navarro_et_al_D6_M12_M13_M17_Social_and_Economic_benchmarks_of_the_AMPs_FINAL.pdf*

- Communication activities were felt to have been more effective in raising awareness amongst frequent park users (e.g. increased awareness of zone rules and boundaries for recreational fishers via the Recfishwest app, potential for increased understanding for park users due to provision of new signage at key sites), and tourists (e.g. via initiatives to communicate about Ningaloo Reef). However, stakeholders noted that there had been less progress made in the changes to awareness and support of marine parks among less frequent users.
- Some First Nations partners and relevant stakeholders noted increases in awareness and understanding of marine parks among Traditional Owners and First Nations communities due to effective engagement and relationships built with specific Parks Australia staff. However, others noted that awareness and understanding of marine parks had not increased in some Traditional Owner and First Nations communities due to limited opportunities to engage with Parks Australia.

In addition, stakeholders identified a range of areas where the efficacy of communication could be improved, as outlined in the actions below.

4.3. Specific management plan actions

The tables below present the completion status and supporting evidence collected during the evaluation for each management plan action within the Communication, Education and Awareness Program.

Action	Completion status
A1. Develop a marketing and communication strategy for Australian Marine Parks to raise awareness and understanding of marine park values and the contribution marine parks make to enhancing Australia's wellbeing	**Completed**

Evidence

This action was assessed as **completed**, with the marketing and communication strategy delivered in a timely manner. Most stakeholders felt that the strategy had been moderately effective in increasing awareness and understanding of marine parks and their values among key audiences.

Evidence from desktop review:

The desktop review identified the '*Communication, Education and Awareness Strategy (2021-26)*' as the guiding document for relevant activities across marine parks/ marine park networks, including the North-west Network. This document was found to have been produced in a timely manner (i.e. within the first four years of the management plan).[7] Evidence of communication products, activities and initiatives that were developed or implemented in accordance with this strategy are noted against the relevant actions below. Additionally, the desktop review also found evidence of the development of the '*North-west Communications Plan*'.[8]

[7] *A Communication, Education and Awareness Strategy (2021-26): Internal document*
[8] *North-west Communications Plan: Internal document*

Evidence from engagement:

Feedback indicated most stakeholders felt communication and marketing activities developed under the strategy had been moderately effective. More specifically, stakeholders provided the following examples of communication activities that had contributed to raising awareness and understanding, though they also noted room for further improvement:

- Increased awareness of zoning rules amongst some park users – some stakeholders in the fishing sector reported that the Recfishwest App had been helpful in supporting understanding of zone rules amongst recreational fishers, but felt that information about of the purpose/ objectives of zones and the marine park values they protected had not been broadly communicated with this audience. It was felt that such information would enhance support for, and broader understanding of, marine parks and their values.
- Some broader communication in relation to research activities – a few researcher participants noted that, as part of Our Marine Park Grants (OMPGs), there was a requirement to communicate research activities/ findings with the broader public. These participants noted that this requirement went some way to supporting greater awareness of marine park values and management activities, but felt that research could be more broadly communicated with greater support from Parks Australia.
- Increased awareness of marine park values in the Ningaloo Reef Marine Park – Parks Australia staff felt that communication had effectively supported an increase in awareness of Ningaloo Reef, particularly among tourists. There were some mechanisms in place to raise understanding of the park and its values, including through forums and meetings with the Kimberley Indigenous Saltwater Advisory Group (ISWAG), NWMPAC and Ningaloo World Heritage (NWH) Committee. However, Parks Australia staff also acknowledged that most other marine parks within the North-west Network were further from shore which had posed a barrier to awareness raising activities.
- Increased awareness of ghost net removal initiatives – a couple of stakeholders reported receiving information about activities to remove ghost nets from the marine parks, but were unsure of the details.

Parks Australia staff also acknowledged that maintaining internal tracking of communication had been challenging due to limited internal resources.

Action	Completion status
A2. Develop online information resources to facilitate awareness of marine park values, management arrangements and visitor opportunities	**Completed**

Evidence

This action was assessed as **completed**, with outputs delivered in a timely manner. Most stakeholders felt that online information resources were moderately effective in supporting awareness and understanding of the marine park values, management arrangements and visitor opportunities.

Evidence from desktop review:

The desktop review identified considerable evidence of online information resources being developed and used. Delivery of these outputs commenced from the initial years of the management plan (i.e. between 2018-2020), highlighting the timely completion of this action.

More specifically, the desktop review identified the following online resources designed to facilitate awareness of marine park values:

- The values chapter in the North-west management plan itself, published in 2018.[9]
- The North-west Network values webpage.[10]
- The 'Five that thrive in our marine parks' website produced by the Fab Five research team at the University of Adelaide (2022), which provided information about five key 'iconic' species that live in Australian Marine Parks.[11]
- Ashmore Reef Environmental Assessment Project blog posts and videos (2020).[12]
- At least 46 social media posts in relation to the North-west Network, including posts covering the: Ashmore Reef environmental assessment project; North-west Ecological Baselines project in the Kimberley; the Ningaloo OMPG2 project; and World Migratory Bird Day focusing on shorebirds at Ashmore Reef Marine Park.[13]

The desktop review also identified the following online resources designed to facilitate awareness of marine park management arrangements:

- The North-west management plan itself, published in 2018.[14]
- A management plan zoning and rules factsheet.[15]
- Apps containing information about Australian Marine Park (AMP) boundaries and zoning, including the Recfishwest app and Department of Biodiversity, Conservation and Attractions of Western Australia (DBCA) Explore Marine Parks Apps.[16]
- Newsletter and social media articles for the Western Australian Fishing Industry Council (WAFIC), Recfishwest, Game Fishing Association of Australia (GFAA) and Western Australia Department of Primary Industries and Regional Development (DPIRD).[17]

Finally, the desktop review also identified the following online resources designed to facilitate awareness of visitor opportunities:

- The '*Rowley Shoals and Mermaid Reef Marine Park*' visitor guide in 2024, developed in partnership with DBCA.[18]
- Updates to the '*Ningaloo Coast World Heritage Area'* booklet in 2022, in partnership with a range of government agencies.[19]

Evidence from engagement:

Most stakeholders reported limited awareness of the range of online information resources produced by Parks Australia in relation to the North-west Network, suggesting potential limited reach and engagement amongst key stakeholder groups.

However, as noted in A1, most stakeholder participants who were aware of communication and education activities felt that online information resources had been moderately effective in facilitating awareness of marine park values and management arrangements.

Action	Completion status
A3. Maximise the use of new technologies and partnerships (including with schools, universities, museums and non-government organisations) to inspire people of all ages to become involved in marine park management and protection	**Partially completed or implemented**

Evidence

This action was assessed as **partially completed**. While evidence of some partnerships and the use of these were identified via the desktop review, most activities did not incorporate the use of modern technologies. In addition, most stakeholders were either unsure or felt it was unlikely that these had been effective in inspiring people of all ages to become involved in marine park management and protection.

Evidence from desktop review:

The desktop review provided evidence of a range of partnerships, including with scientific institutions, and government and non-government organisations, some of which utilised modern technology:

- An information booth and presentation on AMPs at the Australian Marine Sciences Association conference 2019, to raise awareness in the science community about AMPs and authorisation requirements.[20]
- Meetings with the Exmouth Visitors Centre in May 2021 to discuss communicating canyon values in Ningaloo and Gascoyne Marine Parks.[21]
- Collaboration with the DBCA to add information about AMPs and zoning rules to the WA Explore Marine Parks App.[22]

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[9] *The values chapter in the management plan itself (2018): https://australianmarineparks.gov.au/static/effc79ac7104ae979053131c18e51478/amp-document-north-west-management-plan-2018.pdf*
[10] *North-west Network values: https://australianmarineparks.gov.au/management/values/values-north-west-marine-parks-network/*
[11] *The University of Adelaide – Finding the Fab Five, Australian Marine Parks: https://storymaps.arcgis.com/collections/61ca6f9be4354e808146e47e0a59a7d0?item=1*
[12] *Ashmore Reef Environmental Assessment project: https://australianmarineparks.gov.au/news/ashmore-adventures-continue/#:~:text=Ashmore%20Reef%20Marine%20Park%3A%20An,isolated%20sanctuary*
[13] *Foundation phase Implementation Plan review report – North-west network (2021): Internal document*
[14] *The North-west Marine Parks Network Management Plan: https://australianmarineparks.gov.au/parks/North-west-marine-parks-network/North-west-network-management-plan/*
[15] *Zoning and rules factsheet: https://australianmarineparks.gov.au/static/f2d924e86afda12b937d2ba563055a6d/amp-document-factsheet-north-west-management-plan.pdf*
[16] *AMP zoning integration in apps: https://australianmarineparks.gov.au/access-use/other-approvals/recreational-fishing/*
[17] *Foundation phase Implementation Plan review report – North-west network (2021): Internal document*
[18] *Rowley Shoals and Mermaid Reef marine parks visitor guide: https://exploreparks.dbca.wa.gov.au/sites/default/files/2023-12/rowley-shoals-and-mermaid-reef-marine-parks-visitor-guide.pdf*
[19] *Ningaloo Coast World Heritage booklet: https://exploreparks.dbca.wa.gov.au/sites/default/files/2021-10/ningaloo-coast-world-heritage-area-visitor-guide.pdf*
[20] *Foundation phase Implementation Plan review report – North-west network (2021): Internal document*
[21] *Foundation phase Implementation Plan review report – North-west network (2021): Internal document*
[22] *AMP zoning integration in apps: https://australianmarineparks.gov.au/static/72824ff8d5153fc9ddb956256a441aff/communique_nwampac_meeting-7.pdf*

- Collaboration with Recfishwest to add green zones to their fishing app.[23]
- A partnership with DBCA to assist in meeting Parks Australia's communication objectives for the network.[24]
- A partnership with DBCA to draft the '*Rowley Shoals and Mermaid Reef Marine Parks Visitor Guide'* as well as navigation advice for visiting vessels.[25] [26]
- Communication about the North-west Ecological Baselines Project to highlight collaborative science in the Kimberley, Eighty Mile Beach, and Roebuck marine parks. Posts explained that this project is collecting data on fish, sharks, rays and habitats in partnership with WA DPIRD and Kimberley Traditional Owners.[27]

However, no evidence of partnerships with schools, universities or museums were identified. Additionally, the only evidence of the use of modern technologies was incorporation of marine park information into the WA Explore Marine Parks and Recfishwest apps, suggesting scope for further utilisation of a range of technologies through these partnerships.

Evidence from engagement:

Overall, awareness of partnerships and new technologies was found to be low amongst stakeholders. While the few stakeholders who were aware provided favourable feedback about partnerships (such as in relation to the inclusion of zoning information on the Recfishwest app or collaboration with the science community to communicate research outcomes), these stakeholders felt there was scope to expand information sharing via these partnerships (as discussed in A1).

A couple of participants felt that further communication about marine park values and new scientific advancements could support increased engagement in the North-west Network amongst the broader community. Ultimately, however, many stakeholders felt that the intended impact of this action (i.e. inspiring people of all ages to become involved in marine park management and protection) was challenging and "unrealistic" to achieve and measure. Consequently, while these stakeholders believed the action had not been implemented as intended, they also recognised that achieving the intended action would have been highly challenging.

[23] *AMP zoning integration in apps: https://australianmarineparks.gov.au/access-use/other-approvals/recreational-fishing/*
[24] *DBCA and Parks Australia – Final Summary Report 2018/19: Internal document*
[25] *Rowley Shoals and Mermaid Reef marine parks visitor guide: Internal document*
[26] *Rowley Shoals and Mermaid Reef marine parks navigation advice for visiting vessels: Internal document*
[27] *The North-west Ecological Baselines Project: https://us5.campaign-archive.com/?u=6ea9a3670ff3d4010dd5d92ae&id=10645950b6*

Actions	Completion status
A4. Establish network advisory committees to ensure users and interested stakeholders have on-going input into the management of Australian Marine Parks **A8. Establish a North-west Network Advisory Committee to support and collaborate with the Director in management**	**Partially completed or implemented**

Evidence

These actions were assessed as **partially completed**. While the desktop review provided evidence of an advisory committee being established in a timely manner, stakeholder feedback indicated that the committee may not have had the intended input into marine park management.

Evidence from desktop review:

The desktop review found that the NWMPAC was appointed by the Director of National Parks (the Director) in 2019 with 12 members for a period of two years.[28] The NWMPAC has been convened twice annually since 2019 until 2022, with communiqués published after each meeting to document discussions. While documentary evidence of meetings following 2022 was not identified, the NWAMPAC was consulted as part of this evaluation whom provided evidence that the committee remains active.

In May 2025, a Joint Australian Marine Parks Advisory Committee (AMPAC) meeting was held in Brisbane to facilitate knowledge sharing, networking, and cross-network guidance for the upcoming review phase actions.[29]

Evidence from engagement:

NWMPAC members expressed their appreciation for the opportunity to engage with Parks Australia and receive information about management of the North-west Network via the advisory committee. In particular, members felt that the opportunity to meet a diverse range of stakeholders and share perspectives towards park management was beneficial.

However, feedback from both NWMPAC members and Parks Australia staff highlighted concerns regarding the effectiveness of the current operational model. Specifically:

- NWMPAC members felt that their expertise and input shared via the committee had not had a meaningful impact on marine park management. In particular, information sharing was felt to be “one-way” from Parks Australia, and they rarely received feedback to “close the loop” in relation to matters discussed in previous meetings. NWMPAC members also reported that it was sometimes unclear whether topics discussed in meetings were confidential or if information was intended to be shared with their broader networks of marine park users.
- Parks Australia staff raised concerns about the high costs associated with running the committees and limited perceived value derived. Some Parks staff felt that meetings tended to feel more like Parks Australia presenting information rather than a workshop or an

[28] *North-west Marine Parks Advisory Committee: https://australianmarineparks.gov.au/management/partnerships/advisory-committees/North-west-marine-parks-advisory-committee/*

[29] *Temperate East Marine Parks Advisory Committee: https://australianmarineparks.gov.au/management/partnerships/advisory-committees/temperate-east-marine-parks-advisory-committee/*

opportunity to receive meaningful input, particularly given that at times the meetings were poorly attended, which further hindered their ability to seek meaningful input or guidance.

Further information in relation to the operation of AMPAC committees (including the NWMPAC) over the course of the management plan and key learnings for the future are reported on in the '*Overall findings Across Marine Parks*' report.

Action	Completion status
A5. Develop a customer focused approach to tracking the aspirations and concerns of stakeholders in relation to marine parks	**Partially completed or implemented**

Evidence

This action was assessed as **partially completed**. While a formal approach to seeking feedback was developed via the NWMPAC, this was not found to be applicable to the breadth of relevant stakeholders. Feedback from stakeholder engagement was also somewhat mixed in relation to whether Parks Australia had been responsive to stakeholders' aspirations and concerns over the course of the plan.

Evidence from desktop review:

As discussed in relation to A4 and A8 above, the NWMPAC was established in 2019 as a means of understanding and tracking the aspirations and concerns of stakeholders in relation to marine parks.[30] However, no other formal mechanisms/ approaches to track the aspirations and concerns of stakeholders who were not NWMPAC members were identified.

Evidence from engagement:

Overall, feedback provided during the stakeholder engagement suggested that Parks Australia had been partially responsive to stakeholder's concerns and aspirations. More specifically, stakeholder feedback indicated that:

- The NWMPAC only partially supported the implementation of this action – while the NWMPAC went some way to providing a formal mechanism for stakeholder feedback NWMPAC members felt that there were limitations in relation to their ability to provide input via the committee (as discussed in relation to A4 and A8, above). One member also noted that the size of the committee meant that the full range of diverse stakeholder views across the North-west Network could not be represented via this mechanism.
- Responsiveness to First Nations peoples' aspirations and concerns had been inconsistent – while two of the three Traditional Owners who participated in the evaluation felt that Parks Australia had been appropriately responsive to First Nations peoples' aspirations and concerns, a third felt that this was not the case. This highlights the need to engage consistently and comprehensively across First Nations communities.
- Consultation with commercial fishers in relation to the introduction of the Vessel Monitoring System (VMS) had been inadequate – strongly negative views were shared by some

[30] *North-west Marine Parks Advisory Committee: https://australianmarineparks.gov.au/static/3f31bdd7da503f86d20038b60876e45e/amp-document-nwmpac-meeting-one-communique.pdf*

stakeholders from the fishing sector, who reported that they had not been consulted or engaged before the VMS was implemented. Given the impact of this change on commercial fishers, one stakeholder went so far as to suggest that the lack of consultation was "horrific".

In addition, some stakeholders reported that communication and engagement sometimes had an oppositional or "us versus them" tone, whereby park users were portrayed to be "at odds" with park protection activities and park values. Specifically, a couple of stakeholders reported that communication had contributed to a feeling amongst recreational fishers that they were "locked out" of marine parks, rather than being encouraged to use marine protected areas sustainably. A perceived focus on compliance information when communicating with the fishing sector was also found to contribute to this tone.

As such, some stakeholders felt that a more collaborative tone or approach to communication and engagement, which acknowledged the social and economic values of the North-west Network and highlighted how conservation activities benefitted all park users, would be more effective and appropriate.

Action	Completion status
A6. Develop information on marine parks in the Network to encourage increased awareness and understanding of their values and management arrangements. For example, an Ashmore Reef Marine Park visitor guide (to be evaluated together with Activities 1 and 2 above)	**Completed**

Evidence

This action was assessed as **completed** as the required outputs were delivered in a timely manner.

However, many stakeholders felt that communication and engagement had only been moderately effective in increasing awareness and understanding of marine park values and management arrangements.

Evidence from desktop review:

The desktop review identified a range of online information resources to encourage increased awareness of marine park values, management activities and management arrangements, as outlined in response to A2. In addition to online resources, the desktop review also found evidence of signage to support increased awareness and understanding of these sites, see A7.

However, it should be noted that an updated '*Ashmore Reef Marine Park Visitor Guide*' specifically was not identified through the desktop review, with the most recent version found dated 2014.[31]

Evidence from engagement:

As discussed in A1, A2 and A5, stakeholders provided mixed feedback in relation to communication with the general public and marine park users in relation to values and management arrangements in the North-west Network.

[31] *Ashmore Reef and Cartier Island Commonwealth Marine Reserves – Information for visitors: https://www.dcceew.gov.au/sites/default/files/documents/visitors-information-brochureashmore-cartier.pdf*

Action	Completion status
A7. Provide infrastructure in and adjacent to the Network, such as signs and marker buoys, to increase understanding of marine park values and rules, particularly at sites that are regularly visited	**Ongoing**

Evidence

This action was assessed as **ongoing**. The desktop review found that infrastructure had been installed in regularly visited sites. Stakeholder feedback relating to the infrastructure in and adjacent to the Network was mixed.

Evidence from desktop review:

The following examples of marine park infrastructure delivery were identified in the desktop review:

- Development and installation of approximately 43 new visitor information signs at key entry points along the Ningaloo Coast (including Coral Bay and Exmouth), in collaboration with DBCA.[32] Additional evidence was identified of signage provided at Dampier Marine Park and Coral Bay to support increased awareness and understanding of these sites.[33] [34]
- Four moorings were provided in the lagoon of Mermaid Reef (a National Park zone).[35]
- Seven visitor moorings were made available in the West Island Lagoon at Ashmore Reef (within the Recreational Use Zone).[36]

Evidence from engagement:

Stakeholder feedback in relation to this action was mixed. Positively, First Nations partners provided favourable feedback in relation to the openness of Parks Australia to install signage which signalled the Country and Traditional Owners of marine parks. However, other stakeholders demonstrated limited awareness of the delivery of infrastructure, with some assuming that signs and marker buoys had not been fully effective in enhancing visitor understanding. Parks Australia staff also highlighted challenges in installing signage within parks due to complex approval processes.

[32] *Ningaloo Coast visitor information signs https://australianmarineparks.gov.au/static/b36e72f611241f501b2fcc887d5c1902/amp-document-nwmpac-meeting-three-communique.pdf#:~:text=In%20partnership%20with%20DBCA%2C%20joint,was%20featured%20in%20the%20Autumn*

[33] *Dampier Marine Park Use Guide: Internal document*

[34] *Coral Bay Digital sign: Internal document*

[35] *Mermaid reef moorings: https://australianmarineparks.gov.au/parks/North-west-marine-parks-network/mermaid-reef-marine-park/moorings-mermaid-reef/#:~:text=match%20at%20L464%20To%20prevent,National%20Park%20Zone*

[36] *Ashmore Reef Marine Park visitor moorings: https://australianmarineparks.gov.au/parks/North-west-marine-parks-network/ashmore-reef-marine-park/moorings-ashmore-reef/#:~:text=To%20prevent%20anchor%20damage%20to,Recreational%20Use%20Zone*

5. Findings: Tourism and Visitor Experience Program

*This chapter presents assessments of the implementation of the **Tourism and Visitor Experience Program** of the North-west Marine Parks Network Management Plan.*

5.1. Overall findings about the efficacy of program implementation

Grade	
Good with some concerns	The Tourism and Visitor Experience Program was assessed as 'good with some concerns', with the overall outcomes of the program rated as 'substantially met' and 'partially met'. Of the ten planned actions, two were assessed as 'completed', seven were assessed as 'partially completed' and one was considered 'not commenced'. Although some actions were only partially completed and not commenced, the evidence suggests that progress had been made on most actions and that efforts were reasonable given the more remote and deep-sea nature of many of the marine parks in the North-west Network.

Strengths and achievements

The evaluation identified some strengths in Parks Australia's approach to supporting the development and implementation of ecotourism initiatives and promotion of high-quality visitor experiences. In particular, collaboration and partnerships with state and local tourism authorities and operators were found to be an effective implementation mechanism, as these facilitated promotion of tourism activities/ opportunities and data sharing to support the monitoring of tourism activity.

Barriers, challenges and limiting factors

Some barriers, challenges and limiting factors were identified through the evaluation. This included limited interest in tourism in much of the North-west Network. Internal documentation supplied by Parks Australia noted that tourism was a relatively small industry for the North-west Network, as most Western Australian tourism activities operated predominately in state waters (rather than Commonwealth waters). Most tourism activity within the North-west network was found to be focused on key sites (e.g. Ningaloo and Mermaid Reef Marine Parks and Ashmore Reef Marine Park to a lesser degree), with less evidence available about current or potential activities in other marine parks. It was suggested that tourism operators were more likely to focus on visitor experiences in state marine parks, which were generally more accessible.

Impacts of COVID-19 during the current management plan (which caused travel restrictions and park closures) was also found to limit or delay activities conducted by Parks Australia within this management program.

5.2. Outcome effectiveness

Outcome	Outcome effectiveness	Trend rating
O2. High-quality visitor experiences that are appealing, engaging and raise awareness of the natural and Cultural Values of marine parks	**Partially met**	**Trend stable**

Evidence

This outcome was assessed as **partially met**. The desktop review found evidence of some visitor satisfaction data indicating high-quality tourism experiences in Western Australia (WA) in general, although this was not specific to marine parks. No metrics to track visitor awareness of natural and Cultural Values of marine parks before and following experiences was identified. Stakeholder feedback relating to the quality of visitor experiences was limited.

Evidence from desktop review:

The evaluation identified some visitor satisfaction data and trends from overall tourism activities across WA, including some data collection for natural attractions such as national parks.[37] While this data indicated overall high-quality experiences and high satisfaction with tourism activities, this was not specific to tourism in marine parks.

For evidence relating to the promotion of culturally responsive tourism and visitor experiences that foster curiosity and appreciation of natural and heritage values in the North-west Network refer to actions A14 and A16.

Evidence from engagement:

Overall, stakeholder feedback in relation to this outcome was limited, likely due to limited awareness amongst stakeholders of Parks Australia activities in relation to tourism. As discussed in the actions below, there was mixed feedback from stakeholders in relation to the efficacy of Parks Australia's efforts in supporting high-quality visitor experiences, with a few reporting that they were unaware of what, if any, impact Parks Australia had made on the tourism experiences they were familiar with, suggesting a potential gap in visibility or communication of Parks Australia's role in this area.

[37] *Tourism WA – Visitor Experience and Expectations Research 2024-2025 Report: Internal document*

Outcome	Outcome effectiveness	Trend rating
O3. Increased visitation to marine parks	Substantially met	Trend getting better

Evidence

This outcome was assessed as **substantially met**, as visitation numbers for key tourism sites Mermaid Reef and Ningaloo Marine Parks saw overall increases in visitation. However, visitation trends at other sites are unknown over the duration of the plan.

Evidence from desktop review:

As outlined in A13, visitor logs for Mermaid Reef and Ningaloo Marine Parks were identified through the desktop review for the years 2019–2024.[38] [39] Each set of logs indicated that there was an increase in visitation over the duration of the plan.

Internal documents provided by Parks Australia also noted that Mermaid Reef Marine Park saw an increase in visitor numbers during COVID-19, although why this occurred was not reported, and that Ashmore Reef Marine Park has seen an increase in diversity of experiences through cruise ship visits.[40] However, specific visitation numbers were not provided.

Evidence of visitation data outside of these more popular tourism locations was not identified.

Outcome	Outcome effectiveness	Trend rating
O4. Social and economic benefits from the contribution of marine parks to Australia's visitor economy	Substantially met	Trend getting better

Evidence

Overall, this outcome was assessed as **substantially met**. The desktop review found evidence of the economic contribution of marine park tourism in the Ningaloo region, and most stakeholders felt that marine parks had provided social and economic benefits to Australia's visitor economy.

Evidence from desktop review:

The desktop review identified significant evidence of the social and economic benefits from the contribution of Ningaloo Coast and Ningaloo Marine Park, including:

[38] *Mermaid Reef Marine Park mooring bookings for 2019-2020, 2022, 2024: Internal document*
[39] *Ningaloo Reef Marine Park Whale Sharks visitation data for 2019-2020, 2022, 2023: Internal document*
[40] *Foundation phase Implementation Plan review report – North-west network (2021): Internal document*

- A report produced on behalf of the Western Australia Department of Biodiversity, Conservation and Attractions (DBCA) on the economic contribution of tourism in the Ningaloo Coast (2020), which indicated tourism made up 90% of economic contribution to the area.[41]
- The DBAC '*Ningaloo Coast Resilience Strategy 2023',* which outlined the economic and social benefits of the tourism industry along the Ningaloo Coast. Parks Australia is named throughout the strategy due to their responsibility in management of Ningaloo Marine Park. Specifically, the strategy reports that "the local economy of Exmouth and Coral Bay… is mainly reliant on marine-based tourism".[42]

However, evidence of the contribution of tourism for other marine parks was not identified.

Evidence from engagement:

Most stakeholders felt that marine parks contributed social and economic benefits to Australia's visitor economy. For example, one Traditional Owner reported that Parks Australia played a key role in providing tourists with information about rules, regulations, and sustainable use of the marine parks. They noted that this helps protect the parks while supporting the tourism industry to continue its operations.

5.3. Specific management plan actions

The tables below present the completion status and supporting evidence collected during the evaluation for each management plan action within the Tourism and Visitor Experience Program.

Action	Completion status
A9. Develop a sustainable tourism and visitor experience strategy for Australian Marine Parks	**Completed**
Evidence	
Overall, this action was assessed as **completed** in a timely manner, with the desktop review identifying evidence of the timely development of the '*Australian Marine Parks Tourism Strategy 2021—26*'.[43]	

Action	Completion status
A10. Work with national, state and local tourism authorities and operators to maximise the value of sustainable ecotourism opportunities associated with marine parks	**Partially completed or implemented**
Evidence	
Overall, this action was assessed as **partially completed**. The desktop review identified evidence of collaboration with state and local tourism operators and authorities, but limited evidence of	

[41] *Deloitte Report - Economic contribution of Ningaloo: one of Australia's best kept secrets (2020): Can be accessed at https://www.dbca.wa.gov.au/management/world-heritage-areas/resilient-reefs-ningaloo*
[42] *Resilience Strategy for the Ningaloo Coast (2023): https://www.barrierreef.org/uploads/Ningaloo-Strategy-v230216.pdf*
[43] *Australian Marine Parks Tourism Strategy 2021-26: Internal document*

work with national authorities. Additionally, most stakeholders felt there had been minimal increase in the value of sustainable ecotourism experiences.

Evidence from desktop review:

The desktop review identified greater evidence of work with state and local tourism authorities and less so with national authorities/ operators to maximise the value of ecotourism. Delivery of these outputs occurred between 2018-2025, highlighting the timely completion of this action.

The following evidence was identified in relation to work with state and local authorities and operators**:**

- Meetings with WA Tourism and regional tourism centres to identify tourism events, tourism operators and approaches for engagement with the tourism industry.[44]
- Collaboration as evidenced by the DBCA '*Ningaloo Coast Resilience Strategy 2023'*, which proposes actions to support and protect ecosystems, educate and empower the community and facilitate sustainable development. Parks Australia is named throughout the strategy due to their responsibilities managing the Ningaloo Marine Park (Commonwealth waters). The strategy includes encouraging sustainable tourism opportunities, including fostering working relationships with tourism operators.[45]
- An ongoing relationship with DBCA via contractual agreement, which includes the delivery of tourism-related materials, interpretive signage for Ningaloo Marine Park and various industry engagement sessions related to tourism.[46] [47] [48] [49]
- Three annual meetings with the Kimberley Marine Tourism Operators and five meetings with the 15 Ningaloo Whale Shark Operators.[50] [51] [52]
- Engagement with local tourism centres to promote marine parks, such as to support a proposed marine park discovery display at the Ningaloo Centre in Exmouth. [53]
- Development of an interactive whale trail display at Milyering Discovery Centre.[54]
- Engagement with highly engaged cruise operator/ industry members, including via a tourism industry workshop and discussions regarding visitor information opportunities.[55] [56]

Evidence of engagement with other agencies and tourism operators, including:

- A Our Marine Park Grants (OMPG) Round 3 funded project conducted by the University of Western Australia (UWA) relating to Sea Country Discovery of the Dampier Marine Park. The

[44] *Foundation phase Implementation Plan review report – North-west network (2021): Internal document*
[45] *Resilience Strategy for the Ningaloo Coast (2023): https://www.barrierreef.org/uploads/Ningaloo-Strategy-v230216.pdf*
[46] *North-west Internal Self-assessment: Internal document*
[47] *WA DBCA and Parks Australia contract agreement – Final summary report: Internal document*
[48] *Email between Parks Australia and WA DBCA coordinating future meeting (2025): Internal document*
[49] *Stakeholder engagement and travel schedule for Ningaloo Coast World Heritage workshop: Internal document*
[50] *Foundation phase Implementation Plan review report – North-west network (2021): Internal document*
[51] *Parks Australia presentation of Evaluation of management plan to Ningaloo Tourism operators (2025): Internal document*
[52] *Parks Australia presentation to Ningaloo Tour Operators (2020): Internal document*
[53] *Foundation phase Implementation Plan review report – North-west network (2021): Internal document*
[54] *Foundation phase Implementation Plan review report – North-west network (2021): Internal document*
[55] *North-west Internal Self-assessment: Internal document*
[56] *Emails to highly engaged cruise operator about tourism workshop and visitor information opportunities: Internal document*

project included collaborating with Traditional Owners from the Murujuga Aboriginal Corporation and representatives of the commercial and recreational fishing sector with the aim of delivering culturally sensitive maps and a short 360° immersive video for the tourism industry.[57]

- Parks Australia attendance at Ningaloo Whale Shark Festival in 2018.[58]

No evidence of engagement with national authorities was identified through the desktop review.

Evidence from engagement:

In addition to the activities listed above, Parks Australia staff also noted the following activities:

- Attending start and end-of-season meetings with tourism operators (hosted by the state government) to facilitate opportunities for operators to share their perspectives and needs.
- Forming agreements with state government agencies to facilitate data-sharing and minimise reporting burden of operators.

However, many stakeholders were unaware of Park Australia's efforts in relation to supporting sustainable tourism opportunities in the North-west Network. The only example identified by external stakeholders was the collaboration between Parks Australia and cruise operators on Ashmore Reef to provide information about the marine park to their passengers. As such, stakeholders felt that limited progress had been made in relation to this activity.

More broadly, some stakeholders, particularly tourism representatives, felt that the role of Parks Australia was in conservation and park management rather than promoting tourism. This was particularly the case given most tourism businesses operated in state marine parks rather than Commonwealth waters. Other stakeholders, particularly North-west Marine Park Advisory Committee (NWAMPAC) members, however, noted a desire for greater collaboration between Parks Australia and tourism operators to support communication of marine park values and benefits with tourists. Specifically, these stakeholders felt that more could be done to communicate with visitors to Ningaloo Reef and Ashmore Reef as well as via the provision of information through museums and visitor centres (e.g. such as the Marine Discovery Centre at Busselton Jetty).

[57] *Our Marine Parks Grant program – Round 3 (2022): https://australianmarineparks.gov.au/static/34e05cdfb4b82c5919f6d4d7779b57b0/our-marine-park-grants-round-three-projects-v2.pdf*

[58] *Photo of Parks Australia staff at Ningaloo whale shark festival (2018): Internal document*

Action	Completion status
A11. Develop a commercial tourism authorisation system to encourage best-practice and eco-accredited businesses operating in Australian Marine Parks	**Completed**

Evidence

Overall this action was assessed as **completed**, with the desktop review identifying evidence of an online permit and licensing application system that enabled authorisation for commercial tourism activities and other activities.[59]

Evidence from engagement:

However, most stakeholders were unsure whether the authorisation system had been effective in encouraging best-practice and eco-accredited operations. Additionally, one stakeholder felt that the authorisation system posed a burden to operators and was overly prescriptive, with limited flexibility for applications related to more remote locations in the North-west Network.

Action	Completion status
A12. Work with Tourism Australia and state and regional tourism authorities and the fishing industry to market and promote Australian Marine Parks, including opportunities to promote locally and sustainably caught seafood	**Not commenced**

Evidence

This action was assessed as **not commenced**. The desktop review was not able to identify evidence of collaborations to market and promote the marine parks, including opportunities to promote locally and sustainably caught seafood. Stakeholder feedback relating to marketing assets and their effectiveness was mixed.

Evidence from desktop review:

No direct evidence of Parks Australia's involvement or support for promotion of marine parks and local, sustainable seafood was identified. While some evidence of state or industry promotion was identified, Parks Australia's role in these activities was unclear.

Evidence from engagement:

Most stakeholders did not provide feedback on this action. However, a fishing industry stakeholder reported feeling "let down" by Parks Australia's perceived lack of action in this space. This stakeholder reported that, during the establishment phase of the marine parks, promoting sustainable seafood had been presented as a key benefit for the industry, particularly as the parks were expected to enhance the reputation and value of seafood caught in the region and thus the fishing industry. The stakeholder described the absence of action in this area as disappointing and felt it was reflective of a perceived lack of understanding or appreciation of the fishing industry by Parks Australia.

[59] *Australian Marine Parks - Permit and licence applications (publication date unknown): https://onlineservices.environment.gov.au/parks/australian-marine-parks*

Action	Completion status
A13. Monitor visitor trends and levels of satisfaction with marine park experiences and products	Partially completed or implemented

Evidence

Overall, this action was found to be **partially completed**, with evidence of visitor logs monitoring visitation trends for Mermaid Reef and Ningaloo Marine Parks identified. However, the data was limited and did not include information for other areas within the marine parks network.

Evidence from desktop review:

The desktop review identified the following evidence in support of this action:

- A number of visitor log records, including Mermaid Reef mooring bookings and Ningaloo Whale Shark bookings, both of which were managed under annual contracts between Parks Australia and DBCA.[60] [61] However, evidence of visitation data outside of these more popular tourism locations was not identified.
- The '*Visitor Experience and Expectations Research 2024-2025 Report*' by Tourism Research Australia for Tourism Western Australia, which provided visitor satisfaction data and trends from overall tourism activities across WA, including some data collection for natural attractions including national parks.[62]

Evidence from engagement:

Parks Australia staff also reported that they monitored visitor access at Ashmore Reef Marine Park through 'Warden Reports' provided by Australian Border Force (ABF), which recorded which operators entered the park and the moorings that were used.

Action	Completion status
A14. Promote culturally sensitive tourism by encouraging tourism operators to liaise with Traditional Owners	Partially completed or implemented

Evidence

Overall, this action was assessed as **partially completed**. The desktop review identified some evidence that promotion had occurred through the applications process, however stakeholder feedback suggested that this had not been effective in promoting culturally sensitive tourism activities.

[60] *Mermaid Reef mooring bookings for 2020, 2022, 2024: Internal document*
[61] *Ningaloo Reef whale sharks visitation data for 2019-2020, 2022, 2023: Internal document*
[62] *Tourism WA – Visitor Experience and Expectations Research 2024-2025 Report: Internal document*

Evidence from desktop review:

The desktop review found that the main mechanism for encouraging tourism operators to liaise with Traditional Owners was a prompt that appeared on the webpage when submitting an application via the assessments and authorisations process.[63]

Evidence from engagement:

Stakeholder feedback was limited for this action. Of the two tourism operator stakeholders engaged, both felt there had been some encouragement to engage with Traditional Owners but this had not resulted in increased collaboration. The stakeholders suggested that this may have been due to a lack of interest or availability from Traditional Owners and First Nations communities to work with tourism operators.

Feedback from Traditional Owners was mixed. One First Nations partner noted that Parks Australia had taken some initial steps to encourage engagement, while another felt that these activities had not been sufficient to effectively promote culturally sensitive tourism.

Action	Completion status
A15. Work with tourism operators and First Nations peoples to recognise and promote Cultural Values and cultural tourism opportunities	**Partially completed or implemented**

Evidence

Overall, this action was found to be **partially completed**, with limited documentary evidence of collaboration with tourism operators and First Nations peoples to promote cultural tourism opportunities identified and mixed feedback from stakeholders.

Evidence from desktop review:

The desktop review identified limited evidence in relation to collaboration to promote Cultural Values and tourism opportunities. However, internal documentation provided by Parks Australia suggested that this may be due to the limited tourism activities occurring in the North-west network, as discussed in section 5.1.

However, the desktop review did identify some relevant activities funded by OMPG3. As noted in relation to A10, OMPG3 provided funding to support the delivery of culturally sensitive maps and a short 360° immersive video for the tourism industry.[64] OMPG3 also provided funding to support Mayala Traditional Owners to install visitor signs on their Country.[65]

[63] *Screenshots of questions prompting engagement and consideration of impact on First Nations communities through application process provided by email to ORIMA Research*
[64] *Our Marine Parks Grant program – Round 3 (2022): https://australianmarineparks.gov.au/static/34e05cdfb4b82c5919f6d4d7779b57b0/our-marine-park-grants-round-three-projects-v2.pdf*
[65] *Our Marine Parks Grant program – Round 3 (2022): https://australianmarineparks.gov.au/static/34e05cdfb4b82c5919f6d4d7779b57b0/our-marine-park-grants-round-three-projects-v2.pdf*

Evidence from engagement:

There was mixed stakeholder feedback on the effectiveness of collaboration to recognise and promote Cultural Values and tourism opportunities. While one First Nations partner noted that some initial steps had been taken to support cultural tourism opportunities (as noted in relation to A16), another First Nations partner noted that they did not feel that Parks Australia had played a supporting role in the cultural tourism activities they were aware of.

As discussed in A16, tourism industry stakeholders felt that this action had been implemented with moderate success.

Action	Completion status
A16. Promote visitor experiences that foster curiosity and appreciation of natural and heritage values in the Network, for example whale shark watching at Ningaloo Marine Park, diving at Mermaid Reef Marine Park, and bird watching at Ashmore Reef Marine Park	**Partially completed or implemented**

Evidence

This action was found to be **partially completed** as the desktop review found some evidence of promotion of visitor experiences to foster appreciation of park values.

Evidence from desktop review:

In addition to the activities previously referenced in A10, the desktop review found that visitor experiences had also been promoted through the Australian Marine Parks website under the 'explore' and 'discover' sections for each Network. This included promotion of experiences to appreciate natural and heritage values in marine parks across the North-west Network, including Ningaloo, Mermaid Reef and Ashmore Reef Marine Parks.[66]

Evidence from engagement:

Stakeholders provided limited detailed feedback in relation to this action, but tended to report that promotional activities had been broadly effective.

Parks Australia staff highlighted the provision of moorings at Mermaid Reef Marine Park, enabling vessels to safely moor overnight. However, they also acknowledged that much of their work related to tourism occurred "behind the scenes" or with limited broader communication, which may have contributed to reduced visibility of their efforts.

[66] *Australian Marine Parks website, 'explore' and 'discover' sections under each Marine Park: https://australianmarineparks.gov.au/parks/north-west-marine-parks-network/*

Action	Completion status
A17. Work with other Commonwealth, state and territory government agencies, and the tourism industry to support tourism initiatives, events and attractions that promote visitor experiences in marine parks	Partially completed or implemented

Evidence

Overall, this action was assessed as **partially completed**. As outlined in relation to A10, the desktop review found evidence of some collaborations to support tourism activities, but stakeholder feedback suggested that there was a sense that more could be done to support sustainable tourism across the North-west network.

Action	Completion status
A18. Facilitate partnerships between First Nations peoples and tourism operators and support the application of the Uunguu Visitor Management pass system for the Native Title determination area	Partially completed or implemented

Evidence

This action was found to be **partially completed**. The desktop review found some evidence of facilitation of partnerships and mixed views were expressed by stakeholders. No stakeholder feedback was provided in relation to the Uunguu Visitor Management pass system specifically.

Evidence from desktop review:

As per A10 and A15, the OMPG3 grant facilitated some partnerships with First Nations peoples and cultural tourism activities. In addition, internal documentation from Parks Australia noted that they had advised permit applicants of the Uunguu visitor pass required for activities on Wunambal Gaambera Country. For other activities elsewhere, applicants were advised to contact the relevant Prescribed Body Corporation (PBC).[67]

Evidence from engagement:

Stakeholder feedback was mixed, as noted in A10 and A15. While some stakeholders acknowledged initial steps taken to support cultural tourism opportunities, others felt that Parks Australia's role in facilitating partnerships and promoting cultural tourism was limited, and that Parks Australia could strengthen its role in facilitating partnerships between First Nations peoples and tourism operators.

[67] *North-west Internal Self-assessment: Internal document*

6. Findings: Indigenous Engagement Program

*This chapter presents assessments of the implementation of the **Indigenous Engagement Program** of the North-west Marine Parks Network Management Plan.*

6.1. Overall findings about the efficacy of program implementation

Grade

The Indigenous Engagement Program was assessed as having 'significant concerns', with the overall outcomes of the management program rated as 'partially met'. Of the eight planned actions, seven were found to be 'partially completed' and one 'not commenced'.

It is important to note that feedback from First Nations partners for this program was limited, with four Traditional Owners from the North-west participating in the evaluation. Nevertheless, opportunities were identified to improve the program's effectiveness, particularly by strengthening co-management approaches that embed early engagement with First Nations communities and ensuring more appropriate and adequate engagement.

Strengths and achievements

The evaluation identified a range of efforts by Parks Australia to engage First Nations partners in a culturally responsive way, particularly in relation to providing information to First Nations peoples about marine park management. This was exemplified through initiatives to support Ranger groups through grants, collaboration deeds, training and knowledge sharing forums (e.g. with Mayala Kimberely Land Council, Wunambal Gaambera and Kimberely Indigenous Saltwater People).

Barriers, challenges and limiting factors

Despite demonstrated strengths in collaboration with Traditional Owners, Parks Australia staff reported difficulties in initially identifying and establishing connections with appropriate First Nations community members. These difficulties were reported to have constrained the expansion of collaborative projects and partnerships with Traditional Owners and other First Nations organisations. The desktop review supported these findings, with A26 highlighting a limited number of collaborative initiatives and mixed feedback relating to the effectiveness of actions as highlighted in A22.

Additionally, First Nations partners reported a range of less positive feedback in relation to the effectiveness and appropriateness of the Indigenous Engagement Program, citing issues in relation to:

- The "lack-lustre" engagement efforts, including concerns about the absence of genuine co-management approaches that prioritised early, meaningful, and sustained engagement with First Nations communities to ensure shared decision-making throughout.
- Engagement efforts that were not inclusive of all relevant First Nations partners or appropriate Traditional Owners with the necessary Cultural and Sea Country Knowledge, leaving some feeling excluded from important management decisions related to their heritage, Totems and/ or cultural responsibilities.

- The siloed nature of the program from the other programs (i.e. in the management plan), which created a fragmented approach and limited opportunities for holistic and coordinated decision-making.

Overall, this approach led many First Nations peoples to feel that their contributions, engagement and collaboration within the North-west Network were not appropriately valued.

Findings highlighted the need for more structured and consistent engagement (i.e. formally recognising governance structures and appropriate partners/ Traditional Owners), formalised partnerships and co-management approaches, and greater integration of First Nations perspectives in marine park management.

6.2. Outcome effectiveness

Outcome	Outcome effectiveness	Trend rating
O5. Marine Park management contributes to social, cultural and economic benefits for Traditional Owners	Partially met	Trend getting better

Evidence

This outcome was assessed as **partially met**. This assessment was based on the limited desktop evidence indicating that progress has been made towards meeting the outcome as outlined in the plan, as well as mixed feedback provided by Traditional Owners and First Nations partners.

Evidence from desktop review:

Limited documentary evidence was identified to evaluate this outcome. Internal documentation from Parks Australia identified that some progress had been made via implementation of projects with First Nations and Traditional Owner groups in the Kimberley, Roebuck, Eighty Mile and Ningaloo Marine Parks.[68] However, it was noted that ongoing engagement with representatives from First Nations corporations and other government agencies would be required to more effectively identify and contribute to social, cultural, and economic benefits.

Evidence from engagement:

While each of the First Nations partners who provided feedback on this outcome did indicate there had been at least some benefits they were able to identify, the extent of these benefits was somewhat mixed.

Specifically, a couple of other First Nations partners reported there had been a clear positive benefit to First Nations communities, particularly through the provision of resources and funding for Ranger programs. However, one participant noted that this funding (and hence the economic benefit) had not been consistently maintained through the life of the management plan.

In contrast, another First Nations partner reported that, while there had been social and cultural benefits for Traditional Owners, there were no perceived economic benefits. They expressed concerns that funding had been allocated to non-Indigenous researchers to work with Traditional Owners, as opposed to self-led research projects by First Nations peoples and Traditional Owners. This was seen as a missed opportunity to build capacity, empower communities, and ensure that research outcomes were directly aligned with First Nations priorities and aspirations.

[68] *Foundational plan review: Internal document*

Outcome	Outcome effectiveness	Trend rating
O6. Increase understanding of traditional knowledge, map Cultural Values and manage significant sites	Partially met	Trend getting better

Evidence

This outcome was assessed as **partially met,** based on desktop evidence indicating that progress has been made towards meeting the outcome and mixed stakeholder feedback.

Evidence from desktop review:

As discussed in relation to the actions below, the desktop review identified a number of collaborative mapping and Sea Country discovery projects, as well as opportunities for First Nations peoples to share knowledge and perspectives with Parks Australia staff.

Evidence from engagement:

Feedback from First Nations partners in relation to this outcome was mixed. While some felt that there had been little to no increase in understanding of Traditional Knowledge and Cultural Values mapping, others felt there had been positive progress made. This variation in perceptions and experiences highlights inconsistencies in engagement and collaboration across different Traditional Owner groups and First Nations communities within the North-west Network. These findings suggest that efforts to engage and collaborate have not been uniformly implemented, leading to uneven outcomes and varying levels of satisfaction among stakeholders.

More specifically, one First Nations partner felt that there was “mismatched” expectations between Parks Australia and First Nations peoples in relation to cultural mapping and understanding Cultural Values. This stakeholder felt that there was a risk of cultural mapping being “overly simplistic”, where values could be “ticked off” once mapped and without consideration of Traditional Owners’ ongoing interest in the management of their Sea Country. Additionally, this stakeholder noted that the mapping of values could be a complicated matter for some, as many had been removed from their Country (including their Sea Country).

6.3. Specific management plan actions

The tables below present the completion status and supporting evidence collected during the evaluation for each management plan action within the Indigenous Engagement Program.

Action	Completion status
A19. Develop an Australian Marine parks First Nations engagement and cultural heritage strategy, to improve understanding of cultural heritage, link management with Sea Country plans and maximise employment and enterprise opportunities for Traditional Owners	Not commenced

Evidence

This action was assessed as **not commenced** as an Indigenous Engagement and Cultural Heritage Strategy has not been established.

While some parks staff indicated that this had not been pursued due to the diverse and specific requirements of each First Nations culture and community, some First Nations partners suggested that such a strategy could address current shortcomings in engagement activities. Specifically, First Nations participants recommended that the strategy include a requirement to undertake clear and comprehensive mapping of Traditional Owners for the different marine parks to ensure the adequate inclusion and engagement of relevant peoples. Additionally, they emphasised that the strategy should mandate the involvement of relevant Traditional Owner groups from the early stages of projects and provide a framework to better implement co-management practices to ensure ongoing engagement in management and decision-making.

Action	Completion status
A20. Develop agreements to support First Nations Ranger Programs to deliver management in marine parks	Partially completed or implemented

Evidence

This action was assessed as **partially completed**. The desktop review identified evidence of collaboration deeds and Our Marine Park Grants (OMPG) grants provided to First Nations Ranger Programs to deliver marine park management. However, feedback from First Nations partners and Traditional Owners about the effectiveness of these agreements highlighted a range of limitations.

Evidence from desktop review:

The desktop review identified evidence of collaboration deeds established between Parks Australia and:

- The Mayala Kimberely Land Council (KLC) – though date of establishment of the deed is unknown.[69]
- Wunambal Gaambera – to support Uunguu Rangers and Traditional Owners management of Uunguu Coast Zone of the Kimberley Marine Park. This collaboration was publicly announced in 2019.[70]

Evidence of OMPG grants for First Nations Ranger Programs to deliver management in marine parks were also identified. This included with Ranger groups such as:

- Nyamba Buru Yawuru – to build capacity of Kimberely Indigenous Saltwater Peoples to contribute to the management of the North-west Marine Parks (this grant period commenced in 2022) through the Kimberley Indigenous Saltwater Advisory Group (ISWAG).[71] [72]

[69] *North-west Internal Self-assessment: Internal document*
[70] *New collaboration strengthens management of Sea Country in the Kimberley Marine Park: https://parksaustralia.gov.au/news/new-collaboration-strengthens-management-sea-country-kimberley-marine-park/*
[71] *Ship to Suring Up WA Marine Parks: https://ministers.pmc.gov.au/gorman/2024/ship-suring-wa-marine-parks*
[72] *Our Marine Parks Grants round three: https://australianmarineparks.gov.au/management/partnerships/our-marine-parks-grants/grants-round-three*

- The Kimberley Land Council – to support the Mayala peoples manage and protect their cultural sites in the Kimberley Marine Park, through the development of cultural maps and data collection to increase Sea Country Knowledge (this grant period commenced in 2024).[73] [74]

Evidence from engagement:

First Nations partners and non-Indigenous stakeholders whose role involved work in support of First Nations management of Sea Country, acknowledged that progress had been made in support of First Nations Ranger programs, including via establishment of partnerships and provision of funding. However, stakeholders also identified a range of limitations or less effective elements of Parks Australia's activities in this area, including:

- Funding and resource constraints which limited the extent of support provided to Ranger groups. Specifically, some First Nations partners and associated stakeholders reported that current agreements were insufficient to support marine park management in a more meaningful and collaborative manner, such as fostering genuine co-management and empowering Indigenous stewardship. Others noted that they were unable to operate Ranger programs full-time or as frequently as required due to limited funding.
    - One relevant stakeholder reported that as Parks Australia's management activities centred in supporting and leveraging the management activity of other agencies, it was challenging for Parks Australia to ensure that Traditional Owners and Ranger groups were able to participate in management actions if they did not have funds to own and operate their own vessels.
- The "short-term" nature of funding for Ranger programs via grants, which posed challenges in establishing programs that supported the genuine development of mutual trust and respect, and the long-term investment required for effective capacity building.
- The "challenging" processes required to seek grant funding, which could pose a barrier to establishing Ranger programs. In addition, one First Nations partner expressed concern for the capacity for organisations with less established Ranger programs to secure and maintain relationships with Parks Australia, which would limit their opportunities to be involved in the management of their Country.

One First Nations partner who managed Sea Country reported that while organisational capacity has increased in ISWAG, **Parks Australia's ongoing involvement had been minimal** following the initial grant. This First Nations parter reported that they did not know of Ranger groups that were funded or employed by Parks Australia in the marine park space, and that the process of attaining funding through a grant from Parks Australia is challenging and "onerous".

[73] *Ship to Suring Up WA Marine Parks: https://ministers.pmc.gov.au/gorman/2024/ship-suring-wa-marine-parks*
[74] *Our Marine Parks Grants round three: https://australianmarineparks.gov.au/management/partnerships/our-marine-parks-grants/grants-round-three*

Action	Completion status
A21. Provide information to First Nations peoples about marine park management	Partially completed or implemented

Evidence

This action was assessed as **partially completed**. The desktop review identified a number of examples of formal training delivered to First Nations peoples about park management as well as mutual knowledge sharing opportunities. However, Traditional Owners, First Nations partners and relevant stakeholders provided mixed feedback in relation to this action.

Evidence from desktop review:

The desktop review identified several examples of formal training delivered to First Nations peoples about marine park management, including:

- Training to use baited remote underwater video stations (BRUVS) and drop cameras to assess biodiversity and build capacity to assist with marine park management (as part of the Murujuga Sea Country discovery project conducted in 2017-2019).[75]
- An Indigenous trainee Ranger Program, including training for trainee Rangers, back to Country trips on the Ningaloo Coast as well as involvement in expansion of the Ningaloo Turtle Program to Janes Bay. Training involved in track rationalisation, dune stabilisation, campground maintenance.[76]
- In late 2020, Mayala Traditional Owners, supported by the Kimberley Land Council, received an OMPG grant to build their capability and involvement in Kimberley Marine Park management.[77]

The desktop review also identified examples of mutual knowledge sharing between Parks Australia and First Nations peoples such as:

- A saltwater knowledge-sharing camp and emerging curator workshop (between Wunambal Gaambera people, Curtin University and Western Australia (WA) Museum as part of the Kimberely Reef Connect Project, supported by Parks Australia which involved cross-generational knowledge sharing between Traditional Owners, researchers and government stakeholders about specimen curation, taxonomy and coral health.[78]
- Over 60 Traditional Owners and Rangers gathered in Broome for the Kimberley Indigenous Saltwater Advisory Group (ISWAG) Annual Forum in 2025, hosted by the Kimberley Land Council and Nyamba Buru Yawuru. The forum involved mutual knowledge sharing between a range of government partners and First Nations peoples (and was supported via direct investment by Parks Australia).[79]

[75] *Our Marine Parks Grants round three: https://australianmarineparks.gov.au/management/partnerships/our-marine-parks-grants/grants-round-three*
[76] *Final Summary Report – Department of Biodiversity, Conservation and Attractions (DBCA) and Parks Australia 2018/19: Internal document*
[77] *Mayala: Back-To-Country Voyage: https://www.facebook.com/watch/?v=581704216958959*
[78] *Final Report – Our Marine Parks Round Two Grants: Internal document*
[79] *Foundation phase review of North-west Network: Internal document*

Evidence from engagement:

Engagement for the evaluation identified mixed feedback in relation to the provision of information about marine park management, and experiences were found to vary across the cohort of First Nations partners and stakeholders engaged. More specifically, the engagement found that:

- Experiences of Parks Australia's engagement with First Nations peoples varied – one First Nations partner reported that engagement processes had been culturally responsive with Parks Australia staff meeting them On Country and proactively keeping Traditional Owners up-to-date with emerging issues and information. However, other First Nations partners reported less positive experiences whereby there had been limited information provided to Traditional Owners in relation to marine park management and research that may be occurring on Sea Country. In addition, one First Nations partner reported that the physical distance of Parks Australia offices (i.e. in Canberra and Hobart) to the North-west Network impacted the ability for ongoing face-to-face engagement, which was best-practice and mostly preferred.
- Information provision was similarly mixed – while participants acknowledged that Parks Australia attended the ISWAG forum and were able to disseminate information via this channel, they also noted that there were limited mechanisms for sharing information with First Nations communities beyond this group. These participants reported that this meant that First Nations peoples and Traditional Owners who preferred to engage through more "grass roots" community channels may be left out.

Action	Completion status
A22. Collaborate with Traditional Owners and Indigenous Ranger groups and relevant partners to undertake marine park management such as surveillance, monitoring and threat mitigation including marine debris removal, and implement actions identified in Sea Country plans where applicable	Partially completed or implemented

Evidence

This action was assessed as **partially completed**. The desktop review identified a number of timely collaborative activities to monitor and manage marine parks in the North-west Network. Limited and mixed feedback was received from Traditional Owners and First Nations partners in relation to the collaboration that had occurred to undertake management activity and Sea Country Plan activity.

Evidence from the desktop review:

The desktop review identified examples of collaboration with Traditional Owners and First Nations Ranger groups to conduct Sea Country monitoring. Although some of the projects listed involved state marine parks rather than Commonwealth parks managed directly by Parks Australia, evidence suggests that Parks Australia has supported these initiatives through broader Australian Marine Parks engagement and grant programs:

- Wunambal Gaambera Rangers collaborated with eight scientists from the WA Museum and Curtin University, and partnered with Parks Australia, to conduct biodiversity surveys in the Uunguu Wundaagu Indigenous Protected Area.[80] [81]
- Green Turtle genetics research was undertaken by Yawuru Rangers in collaboration with Parks Australia, ISWAG, Department of Biodiversity, Conservation and Attractions (DBCA) and other Kimberley Ranger groups to capture Green Sea Turtles and take genetic samples on Yawuru Nagulagun Roebuck Bay Marine Park. [82] [83]
- Back to Sea Country voyages were conducted on Mayala and Bardi Jawi Sea Country with Mayala Traditional Owners in 2021 to explore harder-to-access islands.[84] A second voyage was conducted in 2024 to trial a reef monitoring program developed in collaboration with UWA.[85] However, for reasons outside Parks Australia's control, this joint monitoring ceased in 2025.[86]
- Sea Country Discovery of the Dampier Marine Park undertaken by UWA with Traditional Owners from the Murujuga Aboriginal Corporation and representatives of the commercial and recreational fishing sector to deliver culturally sensitive maps and a short 360° immersive video, as referenced in A10.

The desktop review also identified an example of collaboration with Traditional Owners and First Nations Ranger groups to conduct marine park management more broadly – that is funding support for the '*Turtle and Dugong Initiative*'. The initiative was developed by ISWAG members in collaboration with Saltwater Country groups. The initiative integrates western and traditional research approaches to support turtle and dugong management and conservation, building on decades of foundational work by First Nations and non-Indigenous marine scientists and managers to ensure long-term sustainability.[87] [88]

Evidence from engagement:

Parks Australia staff noted a range of collaborative management activities that had occurred over the course of the management plan, including face-to-face meetings on Country and ongoing relationships with ISWAG, as referenced in A21.

First Nations partners and other relevant stakeholders, however, provided mixed views in relation to collaborative management activities. While positive feedback was identified in relation to the implementation of Sea Country Plans (e.g. due to endorsement and letters of support for these plans by Parks Australia), other participants felt that collaborative management had not gone far enough. Parks Australia staff also acknowledged some barriers to collaboration, including

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[80] *Foundational phase review of the North-west Network: Internal document*
[81] *Emerging Curators continue two-way knowledge exchange as part of the Kimberley Reef Connect Project: https://www.wunambalgaambera.org.au/emerging-curators-continue-two-way-knowledge-exchange-as-part-of-the-kimberley-reef-connect-project/*
[82] *North-west Internal Self-assessment: Internal document*
[83] *Projects on Country: https://www.yawuru.org.au/country/current-projects*
[84] *Mayala: Back-To-Country Voyage: https://www.facebook.com/watch/?v=581704216958959*
[85] *North-west Internal Self-assessment: Internal document*
[86] *Ibid.*
[87] *Promoting partnerships for Sea Country Research and Monitoring in Western Australia: A snapshot of Indigenous, science & management agency partners: https://www.nespmarine.edu.au/system/files/Lincoln_Hedge%20Promoting%20partnerships%20for%20Sea%20Country_FINAL%2001Nov19.pdf?utm_source=chatgpt.com*
[88] *ISWAG Forum 2020 Report: https://www.dambimangari.com.au/wp-content/uploads/2020/12/Dambi-ISWAG-2020-Report-1.pdf*

challenges identifying the most appropriate Traditional Owner groups to engage with, conflicting interests amongst First Nations communities and resourcing limitations.

Taken together, these findings suggest that, while effective and appropriate collaboration was undertaken in some instances, this was not done consistently or comprehensively with all relevant Traditional Owner groups and First Nations communities across the North-west Network.

Action	Completion status
A23. Identify opportunities and mechanisms to engage Traditional Owners and First Nations Rangers in the management of marine parks	**Partially completed or implemented**

Evidence

This action was assessed **partially completed**. While the desktop review identified a number of timely actions taken, feedback from First Nations partners was mixed.

Evidence from desktop review:

In addition to the activities outlined in A20 and A21, the desktop review identified evidence of the following:

- Consultation with First Nations representative bodies regarding a draft science strategy for AMPs. Additionally, an outline for a work program to develop a 'Sea Country Management Framework', along with associated guidelines and policies, was identified.[89]
- Parks Australia's participation and presentation at a two-day workshop led by the University of Technology Sydney (2023), which explored options to enhance First Nations engagement in Commonwealth fisheries. Supported by the Department of Agriculture, Fisheries and Forestry (DAFF), the Australian Fisheries Management Authority, and funded by the Fisheries Research and Development Corporation, the workshop focused on national engagement strategies and key principles to guide them.[90]
- The Australian Marine Science Association (AMSA) held a conference on Yugambeh Country on the Gold Coast from 2–7 July 2023. The conference focused on the theme of '*Science in Sea Country*'.[91] Parks Australia staff collaborated with Traditional Owners to present at the conference, highlighting the value of co-design and place-based management approaches with First Nations peoples. The conference provided a platform for building connections, sharing knowledge, fostering inspiration, and encouraging collaboration between First Nations and western scientists.
- Fortnightly meetings with First Nations grantees and Parks Australia to support Indigenous Protection Areas (IPA) and Ranger funding proposals, promote community employment, and

[89] *Coral Sea Marine Park Advisory Committee Meeting #7 Communique: https://view.officeapps.live.com/op/view.aspx?src=https%3A%2F%2Faustralianmarineparks.gov.au%2Fstatic%2Fae41da669c3c2665bb8167380f318471%2Famp-document-Communique-7.docx&wdOrigin=BROWSELINK*

[90] *Six month management report: Internal document*

[91] *AMSA Conference 2023 – Science in Sea Country: https://www.amsa.asn.au/amsa-home/amsa-annual-conferences/2023-gold-coast/*

monitor communication preferences for Traditional Owner groups (evidenced through internal documentation provided by Parks Australia).[92]

- A self-reported contribution to the development of a Healthy Country Plan, including marine trips to inform its content, which provided Traditional Owners with opportunities to be on Country and discuss aspirations for joint management.[93]
- Financial contribution to support increased hours (and thus full time equivalent pay) with the aim of increasing engagement with Gnulli Rangers in the Ningaloo Marine Park (Commonwealth waters) in 2019.[94]
- Parks supported Traditional Owner engagement on marine park management at Ningaloo in 2018-20.[95]
- Support was provided for Indigenous participation at Australian Marine Sciences Association (AMSA) conference 2020, 2021 and 2022.[96]
- While relevant for all networks, OMPGs provided funding to support opportunities and mechanisms to engage Traditional Owners in North-west marine park management.[97]
- While relevant for all networks, *'Indigenous Engagement Principles*' were developed in collaboration with First Nations representatives to support engagement of Traditional Owners in the management of North-west Marine Parks.[98]
- While relevant for all networks, Parks Australia sponsored the Australian Sea Country Conference conducted 24-26 September 2024 on Larrakia Country. The conference enabled connection and knowledge sharing between Traditional Owners, Parks Australia and DCCEEW about marine park management.[99]

Evidence from engagement:

As noted in A20 and A21, feedback from First Nations partners and other relevant stakeholders in relation to engagement in collaborative management activities was mixed.

Additionally, one non-Indigenous stakeholder, whose role involved working with and providing support for First Nations management of Country, noted that it was challenging for Parks Australia to ensure that Traditional Owners and Ranger groups were able to participate in management actions if they did not have funds to own and operate their own vessels.

[92] *North-west Internal Self-assessment: Internal document*
[93] *Ibid*.
[94] *Marine Protected Areas (MPA) West Contract DBCA 2018-2019: Internal document*
[95] *Foundation phase review of North-west network: Internal document*
[96] *Ibid.*
[97] *Our Marine Park Grants: https://australianmarineparks.gov.au/management/partnerships/our-marine-parks-grants/*
[98] *Indigenous engagement principles: https://australianmarineparks.gov.au/management/programs/indigenous-engagement-program/indigenous-engagement-principles/*
[99] *TEMPAC Meeting 11 paper: Internal document*

Action	Completion status
A24. Partnerships with Traditional Owners and First Nations groups to manage Sea Country in marine parks	Partially completed or implemented

Evidence

The action was assessed as **partially completed**. While some desktop evidence was identified to indicate partnerships being established with Traditional Owners and First Nations groups to manage Sea Country in a timely manner, feedback from stakeholders was mixed.

Evidence from desktop review:

The desktop review identified a number of examples of partnerships with Traditional Owners and First Nations peoples to support Sea Country management, as outlined in relation to A20 and A21.

Evidence from engagement:

As noted in A20 and A21, feedback from First Nations partners and other relevant stakeholders in relation to engagement in collaborative management activities was mixed.

Action	Completion status
A25. Implement cultural awareness training for Parks Australia staff in association with Traditional Owners	Partially completed or implemented

Evidence

This action was assessed as **partially completed**. While the desktop review identified some evidence of cultural awareness training taking place, feedback from First Nations partners suggested that this may not have been implemented effectively.

Evidence from the desktop review:

The review found limited evidence regarding the details of delivery of cultural awareness training, including evidence of the involvement of Traditional Owner groups and training participants. Evidence that was identified was self-reported by Parks Australia and included:

- A requirement that all Parks Australia staff complete cultural awareness training in accordance with annual requirements set by the Department of Climate Change, Energy, the Environment and Water (DCCEEW). [100]
- Parks Australia staff based in Hobart completed cultural awareness training on Country at Risdon Cove with the Tasmanian Aboriginal Corporation.[101]

[100] *Progress reports Years 1 & 2: Internal document*
[101] *Foundational Phase Review Report: Internal document*

- All Parks staff undertake a cultural induction with the relevant Tradional Owner groups prior to conducting on Country field trips.[102]

Evidence from engagement:

Parks Australia staff noted that all staff members received cultural awareness training upon commencement of their role, with additional specific cultural inductions conducted by local Traditional Owners for staff before engaging face-to-face on Country.

Two Traditional Owners were able to provide feedback in relation to this action. These participants were unaware of local Traditional Owners being involved in the delivery of cultural awareness training and thus did not feel that this had been effectively achieved.

Action	Completion status
A26. Establish protocols for researchers working with Parks Australia to guide engagement with Traditional Owners, like those in the Collaborative Science on Kimbereley Saltwater Country – A Guide for Researchers	**Partially completed or implemented**

Evidence

This action was assessed as **partially completed** with the desktop review identifying evidence supporting the establishment of a range of protocols which may guide engagement with Traditional Owners. However, it was unclear whether these protocols had specifically guided researchers working with Parks Australia staff or were more broadly applied to Parks Australia staff engaging with First Nations peoples or groups, such as Traditional Owners

Evidence from desktop review:

- Parks Australia collaborated with the Biodiversity and Conservation Division and the Heritage, Reef and Ocean Division at the Australian Government Department of Climate Change, Energy the Environment and Water (DCCEEW), as well as Terri Janke and Company to develop a principle-based Indigenous Cultural and Intellectual Property (ICIP) protocol, as well as toolkits, templates and training for staff.[103]
- A Land and Sea Country Mapping Tool was developed to support consultations with Sea Country Managers. This tool collates data layers, relating to Land and Sea management, Native Title, Cultural Heritage, Indigenous Ranger groups, IPAS, Land Councils and Aboriginal community-controlled organisations.[104]
- Parks Australia attended and presented at a Sydney-led workshop supported by the Department of Agriculture, Fisheries and Forestry and the Australian Fisheries Management Authority in November 2023. This workshop focused on options to advance Indigenous engagement in Commonwealth fisheries. Parks Australia presented their approach to partnering with First Nations peoples across the marine parks.[105]

[102] *North-west Internal Self-assessment: Internal document*

[103] TEMPAC Meeting 7 report (2021) – date ICIP protocols were developed are unknown. Internal document

[104] Ibid.

[105] TEMPAC Meeting 10 report (2023): Internal document

Evidence from engagement:

A First Nations partner highlighted the importance of established protocols to ensure researchers funded by Parks Australia engage appropriately and genuinely. They shared mixed experiences with researchers, noting that while some organisations were well-equipped for consultation and meaningful engagement, others treated engagement as a “tick box” exercise to meet grant requirements rather than fostering genuine collaboration. The partner emphasised that Parks Australia plays a key role in facilitating these engagements and suggested that more could be done to equip researchers and organisations to engage effectively with Traditional Owners and First Nations communities.

7. Findings: Marine science program

*This chapter presents assessments of the implementation of the **Marine Science Program** of the North-west Marine Parks Network Management Plan.*

7.1. Overall findings about the efficacy of program implementation

Grade	
Good with some concerns	The Marine Science Program was assessed as 'good with some concerns', with the overall outcomes of the management program rated as 'partially met'. Of the eleven planned actions, four were assessed as 'completed' or 'ongoing', and seven were assessed as 'partially completed'. While the evaluation identified strengths and achievements in relation to the establishment of ecological baselines and the use of new technology and partnerships over the course of the plan, a range of actions and outcomes required further activity to be fully achieved. Particular gaps related to establishment of social and economic baselines, enhancing knowledge brokering and the need to expand monitoring efforts

Strengths and achievements

The following strengths and achievements were identified in relation to the marine science management program:

- Support for use of new technology within the North-west Network – which was found to support marine science and management outcomes.
- Considerable activities undertaken to enhance understanding of ecological values, supported by substantial data providing ecological baselines.
- Considerable progress in fostering collaborations and partnerships with the science community, other government agencies and other park users, contributing to improved understanding of marine park management.

Barriers, challenges and limiting factors

Despite this, a number of limiting factors were identified, including:

- A lack of socio-economic data – whereby existing data was primarily ecologically focused, leaving gaps in understanding of the broader social and economic dimensions of the North-west's values and pressures.
- Concerns with knowledge brokering – the evaluation revealed a desire for greater transparency in relation to marine science activities, progress and outcomes. In particular, there was uncertainty identified amongst stakeholders as to whether marine science data was being effectively used to support evidence-based decision making in marine park management. This lack of awareness was particularly evident among stakeholders with less direct contact with Parks Australia but was also noted by some members of the North-west Marine Parks Advisory Committee (NWMPAC).

- A need to expand monitoring efforts – particularly in relation to invasive species, social and economic uses and their benefits, and the condition of important habitats and their vulnerability to climate change. Enhanced monitoring in these areas was seen as critical to addressing gaps in understanding and supporting more effective marine park management.

7.2. Outcome effectiveness

Outcome	Outcome effectiveness	Trend rating
O7. Increase understanding of marine park values, pressures and adequacy of responses	Partially met	Trend getting better

Evidence

The evaluation determined that this outcome was **partially met**. This assessment was based on the development of baseline data, identified through the desktop review. However, stakeholder feedback suggested only minimal increases in understanding, or uncertainty about the extent to which understanding had improved.

Evidence from desktop review:

The desktop review evidenced multiple efforts to increase understanding of marine park values and pressures, detailed below in the evidence for A27.

These efforts, however, were largely restricted to the establishment of baseline datasets. Without longitudinal data on any changes relating to marine park values over the course of the plan, a robust assessment of the adequacy of management responses was not possible.

Furthermore, the translation of these efforts into increased understanding of marine park values, pressures and the adequacy of responses amongst marine park users and interest groups has not been robustly surveyed.

Evidence from engagement:

Most stakeholders felt that understanding had not increased considerably over the course of the management plan. As discussed in relation to A29, there was calls amongst stakeholders for greater knowledge sharing and data transparency to support increased understanding of marine park values, pressures and management amongst the science community. Hence, stakeholders were unsure of the extent to which understanding of these topics had increased, and felt that understanding had not been effectively supported amongst the science community and marine park users.

While one example of a project to enhance understanding of cultural values was identified, a First Nations partner also emphasised there was a need for greater reciprocation, access and communication of science outcomes and data to Traditional Owners.

Outcome	Outcome effectiveness	Trend rating
O8. Improve understanding of the effectiveness of marine park management in protecting park values	Partially met	Trend getting better

Evidence

This outcome was assess as **partially met**. There was limited desktop evidence identified pertaining to this outcome, and most stakeholder reported minimal improvement in understanding of the effectiveness of marine park management in protecting park values.

Evidence from desktop review:

The desktop review identified an ongoing Recreational Boat Fishing Survey across Western Australia conducted since 2011, with the latest update in 2025. This survey collected catch and release data from recreational fishers.[106] However, from the desktop review, an increase in understanding of management effectiveness could not be clearly established.

Evidence from engagement:

Stakeholders felt there had been only a small improvement in understanding of management effectiveness.

Outcome	Outcome effectiveness	Trend rating
O9. Informed decision-making and improved evidence-based decisions	Partially met	Trend getting better

Evidence

This outcome was assessed as **partially met**. Stakeholder feedback was somewhat mixed, with around half of stakeholders reporting that marine science data had been effective in informing decision-making.

Evidence from engagement:

While around half of the stakeholders felt that there had been an improvement in evidence-based decision-making, limited in-depth feedback was provided for this outcome.

Positively, one stakeholder involved in marine park management noted an increase in the availability of information and data from research, which supported marine park management. However, a couple of NWMPAC members expressed scepticism about how data had been used by Parks Australia to inform decision-making. They described the process of applying research to

[106] *WA Recreational Boat Fishing Survey 2023/24 – Science update August 2025: https://www.dpird.wa.gov.au/siteassets/documents/fisheries/demersal/wa-recreational-boat-survey-fisheries-science-update-2025.pdf*

decisions as a "black box" and unclear, particularly given perceptions that limited marine science data was shared by Parks Australia following the completion of research.

7.3. Specific management plan actions

The tables below present the completion status and supporting evidence collected during the evaluation for each management plan action within the Marine Science Program.

Action	Completion status
A27. Establish ecological, social and economic baselines to support evidence-based decision-making and adaptive management	**Ongoing**

Evidence

Overall, this action was assessed as **ongoing**. Considerable documentary evidence of ecological baselines being established was identified – and while there was less evidence from both the desktop review and stakeholder engagement of the establishment of social and economic baselines, these were found to have been partially implemented, with indications that further activities are planned for the remainder of the management plan period. Stakeholder feedback identified some areas for future improvement.

Evidence from desktop review:

The desktop review identified considerable progress in the establishment of ecological baselines for eight of 13 marine parks in the North-west Network. These datasets were delivered in a timely manner, with more than half being delivered in the first four years of the Management Plan. More specifically, the following evidence was identified to demonstrate the establishment of ecological baseline data sets:

- A Reef Life Survey assessment of Coral Reef Biodiversity in the North-west Marine Parks Network.[107]
- Bathymetry mapping of Carnavon Canyons Marine Park.[108]
- Survey of fish and benthic assemblages in the Ningaloo Marine Park undertaken by the University of Western Australia (UWA) (2023).[109]
- The Kimberley Reef Connect (KRC) project undertaken by Curtin University, the Western Australian Museum, and the Wunambal Gaambera Aboriginal Corporation, mapping biodiversity, ecological health and Cultural Values of reefs in Kimberley Marine Park (2025) as referenced in A22.[110]
- An ongoing three-year collaboration with the Australian Institute of Marine Science (AIMS) to undertake the '*Building Resilience in Australia's Iconic Offshore Reefs*' project in support of the

[107] *RLS assessment of Coral Reef Biodiversity in the North-west Marine Parks Network: https://australianmarineparks.gov.au/static/1f01456a7dbc150fd939638f1901cf20/amp-document-rls-assessment-of-coral-reef-biodiversity-North-west-marine-parks-network.pdf*
[108] *Bathymetry mapping of Carnavon Canyons Marine Park: https://www.csiro.au/en/about/facilities-collections/MNF/Voyages-schedules/Voyages/2022/November/IN2022_V09*
[109] *UWA Synthesis report of fish and benthic assemblages within the Ningaloo Marine Park 2023: internally cited document.*
[110] *Discovering the biodiversity, ecological health, and Cultural Values of reefs in the Kimberley Marine Park. Sea Country Report from Kimberley Reef Connect project: Internally cited document.*

'*Ocean Discovery and Restoration Program*' in Ashmore Reef Marine Park and Mermaid Reef Marine Park (commenced in 2023).[111]

- An environmental assessment of Ashmore Reef Marine Park (2025).[112]
- A project that investigated sea snake species assemblages, genetic diversity and quantified movements between Australian Marine Parks (AMPs), adjacent State Marine Parks and unprotected habitats within the Kimberley, Dampier, Ningaloo and Roebuck Marine Parks (2022-2024). This was undertaken by University of Adelaide, Sharks Pacific, Curtin University and Murujuga Aboriginal Corporation.[113]
- Baseline mapping of fish and elasmobranch communities and their habitats within the Kimberley, Roebuck and Eighty Mile Beach Marine Parks, undertaken by Western Australia Department of Primary Industries and Regional Development (DPIRD) (2023).[114]

In addition, the 2020 '*Social and Economic benchmarks of the Australian Marine Parks'* illustrated the establishment of social and economic baselines.[115]

Evidence from engagement:

Most stakeholders felt there had been at least some progress towards this action, though very few felt that baselines had been fully established. More specifically, stakeholders felt that:

- While some ongoing tracking data had been developed, not all of it could be considered genuine 'baseline' datasets, given there was at times inconsistent monitoring or data collection (e.g. due to funding limitations and access restrictions for some marine parks, which had reduced the frequency or consistency of data collection). However, stakeholders also acknowledged the challenges involved in acquiring baseline data of this scale.
- More work was required to collect social and economic data, though it was also noted that a second iteration of the '*Social and Economic benchmarks of the Australian Marine Parks'* was underway and due for publication in 2026, which would enhance achievement of this action.
- There was a specific need to enhance the evidence base in relation to the impacts of extractive use in marine parks as well as long-term monitoring of marine park pressures.

Positively, a few stakeholders noted that marine science activities conducted over the course of the plan (including baseline data collection) had supported more evidence-based decision-making. On the other hand, some other stakeholders noted that data synthesis had been limited, reducing the potential for adaptive management. Other stakeholders were unaware of how baseline data had been applied in management decisions, suggesting communication about this could be improved.

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[111] *Ocean Discovery and Restoration Program: Building Resilience in Australia's Iconic Oceanic Reefs – Progress report 2: Internally cited document.*

[112] *Ashmore Reef Marine Park Environmental Assessment Final Report: https://australianmarineparks.gov.au/static/47d4f56d87cb0f88b274cf455a90f19c/amp-document-REPORT-Keesingetal_2021_AshmoreReefSurveyWeb.pdf*

[113] *UoA Role of Australian Marine Parks in protecting and connecting sea snake populations across northern Australia Report: Internal document.*

[114] *DPIRD Report on Fish and Elasmobranch Communities and Their Habitats Within the Kimberley, Roebuck and Eighty Mile Beach Marine Parks 2023: Internal document.*

[115] *Social and Economic Benchmarks of the Australian Marine Parks: https://api.research-repository.uwa.edu.au/ws/portalfiles/portal/363774544/Navarro_et_al_D6_M12_M13_M17_Social_and_Economic_benchmarks_of_the_AMPs_FINAL.pdf*

Parks Australia also cited a project exploring social values in Australian Marine Parks including the North-west Network, that is undergoing development at the time of reporting this evaluation.

Action	Completion status
A28. Develop an Australian Marine Parks science strategy to prioritise and encourage research and monitoring of park values, pressures and management effectiveness, and foster science communication and knowledge uptake	**Partially completed or implemented**

Evidence

This action was assessed as **partially completed**. While an AMP science strategy was not developed, the '*Parks Australia Science Strategy'* was published.

Due to the delivery of the '*Parks Australia Science Strategy'* in December 2025 (i.e. during the conduct of this evaluation), evidence could not be obtained to illustrate the extent to which activities had been undertaken in accordance with the strategy, and hence the extent to which the strategy had effectively prioritised and encouraged research and monitoring of park values, pressures and management effectiveness, and fostered science communication and knowledge uptake.

Evidence from desktop review:

The desktop review provided the following evidence of the development of the completion of the '*Parks Australia Science Strategy'* in place of the '*Australian Marine Parks Science Strategy'*:

- Cited internal documents pertaining to Parks Australia Marine Science Strategy project initiation (2024).[116]
- Publication of the '*Parks Australia Science Strategy*' (2025).[117]

This output was not found to meet the criterion of delivery in a timely manner, as its publication occurred in the seventh year of the management plan, which limited potential for the strategy to be implemented over the course of the plan.

Evidence from engagement:

Overall, consultation gave context as to why the AMP science strategy was not implemented as originally intended but also suggested limited satisfaction with this modified approach. Specifically, the following views were expressed:

- Consultation with Parks Australia staff highlighted challenges associated with the development of a unified science strategy that adequately covered all marine parks while reflecting the nuances of each network. This, along with resourcing constraints, was cited as the rationale for opting to develop the broader '*Parks Australia Science Strategy'* instead.
- Other stakeholders, however, were less satisfied with the adoption of a broader strategy that encompassed both marine and terrestrial parks, as they felt this approach did not adequately capture the specific issues, challenges and priorities of the North-west Network. As such,

[116] *Parks Australia Project Initiative Document: Internal document*

[117] *Parks Australia Science Strategy 2025: https://www.dcceew.gov.au/sites/default/files/documents/parks-australia-science-strategy.pdf*

stakeholders expressed concern about the potential for the strategy to guide scientific activities aligned with the values and pressures unique to this network.

Action	Completion status
A29. Encourage and facilitate knowledge brokering to support collaboration and partnerships with the science community, private enterprise, citizen science organisations and other Commonwealth, state and territory agencies	**Partially completed or implemented**

Evidence

This action was assessed as **partially completed**. While there was some evidence of knowledge brokering activities to support collaborations/ partnerships, these did not encompass the range of collaborative activities originally intended (i.e. collaborations/ partnerships with the science community, private enterprise, citizen science organisations and government agencies) and there was limited evidence of these activities occurring consistently across the life of the plan. Additionally, stakeholder views in relation to the effectiveness of knowledge brokering were mixed.

Evidence from desktop review:

The desktop review identified only the bi-annual meetings of the NWMPAC, which commenced in 2019, as evidence of ongoing collaborative knowledge brokering activities.[118]

As per A34 and A36, the desktop review also identified partnerships established with the Australian Hydrographic Office (AHO), the WA Coral Bleaching group (which also includes AIMS, Bureau of Meteorology [BOM], UWA, and other scientists) and the Western Australian Department of Biodiversity, Conservation and Attractions (DBCA) which may go some way to supporting knowledge brokering.

However, no partnerships with private enterprise or citizen science organisations were identified.

Evidence from engagement:

Further partnerships and collaborations were identified through the stakeholder engagement phase, including of Parks Australia's role on the Marine Coastal Hub Steering Committee (funded under the National Environmental Science Program [NESP]) and with DPIRD.

Most stakeholders felt that knowledge brokering activities had been only somewhat effective, with mixed views of these expressed:

- Some research sector stakeholders reported that grants issued by Parks Australia had encouraged knowledge brokering and collaboration between universities and within the marine science community.
- However, other stakeholders called for greater data sharing and transparency, particularly of data produced by projects funded under OMPG grants. In addition, a couple of other stakeholders noted that, although their agency had partnered with Parks Australia, they were

[118] *North-west Marine Parks Advisory Committee: https://australianmarineparks.gov.au/management/partnerships/advisory-committees/North-west-marine-parks-advisory-committee/#overview-section*

unsure of Parks Australia's management priorities, highlighting an opportunity for greater communication and information sharing from Parks Australia.

One fishing industry stakeholder also reported limited opportunities for the commercial sector to be involved. They felt the sector was overlooked, despite its potential to play a strong role in data collection and monitoring, given their "on-the-ground" presence.

Action	Completion status
A30. Establish an authorisation system for scientific research and monitoring by third parties and encourage data to be made publicly available through appropriate information portals such as the Australian Ocean Data Network (AODN)	Completed

Evidence

This action was assessed as **completed**. The evaluation found that an authorisation system for scientific research and monitoring by third parties was developed and operationalised in a timely manner. Data sharing arrangements were also established with the AODN which created public access. However, as noted above, a perception among some stakeholders that research and data were not readily communicated, available, or shared suggests that more could be done to ensure data is publicly accessible and clearly communicated.

Evidence from the desktop review:

- The Australian Marine Parks Online Permit Portal Application launched in 2018.[119] This included a condition to enable data to be publicly available in portals such as the AODN portal.
- Publication of North-west marine science projects on the AMP website.[120]
- Publication of data across all 13 marine parks made publicly available on the '*Seamap Australia*' website.[121]

Action	Completion status
A31. Collaborate with the science community (including through the National Marine Science Plan Committee and National Environmental Science Program) and other marine park users to assist in improving the understanding of marine park values, pressures and management effectiveness	Partially completed or implemented

Evidence

This action was assessed as **partially completed**. The evaluation found evidence of collaborations with the science community and some community groups (i.e. the National Marine Science Committee [NMSC] and NESP) through joint science initiatives and research collaborations.

[119] *Australia Marine park permits: https://onlineservices.environment.gov.au/parks/australian-marine-parks/permits*
[120] *Australian Marine Parks Scientific Publications: https://australianmarineparks.gov.au/science/scientific-publications/*
[121] *Seamap report on North-west Network: https://seamapaustralia.org/region-reports/north-west/*

However, stakeholders felt that further action was needed to support understanding of marine park values, pressures and management effectiveness, particularly among other park users.

Evidence from desktop review:

The desktop review provided the following evidence of strategic collaboration with the science community:

- Parks Australia membership to the NMSC.[122]
- Collaboration with the NESP.[123]
- Collaboration with the AODN and the Integrated Marine Observing System (IMOS).[124]

The desktop review also provided the following evidence of collaboration with the science community through marine science initiatives and research collaborations:

- Marine Science initiatives funded through OMPG in the North-west Network, including:[125]
  - An eco-narrative produced for Kimberley Marine Park.[126]
  - An eco-narrative produced for Gascoyne Marine Park.[127]
- Marine Science initiatives funded through OMPGs applicable across all Marine Parks/ Networks, including:
  - Delivery of an online tracking tool for the Reef Life Survey website and a coffee table book to showcase dive opportunities in AMPs (funded by OMPG2).[128]
  - Project with Macquarie University to identify where the Environmental Protection and Biodiversity Conservation (EPBC) Act listed species occur within AMPs (funded by OMPG2).[129]

Evidence from engagement:

Parks Australia staff reported additional collaborative activities with the Commonwealth Scientific and Industrial Research Organisation (CSIRO) and AIMS. However, they also noted that due to the remote, deep-sea nature of many parks in the North-west Network, it tended to be challenging for marine science programs to receive funding.

Both Parks Australia staff and external stakeholders reported that science collaborations supported or facilitated by Parks Australia through grants had made some progress in improving understanding of marine park values, such as by leading to the identification of new species. One

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[122] *National Marine Science Committee – About page: https://www.marinescience.net.au/aboutnmsc/*
[123] *Parks Australia science partnerships page – National Environmental Science Program: https://australianmarineparks.gov.au/science/science-marine-parks/national-environmental-science-program-nesp/*
[124] *Parks Australia website science partnerships page – Integrated Marine Observing System: https://australianmarineparks.gov.au/science/science-marine-parks/integrated-marine-observing-system-imos/*
[125] *Australian Marine Parks Grants: https://australianmarineparks.gov.au/management/partnerships/our-marine-parks-grants/*
[126] *Kimberley Marine Park eco-narrative: https://australianmarineparks.gov.au/static/2ea34f9e9eab525d42b187b163cd4801/amp-document-amp-guideline-tourism-and-general-use-island-access.pdf*
[127] *Gascoyne Marine Park eco-narrative: https://www.nespmarine.edu.au/document/eco-narrative-gascoyne-marine-park-North-west-marine-region.html*
[128] *Our Marine Park Grants Round Two Projects: https://australianmarineparks.gov.au/static/2b7aff986015d07009d5d04fd9b13d48/our-marine-park-grants-round-two-projects.pdf*
[129] *Ibid*

stakeholder also noted that marine science work under the management plan had contributed to development of a great understanding of pressures such as invasive species and illegal fishing.

However, most external stakeholders also expressed the view that further work was required to maximise the effectiveness of collaborations in supporting understanding of marine park pressures and values. Specifically, stakeholders highlighted a need for increased opportunities for scientific data and publications to be shared with the science community, other stakeholders (including the commercial and recreational fishing sectors) and general population, as well as provision of clearer evidence of data-driven marine park management activities and progress.

Action	Completion status
A32. Collaborate with the science community and other government agencies to increase the use of innovative and effective technology and systems including sensor technology	**Partially completed or implemented**

Evidence

This action was assessed as **partially completed**. While no documentary evidence of collaborations to increase the use of innovative and effective technology and systems was identified, stakeholders reported increased use of new technology and systems over the course of the plan.

Evidence from desktop review:

No evidence was identified of use of technology and systems.

Evidence from engagement:

Most stakeholders felt that there had been an increase in the use of technology over the course of the management plan, which they felt had led to positive marine science outcomes. More specifically, stakeholders provided the following examples:

- Use of EnviroDNA (eDNA)and long run stereo and videos to provide insight and baseline data into species behaviour.
- Development of Analysis by of bycatch data – which was reported to have supported fisheries to continue to operate in and around marine parks in the North-west Network.

The evaluation found that Parks Australia had supported the above initiatives through mechanisms such as funding or letters of support. In relation to funding, stakeholders acknowledged that Parks Australia faced budgetary constraints which could reduce the use or exploration of new technologies. However, a few stakeholders also noted that this limited funding reduced the long-term use of effective and innovative marine science technology (i.e. beyond the end of a grant round).

Action	Completion status
A33. Monitor social and economic uses and their benefits and impacts on marine parks in the Network	Partially completed or implemented

Evidence

The action was assessed as **partially completed**. Initial baseline social and economic monitoring has been conducted, with a second round of monitoring scheduled for completion and publication in 2026.

Evidence from desktop review:

The evaluation has found that monitoring efforts across the North-west Network had primarily focused on ecological aspects with limited timely or consistent monitoring of the social and economic uses of marine parks identified. Despite this, the desktop evidence identified the following:

- A social and economic benchmark survey of the AMPs, with final publication of the survey data in 2021. A stakeholder indicated that a repeat of the survey is planned for 2026 to evaluate changes in awareness over time.[130]
- Monitoring of tourism levels in Ningaloo, Mermaid Reef and Ashmore Reef Marine Parks, as indicated in a self-assessment provided by Parks Australia.[131] However, no primary evidence of this activity was identified.

Action	Completion status
A34. Monitor the condition of important habitats such as reef systems Ningaloo, Mermaid, Kimberley, Ashmore and Cartier Marine Parks, and their vulnerability to climate change	Completed

Evidence

Overall, this action was assessed as **completed**. Desktop evidence indicates timely and ongoing monitoring of important habitat conditions for Ningaloo, Mermaid, Kimberley, Ashmore and Cartier Marine Parks over the life of the plan.

[130] *Social and Economic Benchmarks of the Australian Marine Parks: https://api.research-repository.uwa.edu.au/ws/portalfiles/portal/363774544/Navarro_et_al_D6_M12_M13_M17_Social_and_Economic_benchmarks_of_the_AMPs_FINAL.pdf*

[131] *North-west Internal Self-assessment: Internal document*

Evidence from desktop review:

The following evidence relating to monitoring of the condition of important habitats was identified:

- Ongoing participation in the WA Bleaching taskforce, as referenced in A29 and A36. The group have met monthly through October to April each year since 2015 to discuss coral reef health in WA.[132]
- 2020 report on the Reef Life Survey assessment of the biodiversity of coral reefs in the North-west Network, including Ningaloo, Mermaid, Kimberley, Ashmore and Cartier Marine Parks.[133]
- A 2021 report from canyon mapping and biodiversity in Gascoyne Marine Park. An eco-narrative was also produced.[134] [135]
- A 2021 report of an environmental assessment of Ashmore Reef Marine Park.[136]
- A 2022 CSIRO post on bathymetry mapping of Gascoyne and Carnavon Canyons Marine Park.[137]
- Evidence of an AIMS(Ocean Discovery and Restoration (ODR) program in internal Parks Australia documentation. This project monitored Mermaid and Ashmore coral reefs over 2023-2025 (with findings to be published after the conclusion of this evaluation).[138]
- Curtin University 'Kimberly Reef Connect' project that monitored coral reefs in the Kimberley Marine Park in 2023.[139]

In addition, Parks Australia staff reported that additional coral reef monitoring had been conducted by the Mayala Inninalang Aboriginal Corporation (MIAC) and UWA since 2025, with the report for this work to be released after the conclusion of this evaluation.

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[132] *Worst bleaching event on record for WA coral reefs following long lasting and widespread marine heatwave: https://www.aims.gov.au/research-topics/environmental-issues/coral-bleaching/stay-date-bleaching-events*

[133] *Assessment of Coral Reef Biodiversity in the North-west Marine Parks Network: https://australianmarineparks.gov.au/static/1f01456a7dbc150fd939638f1901cf20/amp-document-rls-assessment-of-coral-reef-biodiversity-North-west-marine-parks-network.pdf*

[134] *Gascoyne Post-Survey Report: https://www.nespmarine.edu.au/system/files/Post_et_al_D8_M2_Gascoyne%20Post%20Survey%20Report_rvsd%20Aug%2021.pdf*

[135] *Eco-Narrative – Gascoyne Marine Park: https://www.nespmarine.edu.au/document/eco-narrative-gascoyne-marine-park-North-west-marine-region.html*

[136] *CSIRO Report – Ashmore Reef Marine Park Environment Assessment: https://australianmarineparks.gov.au/static/47d4f56d87cb0f88b274cf455a90f19c/amp-document-REPORT-Keesingetal_2021_AshmoreReefSurveyWeb.pdf*

[137] *CSIRO Voyage Catalogue post – Valuing Australia's Gascoyne Marine Park: https://www.csiro.au/en/about/facilities-collections/MNF/Voyages-schedules/Voyages/2022/November/IN2022_V09*

[138] *North-west Internal Self-assessment: Internal document*

[139] *Kimberley Reef Connect project: https://www.curtin.edu.au/research/news/kimberley-reef-connect-project-to-make-a-splash?type=media*

Action	Completion status
A35. Monitor the impact of invasive species on marine park values and the effectiveness of management. For example, tropical fire ant impacts on seabirds and turtles at Ashmore Reef Marine Park, and the effectiveness of management such as baiting	**Completed**

Evidence

Overall, this action was assessed as **completed**, with the desktop review identifying evidence of invasive species monitoring. Most stakeholders were unaware of monitoring activity or unsure of their effectiveness.

Evidence from desktop review:

The desktop review identified two examples of invasive species monitoring:

- An ongoing project undertaken by CSIRO and partners monitoring ecosystems and invasive species on Ashmore Reef, guided by the Ashmore Reef Ecosystem Restoration Plan. This project aims to mitigate threats from introduced species, reverse the decline in ecosystem health on Ashmore, and help to protect and restore native biodiversity on Ashmore's terrestrial ecosystems through a phased approach to managing non-native species (including suppression and eradication efforts) (ongoing since 2024).[140]
- The long-term monitoring of invasive species on Ashmore Reef with a particular focus on RNA interference (RNAi) development, guided by the Ashmore Reef Marine Park Terrestrial Ecosystem Characterisation and Restoration Plan (2023)[141]. This involves the monitoring, management of species such as tropical fire ants, mice, Buffel grass and other invasive weeds, and their impact on tropical birds.[142]

While these have been consistently delivered since 2023, the commencement of these activities in the later years of the management plan suggest that they were not implemented in a timely manner.

Evidence from engagement:

Most stakeholders, including NWMPAC members, were not aware of monitoring of invasive species, or were otherwise unsure whether activity had been effective.

Reports of the effectiveness of invasive species management were mixed:

- Parks Australia staff reported that biosecurity including invasive species was handled by the Department of Agriculture, Fisheries and Forestry (DAFF), but noted that they generally did not find any invasive species during regular checks of the marine parks.
- One stakeholder involved in marine park management reported that they had identified two invasive species in their work and expressed concern about effectiveness of activities to monitor pests entering marine park waters on foreign vessels.

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[140] *CSIRO Report – Restoring Island Ecosystems at Ashmore Reef Marine Park Milestone Report 3 on March/April 2025 Voyage: Internal document.*
[141] *CSIRO Report – Population genetic assessment of tropical fire ant, Solenopsis geminata, with a particular focus on RNAi development for deployment on Ashmore Reef Report 2025: Internal document.*
[142] *CSIRO Report – Reef relief: how science is restoring Ashmore Reef Marine Park: https://www.csiro.au/en/news/all/articles/2025/december/ashmore-reef*

Action	Completion status
A36. Collaborate with other Commonwealth, state and territory government agencies, marine park users and the science sector to support long-term monitoring (e.g. monitoring of coral reefs, protected species and the effects of fishing on marine parks)	**Partially completed or implemented**

Evidence

This action was assessed as **partially completed.** The desktop review identified evidence of collaboration that had occurred over the duration of the plan. However, most relevant stakeholders felt that limited collaborative long-term monitoring programs had been supported or sustained.

Evidence from desktop review:

- Self-reported collaboration with the AHO which was reported to lead to greatly improved seafloor and navigation information for the Kimberley and Dampier marine parks.[143]
- 2022 CSIRO survey of sea cucumbers to assess the impacts of illegal foreign fishing at Mermaid and Ashmore Reef Marine Park.[144]
- Parks Australia ongoing membership in the WA Bleaching taskforce (which also includes AIMS, BOM, UWA, WA DBCA scientists), which was established in 2015 and provides predictions on the likelihood of coral bleaching occurring in WA and informs monitoring requirements.[145] [146]
- Self-reported collaboration with DBCA for provision of annual tourism data for Ningaloo and Mermaid Reef Marine Parks.[147]

Evidence of engagement:

Stakeholder feedback in relation to this action was limited and mixed. While Parks Australia staff reported close collaboration with Traditional Owners and First Nations Ranger groups to embed Traditional Knowledge in monitoring programs, a couple of stakeholders (including a stakeholder involved with a Ranger group) reported that their organisations had not been involved in collaborative monitoring activities. These stakeholders expressed a desire for greater information sharing about collaborative monitoring and opportunities to be involved. Similarly, as previously mentioned, a stakeholder from the fishing industry highlighted a lack of engagement with fishers as a missed opportunity, given their regular presence near or around marine parks, which could support monitoring and data collection activities.

[143] *North-west Internal Self-assessment: Internal document*
[144] *CSIRO Data Access Portal – Holothurian and Giant Clam surveys North West Australian Marine Parks - Ashmore and Mermaid Reefs, Parks Australia and CSIRO 2022: https://data.csiro.au/collection/csiro:62952*
[145] *2024/25 Season Newsletter from WA Coral Bleaching Group: https://createsend.com/t/t-F6C4804E6BCEC10A2540EF23F30FEDED?fbclid=IwY2xjawRqm2BleHRuA2FlbQIxMABicmlkETFRNkNkSWUybG9GMUhqeTh3c3J0YwZhcHBfaWQQMjIyMDM5MTc4ODIwMDg5MgABHrNZjYwxKiA-fCMVP5PHZ73zQZ8jeV9jxFJTEt9i3gXR9cBCYgFi5oXtjLAR_aem_BHbeqd_5suCbpevVe6lVKQ*
[146] *Stay up-to-date with bleaching events: https://www.aims.gov.au/research-topics/environmental-issues/coral-bleaching/stay-date-bleaching-events*
[147] *North-west Internal Self-assessment: Internal document*

Action	Completion status
A37. Investigate opportunities to extend citizen science programs	**Partially completed or implemented**

Evidence

This action was assessed as **partially completed**, with only a few examples of documentary evidence identified. However, an internal self-assessment conducted by Parks Australia highlighted that opportunities to extend citizen science in the North-west Network were limited by the remoteness of many Marine Parks. This suggests that prioritising citizen science in this region was appropriately considered less of a focus throughout the plan.

Evidence from desktop review:

The few active citizen science activities noted through the review included:[148]

- Kimberley birdwatching, through a maintained a relationship Kimberley birdwatching group.
- Volunteers from Australasian Seabird Group and Birdlife Australia undertaking continuous seabird and marine mammal observations on selected voyages on the RV Investigator.

[148] *North-west Internal Self-assessment: Internal document*

8. Findings: Assessments and Authorisations Program

*This chapter presents assessments of the implementation of the **Assessments and Authorisations Program** of the North-west Marine Parks Network Management Plan.*

8.1. Overall findings about the efficacy of program implementation

Grade	
Good	Overall, the grade for the actions in the Assessments and Authorisations Program was assessed as 'good'. The outcome of the management program was assessed to be 'fully met'. Five out of seven of the planned actions were assessed to be 'completed' or 'ongoing' and with one found to be 'partially completed or implemented'. While one action was assessed as 'not commenced' (A40 - *Develop an effective and efficient process to assess new technologies and gear types to allow for the use of new equipment during the life of this plan if appropriate*), this was not considered a significant gap. Evidence indicated that new technologies and gear types were adopted where appropriate, suggesting the action may not have been required during the plan's implementation. As a result, its non-completion did not impede the overall aims of the management program.

Strengths and achievements

The evaluation identified a range of strengths and achievements in relation to the Assessments and Authorisations Management Program, including the:

- **Development of a range of policies, processes and procedures to be followed by the Director and Parks Australia** – to support the implementation of the planned actions and achievement of the outcome (as discussed in A38 and A41).
- **Introduction and use of the online portal for submitting applications** – which was felt to improve the ease of the application process for park users over the course of the plan and assist in providing timely assessments.

Barriers, challenges and limiting factors

The presence of offshore gas developments near to the North-west Network was found to be a unique factor in comparison to other Networks. While Parks Australia was generally felt to be appropriately flexible in their approach to managing values for authorisations, a couple of stakeholders noted that greater consideration could be afforded to this unique context for the North-west Network.

8.2. Outcome effectiveness

Outcome	Outcome effectiveness	Trend rating
O10. Assessments and authorisations ensure ongoing protection of marine park values through the management of activities in marine parks	Fully met	Trend getting better

Evidence

This outcome was assessed as **fully met**, with a positive trend identified over the course of the plan to date.

Evidence from engagement:

While there was limited feedback from external stakeholders in relation to the overall effectiveness of assessments and authorisations in protecting marine park values, most stakeholders for whom it was relevant felt positively.

Similarly, Parks Australia staff indicated that they felt that assessments and authorisations had been effective in supporting the protection of marine park values, specifically citing the use of tailored approaches to individual applications where required to ensure any adverse impacts were mitigated so far as possible. One stakeholder also noted the effectiveness of Parks Australia's assessment and authorisation processes, specifically that Parks Australia weighed the evidence and would not approve projects or activities in sanctuary zones if they conflicted with the key priorities of those zones.

8.3. Specific management plan actions

The tables below present the completion status and supporting evidence collected during the evaluation for each management plan action within the Assessments and Authorisations Program.

Action	Completion status
A38. Develop and apply best-practice approaches to regulation and decision-making in the authorisation of activities within marine parks. This includes developing policy to ensure assessment and authorisation requirements are clearly articulated and that decision making is robust, consistently applied, and transparent to all marine park users	Completed

Evidence

Overall, this action was assessed as **completed**. Considerable documentary evidence of the timely development and application of best practice approaches was identified, and while some stakeholders felt that the transparency of decision-making could be improved, moderate to positive ratings were given in relation to this action overall.

Evidence from desktop review:

The desktop review identified a number of activities undertaken over the course of the management plan to achieve this action. Firstly, the desktop review identified the following evidence of best practice approaches being developed for regulation and decision-making:

- Compilation of the '*Australian Marine Parks Assessment and Authorisations Policy'* (2021), which outlined the approach to authorisation and assessment of allowable activities among all marine parks in accordance with the management plan.[149]
- An assertion within the '*Guiding Actions'* within this policy that highlighted how decision making would align with best practice approaches.

Additional documentary evidence was identified to suggest that authorisation decisions were robust, consistently applied and transparent, specifically:

- The robust nature of authorisation decisions was evidenced by the following documents which outlined clear decision-making criteria and processes:
  - An internal checklist outlining the decision-making criteria for authorisation of activities within marine parks.[150]
  - A peer review permit checklist which outlined the steps taken in the peer review process for authorisations.[151]
  - A data quality check register which documented the data quality checks undertaken on application and authorisation data to ensure their accuracy.[152] This also included information about the staff responsible for conducting these checks from 2020-2022.
- Consistency in the application of decision-making criteria was evidenced by:
  - Parks Australia's '*Assessments and Authorisations – Standard Operating Procedure*', which documented the assessment process and how to move through each step when doing the assessment process as an administrative officer.[153]
  - A flowchart which demonstrated the assessment process for internal use by Parks Australia staff.[154]
  - A guide to assessing commercial tourism operations for internal use by Parks Australia staff.[155]
- Transparency in authorisation decisions as evidenced by:
  - Development of the 'Australian Marine Parks Authorisation Consultation Guide'.[156]
  - The standard operating procedures for Australian Marine Parks (AMPs) assessments and authorisations.[157]

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[149] *Australian Marine Parks Assessment and Authorisations Policy: https://australianmarineparks.gov.au/static/6f5d83193c7046f4d03dff87df2dcefd/amp-document-dnp-policy-authorisations-and-assessments.pdf*
[150] *24 - 0.1 - Checklist: Internal document*
[151] *25 - 0.5 - Peer Review Permit review checklist: Internal document*
[152] *19 - 0.4 MP Assessments and Authorisations - CRM Procedure 02 - Data Quality Checks: Internal document*
[153] *Assessments and Authorisations - Standard Operating Procedure: Internal document*
[154] *Assessment process - flowchart: Internal document*
[155] *Guide to assessing commercial tourism operations: Internal document*
[156] *Australian Marine Parks Authorisation Consultation Guideline: Internal document*
[157] *Assessments and Authorisations - Standard Operating Procedure: Internal document*

- The public record of permits and activity licences issued by the Director of National Parks (the Director) since 2018.[158]
- The publicly available outline of the Authorisation and Assessments program.[159]

The delivery of activities was found to start within the first few years of the management program, suggesting the timely completion of this activity.

Evidence from engagement:

Stakeholders with experience applying for and obtaining authorisations were broadly positive about assessments and authorisations processes. Parks Australia staff also provided positive feedback, noting that they employed a risk-based process that was tailored to the circumstances of individual applicants/ marine parks and had the flexibility to be updated in collaboration with other agencies as required.

However, a few stakeholders expressed a need for greater flexibility in authorisation requirements, particularly given the unique characteristics of the North-west Network. As an example, one recreational fisher stakeholder reported that the application process for re-installing a Fish Aggregating Device (FAD) after it had been swept away by a storm was overly complex. They felt that since authorisation to install the FAD had already been granted, re-installation should not require a lengthy application process. Parks Australia staff noted that this experience was atypical, and circumstances such as these would usually be resolved via conversation, not requiring the completion of a new authorisation application.

Another stakeholder felt that transparency was limited in relation to authorisations that were refused, suggesting an opportunity for improved communication around decision-making processes.

Action	Completion status
A39. Collaborate with industry to investigate innovative technologies and systems (including vessel monitoring systems) that can assist businesses and individuals to comply with regulatory requirements	Partially completed or implemented

Evidence

Overall, this action was assessed as **partially completed**. Considerable documentary evidence of the investigation and implementation of innovative technologies was identified, and some evidence of collaboration with industry was identified. However, stakeholders gave mixed ratings in relation to this action. Where feedback was negative, stakeholders reported negative impacts to overall collaboration and trust.

Evidence from desktop review:

The desktop review identified the investigation and implementation of the mandatory Vessel Monitoring System (VMS) as the key innovative compliance technologies introduced over the

[158] *Authorisations: https://australianmarineparks.gov.au/access-use/authorisations/*
[159] *Authorisations & assessments program: https://australianmarineparks.gov.au/management/programs/authorisations-assessments-program/*

course of the plan, supported by collaboration with industry (such as fisheries management agencies). More specifically, the desktop review found that:

- The Electronic and VMS Assistance Program was first introduced, which provided $5.5 million in grant funding through relevant states and territory fisheries management agencies to support initiatives to increase the uptake of electronic and vessel monitoring systems by commercial fishers.[160]
- VMS installation became mandatory in 2024 for all commercial vessels operating in or transiting through Australian Marine Parks (AMPs).[161] This includes an automatic alert service that will alert non-compliant vessels that enter an AMP (i.e. if a vessel enters an AMP with primary gear that is non-compliant in the AMP).[162]

Evidence from engagement:

Parks Australia staff reported that a range of technologies had been implemented over the course of the plan to assist with compliance, including VMS monitoring systems, sound traps and Bluebottle vessels.

Of the few external stakeholders who provided feedback in relation to this action, sentiment was mixed dependent on the level of engagement stakeholders had experienced. More specifically, when the VMS was introduced, some stakeholders reported that collaboration with industry had been inconsistent (i.e. not all groups/ stakeholders had been consulted or involved in trials) and that there had been limited supporting communication. While Parks Australia staff noted that Parks Australia was only responsible for the policy requiring the use of VMS, and that implementation was the responsibility of state/ territory fisheries authorities, the evaluation found that this delineation was not well understood by stakeholders. As such, stakeholders' concerns in relation the introduction of the VMS were found to negatively impact perceptions of this action, as well as overall trust and buy-in to the management plan.

Action	Completion status
A40. Develop an effective and efficient process to assess new technologies and gear types to allow for the use of new equipment during the life of this plan if appropriate	**Not commenced**

Evidence

This action was assessed as **not commenced**. Based on the self-assessment of the North-west Network Management Plan, Parks Australia deemed this action to not be relevant or required for

[160] *Electronic & vessel monitoring systems assistance program: https://australianmarineparks.gov.au/about/fisheries-assistance/electronic-vessel-monitoring-systems-assistance-program/*
[161] *Mandatory Vessel Monitoring Systems (VMS) for commercial fishers in Australian Marine Parks: https://australianmarineparks.gov.au/access-use/commercial-approvals/commercial-fishing/mandatory-vessel-monitoring-systems-vms-commercial-fishers-australian-marine-parks/*
[162] *Australian Marine Parks Compliance Report, Q1 2023: https://australianmarineparks.gov.au/static/e3c8ac92cec8e2c57dec4ea1cd44c048/amp-compliance-qtr-report-1-julsep-2023.pdf*

the management plan.[163] The assessment stated that this was because there were existing effective processes to assess the impacts and suitability of new technologies and gear types.

Parks Australia staff clarified that the assessment of new fishing gear types in particular was not relevant for the management plans, as these would need to be assessed by other Commonwealth or state/ territory regulators, including Fishery Departments, before being assessed by Parks Australia (and no such incidents had arisen over the course of the plan).

Action	Completion status
A41. Develop a guarantee of service for the regulated community that includes a commitment to work with key marine park users and interest groups whose interests are likely to be affected by regulatory decisions	**Completed**

Evidence

Overall, this action was assessed as **completed,** with documentary evidence of a timely guarantee of service identified. However, there were mixed views amongst stakeholders in relation to the adequacy of consultation regarding regulatory decisions.

Evidence from desktop review:

The desktop review found that a guarantee of service had been developed, as referenced in:

- Sections 5.1 and 7.5 of the *'Australian Marine Parks Assessment and Authorisations Policy'* (2021) – which included a commitment to work with marine park users in relation to new class approvals.[164]
- '*The Director of National Parks Corporate Plan'* 2024-2025. [165]
- The Australian Marine Parks Indigenous Engagement Program, which outlines how Parks Australia will support Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples to undertake marine park management, such as monitoring and threat mitigation activities and surveillance.[166]

The *'Australian Marine Parks Assessment and Authorisations Policy'* was delivered within the first four years of the management program, suggesting the timely completion of this activity.

Evidence from engagement:

Parks Australia staff reported engaging with park users and other government agencies in relation to assessments and authorisations. This included working with other regulators to align authorisation and assessment processes where possible, as well as working with applicants to reduce regulatory burden where appropriate.

However, mixed feedback was received from other stakeholders in relation to the effectiveness of consultation by Parks Australia regarding regulatory decisions. While there were moderate

[163] *North-west Internal Self-assessment: Internal document*
[164] *Australian Marine Parks Assessment and Authorisations Policy https://australianmarineparks.gov.au/static/6f5d83193c7046f4d03dff87df2dcefd/amp-document-dnp-policy-authorisations-and-assessments.pdf*
[165] *Director of National Parks Corporate Plan 2024-2025 https://www.dcceew.gov.au/sites/default/files/documents/dnp-corporate-plan-2024-25.pdf*
[166] *Australian Marine Parks Indigenous Engagement Program: https://australianmarineparks.gov.au/management/programs/indigenous-engagement-program/*

levels of satisfaction with effectiveness of consultation amongst some stakeholders (particularly during the first half of the management plan), some reported more limited consultation occurring since this point and as such felt that ongoing relationships and opportunity to engage declined in effectiveness.

Action	Completion status
A42. Develop a customer focused online authorisation system for marine park users that includes publishing authorisations issued by Parks Australia on its website	Completed

Evidence

Overall, this action was assessed as completed. The desktop review identified documentary evidence of an online portal for permit and licence applications for marine park users as well as the online publication of authorisations granted since 2018.[167] [168]

Actions	Completion status
A43. Issue authorisations—a permit, class approval, activity licence or lease—for activities in the marine park assessed as acceptable either by the Director or another government or industry policy, plan or program accepted by the Director	Ongoing

Evidence

Overall, this action was assessed as **ongoing** as there was clear documentary evidence of authorisations being consistently assessed and issued across the life of the plan, and stakeholders mostly provided positive feedback about this process.

Evidence from desktop review:

The desktop review identified evidence of a number of authorisations being issued by the Director for the North-west Network since 2018.[169] Documentary evidence of the policies and processes in place to ensure appropriate and timely assessments was also identified, including via:

- The '*Assessments and Authorisations – Standard Operating Procedure*' document, which outlined the assessment process for licences and permits.[170]
- A flowchart which outlined the process of assessment of approvals, permits or licenses.[171]

[167] *Australian Marine Parks - Permit and license applications, online portal: https://onlineservices.environment.gov.au/parks/australian-marine-parks*
[168] *Authorisations: https://australianmarineparks.gov.au/access-use/authorisations/*
[169] *Ibid*
[170] *17 - 0.2 MP Assessments and Authorisations - Standard Operating Procedure: Internal document*
[171] *21 - Authorisations Manual - flowchart for assessment of approval, permit or licence: Internal document*

- The '*Australian Marine Parks Assessment and Authorisations Policy*'.[172] In particular, this document highlighted how the Director will endeavour to conclude assessments and make decisions within 40 business days of receiving an application.
- An internal guidance document in relation to petroleum activities in AMPs, which outlines the process for consulting with the Director on authorisations for the energy sector.[173]

Evidence from engagement:

Of the stakeholders who were able to speak to this action, most provided positive feedback about their experiences with the authorisations process. Specifically, most felt that authorisations were generally issued in a timely manner and that they were not aware of any issues/ concerns with the authorisations process.

However, as previously mentioned (see stakeholder feedback relating to A38), a couple of stakeholders noted that given the unique nature of the marine parks in the North-west Network, there was an increased need for flexibility and tailored approaches.

Action	Completion status
A44. Work with other Commonwealth, state and territory government agencies to improve experiences and consistency of approaches for people seeking authorisations	Ongoing

Evidence

Overall, this action was assessed as being **ongoing,** with clear documentary evidence of activities in support of the experience and consistency of approaches for those seeking authorisations. There was, however, appetite for future improvement amongst some stakeholders.

Evidence from desktop review:

The desktop review identified several collaborative activities with Commonwealth and state/ territory government agencies to support the experience and consistency of approaches to authorisations, including:

- A joint public statement with the National Offshore Petroleum Safety and Environmental Management Authority (NOPSEMA) about the legislative regime for petroleum activities in and around all marine parks (including the North-west Network).[174] This document was intended to assist petrol titleholders nationally to understand their regulation and authorisation obligations.
- An internal email chain outlining communication with:[175]

[172] *Australian Marine Parks Assessment and Authorisations Policy: https://australianmarineparks.gov.au/static/6f5d83193c7046f4d03dff87df2dcefd/amp-document-dnp-policy-authorisations-and-assessments.pdf*

[173] *03 - Guidance note - Petroleum Activities and Australian Marine Parks: Internal document. Refer to p. 8 "Consulting with the Director of National Parks"*

[174] *NOPSEMA and the Director of National Parks – Petroleum activities and Australian Marine Parks A guidance note to support environmental protection and effective consultation: https://www.nopsema.gov.au/sites/default/files/documents/N-04750-GN1785%20-%20Petroleum%20activities%20and%20Australian%20marine%20parks%20(A620236).pdf*

[175] *Internal email chain provided to ORIMA Research.*

- Regulation of Space Activities Working Group members, as well as the Australian Space Agency, about space launches, activity and potential impact to marine parks.
- The Australian Defence Force (ADF) in relation to streamlining a permit process for the HydroScheme 2026 surveys across Australian Marine Parks.
- The Bureau of Meteorology (BOM) in relation to a permit process for the Ship-of-Opportunity Programme (SOOP), involving ongoing opportunistic research from vessels that are regularly travelling through specific zones of interest.
- Western Australian Department of Biodiversity, Conservation and Attractions (DBCA) and their authorisations team regarding data sharing.
- Reach SubSea to discuss a permit to ensure activities that this company engage in will comply with the relevant regulations.

Evidence from engagement:

Stakeholders reported mixed feedback in relation to the consistency of experiences seeking authorisations across agencies. Some stakeholders reported instances where park users were required to obtain multiple permits from different agencies for the same activity. This duplication created confusion and added administrative burden, leading to less positive experiences with the authorisation process. These stakeholders felt that further improving the inter-agency coordination and streamlining processes could help to enhance user experiences into the future.

9. Findings: Parks Protection and Management Program

*This chapter presents assessments of the implementation of the **Parks Protection and Management Program** of the North-west Marine Parks Network Management Plan.*

9.1. Overall findings about the efficacy of program implementation

Grade	
Good with some concerns	The Parks Protection and Management Program was assessed as 'good with some concerns', with the overall outcome of the management program rated as 'partially met'. Of the nine planned actions, seven were assessed as 'completed' or 'ongoing', while the remaining two were found to be 'partially completed'. For the actions that were only partially completed, evidence suggests considerable progress had been made to achieving these. The development and adherence to tangible processes and strategies that support the protection and management of marine parks was strong. However, the lack of empirical data on the *effect* of management on park values over the course of the plan limited an assessment of outcome effectiveness.

Strengths and achievements

The evaluation highlighted the following key strengths of this program:

- **The development of and adherence to tangible processes and strategies** that has supported the protection and management of marine parks. This was evidenced by the implementation of initiatives such as the critical incident and mooring strategies, as detailed in A46 and A47.
- **Efforts to meet Australia's obligations under international agreements and treaties** – particularly the Ningaloo Coast World Heritage area as described in A49.

Barriers, challenges and limiting factors

- **Limitations of human and financial capacity** – stakeholders on the North-west Marine Parks Advisory Committee (NWMPAC) reported that, as with all program areas, the Parks Protection and Management Program was impacted by resource constraints. One stakeholder from the NWMPAC felt that the management plan appeared to be heavily focused on Parks Australia's actions and suggested that greater flexibility was needed to recognise instances where it would be more appropriate for other agencies to take the lead.
- **Limited awareness of parks protection and management activities** – stakeholders generally reported limited knowledge and awareness of the activities delivered under this program. This lack of awareness may have limited their ability to effectively leverage or support the initiatives and reduced their capacity to provide informed feedback on the program's actions. Additionally, this issue may indicate a broader communication gap regarding the program and its implementation.

9.2. Outcome effectiveness

Outcome	Outcome effectiveness	Trend rating
O11. Impact of pressures on marine park values are minimised as far as reasonably practicable	Partially met	Trend getting better

Evidence

This action was assessed as **partially met**. Whilst actions to support park protection were found to have been undertaken (as evidenced in the below actions), longitudinal, robust data to measure the impact of pressures on marine park values was not identified.

Evidence from desktop review:

In addition to the activities outlined against the actions below, limited documentary evidence was identified to evaluate this outcome. However, internal documentation from Parks Australia identified that some progress had been made, including:

- Supporting a reduction in marine debris in Australian Marine Parks (AMPs), as outlined in A48.
- Monitoring of sensitive habitats, as outlined in O7.
- Providing guidelines for visitors to minimise introduction of pests, pollution and impacts to wildlife.[176]
- Providing guidance on moorings and anchoring in AMPs.[177]
- A strategy to respond to incidents and emergencies in marine parks, as outlined in A46.
- Monitoring of marine park values, as outlined in O7.
- Regulation of marine park activities via the assessments and authorisation program, as outlined in Chapter 8.

However, longitudinal, robust data to measure the impact of pressures on marine park values was not identified.

Evidence from engagement:

Of the few stakeholders who were able to provide feedback in relation to this outcome, many felt that limited action had been taken to minimise the impacts of pressures. However, stakeholders also acknowledged that this action was challenging to measure and achieve (particularly when considering large-scale pressures such as climate change).

[176] *Foundation phase Implementation Plan review report – North-west network (2021): Internal document*
[177] *Foundation phase Implementation Plan review report – North-west network (2021): Internal document*

9.3. Specific management plan actions

The tables below present the completion status and supporting evidence collected during the evaluation for each management plan action within the Parks Protection and Management Program.

Action	Completion status
A45. Apply a risk-based assessment process to prioritise park protection and management actions	**Partially completed or implemented**

Evidence

Overall, this action was assessed as **partially completed**. While the risk-based assessment process was developed in a timely manner, limited evidence of the application of this process was identified through the desktop review.

Evidence from desktop review:

- A Network-wide Risk Management Matrix which was included in the 'Australian Marine Parks Assessment and Authorisation Policy' (2021).[178]
- The inclusion of an objective in the 'Network-wide National Environmental Science Program' project to analyse risks posed by pressures to the values of marine parks.[179]

However, documentary evidence of the application of a risk-based assessment process was not identified. In comparison, evidence of application was identified for two of the five Networks in scope for this evaluation.

Action	Completion status
A46. Develop an Australian Marine Parks critical incident strategy in collaboration with the Australian Maritime Safety Authority (AMSA) and other responsible agencies to respond to critical incidents	**Completed**

Evidence

Overall, this action was assessed to have been **completed**, with the output being delivered in a timely manner.

Evidence from the desktop review:

- The '*Network-wide AMP Environmental Incident and Emergency Response Strategy*' was developed in 2018 and updated in 2021 in collaboration across networks with AMSA and

[178] *Australian Marine Parks Authorisation and Assessments Policy: https://australianmarineparks.gov.au/static/6f5d83193c7046f4d03dff87df2dcefd/amp-document-dnp-policy-authorisations-and-assessments.pdf*

[179] *National Environmental Science Programme Project SS2 Interpreting pressure profiles summary: https://www.nespmarine.edu.au/project/project-ss2-%e2%80%93-interpreting-pressure-profiles.html*

relevant agencies.[180] This strategy outlines the responsibilities, involvement and collaboration of Commonwealth agencies when responding to critical incidents.

- Implementation and collaboration was evident through incident response exercise training conducted jointly between Parks Australia and a number of state/ territory and Commonwealth Government agencies and departments.[181]

Action	Completion status
A47. Develop a mooring and anchoring strategy to protect marine park values and improve visitor experience	Completed

Evidence

This action was assessed as **completed** in a timely manner, as evidenced through the desktop review.

Evidence from desktop review:

The '*Australian Marine Parks Mooring Policy*' was developed and finalised in 2021.[182]

Action	Completion status
A48. Support the removal of marine debris and ghost nets from marine parks through partnerships with Commonwealth, state and territory government agencies and other organisations involved in the management of marine debris	Ongoing

Evidence

Overall, this action was determined to be **ongoing**, as it was actioned consistently over the life of the plan. The desktop review identified evidence of collaborative initiatives to support the removal or marine debris and ghost nets. However, feedback from stakeholders in relation to the effectiveness of these initiatives was mixed, with many unsure or unaware of Parks Australia's involvement in activity occurring in this space.

Evidence from the desktop review:

The following documentary evidence was found to support its implementation:

- The Ghost Nets Initiative was deployed, which involved collaboration across Commonwealth and state agencies (including the Australian Fisheries Management Authority [AFMA],

[180] *Australian Marine Parks -Strategy Environmental Incident and Emergency Response Strategy: https://australianmarineparks.gov.au/static/4d3102f2098731e86292992d9f15b739/amp-document-mpa-environmental-incident-and-emergency-response-strategy.pdf*

[181] *AMP Incident and Exercise Register: Internal document.*

[182] *Australian Marine Parks Mooring Policy: https://australianmarineparks.gov.au/static/179c407a2f3aedc78a01ad6ca7b8835e/amp-document-amp-mooring-policy.pdf*

Maritime Border Command under the Australian Border Force, other organisations and First Nations Ranger Groups). A grant program to support research into innovative solutions to detect, collect and dispose of ghost nets was also supported.[183]

- The '*Australian Marine Park Marine Debris Strategy'* which outlined Commonwealth level collaborations and partnerships to respond to marine debris.[184]
- An AFMA media release which detailed their efforts in supporting the removal of marine debris, including ghost nets.[185]

Evidence from engagement:

In addition to the above evidence, both stakeholders and Parks Australia staff provided the following examples of partnerships (or assumed partnerships) with the following agencies and groups to support in the removal of marine debris:

- The Australian Maritime Safety Authority (AMSA)
- The Australian Border Force (ABF)
- The Western Australia Department of Biodiversity, Conservation and Attractions (DBCA), and
- First Nations Ranger groups.

Stakeholders also reported positive feedback overall in relation to the timely and effective removal of debris across the North-west Network.

Action	Completion status
A49. Contribute to actions, where appropriate, that support Australia's obligations under international agreements and national environmental law (e.g., World Heritage Convention, Ramsar Convention, recovery plans, wildlife conservation plans and threat abatement plans)	**Ongoing**

Evidence

This action was assessed as **ongoing** as the desktop review identified that relevant activities had been delivered, and most stakeholders felt that appropriate actions had been undertaken to support Australia's obligations.

Evidence from the desktop review:

The key evidence outlined in the desktop review was a NWMPAC communiqué from July 2022, which indicated installation/ updates to 43 signs along the Ningaloo Coast to support the protection of this area as a World Heritage Site, as well as updating of the '*United Nations*

[183] *Ghost Nets and Marine Debris Initiative: https://australianmarineparks.gov.au/management/partnerships/ghost-nets-and-marine-debris-initiative/*
[184] *Australian Marine Park Marine Debris Strategy: Internal document*
[185] *2022 AFMA news article – Tonnes of deadly marine debris removed from Australia's northern waters: https://www.afma.gov.au/news/tonnes-deadly-marine-debris-removed-australias-northern-waters*

Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) World Heritage Ningaloo Coast Visitor Guide'.[186] [187]

The evaluation also notes that the North-west Network Management Plan itself was developed to support compliance with the Environment Protection and Biodiversity Conservation Act (EPBC act).

Evidence from engagement:

Most stakeholders who provided feedback on this action felt that Parks Australia had undertaken appropriate activities to support relevant agreements and obligations. Specifically, stakeholders highlighted efforts to meet World Heritage Convention obligations for managing, protecting, and supporting the Ningaloo Coast World Heritage area, as well as compliance with the EPBC Act.

However, some stakeholders expressed concern about risks to the marine parks from potential impacts posed by the offshore petroleum sector, which operates in some parks and is permitted in much of the North-west Network.

Action	Completion status
A50. Enable infrastructure such as moorings to protect coral reefs and enhance visitor safety	**Completed**

Evidence

Overall, the action assessed as **completed**. The desktop review identified evidence of infrastructure being delivered at key sites and stakeholder feedback was broadly positive.

Evidence from desktop review:

The '*Australian Marine Park Infrastructure Register'* reports on infrastructure, maintenance and notes on instalment and removal of infrastructure in the North-west Network at key visitor sites for the purpose of protecting reefs and enhancing visitor safety.[188]

Evidence from engagement:

Of the few stakeholders who provided feedback in relation to this action, most stakeholders felt that infrastructure had improved reef protection and/ or visitor safety.

[186] *NWMPAC Meeting #7 Communiqué: https://australianmarineparks.gov.au/static/72824ff8d5153fc9ddb956256a441aff/communique_nwampac_meeting-7.pdf*
[187] *UNESCO World Heritage Ningaloo Coast Visitor guide: https://exploreparks.dbca.wa.gov.au/sites/default/files/2021-10/ningaloo-coast-world-heritage-area-visitor-guide.pdf*
[188] *Marine Protected Area Register of Infrastructure: Internal document*

Action	Completion status
A51. Collaborate with and support other agencies that undertake invasive and protected species management and marine debris removal (e.g., biosecurity assessments, research, removal of ghost nets)	Ongoing

Evidence

This action was determined to be **ongoing** and delivered consistently over the life of the plan, based on clear desktop evidence and favourable feedback from stakeholders.

Evidence from the desktop review:

In addition to the activities noted in relation to A35 and A48 above, the desktop review also found evidence of a Commonwealth Scientific and Industrial Research Organisation (CSIRO) news post detailing collaboration through the Ocean Discovery and Restoration Task Force (including representatives of the Minderoo Foundation, CSIRO, Commonwealth Scientific and Industrial Research Organisation [AIMS], Offshore Biotechnologies, Esperance Tjaltjraak Native Title Aboriginal Corporation [ETNTAC]) in restoration and management efforts in Ashmore Reef Marine Park, including controlling and eradicating pests and weeds.[189]

Evidence from engagement:

Stakeholder feedback in relation to collaborations to support invasive species management and marine debris removal was consistent with feedback pertaining to A35 and A48.

Action	Completion status
A52. Work with other Commonwealth, state and territory government agencies to respond to environmental incidents and accidents	Ongoing

Evidence

This action was assessed as **ongoing**, with joint incident responses found to have been actioned in collaboration with other commonwealth, state and territory government agencies.

Evidence from desktop review:

The desktop review found that joint incident responses were actioned in collaboration with other Commonwealth, state and territory government agencies when appropriate. Additionally, a whole-of-government training exercise was identified, as evidenced by AMP-wide Incident and Exercise Register.[190]

Evidence from engagement:

Most stakeholders were unsure of the efficacy of collaborations to respond to incidents. Among those who were able to provide an indication, stakeholder perceptions were mixed.

[189] *2025 CSIRO article – Reef relief: how science is restoring Ashmore Reef Marine Park: https://www.csiro.au/en/news/all/articles/2025/december/ashmore-reef*
[190] *AMP Incident and Exercise Register: Internal document*

Action	Completion status
A53. Collaborate with Traditional Owners and Indigenous Ranger groups to undertake management actions	Partially completed or implemented

Evidence

Overall, this action was found to be **partially completed**, as per A20.

Evidence from desktop review:

Evidence from the desktop review was consistent with that presented in relation to A20.

Evidence from engagement:

A few Traditional Owners and other First Nations partners noted that information sharing of research and data had been very limited. They emphasised that greater access to this information would have been appreciated and could have been utilised by Traditional Owners and Ranger groups to inform management decisions.

10. Findings: Compliance Program

*This chapter presents assessments of the implementation of the **Compliance Program** of the North-west Marine Parks Network Management Plan.*

10.1. Overall findings about the efficacy of program implementation

Grade

Good with some concerns

Overall, the grade for the actions in the Compliance Program was assessed as 'good with some concerns'. Of the outcomes of the management program, one was rated as 'substantially met' and three were rated as 'partially met'.

Positive progress had been made on the completion of the planned actions. Of the six planned actions, five were assessed as 'completed' or 'ongoing' and one was found to be 'partially completed'.

Strengths and achievements

The evaluation identified a range of strengths and achievements in relation to the compliance program, including:

- **Use of new technologies to support compliance** – including the implementation of Vessel Monitoring Systems (VMS) for all commercial vessels operating in or transiting through Australian Marine Parks (AMPs), which stakeholders reported had been highly effective in supporting compliance among commercial marine park users. In addition, the trial of sound monitoring devices and introduction of 'Bluebottles' (i.e. autonomous vessels used to detect illegal fishing activity) were felt to present a promising opportunity for the use of innovative technologies to support compliance across the network.
- **Effective collaborations with other Commonwealth agencies to support compliance** – with stakeholders reporting that collaborations with the Australian Fisheries Management Authority (AFMA), the Australian Maritime Safety Authority (AMSA) and the Australian Border Force (ABF) had been particularly effective in monitoring and enforcing instances of non-compliance across the North-west.

Barriers, challenges and limiting factors

However, some challenges and barriers were also identified by stakeholders, including:

- **Challenges of enforcement in offshore parks** – the remote and expansive nature of many of the marine parks in the North-west Network was found to create practical challenges for compliance, monitoring and enforcement activities. Large geographic distances, limited on-water presence, and resource constraints could reduce the visibility of non-compliant activities and limit Parks Australia's ability to consistently monitor park usage. However, it is worth noting that levels of surveillance in the North and North-west networks are higher than other networks, owing to

Whole of Australian Government (WoAG) compliance and enforcement arrangements in these marine regions.[191] [192]

- **Limited available data to measure some intended outcomes** – there was limited evidence of data collection and analysis to support measurement of outcomes related to awareness of marine park rules, levels of voluntary compliance and a decrease in non-compliance over the more recent years of the plan. Additionally, stakeholders acknowledged difficulties associated with measuring rates of 'voluntary' compliance, as it was felt to be challenging to accurately understand park users' potentially unseen behaviours.
- **Levels of non-compliance across the network** – as outlined in O14 and O15 below, a considerable peak in non-compliance incidents and specifically foreign fishing incidents was identified in 2021-22, followed by a decrease in incidents in the following years.
- **The range of government departments and agencies responsible for marine compliance** – Parks Australia staff noted that Parks Australia was not solely or primarily responsible for some elements of compliance and enforcement in marine parks. For example, deterrence and penalties for illegal foreign fishing were noted as being the responsibility of the Australian Boarder Force (ABF) and the Department of Agriculture, Fisheries and Forestry (DAFF). As such, it was felt that achievement of some outcomes in this management program area were not possible for Parks Australia to achieve alone.

10.2. Outcome effectiveness

Outcome	Outcome effectiveness	Trend rating
O12. Improved user awareness of marine park rules	Partially met	Trend stable
Evidence		
The evaluation assessed this outcome as being **partially met**. A range of compliance communication and education activities were identified through the desktop review and stakeholder consultations. However, the evaluation was unable to identify any data to assess the effectiveness of these activities or any associated changes in user awareness of marine park rules. **Evidence from desktop review:** The desktop review identified a number of communication and engagement activities undertaken by Parks Australia to promote understanding of marine park rules and how to comply, as outlined in A57 (below). While these should go some way to improving user awareness of marine park rules, ultimately the desktop review did not identify any data which evaluated the effectiveness of these communication activities or measured changes in user awareness over time. **Evidence from engagement:** Most stakeholders felt that this outcome had been implemented with moderate levels of effectiveness. These stakeholders reported that levels of awareness of marine park rules were generally fairly high across park users.		

[191] *Australian Government Civil Maritime Security Strategy, 2021: https://www.homeaffairs.gov.au/nat-security/files/australian-government-civil-maritime-security-strategy.pdf*
[192] *Guide to Australian Maritime Security Arrangements, 2020: https://www.abf.gov.au/what-we-do-subsite/files/gamsa-2020.pdf*

However, some stakeholders reported that recreational users of the parks had lower levels of awareness of rules, and that there had been minimal change through the life of the Plan. Moreover, a few stakeholders felt that awareness raising efforts had deteriorated over the course of the plan, with some reporting that the majority of the communication from Parks Australia had occurred within the initial stages of the management plan.

Outcome	Outcome effectiveness	Trend rating
O13. Increased levels of voluntary compliance and self-regulation by marine park users	Substantially met	Trend getting better

Evidence

Overall, this outcome was assessed as **substantially met**. While there was no desktop review evidence identified specific to voluntary compliance, compliance data suggests that most instances of non-compliance in the North-west Network were due to illegal foreign fishing, rather than the actions of Australian marine park users. In addition, stakeholder feedback was broadly positive.

Evidence from desktop review:

The desktop review did not identify evidence of surveys or data measuring voluntary compliance attitudes and behaviours or of documents demonstrating self-regulation among users. However, the review identified high overall levels of compliance by marine park users, with the exception of illegal foreign fishers (outlined further in O14, below), suggesting that voluntary compliance among Australian marine park users was high over the course of the management plan.

Evidence from engagement:

Stakeholder engagement found that most stakeholders felt there had been a small to moderate increase in levels of voluntary compliance and self-regulation by users. Stakeholders felt that this had been supported by compliance activities occurring in the North-west Network, as detailed in relation to A58 (below).

Outcome	Outcome effectiveness	Trend rating
O14. High overall levels of compliance with the rules by marine park users	Partially met	Trend getting better

Evidence

Overall, this outcome was assessed as **partially met**. While the review identified evidence of comparatively high levels of non-compliance, most stakeholders felt there had been moderately high overall levels of compliance by users.

Evidence from desktop review:

The review identified evidence of comparatively high levels of non-compliance over the course of the management plan in the North-west Network, compared with other networks. Specifically, the

evaluation found that non-compliance peaked during the middle years of the management plan, particularly due to a rise in foreign fishing incidents. However, as noted above, responsibility for the deterrence and penalisation of foreign fishing largely sits outside Parks Australia's remit. Non-compliance has since decreased in the latter years of the management plan. This decrease in non-compliance may reflect the success of ABF and DAFF Operation LEEDSTRUM to respond to high levels of illegal foreign fishing in the North-west Network, but may also reflect displacement of illegal foreign fishing activity to other networks.[193]

Evidence from engagement:

Most stakeholders reported that there had been moderately high overall levels of compliance across users. Industry stakeholders, including those from the commercial fishing, space, and energy sectors, noted that compliance was generally high. They attributed this to a strong commitment to compliance within their industries, supported by established compliance requirements and the use of technologies such as Vessel Monitoring Systems (VMS).

Stakeholders felt that foreign vessels entering park waters made up a significant portion of non-compliance for the Network, particularly in comparison to other networks, which may explain the higher levels of non-compliance identified in the North-west Network in the desktop review.

Outcome	Outcome effectiveness	Trend rating
O15. A decrease in the number of non-compliances	Partially met	Trend getting better

Evidence

Overall, this outcome was assessed as **partially met**. The evaluation found that non-compliance in the North-west Network rose during the initial years of the management plan, but has since decreased.

Evidence from desktop review:

Data published in the Australian Marine Parks compliance reports from July 2019 to June 2023 illustrates high numbers of non-compliance incidents in the North-west Network when compared with some other networks. A large peak in compliance incidents occurred in the 2021-22 period, largely related to foreign fishing[194]. However, the evaluation found that non-compliances have since decreased.

Evidence from engagement:

Limited stakeholder feedback was provided in relation to this outcome. However, some stakeholders noted that the prior increases in incidences of non-compliance may have been due to more effective surveillance and monitoring activities, rather than an increase in illegal acts and non-compliance.

[193] Illegal foreign fishing vessels targeted in new multi-agency operation, 2023: https://www.abf.gov.au/newsroom-subsite/Pages/Illegal-foreign-fishing-vessels-targeted-in-new-multi-agency-operation--.aspx
[194] *Compliance program: https://australianmarineparks.gov.au/management/programs/compliance-program/*

Additionally, some Parks Australia staff raised concerns about the validity of the outcome measure, highlighting that a reduction in recorded non-compliances does not necessarily indicate improved compliance. Instead, it could reflect less effective monitoring and enforcement efforts. For example, an increase in identified non-compliance incidents may result from enhanced surveillance and detection activities, rather than an actual rise in non-compliant behaviour.

10.3. Specific management plan actions

The tables below present the completion status and supporting evidence collected during the evaluation for each management plan action within the Compliance Program.

Action	Completion status
A54. Apply a risk-based approach to compliance planning, targeted enforcement and compliance auditing	Ongoing

Evidence

Overall, this action was assessed as **ongoing**. Considerable documentary evidence of the development and application of a risk-based approach to compliance planning, enforcement and auditing was identified. However, scope for improvement was identified in relation to the timeliness and consistency of activities.

Evidence from desktop review:

The desktop review identified a number of activities undertaken over the course of the management plan to achieve this action. These suggest that a risk-based approach to compliance planning, consultation and data informed compliance plans have been undertaken throughout the life of the plans. However, the evaluation also found that the consistency of published compliance reporting could be enhanced to support compliance measurement and transparency throughout the plan period.

More specifically, the desktop review identified the following evidence of the development of a risk-based approach to compliance and use of this approach in compliance planning:

- The 2024 internal document '*Australian Marine Parks Internal procedure: Compliance Risk Assessments (Marine)'* which outlines the methodology for compliance risk assessments and evaluation. In particular, this document provides a detailed outline of the intended methodology for applying risk analysis to compliance activities. Additionally, outlining the process for compliance evaluation is likely to support in compliance auditing activities.[195]
- The 2024 internal document '*Australian Marine Parks Internal Procedure: Marine Compliance Operations Standard Operating Procedure (SOP)'*, which consolidates all marine park compliance procedures, including specific guidance on how to deal with specific compliance issues or tasks. [196]
- The '*Australian Marine Park Enforcement Guidelines*' (2025), which outline the process for assessing, investigating and responding to reported non-compliance incidents[197]. These

[195] *Australian Marine Parks Internal procedure: Compliance Risk Assessments (Marine) (2024): Internal document*
[196] *Australian Marine Parks Internal Procedure: Marine Compliance Operations Standard Operating Procedure (SOP) (2024): Internal document*
[197] *Australian Marine Park Enforcement Guidelines (2025): Internal document*

enforcement guidelines aim to assist in the decision-making process for the Authorisations and Compliance Section of the Marine and Island Parks Branch (MIPB) in responding to reported contraventions.

- The internal document '*Director of National Parks Internal Procedure – Appointing Wardens and Rangers (Marine and Terrestrial)*' which outlines the expected regulatory capabilities of Wardens and Rangers and minimum required qualifications to ensure they are able to meet these capabilities.[198]

The desktop review also identified the following evidence of a risk-based approach being applied in targeted enforcement activities:

- The establishment of a telephone hotline and email address to enable marine park users to report suspicious or illegal activity, thereby supporting targeted enforcement in response to these reports.[199]
- The 2022-2024 RA Treatment Progression Register, which provided comprehensive documentation of compliance treatments undertaken across all marine park networks.[200]
- An '*Enforcement Action Assessment'* report which outlined an assessment of an infringement that has occurred in the North-west Network.[201]

Action	Completion status
A55. Collaborate with Australian, state and territory government agencies by sharing assets and information	**Ongoing**

Evidence

Overall, this action was assessed as **ongoing.** Clear documentary evidence of continuing collaborations was identified and feedback from stakeholders was positive.

Evidence from desktop review:

Overall, the desktop review identified adequate evidence of collaborations with Australian, state and territory organisations to share assets and information in support of compliance. Commencement of these activities in the first few years of the management plan (i.e. as early as 2020) and evidence of continuing agreements also showed that these activities have been completed in a timely and consistent manner.

More specifically, the desktop review identified the following contracts, agreements and collaborations with Commonwealth and State/ Territory government agencies:

- A contract with the Commonwealth Minister for the Environment, the Minister for Fisheries WA to share VMS and logbook data for the purpose of compliance monitoring in 2025.[202]

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[198] *Director of National Parks Internal Procedure - Appointing Wardens and Rangers (Marine and Terrestrial): Internal document*
[199] *Compliance program: https://australianmarineparks.gov.au/management/programs/compliance-program/*
[200] *2022-2024 FY Treatment Progression Register: Internal document*
[201] *Enforcement Action Assessment Report: Internal document*
[202] *Signed Data Sharing Collaborative Arrangement with the Commonwealth Minister for the Environment, the Minister for Fisheries (WA) (2025): Internal document*

- A Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) with DPIRD in 2024, that outlined collaborative arrangements both parties can engage in regarding communication, education and awareness, compliance, data sharing and monitoring, evaluation and reporting.[203]
- A MOU regarding the provision of aircraft on an opportunity basis with AMSA in 2020. This document outlines the approval required to use aircrafts from AMSA to conduct air surveillance over all marine parks.[204]
- A MOU that outlines that AMFA will support the VMS alert system management as well as other aspects in relation to compliance.[205]
- A contract between the Northern Territory Department of Agriculture and Fisheries (NT DAF), outlining that the NT DAF will provide information to support compliance efforts.[206]
- A contract which outlines various compliance activities the DPIRD will be responsible for to support compliance activities in the North-west Network.[207]

Evidence from engagement:

Overall, stakeholders felt that effective collaboration had occurred between the Director of National Parks and other government agencies. Specifically:

- Parks Australia staff reported that collaboration was supported by a range of processes and agreements, including MOUs and other informal agreements – which stakeholders reported were critical given that the Director did not have a physical presence in each marine park network. Specifically, Parks Australia staff cited formal MOUs with various fisheries management agencies, the national VMS group, Maritime Border Command and AMSA. A partnership/ contract with a private company was also referenced as key to supporting compliance operations via 'Bluebottle' operations.
- External stakeholders felt that collaboration with the AFMA, the Australian Defence Force (ADF) and Border force agencies had effectively supported compliance activities.

[203] *Memorandum of understanding with WA DPIRD (2024): Internal document*
[204] *Memorandum of understanding about the provision of aircraft on an opportunity basis with the Australian Maritime Safety Authority (2020): Internal document*
[205] *AFMA VMS MoU Activity Schedule for 2024/25 and 2025/26 FYs: Internal document*
[206] *Contract with NT DAF for 2024-26: Internal document*
[207] *Contract with WA DPIR for 2024-26D: Internal document*

Action	Completion status
A56. Investigate the use of new technologies and warning systems to assist in the detection of potential illegal activities	Completed

Evidence

Overall, this action was assessed as **completed**, as the desktop review identified consistent evidence of new technologies and warning systems being investigated over the course of the plan.

Evidence from desktop review:

The desktop review showed that new technologies and warning systems had been investigated, trialled or implemented consistently over the course of the plan, with activities largely taking place between 2021 and 2024. Specifically, the following evidence was identified:

- Implementation of the VMS, which is now required to be installed on all commercial fishing vessels which relays messages between satellite networks to land-based receiving stations. Specifically, the unit transmits data on vessel location, course, and speed, providing real time information on commercial fishing activities to vessels, fishery managers and marine park compliance teams. From 1 July 2024, VMS units were mandatory for all commercial vessels.[208]
- Implementation of an alert service in partnership with AFMA. This alert service is a free service tool that will send an alert via email to an onboard computer and/or an SMS message to a nominated phone.[209]
- A trial of 'Bluebottles' – i.e. autonomous vessels that can monitor areas using day/ night infrared cameras, radar and satellite communication, to monitor marine park areas for non-compliant activities.[210] These vessels have subsequently been implemented to support compliance.
- A trial of acoustic recorders/ sound traps to monitor marine park areas for non-compliant activities.[211]
- A trial of uncrewed aerial vehicles (UAV), a type of drone, to monitor marine park areas for non-compliant activities.[212] [213]

[208] *VMS system monitoring: https://australianmarineparks.gov.au/access-use/commercial-approvals/commercial-fishing/mandatory-vessel-monitoring-systems-vms-commercial-fishers-australian-marine-parks/*
[209] *Alert service in partnership with Australian Fisheries Management Authority: https://australianmarineparks.gov.au/alert-service/*
[210] *Bluebottles to sting illegal fishers in Australian Marine Parks (2021): https://australianmarineparks.gov.au/news/bluebottles-sting-illegal-fishers-australian-marine-parks/*
[211] *New technology to monitor Australian marine parks (2022): https://minister.dcceew.gov.au/plibersek/media-releases/new-technology-monitor-australian-marine-parks*
[212] *Australian Marine Parks drone trial project plan (2021): Internal document*
[213] *Australian Marine Park Surveillance RPAS (2023): https://hoveruav.com.au/resource-centre/australian-marine-park-surveillance/*

Action	Completion status
A57. Work with marine park users to promote understanding of the rules for activities and how to comply	**Partially completed or implemented**

Evidence

Overall, this action was assessed as **partially completed**. Consistent documentary evidence of communication to promote understanding of rules and desired compliance behaviours was identified. However, stakeholder feedback in relation to this action was mixed.

Evidence from desktop review:

The desktop review identified a range of activities undertaken to promote marine park rules and how to comply amongst marine park users, which were shown to be undertaken consistently throughout the life of the management plan. Specifically, these included:

- A factsheet published by Parks Australia about the North-west Network Management Plan, including an overview of the rules for various activities with links directing readers to more detailed further information.[214]
- A factsheet about Australian Marine Parks and permitted activities for commercial fishers developed by Parks Australia.[215]
- A document outlining permitted petroleum activities in Australian Marine Parks, prepared by the National Offshore Petroleum Safety and Environmental Management Authority (NOPSEMA) in collaboration with Parks Australia.[216] This document was published in 2020.
- A Parks Australia email chain, which outlined communication between the Marine Parks Authorisations Team and Reach SubSea to discuss a permit for Reach SubSea to ensure the company's activities will comply with the relevant regulations.[217]

Evidence from engagement:

Most stakeholders felt that marine park rules and compliance requirements had generally been effectively communicated with marine park users, and cited resources such as the Recfishwest app which supported compliance across the network. However, a notable minority expressed more negative views:

- Some stakeholders reported that engagement and promotion activities had declined in frequency through the life of the plan, with a few reporting that they were not aware of where to find resources to provide to others in their networks in relation to compliance.

[214] *Factsheet of the North-west Management Plan: https://australianmarineparks.gov.au/static/f2d924e86afda12b937d2ba563055a6d/amp-document-factsheet-North-west-management-plan.pdf.*
[215] *Commercial fishing in Australian Marine Parks factsheet: https://australianmarineparks.gov.au/static/2c26f0c718876001f2d2cab11834e537/amp-document-commercial-fishing-factsheet.pdf*
[216] *Petroleum activities and Australian Marine Parks guidance note: https://www.nopsema.gov.au/sites/default/files/documents/2021-03/A620236.pdf*
[217] *Internal email chain provided to ORIMA Research*

- Stakeholders from the commercial sector in particular reported that communication had been of mixed quality, particularly in relation to the implementation of new rules and technologies such as the VMS. While the implementation of the VMS was led by state/ territory fisheries departments, as outlined in A 39 the lack of delineation between the roles of different authorities meant that more negative perceptions of this action were identified amongst those who had received more limited communications.

Action	Completion status
A58. Work with other Commonwealth, state and territory government agencies, particularly where parks adjoin state or territory marine parks, in compliance planning, including implementing actions to deter illegal activities and encourage voluntary compliance	Ongoing

Evidence

Overall, this action was assessed as **ongoing** over the life of the plan. The desktop review identified evidence of timely and consistent joint compliance planning activities and stakeholder feedback was positive.

Evidence from desktop review:

In additional to the collaborative compliance activities identified in support of A55 above, the desktop review identified the following evidence of joint compliance planning and actions implemented:

- A register of compliance activities completed in the North-west network between 2022 and 2024.[218]
- Email chains with two Commonwealth agencies in relation to confirming permits and agreements to ensure ships passing through the North-west and surrounding Networks complied with regulations in 2025 and 2026.[219] [220] [221] Emails also contained information in relation to streamlining the permit process for a 2026 survey.

Evidence from engagement:

Most stakeholders reported that joint compliance planning and actions were appropriately implemented and had been effective in encouraging voluntary compliance, providing the following examples:

- The introduction of 'Bluebottles' – stakeholders felt these vessels were a cost-effective deterrent of illegal activity which encouraged voluntary compliance, including in more remote parks.
- A trial of sound monitoring devices – which a couple of stakeholders felt increased perceptions of surveillance in remote areas and hence voluntary compliance.
- The introduction of the VMS (as discussed in A56).

[218] *2022-24 FY RA Treatment Progression Register: Internal document*
[219] *Internal email chain provided to ORIMA Research*
[220] *Internal email chain provided to ORIMA Research*
[221] *Internal email chain provided to ORIMA Research*

Parks Australia staff reported that significant progress had been made to align regulation and management with adjacent parks and zones and maintained strong partnerships with the WA State Government to do so.

Action	Completion status
A59. Collaborate with Commonwealth, state and territory government agencies in surveillance, including water and aerial patrols	**Ongoing**

Evidence

Overall, the action was assessed as **ongoing**. The desktop review identified evidence of timely and consistent collaboration to support surveillance activities, and stakeholder feedback on this action was broadly positive.

Evidence from desktop review:

In additional to the collaborative compliance activities identified in support of A55, the desktop review identified some specific examples of consistent and timely joint surveillance actions as follows:

- A range of compliance reports with data regarding how many aerial, surface and vessel patrols were completed across each AMP between 2023-2025.[222] [223] [224]
- Internal email chain outlining a report completed by ABF in relation to a sighting of a non-compliance incident in the network.[225]
- An internal spreadsheet tracking North-west Network patrols and air surveillance activities between 2019-2026.[226]

Evidence from engagement:

Stakeholder feedback on this action was limited but generally positive, particularly regarding collaboration with Commonwealth agencies. However, some stakeholders questioned the return on investment of these activities, noting that the remoteness of certain parks within the North-west Network reduced their overall impact and value compared to other networks.

[222] *Quarterly Compliance Report July, August and September 2023: Internal document*
[223] *2024/2025 Compliance Operations Annual Summary': Internal document*
[224] *Monthly Compliance Report November 2025: Internal document*
[225] *Internal email chain provided to ORIMA Research*
[226] *NW patrol and air surveillance tracker: Internal document*

11. Conclusion

The evaluation of the North-west Network Management Plan highlighted **notable progress in implementing actions and achieving intended outcomes** across its seven management programs. **Strengths** included the development of robust frameworks and policies, significant ecological baseline data collection, and effective compliance and enforcement activities. Collaborations with some stakeholders, including the science community and government agencies, were identified as key drivers of success. However, **challenges** such as the remote nature of parks, insufficient engagement with First Nations peoples, and challenges balancing the protection of ecological, social and economic values limited overall implementation effectiveness.

More specifically, the evaluation established the following grades for management programs within the North-west Network Management Plan:

- **'Good'** – assigned to the 'Assessments and Authorisations' management program. Strong results in this program were supported by the development of a range of policies, processes and procedures to support authorisations.
- **'Good with some concerns'** – assigned to the 'Communication, Education and Awareness', 'Tourism and Visitor Experience', 'Marine Science', 'Parks Protection and Management' and 'Compliance' programs. While each of these programs had key strengths that supported effective implementation of many of the planned actions and outcomes, barriers, challenges and/ or other limiting factors were identified for each, which should be considered when designing and implementing future management plans.
- **'Significant concerns'** – assigned to the 'Indigenous Engagement' program. While some progress was made in this program, inclusive collaboration with all relevant Traditional Owners was identified as a challenge, highlighting the need for more structured engagement and partnership approaches. Additionally, the application of best-practice co-management approaches was recommended to ensure early engagement and to create opportunities for broader community involvement.

A range of **key learnings and recommendations for the development of the future North-west Network Management Plan have been identified** and should be considered in the Management Plan Review Process. These are detailed in Chapter 3 of this report. Specific findings in relation to the **strengths and weaknesses of each management program** area also provide insight into how to **maximise the effectiveness of implementation** for the next North-west Network Management plan, and should be considered where actions and outcomes remain consistent. These are outlined in Chapters 4-10 of this report.

APPENDIX A: Performance assessment tools

Completion status categories (at the individual action level)

Completed	Ongoing	Implemented with modifications	Partially completed or implemented	Not commenced
Completed	Ongoing	Implemented with modifications	Partially completed or implemented	Not commenced
Action was specific and has been fully implemented as described.	Action is an ongoing requirement that has been consistently implemented as described.	Action has been fully implemented, but in a way other than was described in the plan.	Action has been partially implemented but is not yet complete as per the description in the plan.	No progress has been made against the action.

Implementation effectiveness rating categories at the management program level

Grade	Threshold
Good	Management actions and outcomes have been largely delivered as planned, with no significant gaps; or Management is efficient and effective due to adequate enabling services being in place; and Targets for at least three-quarters of stakeholder feedback performance measures have been fully or substantially met.
Good with some concerns	Most management actions and outcomes have been delivered as planned but some important actions were not delivered; or Some management activities are not adequate, leading to decreased efficiency or effectiveness; and Targets for at least half of stakeholder feedback performance measures have been fully or substantially met.
Significant concerns	Some aspects of management plan actions and outcomes have been adequately delivered, but many important actions have not been fully delivered; or Some enabling management activities are adequate, yet many are not, leading to substantially reduced efficiency or effectiveness; and/or Targets for between a quarter and a half of stakeholder feedback performance measures have been fully or substantially met.
Critical	Failure to deliver most planned management actions and outcomes; or Many management actions are not adequate, leading to greatly reduced efficiency or effectiveness; and/or Targets for less than a quarter of stakeholder feedback performance measures have been fully or substantially met.
Unknown	There is insufficient information or data available to make a judgement.

Outcome effectiveness rating categories

Grade	Result
Fully met Fully met	All of the success measures/targets were fully met.
Substantially met Substantially met	All of the success measures/targets were fully or substantially met.
Partially met Partially met	Half of the success measures/targets were fully or substantially met or most/all of the measures/targets were at least partially met.
Not met Not met	At best, half or less than half of the success measures/targets were partially met.
Unknown Unknown	There is insufficient information or data available to make a judgement.

Trend rating categories (outcomes)

Trend	Threshold
Trend stable Trend stable	There has been no change in the status of this matter over the life of this plan.
Trend getting worse Trend getting worse	There has been a negative trend in the status of this matter over the life of this plan.
Trend getting better Trend getting better	There has been a positive trend in the status of the matter over the life of this plan.

Stakeholder engagement metrics

Stakeholder engagement metrics are proposed as a key measurement to determine performance against management plan actions and outcomes.

The ORIMA team will produce a stakeholder engagement plan and collect qualitative feedback from a range of relevant stakeholders about the extent to which actions and outcomes have been implemented or achieved. Stakeholder responses will be aggregated, with the approximate proportion of stakeholders who consider key outputs or outcomes to have been effectively implemented or achieved summarised as shown below.

Most – More than three quarters of stakeholders consulted

Many – More than half of the stakeholders consulted

Some – Around a third of the stakeholders consulted

A few – Less than a quarter of stakeholders consulted

APPENDIX B: Performance Information Matrix

Performance Information Matrix – North-west Marine Parks Network

Type (action or outcome)	Actions/ Outcomes	Output(s)	Target/ measure of success	Indicator(s)	Data source(s)
	Management Plan Actions and Outcomes	*Outputs to achieve actions*	*Criteria for success*	*Evidence of success*	*Data sources for measuring indicators*
Management program – Communication, Education and Awareness					
Management Plan Actions	A1. Develop a marketing and communication strategy for Australian marine parks to raise awareness and understanding of marine park values and the contribution marine parks make to enhancing Australia's wellbeing	• Marketing and communication strategy developed. • Communication products developed in accordance with strategy. • Communication activities/ initiatives undertaken in accordance with strategy.	• Completion of outputs in a timely manner. • Most key stakeholders assess that marketing and communication has been effective in increasing awareness and understanding of marine parks and their values among key audiences.	• Documentary evidence of development and implementation of communications strategy. • Key stakeholder feedback concerning the effectiveness of marketing and communication.	• Administrative data/ desktop review. • Stakeholder engagement conducted by ORIMA.
	A2. Develop online information resources to facilitate awareness of marine park values, management arrangements and visitor opportunities	• Online information resources developed that address: awareness of marine park values; management arrangements; and visitor opportunities.	• Completion of outputs in a timely manner. • Most stakeholders assess that online information resources have been effective in addressing key information components.	• Documentary evidence that the developed information resources cover the key information components. • Key stakeholder feedback concerning the effectiveness of online information resources.	• Administrative data/ desktop review. • Stakeholder engagement conducted by ORIMA.

Type (action or outcome)	Actions/ Outcomes	Output(s)	Target/ measure of success	Indicator(s)	Data source(s)
	A3. Maximise the use of new technologies and partnerships (including with schools, universities, museums and non-government organisations) to inspire people of all ages to become involved in marine park management and protection	• Education partnerships with schools, universities, museums and non-government organisations. • Use of new technologies in partnerships.	• Whether partnerships have been established. • New technologies have been integrated into partnership opportunities where possible. • Most stakeholders assess that partnerships and use of technology have been effective in inspiring people of all ages to become involved in marine park management and protection.	• Documentary evidence that partnerships have been established. • Documentary evidence of the adoption/ use of new technologies. • Key stakeholder feedback concerning the effectiveness of partnerships and use of technology.	• Administrative data/ desktop review. • Stakeholder engagement conducted by ORIMA.
	A4. Establish network advisory committees to ensure users and interested stakeholders have on-going input into the management of Australian Marine Parks (to be assessed together with Activity 8 below – same assessment criteria)	• Establishment and operation of the North-west Marine Parks Advisory Committee (NWMPAC). • Effective operation of the NWMPAC.	• Timely establishment of the Australian Marine Parks Advisory Committee (AMPAC). • Most AMPAC members express that they have had ongoing input into the management of the marine park. • Most AMPAC members and Parks Australia staff express satisfaction with the	• Documentary evidence to show establishment and operation of AMPAC. • Feedback from AMPAC members and Parks Australia staff.	• Administrative data/ desktop review. • Stakeholder engagement conducted by ORIMA.

Type (action or outcome)	Actions/ Outcomes	Output(s)	Target/ measure of success	Indicator(s)	Data source(s)
			AMPAC's effectiveness in supporting the implementation of the management plan.		
	A5. Develop a customer focused approach to tracking the aspirations and concerns of stakeholders in relation to marine parks	• Strategy developed for tracking aspirations and concerns of stakeholders in relation to marine parks.	• Whether strategy development is complete and tracking is in place. • Most stakeholders express that their aspirations and concerns have been considered over the course of the plan.	• Documentary evidence of strategy development and ongoing tracking. • Key stakeholder feedback.	• Administrative data/ desktop review. • Stakeholder engagement conducted by ORIMA.
	Actions specific to the North-west Network				
	A6. Develop information on marine parks in the Network to encourage increased awareness and understanding of their values and management arrangements. For example, an Ashmore Reef Marine Park visitor guide (to be evaluated together with Activities 1 and 2 above)	• Information developed with the aim of increasing awareness and understanding of marine park values and management arrangements. • Viewership or readership of media outputs.	• Completion of outputs in a timely manner. • Most stakeholders consider that information has been effective in increasing awareness and understanding of marine park values and management arrangements.	• Documentary evidence of information developed (e.g. Ashmore Reef Marine Park visitor guide). • Key stakeholder feedback concerning the effectiveness of outputs in encouraging increased awareness and understanding of marine park values and management arrangements.	• Administrative data/ desktop review. • Stakeholder engagement conducted by ORIMA.

Type (action or outcome)	Actions/ Outcomes	Output(s)	Target/ measure of success	Indicator(s)	Data source(s)
	A7. Provide infrastructure in and adjacent to the Network, such as signs and marker buoys, to increase understanding of marine park values and rules, particularly at sites that are regularly visited	• Infrastructure developed with the aim of increasing awareness and understanding of marine park values and rules, particularly at regularly visited sites.	• Infrastructure has been installed in regularly visited sites. • Most stakeholders assess infrastructure as being effective in increasing understanding of marine park values and rules.	• Documentary evidence to show extent of infrastructure provision in and adjacent to the marine park. • Documentary evidence that infrastructure has been installed in regularly visited areas. • Key stakeholder feedback concerning the effectiveness of new infrastructure in increasing understanding of marine park values and rules.	• Administrative data/ desktop review. • Stakeholder engagement conducted by ORIMA.
	A8. Establish a North-west Network advisory committee to support and collaborate with the Director in management (To be evaluated together with Activity 4 above – same assessment criteria)	• Establishment and operation of the NWMPAC.	• Timely establishment of the AMPAC. • Most AMPAC members consider that they have had ongoing input into the management of the marine park.	• Documentary evidence to show establishment and operation of AMPAC. • Feedback from AMPAC members and Parks Australia staff.	• Administrative data/ desktop review. • Stakeholder engagement conducted by ORIMA.

Management Plan Outcomes	O1. Increased awareness, understanding and support for marine parks	• N/A	• Survey-based metrics show an increase in public awareness, understanding and support for the plan. • Most stakeholders report that awareness, understanding and support for the marine park has increased within their networks/ organisations/ interest groups.	• Relevant survey questions addressing awareness, understanding and support. • Key stakeholder feedback.	• National Environmental Science Program (NESP) 2021 boat ramp surveys (awareness of AMPs) and more recent surveys (repeat survey currently in field). • Stakeholder engagement conducted by ORIMA.

	Actions/ Outcomes	Output(s)	Measure of success	Indicator(s)	Data source(s)/ collection method(s)
Management program – Tourism and visitor experience					
Management Plan Actions	A9. Develop a sustainable tourism and visitor experience strategy for Australian Marine Parks	• Sustainable tourism and visitor experience strategy developed.	• Completion of strategy in a timely manner.	• Documentary evidence of strategy development.	• Administrative data/ desktop review.
	A10. Work with national, state and local tourism authorities and operators to maximise the value of sustainable ecotourism opportunities associated with marine parks.	• Partnership arrangements and collaboration initiatives established with tourism authorities and operators to maximise sustainable ecotourism opportunities.	• Completion of outputs in a timely manner. • Most key stakeholders feel there has been an increase in the value of sustainable ecotourism experiences over the life of the plan.	• Documentary evidence of working with national/ state/ local authorities and operators. • Stakeholder feedback.	• Administrative data/ desktop review. • Stakeholder engagement conducted by ORIMA.

	Actions/ Outcomes	Output(s)	Measure of success	Indicator(s)	Data source(s)/ collection method(s)
	A11. Develop a commercial tourism authorisation system to encourage best-practice and eco-accredited businesses operating in Australian Marine Parks	• Commercial tourism authorisation system developed. • Authorisations granted to operators in accordance with system.	• Completion of system in a timely manner. • Most stakeholders feel the system encourages best-practice and eco-accredited businesses operating in Australian Marine parks.	• Documentary evidence of the commercial tourism authorisation system. • Stakeholder feedback.	• Administrative data/ desktop review (system documentation and authorisation records).
	A12. Work with Tourism Australia and state and regional tourism authorities and the fishing industry to market and promote Australian Marine Parks, including opportunities to promote locally and sustainably caught seafood	• Delivery of marketing assets showcasing and promoting Australian Marine parks and locally and sustainably caught seafood. • Collaborations with Tourism Australia and state and regional tourism authorities and the fishing industry.	• Outputs delivered in a timely and consistent manner. • Most stakeholders feel marketing assets have been effective in promoting marine parks and locally and sustainably caught seafood. .	• Documentary evidence of production of marketing assets relating to marine parks and locally and sustainably caught seafood (including reach of these). • Stakeholder feedback.	• Administrative data/ desktop review (marketing/ promotion analytics and data.) • Stakeholder engagement conducted by ORIMA.
	A13. Monitor visitor trends and levels of satisfaction with marine park experiences and products	• Visitor trends monitoring implemented. • Levels of satisfaction with marine park experiences and products monitored.	• Ongoing and comprehensive monitoring undertaken regarding visitor trends and satisfaction with marine park experiences and products.	• Documentary evidence of visitor numbers being recorded over time. • Visitor satisfaction trends of experiences and products recorded (either quantitatively and/ or qualitatively).	• Administrative data/ desktop review (e.g. tourism authorisation holder logbooks for levels of access to the North-west Marine Parks).

	Actions/ Outcomes	Output(s)	Measure of success	Indicator(s)	Data source(s)/ collection method(s)
	A14. Promote culturally sensitive tourism by encouraging tourism operators to liaise with Traditional Owners	• Actions taken to encourage tourism operators to liaise with Traditional Owners to promote culturally sensitive tourism.	• Outputs delivered. • Most operators feel they have been appropriately encouraged to engage with Traditional Owners. • Most First Nations partners feel Parks Australia has taken appropriate steps to encourage tourism operators to liaise with Traditional Owners.	• Documentary evidence of actions taken to encourage tourism operators to liaise with Traditional Owners to promote culturally sensitive tourism. • Feedback from Traditional Owners and tourism operators.	• Stakeholder engagement conducted by ORIMA (with tourism operators/ Traditional Owners).
	A15. Work with tourism operators and First Nations peoples to recognise and promote cultural values and cultural tourism opportunities	• Collaboration with tourism operators and First Nations peoples to promote cultural tourism opportunities.	• Most First Nations partners and Tourism industry stakeholders feel Parks Australia has taken appropriate and effective steps to recognise and promote cultural values and cultural tourism opportunities.	• Documentary evidence of collaboration with tourism operators and First Nations peoples to promote cultural tourism opportunities. • Feedback from First Nations partners and tourism operators.	• Administrative data/ desktop review. • Stakeholder engagement conducted by ORIMA (with First Nations peoples/ Traditional Owners and other tourism operators).
	Actions specific to the North-west Network				
	A16. Promote visitor experiences that foster curiosity and appreciation of natural and heritage values in the Network, for example whale shark watching at Ningaloo Marine Park, diving at Mermaid Reef Marine Park, and bird watching at Ashmore Reef Marine Park	• Promotion of visitor experiences that foster curiosity and appreciation of natural and heritage values in the marine park.	• Visitor experiences relating to natural and heritage values of marine parks are promoted.	• Documentary evidence of promotion of visitor experiences relating to natural and	• Administrative data/ desktop review (including visitor surveys, tourism analytics, website and social metrics).

	Actions/ Outcomes	Output(s)	Measure of success	Indicator(s)	Data source(s)/ collection method(s)
		• Promotional content relates to the natural and heritage value of the marine park.	• Most key stakeholders assess that this promotion is fostering curiosity and appreciation of natural and heritage values.	heritage values of marine parks. • Feedback from stakeholders.	• Stakeholder engagement conducted by ORIMA.
	A17. Work with other Commonwealth, state and territory government agencies, and the tourism industry to support tourism initiatives, events and attractions that promote visitor experiences in marine parks	• Partnerships and collaborations with Commonwealth, state government agencies and the tourism industry to support tourism initiatives in the marine park.	• There has been an increase in initiatives, events and attractions that promote visitor experiences in the marine park. • Most stakeholders assess that effective support has been provided for these initiatives, events and attractions.	• Documentary evidence of partnerships and collaborations with Commonwealth and state government agencies and the tourism industry to support tourism. • Feedback from key stakeholders.	• Administrative data/ desktop review (including visitor surveys, tourism datasets, website and social metrics). • Stakeholder engagement (with Commonwealth, state government agencies and the tourism industry) conducted by ORIMA.
	A18. Facilitate partnerships between First Nations peoples and tourism operators and support the application of the Uunguu Visitor Management pass system for the Native Title determination area	• Partnerships between First Nations peoples and tourism operators. • Support for the application of the Uunguu Visitor Management pass system for the Native Title determination area has been provided.	• Outputs delivered in a timely and consistent manner. • Most stakeholders assess that partnerships between First Nations peoples and tourism operators have been facilitated. • Most stakeholders assess that effective support has been	• Documentary evidence of partnerships between First Nations peoples and tourism operators and support for the application of the Uunguu Visitor Management pass system for the Native Title determination area.	• Administrative data/ desktop review. • Stakeholder engagement conducted by ORIMA.

	Actions/ Outcomes	Output(s)	Measure of success	Indicator(s)	Data source(s)/ collection method(s)
			provided for the Uunguu Visitor Management pass system for the Native Title determination area.	• Feedback from key stakeholders (including First Nations partners).	
Management Plan Outcomes	O2. High-quality visitor experiences that are appealing, engaging and raise awareness of the natural and cultural values of marine parks	• N/A	• Visitors to the marine park report high-quality experiences. • Visitors report an increased awareness of the natural and cultural values of marine parks. • Most relevant stakeholders report that visitor experiences delivered are appealing, engaging and raise awareness of the natural and cultural values of marine parks.	• Experience and satisfaction ratings from visitors to marine parks. • Feedback from stakeholders.	• Administrative data/ desktop review (including visitor surveys, tourism datasets). • Stakeholder engagement conducted by ORIMA.
	O3. Increased visitation to marine parks	• N/A	• Year-on-year increase in visitation.	• Documentary evidence of visitor numbers (compared annually).	• Administrative data/ desktop review (including visitor monitoring indicators, tourism analytics).

	O4. Social and economic benefits from the contribution of marine parks to Australia's visitor economy	• N/A	• Increased economic contribution of marine park tourism. • Most stakeholders perceive social and economic benefits from the contribution of marine parks to Australia's visitor economy.	• Documentary evidence of economic contribution of marine park tourism. • Feedback from key stakeholders.	• Administrative data/ desktop review (e.g. economic impact analysis/ tourism datasets). • Stakeholder engagement conducted by ORIMA.

	Actions/ Outcomes	Output(s)	Measure of success	Indicator(s)	Data source
Management program – Indigenous Engagement					
Management Plan Actions	A19. Develop an Australian Marine parks First Nations engagement and cultural heritage strategy, to improve understanding of cultural heritage, link management with Sea Country plans and maximise employment and enterprise opportunities for Traditional Owners	• First Nations engagement and cultural heritage strategy developed and implemented. • Activities/ initiatives undertaken in accordance with strategy to improve understanding of cultural heritage, link management with Sea Country plans and maximise employment and enterprise opportunities for Traditional Owners.	• Strategy delivered in a timely manner. • Most First Nations partners feel strategy is aligned with Sea Country plans. • Most First Nations partners feel strategy has increased understanding of cultural heritage and employment and enterprise opportunities.	• Documentary evidence of strategy completion and implementation. • Feedback from Traditional Owners.	• Administrative data/ desktop review (e.g. economic impact analysis/ tourism datasets, grant program information). • First Nations engagement (with Traditional Owners) conducted by ORIMA.
	A20. Develop agreements to support First Nations Ranger programs to deliver management in marine parks	• Agreements established to support First Nations Ranger	• Agreements in place in timely manner. • Increasing First Nations Ranger	• Documentary evidence of agreements to support First Nations	• Administrative data/ desktop review. • First Nations engagement (with

	Actions/ Outcomes	Output(s)	Measure of success	Indicator(s)	Data source
		programs in marine parks.	representation in the management of marine parks.	Ranger programs in marine parks. • Feedback from First Nations partners.	First Nations Rangers, community and Traditional Owners) conducted by ORIMA.
	A21. Provide information to First Nations peoples about marine park management	• Information developed and shared with First Nations peoples about marine park management (e.g. newsletters, workshops, briefings).	• Completion of outputs in a timely manner. • Most First Nations partners report information has been provided in an appropriate way.	• Documentary evidence of information provision. • Feedback from First Nations partners.	• Administrative data/ desktop review. • First Nations engagement (with First Nations Rangers, First Nations community and Traditional Owners) conducted by ORIMA).
	Actions specific to the North-west Network				
	A22. Collaborate with Traditional Owners and First Nations Ranger groups and relevant partners to undertake marine park management such as surveillance, monitoring and threat mitigation including marine debris removal, and implement actions identified in Sea Country plans where applicable	• Collaborative management activities delivered with First Nations partners. • Implement actions identified in Sea Country plans where applicable.	• Outputs delivered in a timely manner. • Most First Nations partners feel appropriate and effective collaboration has occurred.	• Documentary evidence of collaborative management activities. • Feedback from Traditional Owners, First Nations Ranger groups, and relevant partners and Indigenous advisory committees.	• Administrative data/ desktop review. • First Nations engagement (with Traditional Owners, First Nations Ranger groups, and relevant partners and Indigenous advisory committees) conducted by ORIMA).
	A23. Identify opportunities and mechanisms to engage Traditional Owners and First Nations Rangers in the management of marine parks	• Formal identification of partnership opportunities and mechanisms for engagement of Traditional Owners and First Nations	• Completion of outputs in a timely manner. • First Nations partners feel appropriate and adequate efforts have been made to identify opportunities and	• Documentary evidence of formal identification of partnership opportunities (including the provision of grants).	• Administrative data/ desktop review. • First Nations engagement (with First Nations Rangers, First Nations community and

	Actions/ Outcomes	Output(s)	Measure of success	Indicator(s)	Data source
		Rangers in marine park management.	mechanisms to engage Traditional Owners and First Nations Rangers in the management of the marine park.	• Feedback from Traditional Owners, First Nations Rangers and the First Nations community.	Traditional Owners) conducted by ORIMA.
	A24. Partnerships with Traditional Owners and First Nations groups to manage Sea Country in marine parks.	• Traditional Owners and First Nations Groups have been engaged in partnerships in relevant marine park management.	• Delivery of partnerships in a timely manner. • First Nations partners feel appropriate and adequate efforts have been made to partner in management of Sea Country.	• Documentary evidence of partnerships (including the provision of grants). • Feedback from Traditional Owners and First Nations groups.	• Administrative data/ desktop review. • First Nations engagement (with Traditional Owners and First Nations groups) conducted by ORIMA.
	A25. Implement cultural awareness training for Parks Australia staff in association with Traditional Owners	• Cultural awareness training delivered to Parks Australia staff in collaboration with Traditional Owners.	• Output delivered in a timely manner. • Traditional Owners feel they were appropriately involved in training.	• Documentary evidence of proportion of staff who received training. • Feedback from Traditional Owners and Parks Australia staff.	• Administrative data/ desktop review (e.g. training attendance data). • First Nations engagement (with Traditional Owners) and engagement with Parks Australia staff conducted by ORIMA.
	A26. Establish protocols for researchers working with Parks Australia to guide engagement with Traditional Owners, like those in the Collaborative Science on Kimbereley Saltwater Country – A Guide for Researchers	• Protocols developed and implemented to guide researchers working with Parks Australia in engaging with Traditional Owners.	• Output delivered in a timely manner.	• Documentary evidence of protocol development.	• Administrative data/ desktop review (e.g. training attendance data).

Management Plan Outcomes	O5. Marine Park management contributes to social, cultural and economic benefits for Traditional Owners	• N/A	• Documentary evidence that the management plan contributes to social, cultural and economic benefits for Traditional Owners. • Most First Nations partners feel social/ cultural/ economic benefits have been achieved from marine park management.	• Documentary evidence. • Feedback from Traditional Owners.	• Administrative data/ desktop review. • Engagement with Traditional Owners conducted by ORIMA.
	O6. Increase understanding of traditional knowledge, map cultural values and manage significant sites	• N/A	• Documentary evidence of initiatives to increase traditional knowledge, map cultural values and manage significant sites. • Most First Nations partners feel efforts to increase traditional knowledge, map cultural values and manage significant sites have been sufficient.	• Documentary evidence. • Feedback from First Nations partners.	• Administrative data/ desktop review. • Engagement with Traditional Owners and First Nations partners conducted by ORIMA.

	Actions/ Outcomes	Output(s)	Measure of success	Indicator(s)	Data source
Management program – Marine science					
Management Plan Actions	A27. Establish ecological, social and economic baselines to support evidence-based decision-making and adaptive management	• Baseline datasets established (ecological, social, economic).	• Outputs delivered in a timely manner.	• Documentary evidence of baseline datasets/ reports.	• Administrative data/ desktop review.

	Actions/ Outcomes	Output(s)	Measure of success	Indicator(s)	Data source
			• Evidence of baselines utilisation in decision-making to support adaptive management.	• Evidence of use of datasets – including references to baseline data in decision-making.	• Stakeholder engagement conducted by ORIMA.
	A28. Develop an Australian Marine Parks science strategy to prioritise and encourage research and monitoring of park values, pressures and management effectiveness, and foster science communication and knowledge uptake	• Science strategy developed. • Activities/ initiatives undertaken in accordance with strategy to prioritise and encourage research and monitoring of park values, pressures and management effectiveness. • Activities/ initiatives undertaken in accordance with strategy to foster science communication and knowledge uptake.	• Outputs delivered in a timely manner. • Strategy has been implemented over the course of the plan to prioritise research and monitoring activities across key areas. • Most stakeholders consider that research priorities align with the strategy, and that science communication and knowledge uptake have been fostered.	• Documentary evidence of marine parks science strategy. • Feedback from key stakeholders.	• Administrative data/ desktop review. • Stakeholder engagement conducted by ORIMA.
	A29. Encourage and facilitate knowledge brokering to support collaboration and partnerships with the science community, private enterprise, citizen science organisations and other Commonwealth, state and territory agencies	• Knowledge brokering activities delivered. • Collaborations and partnerships with the science community, private enterprise, citizen science organisations and other Commonwealth,	• Outputs delivered consistently over the course of the plan. • Most stakeholders feel effective knowledge brokering has taken place.	• Documentary evidence that partnerships have been established (e.g. collaborative knowledge sharing activities with the science community, private enterprise,	• Administrative data/ desktop review. • Stakeholder engagement (with science community, private enterprise, citizen science organisations and other

	Actions/ Outcomes	Output(s)	Measure of success	Indicator(s)	Data source
		state and territory agencies.		citizen science organisations and other Commonwealth, state and territory agencies.) • Feedback from stakeholders.	Commonwealth, state and territory agencies) conducted by ORIMA.
	A30. Establish an authorisation system for scientific research and monitoring by third parties and encourage data to be made publicly available through appropriate information portals such as the Australian Ocean Data Network	• Research authorisation system developed and operational. • Data-sharing arrangements established.	• Output delivered in a timely manner. • Increased number of research projects made public.	• Documentary evidence of research authorisation system. • Documentary evidence of research projects made public.	• Administrative data/ desktop review.
	A31. Collaborate with the science community (including through the National Marine Science Plan Committee and National Environmental Science Program) and other marine park users to assist in improving the understanding of marine park values, pressures and management effectiveness	• Joint science initiatives and research collaborations delivered to assist in improving the understanding of marine park values, pressures and management effectiveness.	• Outputs delivered over the course of the plan. • Most stakeholders feel collaborations with the science community have assisted in improving the understanding of marine park values, pressures and management effectiveness.	• Documentary evidence of joint science initiatives and research collaborations. • Feedback from stakeholders (science community).	• Administrative data/ desktop review (e.g. via research project reports). • Stakeholder engagement conducted by ORIMA.
	A32. Collaborate with the science community and other government agencies to increase the use of innovative and effective technology and systems including sensor technology	• Collaborations with the scientific community and government agencies to support the use of innovative and effective technology	• Most stakeholders feel collaborations with the science community have increased use of innovative and effective technologies	• Documentary evidence of joint initiatives to increase the use of innovative and effective technology and	• Administrative data/ desktop review. • Stakeholder engagement conducted by ORIMA.

	Actions/ Outcomes	Output(s)	Measure of success	Indicator(s)	Data source
		and systems including sensor technology.	and systems over the course of the plan. • Evidence of increased use of innovative and effective technologies and systems over the course of the plan.	systems including sensor technology. • Feedback from key stakeholders (science community).	
	Actions specific to the North-west Network				
	A33. Monitor social and economic uses and their benefits and impacts on marine parks in the Network	• Social and economic monitoring being conducted. • Analysis conducted on benefits and impacts.	• Output delivered in a timely and consistent manner.	• Documentary evidence of social/ economic impact monitoring.	• Administrative data/ desktop review.
	A34. Monitor the condition of important habitats such as reef systems Ningaloo, Mermaid, Kimberley, Ashmore and Cartier Marine Parks, and their vulnerability to climate change	• Monitoring of important habitats conducted, with attention to vulnerabilities to climate change.	• Output delivered in a timely and consistent manner.	• Documentary evidence of habitat monitoring (e.g. Ningaloo, Mermaid, Kimberley, Ashmore and Cartier Marine Parks).	• Administrative data/ desktop review.
	A35. Monitor the impact of invasive species on marine park values and the effectiveness of management. For example, tropical fire ant impacts on seabirds and turtles at Ashmore Reef Marine Park, and the effectiveness of management such as baiting	• Impact of invasive species on marine park values and the effectiveness of management monitored.	• Output delivered in a timely and consistent manner.	• Documentary evidence of invasive species monitoring (e.g. tropical fire ant impacts on seabirds and turtles at Ashmore Reef Marine Park).	• Administrative data/ desktop review. • Stakeholder engagement conducted by ORIMA.
	A36. Collaborate with other Commonwealth, state and territory government agencies, marine park users and the science sector to support long-term monitoring (e.g., monitoring of coral reefs, protected species and the effects of fishing on marine parks)	• Long-term monitoring partnerships and programs with Commonwealth, state and territory government agencies,	• Outputs delivered and maintained over life of plan. • Most relevant stakeholders agree that collaborative	• Documentary evidence of monitoring partnerships.	• Administrative data/ desktop review. • Stakeholder engagement (Commonwealth, state and territory

	Actions/ Outcomes	Output(s)	Measure of success	Indicator(s)	Data source
		marine park users and the science sector.	long-term monitoring programs have been supported and sustained.	• Stakeholder feedback.	government agencies, marine park users and the science sector) conducted by ORIMA.
	A37. Investigate opportunities to extend citizen science programs	• Expanded or new citizen science programs considered.	• Output delivered.	• Documentary evidence of investigations to extend citizen science programs.	• Administrative data/ desktop review.
Management Plan Outcomes	O7. Increase understanding of marine park values, pressures and adequacy of responses	• N/A	• Survey-based metrics show an increase in understanding of marine park values, pressures and adequacy of responses. • Most stakeholders report that awareness, understanding of marine park values, pressures and adequacy of responses has increased within their networks/ organisations/ interest groups.	• Relevant survey questions addressing understanding of marine park values, pressures and adequacy of responses. • Stakeholder feedback.	• Park user surveys - National Environmental Science Program (NESP) 2021 boat ramp surveys and more recent surveys (repeat survey currently in field). • Stakeholder engagement conducted by ORIMA.
	O8. Improve understanding of the effectiveness of marine park management in protecting park values	• N/A	• Survey-based metrics show improved understanding of the effectiveness of	• Relevant survey addressing understanding of the effectiveness of	• Park user surveys. • Stakeholder engagement conducted by ORIMA.

			marine park management in protecting park values. • Most stakeholders report an improved understanding of the effectiveness of marine park management in protecting park values within their networks/ organisations/ interest groups.	marine park management in protecting park values. • Stakeholder feedback.	
	O9. Informed decision-making and improved evidence-based decisions	• N/A	• Most stakeholders report informed decision-making and improved evidence-based decisions.	• Stakeholder feedback.	• Stakeholder engagement conducted by ORIMA.

	Actions/ Outcomes	Output(s)	Measure of success	Indicator(s)	Data source
Management program – Assessments and Authorisations					
Management Plan Actions	A38. Develop and apply best-practice approaches to regulation and decision-making in the authorisation of activities within marine parks. This includes developing policy to ensure assessment and authorisation requirements are clearly articulated and that decision making is robust, consistently applied, and transparent to all marine park users	• Regulatory policy and procedural guidance developed and implemented based on best-practice approaches. • Clear decision-making criteria established and applied (e.g. robust, consistent, transparent).	• Output delivered in a timely manner. • Most stakeholders report that decisions are robust, consistent and transparent.	• Documentary evidence of development and application of best-practice approaches to regulation and decision-making. • Stakeholder feedback.	• Administrative data/ desktop review (e.g. regulatory policy documentation). • Stakeholder engagement conducted by ORIMA.

	Actions/ Outcomes	Output(s)	Measure of success	Indicator(s)	Data source
	A39. Collaborate with industry to investigate innovative technologies and systems (including vessel monitoring systems) that can assist businesses and individuals to comply with regulatory requirements	• Investigations of innovative compliance technologies and systems to assist businesses and individuals to comply with regulatory requirements. • Collaboration initiatives with industry in relation to compliance technologies and systems.	• Outputs delivered over course of the plan. • Most stakeholders agree there has been adequate action taken to investigate innovative technologies and systems (including vessel monitoring systems) that can assist businesses and individuals to comply with regulatory requirements.	• Documentary evidence of collaborations. • Stakeholder feedback.	• Administrative data/ desktop review (e.g. compliance data). • Stakeholder engagement (with businesses and individuals) conducted by ORIMA.
	A40. Develop an effective and efficient process to assess new technologies and gear types to allow for the use of new equipment during the life of this plan if appropriate	• Process and criteria developed for assessment of new gear/ technology to be used.	• Output delivered in a timely manner. • Most stakeholders express the process is effective and efficient in assessing new technologies and gear types to allow for the use of new equipment during the life of this plan.	• Documentary evidence of process. • Stakeholder feedback.	• Administrative data. • Stakeholder engagement conducted by ORIMA.
	A41. Develop a guarantee of service for the regulated community that includes a commitment to work with key marine park users and interest groups whose interests are likely to be affected by regulatory decisions	• Service guarantee developed and publicly available.	• Output delivered in a timely manner. • Most key marine park users and interest groups agree that they have been appropriately	• Documentary evidence of service guarantee publication. • Key stakeholder feedback.	• Administrative data/ desktop review. • Stakeholder engagement (marine park users and interest groups) conducted by ORIMA.

	Actions/ Outcomes	Output(s)	Measure of success	Indicator(s)	Data source
			consulted regarding regulatory decisions.		
	A42. Develop a customer focused online authorisation system for marine park users that includes publishing authorisations issued by Parks Australia on its website	• Online authorisation system developed and operational. • Authorisations published online.	• Output delivered in a timely manner. • Transparent publication of all authorisations.	• Documentary evidence of system development. • Documentary evidence of authorisations published.	• Administrative data/ desktop review.
	Actions specific to the North-west Network				
	A43. Issue authorisations—a permit, class approval, activity licence or lease—for activities in the marine park assessed as acceptable either by the Director or another government or industry policy, plan or program accepted by the Director	• Authorisations issued for activities in the marine park that are assessed as acceptable by the Director or align with an approved government or industry policy, plan or program accepted by the Director.	• Outputs delivered in a timely manner.	• Documentary evidence. • Stakeholder feedback.	• Administrative data/ desktop review (e.g. evidence of authorisations such as permits, class approvals, activity licences or lease). • Stakeholder engagement (marine park users and interest groups) conducted by ORIMA.
	A44. Work with other Commonwealth, state and territory government agencies to improve experiences and consistency of approaches for people seeking authorisations	• Collaborations with Commonwealth, state and territory government agencies to improve experiences of people seeking authorisations.	• Output delivered. • Most relevant stakeholders believe consistency of experiences has increased.	• Documentary evidence of alignment between government agency authorisation processes. • Stakeholder feedback.	• Administrative data/ desktop review (e.g. evidence of collaboration to increase consistency of authorisation processes).

	Actions/ Outcomes	Output(s)	Measure of success	Indicator(s)	Data source
		• Consistent approaches achieved for authorisations.			• Stakeholder engagement conducted by ORIMA.

Management Plan Outcomes	O10. Assessments and authorisations ensure ongoing protection of marine park values through the management of activities in marine parks	• N/A	• Most stakeholders feel assessments and authorisations have ensured ongoing protection of marine park values through the management of activities in marine parks.	• Stakeholder feedback.	• Stakeholder engagement conducted by ORIMA.

	Actions/ Outcomes	Output(s)	Measure of success	Indicator(s)	Data source
Management program – Parks protection and management					
Management Plan Actions	A45. Apply a risk-based assessment process to prioritise park protection and management actions	• Risk-based assessment process developed and applied to prioritise park protection and management actions.	• Output delivered in a timely manner.	• Documentary evidence of framework development.	• Administrative data/ desktop review (e.g. risk assessment reports).
	A46. Develop an Australian Marine Parks critical incident strategy in collaboration with the Australian Maritime Safety Authority (AMSA) and other responsible agencies to respond to critical incidents	• Critical incident strategy developed and implemented. • Collaboration with AMSA and relevant agencies established.	• Output delivered in a timely manner.	• Documentary evidence of strategy completion.	• Administrative data/ desktop review (e.g. strategy documentation and incident response reports).
	A47. Develop a mooring and anchoring strategy to protect marine park values and improve visitor experience	• Mooring and anchoring strategy developed and implemented in consideration of	• Output delivered in a timely manner.	• Documentary evidence of strategy completion.	• Administrative data/ desktop review (e.g. strategy documentation).

	Actions/ Outcomes	Output(s)	Measure of success	Indicator(s)	Data source
		marine park values and visitor experience.			
	A48. Support the removal of marine debris and ghost nets from marine parks through partnerships with Commonwealth, state and territory government agencies and other organisations involved in the management of marine debris	• Marine debris partnerships and removal programs delivered.	• Outputs delivered in a timely manner. • Most stakeholders believe effective collaboration achieved to support removal of marine debris and/ or ghost nets.	• Documentary evidence of collaborative initiatives or programs to support the removal of marine debris and ghost nets. • Feedback from stakeholders.	• Administrative data/ desktop review (e.g. debris removal data, evidence of partnerships). • Stakeholder engagement conducted by ORIMA.
	A49. Contribute to actions, where appropriate, that support Australia's obligations under international agreements and national environmental law (e.g., World Heritage Convention, Ramsar Convention, recovery plans, wildlife conservation plans and threat abatement plans)	• Actions that support Australia's obligations under international agreements and national environmental law.	• Outputs delivered. • Most stakeholders feel appropriate actions have been taken to support Australia's obligations under international agreements and national environmental law.	• Documentary evidence of actions taken to support Australia's obligations under international agreements and national environmental law. • Feeback from stakeholders.	• Administrative data/ desktop review (e.g. International/ national reporting documentation). • Stakeholder engagement conducted by ORIMA.
	Actions specific to the North-west Network				
	A50. Enable infrastructure such as moorings to protect coral reefs and enhance visitor safety	• Infrastructure (e.g. moorings) established and maintained.	• Outputs delivered at key visitor sites. • Most key stakeholders report improvements to reef protection and/ or visitor safety.	• Documentary evidence of infrastructure delivered. • Stakeholder feedback.	• Administrative data/ desktop review (e.g. infrastructure records). • Stakeholder engagement conducted by ORIMA.

	Actions/ Outcomes	Output(s)	Measure of success	Indicator(s)	Data source
	A51. Collaborate with and support other agencies that undertake invasive and protected species management and marine debris removal (e.g., biosecurity assessments, research, removal of ghost nets)	• Collaborations to support other agencies that undertake invasive and protected species management and marine debris removal.	• Outputs delivered in a timely manner. • Most stakeholders express there have been effective joint programs concerning invasive and protected species management and marine debris removal.	• Documentary evidence of collaborative programs. • Key stakeholder feedback.	• Administrative data/ desktop review (e.g. program documentation). • Stakeholder engagement conducted by ORIMA.
	A52. Work with other Commonwealth, state and territory government agencies to respond to environmental incidents and accidents	• Joint incident responses.	• Joint incident responses actioned when appropriate. • Most stakeholders feel effective collaboration has taken place to respond to environmental incidents and accidents.	• Documentary evidence of joint incidence responses. • Key stakeholder feedback.	• Administrative data/ desktop review (e.g. incident reports). • Stakeholder engagement conducted by ORIMA.
	A53. Collaborate with Traditional Owners and First Nations Ranger groups to undertake management actions	• Collaborative management activities implemented with Traditional Owners and First Nations Ranger groups.	• Outputs delivered. • Most Traditional Owner and First Nations Ranger partners report adequate involvement in management actions.	• Documentary evidence of collaborative management actions. • Feedback from Traditional Owners and First Nations Ranger groups.	• Administrative data/ desktop review. • First Nations engagement conducted by ORIMA.
Management Plan Outcomes	O11. Impact of pressures on marine park values are minimised as far as reasonably practicable	• N/A	• Documentary evidence of minimisation of	• Documentary evidence.	• Administrative data/ desktop review.

			pressures on marine park values. • Most stakeholders feel the impact of pressures on marine park values has been minimised as far as reasonably practicable.	• Stakeholder feedback.	• Stakeholder engagement conducted by ORIMA.

	Actions/ Outcomes	Output(s)	Measure of success	Indicator(s)	Data source
Management program – Compliance					
Management Plan Actions	A54. Apply a risk-based approach to compliance planning, targeted enforcement and compliance auditing	• Risk-based compliance approach developed and applied.	• Output delivered in a timely manner.	• Documentary evidence of risk-based compliance planning, enforcement and auditing.	• Administrative data/ desktop review.
	A55. Collaborate with Australian, state and territory government agencies by sharing assets and information	• Collaborations with Australian, state and territory government agencies by sharing assets and information.	• Outputs delivered in a timely and consistent manner. • Most stakeholders report effective collaboration has occurred.	• Documentary evidence of sharing of assets and information with other government agencies (Australian and state/ territory). • Stakeholder feedback.	• Administrative data/ desktop review. • Stakeholder engagement conducted by ORIMA.
	A56. Investigate the use of new technologies and warning systems to assist in the detection of potential illegal activities	• New technologies assessed, trialled or implemented to assist in the detection of	• Outputs delivered consistently.	• Documentary evidence of assessment, trialling or implementation of new technologies to	• Administrative data/ desktop review.

	Actions/ Outcomes	Output(s)	Measure of success	Indicator(s)	Data source
		potential illegal activities.		assist in the detection of potential illegal activities.	
	A57. Work with marine park users to promote understanding of the rules for activities and how to comply	• Promotion of rules and activities relating to how to comply.	• Outputs delivered consistently. • Most relevant stakeholders feel they have been adequately engaged regarding marine park rules and how to comply.	• Documentary evidence of efforts to work with marine park users to promote understanding of the rules for activities and how to comply. • Stakeholder feedback.	• Administrative data/ desktop review. • Stakeholder engagement conducted by ORIMA.
	Actions specific to the North-west Network				
	A58. Work with other Commonwealth, state and territory government agencies, particularly where parks adjoin state or territory marine parks, in compliance planning, including implementing actions to deter illegal activities and encourage voluntary compliance	• Joint compliance planning undertaken with focus on deterring illegal activities and encouraging voluntary compliance. • Actions implemented towards this end.	• Outputs delivered in a timely and consistent manner. • Most stakeholders consider joint compliance planning to be effective.	• Documentary evidence of shared compliance planning. • Stakeholder feedback.	• Administrative data/ desktop review. • Stakeholder engagement (Commonwealth, state and territory government agencies) conducted by ORIMA.
	A59. Collaborate with Commonwealth, state and territory government agencies in surveillance, including water and aerial patrols	• Joint surveillance actions, including water and aerial patrols.	• Outputs delivered in a timely and consistent manner. • Most stakeholders consider joint surveillance actions to be effective.	• Documentary evidence of joint surveillance actions, including water and aerial patrols.	• Administrative data/ desktop review (e.g. patrol logs, surveillance collaboration actions, reports or evidence). • Stakeholder engagement (Commonwealth, state and territory government agencies) conducted by ORIMA.

	Actions/ Outcomes	Output(s)	Measure of success	Indicator(s)	Data source

Management Plan Outcomes	O12. Improved user awareness of marine park rules	• N/A	• Survey-based metrics show an increase in awareness of marine park rules. • Most stakeholders report that awareness of marine park rules has improved.	• Relevant survey responses addressing awareness of marine park rules. • Stakeholder feedback.	• Park user surveys - National Environmental Science Program (NESP) 2021 boat ramp surveys and more recent surveys (repeat survey currently in field). • Stakeholder engagement conducted by ORIMA.
	O13. Increased levels of voluntary compliance and self-regulation by marine park users	• N/A	• Evidence of increased voluntary compliance and self-regulation by users of marine parks. • Most stakeholders perceive voluntary compliance to have increased.	• Survey based metrics of voluntary compliance attitudes and behaviours (including self-regulation). • Documentary evidence of self-regulation. • Stakeholder feedback.	• Park user surveys. • Administrative data/ desktop review (e.g. compliance monitoring records/audits). • Stakeholder engagement conducted by ORIMA.
	O14. High overall levels of compliance with the rules by marine park users	• N/A	• High levels of compliance over course of plan. • Most stakeholders perceive compliance	• Survey based metrics of compliance attitudes and behaviours. • Documentary records of rates of	• Park user surveys. • Administrative data/ desktop review (e.g. compliance monitoring records/audits).

			with the rules to be high.	compliance/ non-compliance (e.g. investigations). • Stakeholder feedback.	Stakeholder engagement conducted by ORIMA.
	O15. A decrease in the number of non-compliances	• N/A	• Decreasing trend in non-compliance incidents over the course of the plan. • Most stakeholders consider non-compliance to be decreasing.	• Documentary records of number of non-compliances throughout the life of the plan. • Stakeholder feedback.	• Administrative data/ desktop review (e.g. compliance monitoring records/audits). • Stakeholder engagement conducted by ORIMA.