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

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

Date: 15 July 2026

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.*

Contents

Executive Summary 4
1. Introduction 10
1.1. Background 10
1.2. Project objectives 11
1.3. Methodology 12
1.4. Understanding this report 15
1.5. Understanding the evaluation framework 16
2. North Marine Parks Network context 18
2.1. About the North Marine Parks Network 18
2.2. Values 19
2.3. Pressures 20
2.4. Management 21
3. Findings relating to overall evaluation questions 22
3.1. Overall findings 22
3.2. Specific findings about management plan design: Level of detail provided, plan flexibility, and efficacy of monitoring and review mechanisms 24
3.3. Findings relevant to future plan development 24
4. Findings: Communication, Education and Awareness Program 26
4.1. Overall findings about the efficacy of program implementation 26
Strengths and achievements 26
Barriers, challenges and limiting factors 26
4.2. Outcome effectiveness 27
4.3. Specific management plan actions 28
5. Findings: Tourism and Visitor Experience Program 36
5.1. Overall findings about the efficacy of program implementation 36
Strengths and achievements 36
Barriers, challenges and limiting factors 36
5.2. Outcome effectiveness 37
5.3. Specific management plan actions 38
6. Findings: Indigenous Engagement Program 45
6.1. Overall findings about the efficacy of program implementation 45

Strengths and achievements 45
Barriers, challenges and limiting factors 45
6.2. Outcome effectiveness 46
7. Findings: Marine Science Program 57
7.1. Overall findings about the efficacy of program implementation 57
Strengths and achievements 57
Barriers, challenges and limiting factors 57
7.2. Outcome effectiveness 58
7.3. Specific management plan actions 60
8. Findings: Assessments and Authorisations Program 72
8.1. Overall findings about the efficacy of program implementation 72
Strengths and achievements 72
Barriers, challenges and limiting factors 72
8.2. Outcome effectiveness 73
8.3. Specific management plan actions 73
9. Findings: Parks Protection and Management Program 80
9.1. Overall findings about the efficacy of program implementation 80
Strengths and achievements 80
Barriers, challenges and limiting factors 80
9.2. Outcome effectiveness 81
9.3. Specific management plan actions 81
10. Findings: Compliance Program 87
10.1. Overall findings about the efficacy of program implementation 87
Strengths and achievements 87
Barriers, challenges and limiting factors 87
10.2. Outcome effectiveness 88
10.3. Specific management plan actions 91
11. Conclusions 98
APPENDIX A: Performance assessment tools 99
APPENDIX B: Performance Information Matrix 103

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 Australian Government**.

For Commonwealth managed marine parks, the '*Environment Protection and Biodiversity Conservation Act 1999'* (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 Marine Parks Network** (herein referred to as the North 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=53 stakeholders and First Nations peoples participated in the evaluation of the North Network, speaking from either a perspective specific to the North Network, or from a national perspective with relevance to the Network.

FINDINGS RELATING TO OVERALL EVALUATION QUESTIONS

The **North 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 Network 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'*.

- **Strong prioritisation of resourcing** – the evaluation found that Parks Australia had adopted an appropriately targeted approach to management plan implementation, based on early work to assess the relevance of each management program to the values, pressures and unique needs of the North Network and consultation with the North Marine Parks Advisory Committee (NMPAC).
- **Strong First Nations engagement** – stakeholders broadly commended Parks Australia's efforts to engage with Traditional Owners and First Nations Ranger groups via culturally responsive partnerships.
- **Progress in ecological baseline data collection** – starting from a very low evidence base, the collection of baseline data was identified as priority for the North Network, and the evaluation found that significant progress had been made in this area.
- **Collaboration and partnerships with the science community, private enterprise and government agencies** – such as via the National Environmental Science Program (NESP) and the Australian Institute of Marine Science (AIMS).

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

- **Certain stakeholder groups feeling that their interests were de-prioritised** – while some efforts were made to engage with stakeholders such as conservation groups and commercial and recreational fishers, these stakeholders tended to report that meaningful communications and collaborations were limited, reducing their ability to contribute their knowledge and expertise to park management.
- **Remote and offshore nature of the parks** – the isolated and deep-sea nature of many of the marine parks, as well as the dangerous fauna found in the North Network, made implementation challenging, particularly for tourism and compliance. Limited accessibility as well as resource constraints further hindered management of these parks.
- **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. In addition, limited baseline data at the commencement of the management plan also posed challenges.
- **Appropriately balancing protection of ecological, social and economic values** – the evaluation found that balancing competing stakeholder interests in the North Network will be an ongoing challenge, with a range of diverse views identified in relation to the balance of protection of ecological and other values.
- **Limited effectiveness of NMPAC process** – both NMPAC 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 NETWORK MANAGEMENT PLAN

The **specific program grades indicated positive progress overall**. Two programs were assessed as 'good', three were assessed as 'good with some concerns', one was assessed as having 'significant concerns' and another was 'critical'. Specific findings for each program are outlined overleaf.

Communications, Education and Awareness Program

Good with some concerns

Overall, the grade for the actions in the Communications, Education and Awareness Program was assessed as 'good with some concerns', with the outcome of the program assessed as 'partially met'. Of the eight planned actions, three were assessed as 'completed', four as 'partially completed' and one as 'not commenced'.

Whilst more engaged stakeholders (such as grant recipients) and First Nations partners reported high levels of satisfaction with communication, education and awareness efforts in the North, other stakeholder groups expressed lower satisfaction with engagement. Concerns were also raised about the reach and effectiveness of communication regarding the North Network among marine park users and the broader community.

Tourism and Visitor Experience Program

Critical

Overall, the grade for the actions in the Tourism and Visitor Experience Program was assessed as 'critical', with the overall outcomes of the management program rated as 'not met' or 'unknown'. Of the ten planned actions, only half were assessed as 'completed' or 'ongoing' – all others were assessed as 'partially completed' or 'not commenced'.

However, the evaluation found that this assessment does not indicate poor performance by Parks Australia. Instead, it reflects the limited relevance of this program to the values of the North Network and the appropriate decision to focus resources and efforts on programs that are more aligned with the region's specific needs and priorities.

Indigenous Engagement Program

Good

Overall, the grade for the Indigenous Engagement Program was assessed as 'good'. The outcomes of the program were assessed as 'fully met' or 'substantially met', and six out of eight of the planned actions were assessed as 'completed' or 'ongoing'. Of the remaining two, one was assessed as 'partially completed' and one 'not commenced'.

Feedback from engagement with First Nations peoples and stakeholders highlighted this program implementation as a key strength of plan delivery in the North Network.

Marine Science Program

Good with some concerns

The Marine Science Program implementation was assessed as 'good with some concerns', with all three of the overall outcomes of the management program rated as 'partially met'. Of the eleven planned actions, seven were assessed as 'completed' or 'ongoing', and four as 'partially completed'.

Whilst the evaluation identified significant efforts in relation to the establishment of baseline ecological datasets (which was noted as important given that the North Network had a very limited scientific evidence base at the start of the plan), much of the data collected was felt to be either poorly suited to measuring management effectiveness or insufficiently synthesised and communicated in a way that could effectively inform decision-making.

Assessments and Authorisations Program

Good with some concerns

Overall, the grade for the Assessments and Authorisations Program was assessed as 'good with some concerns'. The outcome of the program was assessed as 'partially met', and five of the seven actions were assessed as either 'completed' or 'ongoing', with one assessed as 'partially completed' and one 'not commenced'.

While Action 40 (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) was assessed as 'not commenced', this was not considered to be a significant gap as other evidence was provided of new technologies and gear types being adopted where appropriate – hence suggesting that the non-completion of this action did not impede the overall aims of the management program.

Parks Protection and Management Program

Good

The Parks Protection and Management Program was assessed as 'good', 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 deemed 'partially completed'. For these actions, the evidence suggests that efforts were trending positively.

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.

Compliance Program	
Significant concerns	Overall, the grade for the actions in the Compliance Program was assessed as having 'significant concerns'. Of the four planned outcomes, two were assessed as 'partially met', one 'substantially met' and one 'not met'. Of the six planned actions, three were assessed as 'completed' or 'ongoing' and three were assessed as 'partially completed'. Stakeholders identified several strengths and achievements of the Compliance Program, including the effective use of new technologies. However, they also raised some key challenges, such as difficulties in measuring voluntary compliance, the practical barriers to enforcement in remote offshore parks, and perceptions among some commercial fishers that the program's early approach to compliance lacked sufficient focus on education and awareness-raising.

IMPLICATIONS FOR FUTURE PLAN DEVELOPMENT

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

- **Demonstrating how robust evidence has been used, particularly for zoning decisions** – it was expected that any future management plans would clearly draw from the evidence and data now available. Such an approach should be transparent and well-communicated to ensure clarity and explain why decisions 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 cultural and traditional values and address the community's distinct needs.
- **Embedding cultural perspectives 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.
    - Providing more informal avenues for engagement with First Nations community members – to ensure inclusive engagement.
- **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 providing simplified toolkits and/ or raising awareness of summaries of management plans to improve usability and accessibility for stakeholders.

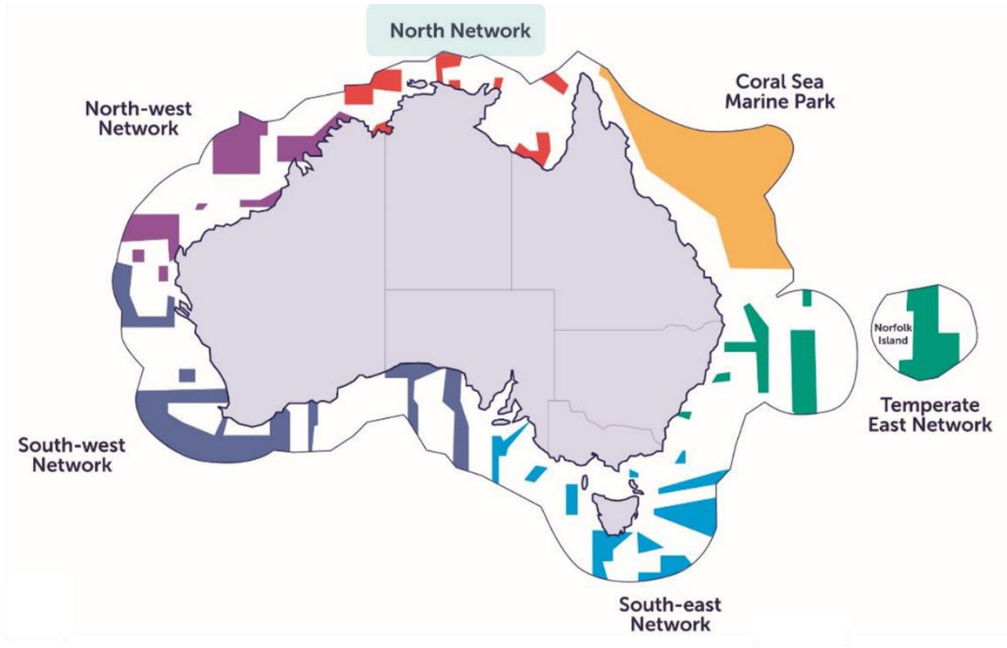
- **Responding to the '30 by 30' commitment** – including considering implications of potential changes to zoning arrangements. In doing so, it will be important to clearly communicate the evidence-based need and benefits of commitment to '30 by 30' in an Australian context.
- **Aligning with state management plans** – if possible, considering synchronising review and renewal cycles to enable simultaneous consultation and communication about changes, as well as further collaboration to streamline permit applications.

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 Marine Parks Network (herein referred to as the North Network). ***Figure 2*** shows the six AMPs/ AMP networks, with the North Network shown in red.

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 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 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 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 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, 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 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 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

Prior to the commencement of the external stakeholder engagement, the project was submitted for review to the ORIMA 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.

1.3.3. Stakeholder engagement

TARGET AUDIENCE

The target audience for the engagement was stakeholders and First Nations peoples with experience or expertise relevant to either the North 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, and consultation with Parks Australia staff, AMPAC 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]

Of the **n=195** total participants, **n=26** spoke from a perspective specific to the North Network, and a further **n=27** spoke from a national perspective with relevance to the North Network. Each of these participants fell into one or more of the key stakeholder groups identified during the stakeholder

---

[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)

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 Marine Parks Network	Parks Australia staff	*n=4*
	State government agencies	*n=4*
	First Nations peoples/ organisations	*n=8*
	Researchers/ data custodians	*n=3*
	Industry and community groups: Commercial and recreational fishing representatives	*n=6*
	Industry and community groups: Offshore energy representatives	*n=1*
	Industry and community groups: Conservation/ environmental organisations	*n=2*
	AMPAC Members	*n=7*
Across all Parks/ Park Networks	Parks Australia	*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 adopted 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. Notably, some stakeholders from remote or isolated areas, such as the Tiwi Islands and Cape York, did not participate, which may have resulted in gaps in perspectives. Representation from the North Marine Parks Advisory Committee was also relatively low, which should be considered when interpreting findings in relation to the function of the advisory committee.
- **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 conclusions, including 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 in Appendix A.

1.5. Understanding the evaluation framework

There are three components to the evaluation framework, outlined in the sections overleaf. 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 overleaf).
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 plan 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

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 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 Marine Parks Network context

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

2.1. About the North Marine Parks Network

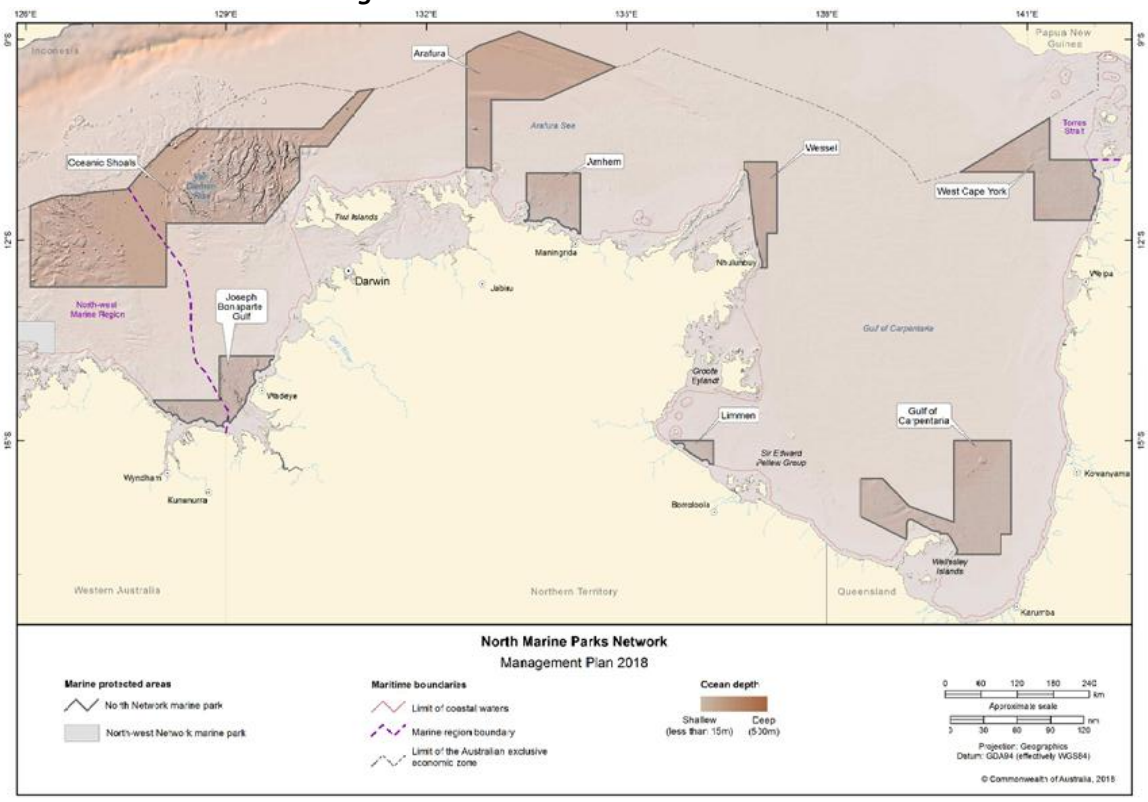
The North Marine Parks Network extends from the western Cape York Peninsula to the border between the Northern Territory and Western Australia. This region encompasses approximately 625,689 km^2 of tropical waters, including the Gulf of Carpentaria, Arafura Sea, and Timor Sea. The network itself covers 157,480 km^2 and includes eight marine parks:

- Joseph Bonaparte Gulf Marine Park
- Oceanic Shoals Marine Park
- Arafura Marine Park
- Arnhem Marine Park
- Wessel Marine Park
- Limmen Marine Park
- Gulf of Carpentaria Marine Park
- West Cape York Marine Park

The North Network is characterised by shallow-water tropical marine ecosystems and a large area of continental shelf. Habitats include coral reefs, soft sediments, shelf, canyons and limestone pinnacles. The region is subject to extreme tidal regimes, monsoonal climatic patterns and a high incidence of cyclones. It is influenced by currents driven largely by strong winds and tides, with only minor influences from oceanographic currents.

The region has high species diversity and globally significant populations of internationally threatened species. Coral reef systems of the region support some endemic species, but flora and fauna are generally typical of the Indo-West Pacific. Coral, invertebrates and phytoplankton are all highly diverse, and fish such as snapper, emperor and groper are common higher-order predators of the coral and rocky reef habitats. The region supports biologically important areas for a range of spectacular and unique species – seabirds, sharks, dolphins, and dugong (*Dugong dugon*). Six of the world's seven species of marine turtle are known to occur in the region. Other species known to occur in the region include species of sawfish, sea snake, saltwater crocodile, seahorse and pipefish. A map of the North Network is shown in Figure 4 overleaf.

Figure 4: North 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 Network values include:

- **Natural values** – the network encompasses key ecological features such as coral reefs, carbonate banks, gulfs, shelf breaks, slopes, canyons, and plateaux and a range of unique species including seabirds, sharks, dolphins, dugong (*Dugong dugon*) and six of the world's seven species of marine turtle.
- **Cultural values** – Sea Country is integral to First Nations cultural identity, health and wellbeing, and First Nations people continue to assert inherited rights and responsibilities over Sea Country within the North Network. Many groups have prepared Land and Sea Country Management Plans and undertake work to protect and monitor the health of culturally significant and threatened species. Some groups have dedicated Indigenous Protected Areas (IPAs) over Sea Country, overlapping the Wessel and Gulf of Carpentaria Marine Parks. In the Torres Strait, in recognition of the cultural value of dugong, a dugong sanctuary has been voluntarily established under the Torres Strait Fisheries Act 1984. Native title determinations have also been made over Sea Country within the North Network.

[5] *Director of National Parks. (2018). North Marine Parks Network Management Plan 2018. Australian Marine Parks. https://australianmarineparks.gov.au/static/248a8e9a7301e5782fd92d748277acfe/amp-document-north-management-plan-2018.pdf*

- **Heritage values** – the region contains historic shipwrecks of significance to Australian maritime history, including A.D.C (1886), Ada (1886), Douglas Mawson (1923), Mystery (1902) and Wild Duck (1876).
- **Socio-economic values** – industries of national economic importance include shipping, port-related activities, commercial fishing, aquaculture and offshore mining operations are industries of national economic significance. Marine tourism such as charter fishing, snorkelling, diving and wildlife watching are also important commercial activities that offer unique visitor experiences on reefs, islands and in deep water environments.

2.3. Pressures

Operating in alignment with Marine Park values enables the management of Marine Park pressures. The North Marine Parks Network faces a range of pressures including:

- **Climate change** impacts including changes in temperature, sea level, acidification, ocean currents, increased storm frequency and intensity, species range extensions or local extinctions. Examples of habitats, key ecological features, and species vulnerable to the effects of climate change include the submerged coral reefs of the Gulf of Carpentaria and pinnacles of the Bonaparte Basin, and species of 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 habitats and species vulnerable to changes in hydrology include reef and seagrass habitats, the Gulf of Carpentaria coastal zone, and species of sawfish, shark and dugong.
- **Extraction of living resources** due to unlawful/ unsustainable fishing practices, and the subsequent disturbance to key ecological features and species vulnerable to such impacts. Examples of habitats, key ecological features and species vulnerable to such impacts include reef and shoal habitats, the pinnacles of the Bonaparte Basin, and species of shark, sawfish, dolphin, marine turtle, sea snake, 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, the tributary canyons of the Arafura Depression and Gulf of Carpentaria coastal zone, and species of marine turtle, fish, sea snake, dolphin and dugong.
- **Human presence** via activities such as boating, camping, diving and snorkelling has 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, marine turtles and seabirds.
- **Invasive species** introduced via key sources including vessel ballast and bilge water discharge, biofouling, accidental or deliberate species transport, and land-based activities, with impacts including predation, habitat damage and competition with native species. Examples of habitats, key ecological features, and species vulnerable to the impacts of invasive species include reef habitats and species of nesting marine turtle, seabird and saltwater crocodile.
- **Marine pollution** including the emission of noise or light, marine debris (for example, plastics and lost fishing gear), and discharge of oil, chemicals or waste. Pollution can be detrimental to marine life, leading to contamination of ecosystems, entanglement, or ingestion by marine species. Examples of habitats, key ecological features and species vulnerable to marine pollution

include islands, reefs and other shallow water habitats, the Gulf of Carpentaria basin, the plateaux and saddle north-west of the Wellesley Islands, and species of dolphin, whale, marine turtle, sawfish, shark, seabird and dugong.

2.4. Management

The North Network is managed by Parks Australia staff within the Marine and Island Parks Branch, on behalf of the Director of National Parks. This is done in collaboration with:

- **Traditional Owners and First Nations people**
- **Government agencies** (both Commonwealth and state/ territory and local)
- **North Marine Parks Advisory Committee (NMPAC)** – an expert advisory committee representing a range of perspectives relevant to marine park management in the North Marine Parks Network. The committee provides strategic advice to Parks Australia on marine park management issues at a regional level
- **Scientific community and other researchers** (e.g. anthropologists, archaeologists), and
- **Industry** (e.g. some collaboration with fishing and oil and gas industries).

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

The North Network demonstrated positive progress in implementing actions and achieving intended outcomes across its management programs. However, further work is required to enhance effectiveness in certain program areas. In relation to program assessments, two programs were rated as 'good', three as 'good with some concerns', one as having 'significant concerns', and one as 'critical'.

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

- **Strong prioritisation of resourcing** – the evaluation found that Parks Australia had adopted an appropriately targeted approach to management plan implementation, based on early work to assess the relevance of each management program to the values, pressures and unique needs of the North Network and consultation with the North Marine Parks Advisory Committee (NMPAC). Rather than seeking to progress all programs equally, limited resources were directed towards the three areas considered most significant to the network: Communications, Education and Awareness; Indigenous Engagement; and Marine Science (with Compliance and Assessments & Authorisation the focus of a centralised compliance team). This prioritisation appears to have supported more substantive progress in these areas than would likely have been possible had resources been distributed evenly across all programs irrespective of their relative relevance or strategic importance to the network.
- **Strong First Nations engagement** – stakeholders broadly commended Parks Australia's efforts to engage with Traditional Owners and First Nations Ranger groups via culturally responsive partnerships. Given the significant overlap between Australian Marine Parks (AMPs) and Sea Country in the North Network, partnering with Traditional Owners and First Nations Ranger groups to manage the marine parks was viewed as essential to management plan success. More specifically, First Nations partners highlighted the following effective elements of Parks Australia's culturally responsive and appropriate engagement efforts:
    - **Regular, respectful and informative face-to-face meetings on Country**, including in remote areas where some Traditional Owner groups resided.
    - **Regular communication with trusted community representatives and leaders**, who were able to convey information to and from community on a more dynamic basis.
    - An **emphasis on establishing sustainable, long-term relationships with Traditional Owner groups** to ensure long-term success in engagement.
    - **Flexible timeframes** to account for the necessary 'trust building' phase of any meaningful engagement with Traditional Owner groups.
    - An emphasis on **shared priority for protecting ecological, social and cultural values.**

  Through the evaluation, First Nations partners expressed strong views that Parks Australia's adherence to the above principles of engagement were unique for a relationship with a

government agency, allowing for the creation of sustainable, respectful and meaningful relationships to support marine park management.

- **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 subsumed into a broader science strategy, with stakeholder feedback suggesting that clearer and more tailored strategies in these areas of management could support a more consistent and effective approach across the management plans.
- **Progress in ecological baseline data collection** – starting from a very low evidence base, the collection of baseline data was identified as priority for the North Network, and the evaluation found that significant progress had been made in this area.
- **Collaboration and partnerships with the science community, private enterprise and government agencies** – such as via the National Environmental Science Program (NESP) and the Australian Institute of marine science (AIMS).

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

- **Certain stakeholder groups feeling that their interests were de-prioritised** – while some efforts were identified to meaningfully engage with stakeholders such as conservation groups and commercial and recreational fishers, these stakeholders tended to report that meaningful communications and collaborations were limited, reducing their ability to contribute their knowledge and expertise to marine park management.
- **Remote and offshore nature of the parks** – the isolated and deep-sea nature of many of the marine parks, as well as the dangerous fauna found in the North Network, made implementation challenging, particularly for the tourism, monitoring, and compliance program areas. Limited accessibility and resource constraints further hindered consistent management of the parks in this network.
- **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 some data, such as socio-economic data, hindered a comprehensive understanding of progress and/ or the ability to assess the broader impacts of marine park management (whilst also reducing the ability to make informed decisions that balanced environmental, social and economic outcomes). Parks Australia staff also noted that limited baseline data at the establishment of the management plan posed challenges to the establishment of a monitoring program in the North Network.
- **Appropriately balancing protection of ecological, social and economic values** – the evaluation found that balancing competing stakeholder interests in the North 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 (potentially destabilising commercial industries). 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 Marine Park Advisory Committee (NMPAC) process** – both NMPAC 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 of a range of stakeholders was noted, suggesting that a more inclusive and collaborative approach could better capture diverse stakeholder perspectives for consideration in decision-making processes.

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 Network. Positively, some stakeholders felt that the North Network Management Plan provided an appropriate level of detail. 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 such an approach at times felt to complicate implementation. This concern was particularly prevalent in relation to the Tourism and Visitor experience program, which was felt to be poorly suited to the North Network's values, needs and priorities. A few stakeholders also advocated for the inclusion of more prescriptive targets.
- The evaluation also identified several challenges with the monitoring and review mechanisms, with some 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.
- Some of the specific actions and outcomes in the North 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') as well as many of the actions and outcomes in the Tourism Management Program.

3.3. Findings relevant to future plan development

The evaluation highlighted several recommendations to consider when developing the next plan for the North Network, including

- **Demonstrate 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.

- **Ensure 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.
- **Embedding cultural perspectives and prioritising First Nations perspectives in the management of their Sea Country through:**
    - Continued adoption of co-management approaches that embed early and culturally appropriate and responsive 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.
    - Continuing to avoid "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). This was found to be a strength of implementation in this Network over the current plan's lifecycle.
    - 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 but who nevertheless 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.
- **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 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.
- **Aligning with state Management Plans** – if possible, considering synchronising review and renewal cycles to enable simultaneous consultation and communication about changes, as well as further collaboration to streamline permit applications.

4. Findings: Communication, Education and Awareness Program

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

4.1. Overall findings about the efficacy of program implementation

Grade	
Good with some concerns	Overall, the grade for the actions in the Communications, Education and Awareness Program was assessed as 'good with some concerns', with the outcome of the program assessed as 'partially met'. Of the eight planned actions, three were assessed as 'completed', four as 'partially completed' and one as 'not commenced'. Whilst more engaged stakeholders (such as grant recipients) and First Nations partners reported high levels of satisfaction with communication, education, and awareness efforts in the North, other stakeholder groups expressed lower satisfaction with engagement. Concerns were also raised about the reach and effectiveness of communication regarding the North Network among marine park users and the broader community.

Strengths and achievements

Both First Nations partners and non-Indigenous stakeholders commended Parks Australia's efforts to communicate information with First Nations peoples, reporting that they communicated in a meaningful way that was culturally appropriate and responsive. This included:

- **Regular, respectful and informative face-to-face meetings on Country**, including in remote areas where Traditional Owner groups resided.
- **Regular communication with trusted community representatives and leaders**, who were able to convey information to and from community in a dynamic exchange.
- An **emphasis on establishing sustainable, long-term relationships with Traditional Owner groups** to ensure long-term success in engagement.

Recipients of grants, and especially those who had received multiple grants, also tended to report high satisfaction with the efficacy of communication, education and awareness efforts in the North, emphasising the responsiveness and proactivity of the North Team in guiding this engagement.

Barriers, challenges and limiting factors

Communication with other stakeholders, including recreational fishers, industry representatives and conservationists, were felt to be insufficient, particularly when compared to the commendable and successful communication and engagement initiatives with First Nations peoples. Stakeholders tended to attribute these limitations to constrained resources.

The Communications, Education and Awareness Program also faced notable weaknesses in its communication efforts with the general community. Stakeholders identified challenges in reaching communities due to the remote location of offshore parks and, as with stakeholders, limited

resources available for communication efforts. Although it was noted that Parks Australia implemented initiatives to engage the public, such as attendance at conferences, community engagement and educational initiatives in schools, stakeholders tended to report that these activities had limited reach and visibility within their networks.

4.2. Outcome effectiveness

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

Evidence

This outcome was assessed as **partially met**, as only some stakeholders reported high satisfaction with communications in increasing awareness, understanding and support.

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. These surveys collected data on awareness, understanding and support for Australian Marine Parks.

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:

As previously mentioned, First Nations partners and stakeholders with whom Parks Australia regularly engaged with over the plan's lifecycle, such as grant recipients, generally reported high satisfaction with the efficacy of communication, education and awareness efforts in the North.

However, other stakeholders (including recreational fishers, industry representatives and conservationists) reported that the marine park users they worked or interacted with tended to have limited awareness, understanding and/ or support for marine parks. In addition, several stakeholders felt that awareness, understanding and support for marine parks amongst the general public was unlikely to have increased, as they were unaware of any broad-reaching communications and education activities undertaken to engage these audiences over the course of the plan.

[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*

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**

Rationale for verdict:

This action was assessed as **completed**, with the marketing and communication strategy delivered in a timely manner.

However, only some stakeholders felt the strategy had been effective in increasing awareness and understanding of marine parks and their values among key audiences to date.

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 Network. This document was found to be 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.

Evidence from engagement:

There was limited awareness of the *'Communication, Education and Awareness strategy'* amongst external stakeholders. When considering the effectiveness of Parks Australia's communications, education and awareness activities in raising awareness and understanding of North Marine Parks values and contribution to Australia more generally, stakeholders provided mixed assessments:

- Stakeholders who had direct, ongoing engagement with Parks Australia generally described them as willing to engage, communicate and, where possible, educate stakeholders. First Nations partners, in particular, reported that engagement efforts had been largely effective with them.
- However, stakeholders without regular direct interaction with Parks Australia were less positive about the effectiveness of broader communication and marketing activities. This view was particularly common among recreational fishers, industry representatives and conservationists, who felt that Parks Australia's more general outreach efforts lacked visibility, reach and impact.

In addition, most stakeholders felt that awareness of the North Network remained low among other park users and the general community, with most unaware of activities undertaken by Parks Australia to promote marine parks within the network amongst this audience. While stakeholders understood that Parks Australia faced a range of challenges communicating with marine park users and the general population (e.g. resource constraints, challenges engaging

[7] *A Communication, Education and Awareness Strategy (2021-26): Internal document*

members of the general public in remote/ offshore marine parks), they also felt that raising awareness of the values and importance of the network amongst both marine park users and the general population where possible was critical to supporting buy-in to management activities and marine conservation.

While Parks Australia staff also acknowledged challenges engaging audiences in communications, particularly given the remoteness of many parks in the North Network, they noted a number of activities undertaken in line with the '*Communications, Education and Awareness Strategy*'. These included attendance at conferences, community engagement and educational initiatives in schools.

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

Evidence

This action was assessed as **partially completed**. Although online information resources to facilitate awareness of marine park values and management arrangements were delivered in a timely manner, no resources in relation to visitor opportunities were identified. Additionally, many stakeholders believed the action had been implemented only moderately effectively, and a few felt implementation had been limited.

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 delivery of outputs relevant to 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 management plan itself (2018),[8]
- The North Network values webpage,[9]
- 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 (AMPs),[10] and

[8] *North Marine parks Network Management Plan: https://australianmarineparks.gov.au/static/5797254b49ade6c0ea62ff8785ca9958/amp-document-north-management-plan-2018.pdf*
[9] *North Marine Parks Network values: https://australianmarineparks.gov.au/management/values/values-north-marine-parks-network/*
[10] *The 'Five that thrive in our marine parks' website: https://storymaps.arcgis.com/collections/61ca6f9be4354e808146e47e0a59a7d0?item=1*

- News stories[11] and a range of social media posts relating to marine park values.[12] [13] [14] [15]

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

- The management plan itself (2018)[16], and
- The management plan zoning and rules factsheet.[17]

No online resources related to visitor opportunities were identified through the review. However, stakeholders acknowledged that the limited visitation potential within the North Network was likely the reason for this lack of communication.

Evidence from engagement:

Overall, stakeholders held mixed perceptions in relation to the efficacy of online resources in facilitating awareness of marine park values, management activities and visitor opportunities. This was largely found to be the result of differing levels of awareness amongst stakeholders of online information resources, suggesting that reach of communications and education activities had been limited and/ or inconsistent.

Whilst highly engaged stakeholders, including multi-grant recipients and First Nations partners, reported knowledge and a belief in the utility of online information resources regarding the North network, other groups including recreational fishers, industry representatives and conservationists had lower awareness of resources. A few stakeholders felt that, whilst quality online information resources may have been developed, they were not being effectively distributed or communicated.

In addition, several stakeholders questioned the relevance of the inclusion of 'visitor opportunities' as a communication priority, given the largely inaccessible nature of the North Network.

---

[11] News stories: https://australianmarineparks.gov.au/news/indigenous-rangers-monitoring-marine-park-health-australias-top-end/#:~:text=The%20Traditional%20Owners%20and%20sea,Joseph%20Bonaparte%20Gulf%20Marine%20Park
[12] Foundation Implementation Plan Review (2018-2022) - North Network: Internal Document
[13] YEAR 5 (2024-25) ANNUAL PROGRESS REPORT NORTH MARINE PARKS NETWORK MANAGEMENT PLAN 2018: Internal document
[14] YEAR 6 (2024-25) ANNUAL PROGRESS REPORT NORTH MARINE PARKS NETWORK MANAGEMENT PLAN 2018: Internal document
[15] YEAR 7 (2024-25) ANNUAL PROGRESS REPORT NORTH MARINE PARKS NETWORK MANAGEMENT PLAN 2018: Internal document
[16] North Marine parks Network Management Plan: https://australianmarineparks.gov.au/static/5797254b49ade6c0ea62ff8785ca9958/amp-document-north-management-plan-2018.pdf
[17] North Marine Parks Network Management Plan 2018 Zoning and rules: https://australianmarineparks.gov.au/static/3b7018fa7f0f94d27a3d6ecb48274c88/amp-document-factsheet-north-management-plan.pdf

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**. Although some documentary evidence of partnerships and utilisation of new technologies was identified, there was mixed feedback from stakeholders in relation to the efficacy of these efforts in inspiring people to become involved in marine park management.

Evidence from desktop review:

The desktop review provided the evidence of a range of partnerships, including with schools, universities, museums and non-government organisations, some of which utilised modern technology:

- Our Marine Parks Grants (OMPG) Round 3 partnerships with Charles Darwin University to integrate traditional knowledge with western science to inform marine park management.[18]
- Partnerships supported Marra Traditional Owners of the Limmen Bight region to work with both levels of government to protect the unique natural and cultural values of Sea Country in the Limmen Bight (pilot of a best practice model for managing the environment in a way that linked marine parks across both jurisdictions while respecting First Nations Culture).[19]
- Multiple partnerships with James Cook University to complete benthic surveys in Marra Sea Country, including fine-scale mapping of 100% of Limmen Marine Park's sea-floor, in collaboration with Charles Darwin University and the li-Anthawirriyarra Rangers (2020-23).[20] [21]
- Projects as part of OMPG4 with Charles Darwin University to support First Nations engagement in marine park management at Arafura and Oceanic Shoals Marine Parks.[22]
- Partnerships to undertake the Ghost Nets Initiative, including a grant program, which primarily focused efforts on removing ghost nets from the North Network in collaboration with Australian Fisheries Management Authority (AFMA) and Maritime Border Command (MBC).[23] Ongoing collaborative activities associated with the initiative were demonstrated

[18] *Looking After Sea Country - Understanding and protecting the values of the Arnhem Marine Park and Djelk Indigenous Protected Area: https://australianmarineparks.gov.au/management/partnerships/our-marine-parks-grants/grants-round-three/*
[19] *Supporting Marra Traditional Owners to manage Sea Country: https://ministers.pmc.gov.au/mccarthy/2022/2-8-million-support-marra-traditional-owners-manage-sea-country*
[20] *Mapping Marra Sea Country with a focus on benthic habitats of the Limmen Marine Park: https://researchers.cdu.edu.au/en/projects/mapping-marra-sea-country-with-a-focus-on-benthic-habitats-of-the/*
[21] *Benthic surveys in Marra Sea Country: https://australianmarineparks.gov.au/management/partnerships/our-marine-parks-grants/grants-round-two/*
[22] *Our Marine PRKS Grands Round 4: https://australianmarineparks.gov.au/management/partnerships/our-marine-parks-grants/grants-round-four/*
[23] *Ghost Nets and Marine Debris Initiative: https://australianmarineparks.gov.au/management/partnerships/ghost-nets-initiative/*

across multiple communiqués, including references to clean-ups piloted by Indigenous Ranger groups and a new training package and GPS tracking being trialled at these clean-ups.[24 25 26]

Evidence from engagement:

Overall, stakeholder feedback in relation to this action was mixed. Some stakeholders provided positive feedback and identified examples of effective partnerships that they felt had helped to inspire involvement in marine park management, particularly partnerships with First Nations peoples. Several stakeholders singled out the partnership with Namultja Aboriginal Corporation and the Marranbala Land and Sea Rangers as a particularly positive example.

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. As such, most stakeholders reported they were unsure whether the intended impact of this action had been achieved.

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 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 the desktop review:

The desktop review found that the North Marine Park Advisory Committee (NMPAC) was appointed by the Director of National Parks (the Director) in 2019 with 13 members for a period of two years.[27]

The NMPAC has been convened twice annually since 2019, with communiques published after each meeting to document discussions. 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.[28]

---

[24] *NMPAC Meeting #3 Communiqué: https://australianmarineparks.gov.au/static/bc50e63faf186d5d453f8bef94a0a279/amp-document-nmpac-meeting-three-communique.pdf*
[25] *NMPAC Meeting #5 Communiqué: https://australianmarineparks.gov.au/static/c73db510ea027498a194925b78f38a8e/amp-document-nmpac-meeting-5-communique-24june.pdf*
[26] *NMPAC Meeting #6 Communiqué: https://australianmarineparks.gov.au/static/5a780036e179074a6bf90fbe41380aed/amp-document-nmpac-meeting-6-communique.pdf*
[27] *North Marine Parks Advisory Committee: https://australianmarineparks.gov.au/management/partnerships/advisory-committees/north-marine-parks-advisory-committee/#overview-section*
[28] *North Marine Parks Advisory Committee: https://australianmarineparks.gov.au/management/partnerships/advisory-committees/north-marine-parks-advisory-committee/#overview-section*

Evidence from engagement:

NMPAC members expressed their appreciation for the opportunity to engage with Parks Australia and receive information about management of the North Network via the advisory committee. NMPAC members also reported that the joint meetings with members of other AMPAC committees had been beneficial.

However, both NMPAC members and Parks Australia staff expressed concerns about the effectiveness of the operation of the current model. More specifically:

- NMPAC members expressed reservations about the committee's ability to provide interested stakeholders with a mechanism for ongoing, meaningful input into the management of AMPs. NMPAC members generally felt the committee has not provided an effective 'advisory' mechanism for different sectors. Industry representatives, in particular, were sceptical of the appropriateness of the NMPAC as a mechanism for commercial sector engagement.
- Additionally, NMPAC members reported feeling unsure if their expertise and the input they had shared had meaningfully impacted marine park management, as they received limited feedback in relation to the outcomes of committee discussions.
- Parks Australia staff raised concerns about the high costs and administrative burden associated with running the NMPAC, which was felt to reduce the relative value of the committee process.

Further information in relation to the operation of AMPACs (including the NMPAC) over the course of the management plan and key learnings for the future are presented 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	**Completed**

Evidence

This action was assessed as **completed**, as the desktop review identified both formal and informal tracking of stakeholder aspirations and concerns, and many stakeholders felt this had been done effectively.

Evidence from desktop review:

As discussed in relation to A4 and A8 above, the NMPAC was established in 2019 as a means of understanding and tracking the aspirations and concerns of stakeholders in relation to the North Network park.[29] In addition, internal Parks Australia documentation contained reference to multiple meetings with industry, research and First Nations groups (including Ranger groups) that had resulted in formal and informal records of stakeholder aspirations and concerns.[30]

[29] *North Marine Parks Advisory Committee: https://australianmarineparks.gov.au/management/partnerships/advisory-committees/north-marine-parks-advisory-committee/#overview-section*
[30] *Parks Australia self-assessment: Internal document*

Evidence from engagement:

Feedback from stakeholders and First Nations partners was broadly positive in relation to this action. In particular, Traditional Owners in the Limmen Bight region commended Parks Australia's proactive efforts to support Traditional Owners and First Nations Ranger groups to manage AMPs, and efforts to track the aspirations of Traditional Owner groups. Other stakeholders also acknowledged Parks Australia's proactive engagement and its openness to hear and respond to stakeholder aspirations. However, a few stakeholders felt that the prioritisation of aspirations of First Nations partners limited opportunities for other groups.

While the establishment of the NMPAC was a key feedback mechanism, NMPAC members expressed concerns about their ability to provide meaningful feedback via this forum, as discussed above (see A4 and A8).

Action	Completion status
A6. Develop information on marine parks in the Network to encourage increased awareness and understanding of their values and management arrangements (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, stakeholder perspectives on the efficacy of action implementation were mixed. A few cited low awareness of information products amongst marine park users as evidence that these activities had not been effective in increasing 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 and management arrangements, as outlined in response to A2 (above). In addition to online resources, the desktop review also found evidence of the following communications and education initiatives:

- Information sharing, such as at conferences and workshops – Parks Australia hosting, funding, or partnering with different groups or organisations (often Traditional Owner groups) to deliver numerous trade booths at relevant conferences, as well as a number of workshops in relevant communities with Ranger groups and Traditional Owner groups.[31] [32] [33] [34]
- Coverage on the Northern Territory Department of Tourism and Hospitality in relation to Parks Australia's support to develop a culturally-driven management framework for Limmen Marine Park – a project led by Li-Anthawirriyarra Sea Rangers.[35]

[31] *Foundation Implementation Plan Review (2018-2022) - North Network: Internal Document*
[32] *YEAR 5 (2024-25) ANNUAL PROGRESS REPORT NORTH MARINE PARKS NETWORK MANAGEMENT PLAN 2018*: Internal document
[33] *YEAR67 (2024-25) ANNUAL PROGRESS REPORT NORTH MARINE PARKS NETWORK MANAGEMENT PLAN 2018*: Internal document
[34] *YEAR 7 (2024-25) ANNUAL PROGRESS REPORT NORTH MARINE PARKS NETWORK MANAGEMENT PLAN 2018*: Internal document
[35] *Northern Territory Government News Story: https://dth.nt.gov.au/news/2024/namultja-aboriginal-corporation-working-together-with-partners-from-strength-to-strength*

Evidence from engagement:

As discussed in A2, more highly engaged stakeholders, including multi-grant recipients and First Nations partners, felt that communications and education initiatives had been effective. One particular example shared by stakeholders of effective communications activities was the development of a seasonal calendar with First Nations communities.

However, other stakeholders reported lower awareness of resources promoting marine park values and management arrangements, making them less likely to view this action as effectively achieved.

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	Not commenced

Evidence

This action was assessed as **not commenced**, as no evidence of infrastructure provision was identified.

However, stakeholders largely agreed with Parks Australia's self-assessment that the North Network marine parks are generally too remote, and levels of use beyond maritime traffic and commercial fishing too low, to warrant signage or marker buoys.[36]

[36] *N Network Internal Self Assessment: Internal document*

5. Findings: Tourism and Visitor Experience Program

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

5.1. Overall findings about the efficacy of program implementation

Grade	
Critical	Overall, the grade for the actions in the Tourism and Visitor Experience Program was assessed as 'critical', with the overall outcomes of the management program rated as 'not met' or 'unknown'. Of the ten planned actions, only half were assessed as 'completed' or 'ongoing' – all others were assessed as 'partially completed' or 'not commenced'. However, the evaluation found that this assessment does not indicate poor performance by Parks Australia. Instead, it reflects the limited relevance of this program to the values of the North Network and the appropriate decision to focus resources and efforts on programs that are more aligned with the region's specific needs and priorities.

Strengths and achievements

Given the considerable lack of tourism and potential for visitation in the North Network, there was limited scope for strengths and achievements. Efforts were made by Parks Australia to assess the interest in tourism in this Network, and having identified low interest, the evaluation found that the program was appropriately deprioritised.

Barriers, challenges and limiting factors

Stakeholder feedback consistently indicated that tourism and visitation were not key concerns for the North Network. The network's remote offshore location, combined with limited accessibility and safety concerns (e.g. due to the presence of dangerous marine life), significantly reduced its viability as a tourism destination. As such, stakeholders reported that this program had limited relevance for the North Network.

This view was reflected in Parks Australia's implementation approach. Following early efforts to gauge tourism interest – which identified low demand – tourism-related activities were deprioritised. This decision was made in consultation with the North Marine Parks Advisory Committee (NMPAC), which supported reallocating resources toward program areas more aligned with the network's values and needs.

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	Not met	Trend stable

Evidence

This outcome was assessed as **not met**, as there was no data identified to evaluate the quality of visitor experience, and no stakeholders believed the action had been implemented effectively.

Evidence from desktop review:

As discussed in A10 (below), the desktop review found that there was limited tourism activity occurring in the North Network, and a range of barriers to establishing such activities. As such, no data to evaluate visitor satisfaction was identified.

Evidence from engagement:

Overall, stakeholders did not feel this action had been implemented. However, this was not felt to be a shortcoming of management activities, as feedback consistently indicated that the North Network's remote offshore location, combined with safety constraints (e.g. hazardous marine environments), significantly reduced its viability as a tourism destination.

One stakeholder felt that greater infrastructure and investment was needed to better support tourism experiences into the future, but it was noted that this was not achievable within the lifecycle of this plan.

Outcome	Outcome effectiveness	Trend rating
O3. Increased visitation to marine parks	Unknown	Unknown

Evidence

This outcome was assessed as **unknown**, as no data on visitation trends was found in the desktop review.

Stakeholders were unable to confidently speak to trends in visitation, other than to report that visitation was low, and had likely remained so throughout the plan.

Outcome	Outcome effectiveness	Trend rating
O4. Social and economic benefits from the contribution of marine parks to Australia's visitor economy	Not met	Trend stable

Evidence

This outcome was assessed as **not met**. As outlined in O2 (above), there was limited evidence of tourism activities in the North Network.

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**, with the desktop review identifying evidence of the timely development of the '*Australian Marine Parks Tourism Strategy*' (2021-26).[37]

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.** Whilst the desktop review and stakeholder engagement highlighted timely efforts to implement this action, a range of barriers preventing effective implementation were also identified.

Further, many stakeholders and Parks Australia staff felt the action was not well suited to the North Network context, given the dearth of tourism opportunities in the network.

Evidence from desktop review:

While the desktop review identified several efforts to collaborate with relevant authorities in maximising the value of ecotourism, there was limited evidence of successful collaborations in practice. More specifically, the desktop review identified the following:

[37] *Australian Marine Parks Tourism Strategy 2021-26: Internal document*

- Self-reported attempts by Parks Australia to contact tourism operators and authorities in the North Network.[38]
- Self-reported evidence by Parks Australia of developing video footage to raise awareness of tourism opportunities. While there was indication of engagement with the Northern Territory Government to support in the distribution of these products, there was no evidence of established relationships with the tourism operators (e.g. cruise operators) who would most likely be interested in providing the information/ products to visitors.[39]
- Self-reported initial engagement with Northern Territory Government organisations in 2018–19 with the intention of developing signage at high-use boat ramps in the Gulf of Carpentaria and at the Darwin Harbour.[40] However, engagement had decreased due to COVID-19. No primary evidence was found of these visitor products being produced.

The desktop review found several barriers to implementing this action. Parks Australia noted that sustainable ecotourism initiatives in the North Network were likely to provide limited return on investment because the marine parks are in remote locations. The only exception was "through tourism" (e.g. cruise ships passing through the marine parks en route to the east or west coasts). The specific barriers identified were:

- Self-reported evidence that Parks Australia had authorised very few tourism activities in the North network due to dangerous marine species (i.e. meaning there were no safe in-water visitor experiences), remoteness of marine parks and the non-permittance of access from Prescribed Body Corporate (PBC) holders of Native Title rights for many of the coastal regions.[41]
- Evidence identified in Parks Australia's 2021 review of the foundation phase of the implementation plan which showed that fifty-four Northern Marine Tourism operators were contacted about tourism in the North Network in the first year of management, but no responses were received. As a result, internal Parks Australia documents noted that "tourism had not been a priority for the foundational implementation activities and remained a lower priority moving into the consolidation phase [of the management plan]".[42] This de-prioritisation of the Tourism and Visitor Experience Program was also outlined in the NMPAC meeting 3, suggesting collaborative decision-making.[43]

Evidence from engagement:

Stakeholders and First Nations partners broadly supported the findings of the desktop review in highlighting the irrelevance and inappropriateness of this action for the North Network.

[38] *N Network Internal Self Assessment: Internal document*
[39] *N Network Internal Self Assessment: Internal document*
[40] *FIP North review: Internal document*
[41] *N Network Internal Self Assessment: Internal document*
[42] *FIP North review: Internal document*
[43] *NMPAC Management Report Meeting 3: 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** in a timely manner, with the desktop review identifying evidence of an online permit and licencing application system through which commercial tourism activities and recreation fishing (amongst other activities) can be authorised.[44]

However, given the limited relevance of tourism to the North Network (as discussed above), only one stakeholder was able to comment on the efficacy of this system in encouraging best-practice eco-accredited businesses to operate – reporting that the system had been somewhat successful in this regard.

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	Partially completed or implemented

Evidence

Overall, this action was assessed as **partially completed.** While a few collaborative activities relating to the promotion of marine parks and/ or locally and sustainably caught seafood were identified as being delivered, most stakeholders felt that this action had not been implemented effectively.

Evidence from desktop review:

The following outputs were identified as collaborative efforts to build sustainable fishing knowledge and capability within the North Network; however, it is noted that these do not strongly demonstrate a promotional component relating to marine parks and/or locally and sustainably caught seafood:

- Our Marine Park Grants Round one (OMPG1) funded project conducted by Northern Territory Seafood Council to develop a sustainability strategy for the Territory's seafood industry.[45] The project involved industry members across 15 different wild harvest and aquaculture fisheries. As part of this project, an information resource/ factsheet was developed which outlined the results from the sustainability survey.[46]
- Our Marine Park Grants Round two (OMPG2) funded project conducted by Northern Territory Seafood Council to improve the knowledge of sawfish and river sharks, threatened species of Northern Australian fishing grounds. The project served as a knowledge sharing opportunity

[44] *Australian Marine Parks - Permit and licence applications: https://onlineservices.environment.gov.au/parks/australian-marine-parks*
[45] *Northern Territory Seafood Council – Sustainability Strategy: https://www.ntsc.com.au/documents/item/1486*
[46] *Marine parks and the northern territory seafood industry: https://www.ntsc.com.au/documents/item/1403*

between fishers and marine scientists, and various fieldwork activities were conducted (i.e. fishing surveys, fish tagging, water and genetic sampling).[47]

Evidence from engagement:

Stakeholders from the commercial and recreational fishing sectors reported no awareness of collaborative efforts to promote marine parks and/ or locally and sustainably caught seafood, reporting that more could be done to effectively achieve this action. One stakeholder felt that public sentiment on sustainable fishing in marine parks had declined over the course of the management plan, in part owing to an absence of supportive marketing and promotional efforts from Parks Australia.

Action	Completion status
A13. Promote culturally sensitive tourism by encouraging tourism operators to liaise with Traditional Owners	Not commenced

Evidence

Overall, this action was assessed as **not commenced**. While some efforts to undertake this action were identified, the desktop review found that there were limited opportunities to implement it over the course of the management plan.

Evidence from desktop review:

The desktop review found evidence of a meeting held between Parks Australia, the Namultja Aboriginal Corporation, Northern Territory Government organisations and the Marra Traditional Owners in the Limmen region regarding Marine Park management. The meeting involved discussions around the development of a Code of Conduct for visitors to Marra Country.[48] The desktop review also identified a prompt on the webpage when submitting an application via the authorisations and assessments process which encouraged tourism operators to liaise with Traditional Owners was a prompt that appeared.[49]

More broadly, however, self-reported evidence from Parks Australia indicates that, while opportunities to support culturally sensitive tourism were sought, implementation was constrained by limited market interest and a very small pool of relevant operators whose activities involved transiting through marine parks in the North Network. As a result, practical opportunities to progress this action were limited.[50] [51]

[47] *Our Marine Parks Grant program – Round 2 (2020): https://australianmarineparks.gov.au/static/2b7aff986015d07009d5d04fd9b13d48/our-marine-park-grants-round-two-projects.pdf*
[48] *Article "A celebratory On Country meeting for Limmen Bight Marine Park Traditional Owners" (2025): https://dth.nt.gov.au/news/2025/a-celebratory-on-country-meeting-for-limmen-bight-marine-park-traditional-owners*
[49] *Screenshots of questions prompting engagement and consideration of impact on First Nations communities through application process provided by email to ORIMA Research*
[50] *N Network Internal Self Assessment: Internal document*
[51] *FIP North review: Internal document*

Action	Completion status
A14. Work with tourism operators and First Nations peoples to recognise and promote cultural values and cultural tourism opportunities	Ongoing

Evidence

Overall, this action was assessed as **ongoing**. Whilst preliminary efforts to recognise and promote cultural values and cultural tourism opportunities were identified in the desktop review, implementation of the action was found to have been limited by a lack of collaborative opportunities, given the remote nature of marine parks in the North Network.

Evidence from desktop review:

In addition to the efforts outlined in the evidence for A13 (above), the desktop review found indication of potential for future collaboration with First Nations peoples and partners to support tourism opportunities. Specifically, the desktop review found recent evidence of Mardbalk Rangers and Warruwi Traditional Owners on South Goulburn Island expressing interest in working with tourism operators, such as cruise groups coming to the island. Parks Australia indicated that this opportunity would be investigated during 2026.[52]

Evidence from engagement:

There was limited stakeholder feedback in relation to this action, likely owing to the dearth of tourism opportunities identified in the network.

Action	Completion status
A15. Monitor visitor trends and levels of satisfaction with marine park experiences and products	Not commenced

Evidence

Overall, this action was assessed as **not commenced** as the desktop review found that monitoring activities were not executed over the course of the management plan.

Evidence from desktop review:

The desktop review identified internal documentation from Parks Australia stating that this action was not applicable to the North Marine Parks Network. [53]

[52] *YEAR 7 (2024-25) ANNUAL PROGRESS REPORT: Internal document*
[53] *N Network Internal Self Assessment: Internal document*

Action	Completion status
A16. Promote visitor experiences that foster curiosity and appreciation of natural and heritage values in the Network	Ongoing

Evidence

Overall, this action was assessed as **partially implemented**. Whilst both the desktop review and stakeholder engagement highlighted efforts to implement this action, most stakeholders felt the action was inappropriate for the North Network, given the limited tourism opportunities.

Evidence from desktop review:

In addition to the efforts outlined in relation to A10 (above), internal documents indicate that Parks Australia made initial efforts to develop displays about the North Network's natural and heritage values in museums and cultural institutions, but had limited interest from organisations such as Darwin Harbour and the Northern Territory Museum and Art Gallery.[54]

Evidence from engagement:

Consultations with stakeholders and First Nations partners supported the findings from the desktop review.

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	Not commenced

Evidence

Overall, this action was assessed as **not commenced**, as collaborations and promotional activities were not delivered in a timely or consistent manner.

Evidence from desktop review:

The desktop review identified internal documentation from Parks Australia stating that this action was not applicable to the North Marine Parks Network. [55]

[54] *N Network Internal Self Assessment: Internal document*
[55] *N Network Internal Self Assessment: Internal document*

Action	Completion status
A18. Facilitate partnerships between First Nations peoples and tourism operators	Ongoing

Evidence

As per A14 (above), this action was assessed as **ongoing**. Although partnership opportunities in the North Network have been limited due to a lack of collaboration opportunities, Parks Australia has indicated that further opportunities will be explored in 2026.[56] Refer to evidence in A14.

[56] *YEAR 7 (2024-25) ANNUAL PROGRESS REPORT: Internal document*

6. Findings: Indigenous Engagement Program

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

6.1. Overall findings about the efficacy of program implementation

Grade	
	Overall, the grade for the Indigenous Engagement Program was assessed as 'good'. The outcomes of the program were assessed as 'fully met' or 'substantially met', and six out of eight of the planned actions were assessed as 'completed' or 'ongoing'. Of the remaining two, one was assessed as 'partially completed' and one 'not commenced'. Feedback from engagement with First Nations peoples and non-indigenous stakeholders highlighted this program implementation as a key strength of plan delivery in the North Network.

Strengths and achievements

Stakeholder and First Nations feedback consistently indicated that Parks Australia has implemented this program effectively, particularly in its approach to engagement and partnership with Traditional Owners. Furthermore, Traditional Owners who were engaged through the evaluation strongly commended Parks Australia's efforts to support Traditional Owners and First Nations Ranger groups in the management of Australian Marine Parks (AMPs). More specifically:

- This positive sentiment was found to be closely linked to Parks Australia's deliberate implementation strategy, which was felt to prioritise depth of engagement and recognise the importance of a time-rich approach. Stakeholders and First Nations partners noted that dedicating time and resources to specific communities supported the development of strong relationships and meaningful collaboration.
- The approach to engagement was felt to have established a strong foundation for future upscaling. By investing in sustained, high-quality engagement, Parks Australia had built trust and capability within participating communities, positioning the program to expand in a measured and effective manner over time.
- First Nations stakeholders further commended Parks Australia's culturally appropriate and responsive communication practices. This included an emphasis on regular, respectful, face-to-face engagement on Country including in remote communities, alongside ongoing communication with Traditional Owners, trusted local representatives and community leaders. These channels were seen to facilitate a dynamic, two-way exchange of information between Parks Australia and communities, supporting more responsive and effective program delivery.

Barriers, challenges and limiting factors

While few barriers were identified, a few stakeholders questioned the extent to which strong engagement with First Nations peoples was translating into tangible marine park management benefits. One First Nations partner also noted that there were instances where communities were

not engaged from the outset of projects (i.e. before commissioning), which limited their ability to influence priorities and fully participate in co-management activities.

6.2. Outcome effectiveness

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

Evidence

This outcome was assessed as **fully met**, supported by clear evidence from the desktop review. Additionally, many First Nations partners and stakeholders indicated that the outcome had been effectively implemented.

Evidence from desktop review:

As evidenced in the actions below, the desktop review identified numerous collaboration efforts, grant-funded training and capacity-building activities, workshops with Traditional Owners, and fee-for-service arrangements which were collectively contributing to social, cultural and economic benefits for Traditional Owner groups across the North Network.[57] More specifically, the review identified:

- Evidence of building capacity within First Nations organisations to work with Parks Australia in the successful management of marine parks, including fee-for-service work and project coordinator or engagement positions (outlined in the actions below).[58]
- Consistent work with Rangers and provision of training to undertake scientific sampling methods and participate in scientific voyages in Arafura, Arnhem, West Cape York, Oceanic Shoals and Joseph Bonaparte Gulf marine parks (outlined in the actions below).[59]

Evidence from engagement

Most First Nations partner participants reported that the projects delivered social, cultural and economic benefits for Traditional Owners. While some non-Indigenous participants had limited visibility of the social and cultural benefits generated, some reported awareness of economic benefits. This included direct investment and collaboration deeds which gave First Nations organisations time to establish self-sufficiencies such as fee-for-service arrangements and employment of First Nations Ranger groups.

Parks staff reported that they had achieved this outcome via First Nations involvement across all projects, and through co-design and collaboration in many projects, as outlined in the actions below.

[57] *Foundational Implementation Plan Review 2018-2022: Internal document*
[58] *YEAR 7 (2024-25) ANNUAL PROGRESS REPORT: Internal document*
[59] *YEAR 7 (2024-25) ANNUAL PROGRESS REPORT: Internal document*

Outcome	Outcome effectiveness	Trend rating
O6. Increase understanding of traditional knowledge, map cultural values and manage significant sites	Substantially met	Trend getting better

Evidence

This outcome was assessed as **substantially met**, as while efforts to complete the outcome were still underway, positive progress was identified.

Evidence from desktop review:

In the foundational phase of management plan implementation, Parks Australia highlighted that it would be difficult to pursue this outcome meaningfully before strong relationships with Traditional Owner groups had been established.[60] However, during the consolidation phase, once relationships and trust had developed, significant steps were taken towards achieving this outcome:

- The Wellesley Island Land Sea Social Economic Development organisation held two successful workshops, which included discussion of cultural connections to the Gulf of Carpentaria Marine Park.
- Parks Australia worked with Charles Darwin University researchers to identify cultural values, including two sacred sites in Arnhem Marine Park.[61]

Evidence from engagement:

Consultations with First Nations partners indicated that early efforts were focused on identifying areas of interest to Traditional Owners and First Nations groups. Positively, participants emphasised that engagement approaches supported Traditional Owners to document cultural values at their own pace, with control over when and how this information would be shared with Parks Australia.

[60] *Foundational Implementation Plan Review 2018-2022: Internal document*
[61] *YEAR 7 (2024-25) ANNUAL PROGRESS REPORT: Internal document*

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 had not been established.

Evidence from engagement:

Of the few participants who commented on this action, First Nations partners were largely unconcerned by the absence of a national strategy, feeling that Parks Australia had demonstrated meaningful, culturally appropriate and responsive engagement by tailoring their approach to the specific needs of each Traditional Owner group. However, one First Nations partner suggested that a strategy based on best-practice principles could help ensure consistent engagement across marine park networks and support earlier involvement of First Nations communities before projects are commissioned, further embedding co-management approaches.

One government stakeholder concurred with this sentiment, feeling that whilst a national strategy for First Nations engagement might provide some useful policy context to encourage meaningful engagement across different marine parks, its success would ultimately rely on the adaption of approaches to the diverse and highly specific needs of local communities.

Action	Completion status
A20. Develop agreements to support First Nations Ranger programs to deliver management in marine parks	Completed

Evidence

This action was assessed as **completed**, as both the desktop review and consultations found ample evidence of agreements to support First Nations Ranger programs being delivered in a timely manner.

Evidence from desktop review:

The desktop review identified the following agreements and partnerships to support First Nations ranger programs to deliver marine park management:

- The 2021–2025 Indigenous Rangers Coastal Clean-up Program (IRCCP) component of the Ghost Nets Initiative supports 24 Ranger groups to undertake ghost net clean-up activities across the Gulf and Top End under fee-for-service arrangements. [62]

[62] *Indigenous Ranger Coastal Clean-up Project – the Ghost Net Initiative: https://www.agriculture.gov.au/biosecurity-trade/policy/australia/indigenous-ranger-biosecurity-program/coastal-clean-up*

- A collaboration deed between Parks Australia and the Carpentaria Land Council Aboriginal Corporation (2023) for the delivery of marine park management for the Gulf of Carpentaria Marine Park.[63]
- A collaboration deed between Parks Australia and Ipima Ikaya Aboriginal Corporation (2021) to recognise their partnership and support management projects of mutual interest.[64]
- A collaboration deed between Parks Australia and Laynhapuy Homelands Aboriginal Corporation (the Yirralka Rangers) to facilitate joint projects. Under this agreement, a cultural values mapping project was initiated, involving additional collaboration with the Dhimurru and Gummur Marthakal Ranger groups, further strengthening cooperative efforts in marine park management (2019).[65]
- Parks Australia and the Northern Territory Government developed a Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) to support the Marra people in developing a Healthy Country Plan for their Land and Sea Country. This plan was also used to help establish a Sea Country Ranger group in the region and facilitate Traditional Owner engagement in the management of the Northern Territory's Limmen Bight Marine Park and in the Commonwealth's Limmen Marine Park.[66]

Evidence from engagement:

Consultations with First Nations partners as well as non-Indigenous stakeholders supported the findings from the desktop review. In particular, Traditional Owners in the Limmen Bight region strongly commended Parks Australia's efforts to support Traditional Owners and First Nations Ranger groups to manage AMPs.

More broadly, stakeholders recognised and endorsed the strategic focus on prioritising depth of engagement, noting that dedicating consistent time and funding to specific communities was integral to successful implementation. It was felt that this approach enabled strategies to be built on demonstrated success, and has positioned the program well to scale up in the future.

Action	Completion status
A21. Provide information to First Nations peoples about marine park management	**Ongoing**
Evidence	
This action was assessed as **ongoing**, as there was clear documentary evidence of information being provided in a timely manner, and most First Nations partners consulted felt information was being provided in an appropriate way.	

[63] *Director of National Parks Annual Report 2023-24: https://www.transparency.gov.au/publications/agriculture-water-and-the-environment/director-of-national-parks/director-of-national-parks-annual-report-2023-24/chapter-4---annual-performance-statement/performance-criterion-3%3A-partnerships-with-traditional-owners-and%2For-other-stakeholders-enhance-the-management-of-commonwealth-parks-and-gardens-for-all-australians-%E2%80%93-results*
[64] *NMPAC Meeting 6 report: Internal document*
[65] *NMPAC Meeting 2 report: Internal document*
[66] *NMPAC Meeting 3 report: Internal document*

Evidence from desktop review:
Overall, the review identified a number of examples of information being provided to First Nations peoples about marine park management. However, most of this information was found to primarily focus on training and upskilling First Nations Rangers and Traditional Owners and there was limited provision of school-based resources or other information for broader First Nations communities.

Specifically, the desktop review identified the following examples of the provision of information:

- Thamurrurr Rangers were provided techniques to monitor marine life diversity in Joseph Bonaparte Gulf Marine Park by partners including the Australian Institute of Marine Science (AIMs) and Parks Australia. These techniques included initial biological surveys, implementation of the monitoring program about threats and changes to Sea Country through the use of Baited Remote Underwater Video (BRUV) and drop cameras. This training was also delivered as part of a Certificate in Compliance by Northern Territory fisheries through Charles Darwin University.[67]
- Parks Australia partnered with AIMS and Bawinanga Rangers to provide training and establish monitoring of Sea Country in Arnehm Marine Park.[68]
- Department of Climate Change, Energy, the Environment and Water (DCCEEW) delivered drone training and platform co-design workshops across the Northern Territory to equip First Nations Rangers with practical skills and tools to detect and manage ghost nets and marine debris in remote coastal regions.[69]
- Parks Australia collaborated with AIMS and Geoscience Australia on communication materials to share results from the November 2020 National Environmental Science Program (NESP) voyage with Garngi Rangers, Traditional Owners and stakeholders at the Territory Natural Resource Management (TNRM) conference in Darwin.[70]
- Self-reported evidence of 'on Country' visits, workshops with Traditional Owners and Ranger groups, collaboration in marine science, cultural values maps in marine parks, development of merchandise and school visits in community as well as opportunities for Traditional Owners and Rangers to visit the park through science projects.[71]

Evidence from engagement:

First Nations partners provided positive feedback in relation to Parks Australia's efforts to communicate information in culturally responsive ways, involving an emphasis on regular, respectful and informative face-to-face meetings on Country, including in remote areas where Traditional Owner groups resided, as well as regular communication with trusted community representatives and leaders. These channels were found to enable a dynamic, two-way information exchange between Parks Australia and the First Nations communities with which they engaged.

---

[67] *Indigenous rangers monitoring marine park health in Australia's Top End: https://australianmarineparks.gov.au/news/indigenous-rangers-monitoring-marine-park-health-australias-top-end/*
[68] *2021 North Marine Parks Advisory Committee Meeting #5 Communique: Internal document*
[69] *Eyes in the sky supports on Country surveillance: https://www.agriculture.gov.au/about/news/indigenous-ranger-drone-training*
[70] *NMPAC Meeting 6 report paper: Internal document*
[71] *North network self-assessment: Internal document*

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	Ongoing

Evidence

This action was assessed as **ongoing**, with the desktop review identifying a range of examples of collaborative management activities occurring in a timely manner. In addition, most First Nations partners felt that appropriate collaboration had been occurring.

Evidence from desktop review:

Beyond those listed in A20 (above), a range of other collaborative management activities between Parks Australia and Traditional Owners and/ or First Nations Ranger groups were identified in the desktop review. Activities commenced in the first few years of the management plan, suggesting they had been undertaken in a timely manner.

The following collaborative management activities were identified that supported monitoring and surveillance:

- Collaborated with Thamarrurr Rangers to deploy BRUVs and drop cameras to capture images and monitor marine life underwater as part of the first round of marine biodiversity survey project in Emu Reef in the north of the Joseph Bonaparte Gulf Marine Park.[72]
- Sea Country monitoring by Bawinanga Rangers in September 2021, which involved the deployment of sea temperature loggers in Arnhem Marine Park. This project was conducted in partnership with Parks Australia and AIMs to improve baseline data in the Djelk Indigenous Protected Area.[73]
- Collaboration with Dhimurru, Marthakal and Laynhapuy Rangers to conduct a week-long visit to Sea Country to deploy BRUVs, drop cameras and environmental DNA (eDNA) in the Dhimurru IPA and Wessel Marine Park.[74]
- Support provided via an 'Our Marine Parks Grants Round Four' (OMPG4) grant for the development of marine mega-fauna monitoring and research capability for the Garngi Rangers in the Arafura Marine Park and adjacent Sea Country.[75]
- A collaborative sea grass mapping survey conducted by James Cook University, Traditional Owners and First Nations Rangers.[76] This project was supported by Parks Australia and the Torres Strait Regional Authority in West Cape York.[77]

[72] *Indigenous rangers monitoring marine park health in Australia's top end: https://australianmarineparks.gov.au/news/indigenous-rangers-monitoring-marine-park-health-australias-top-end/*
[73] *NMPAC Meeting 5 paper: Internal document*
[74] *NMPAC Meeting 7 paper: Internal document*
[75] *Our Marine Parks Round four projects: https://australianmarineparks.gov.au/management/partnerships/our-marine-parks-grants/grants-round-four/*
[76] *YEAR 7 (2024-25) ANNUAL PROGRESS REPORT NORTH MARINE PARKS NETWORK MANAGEMENT PLAN 2018*: Internal document
[77] *Communique #6: Internal document*

- A survey of seafloor habitats within and adjacent to Limmen Marine Park and the Northern Territory's Limmen Bight Marine Park, conducted by Marra and li-Anthawirryarra Rangers in collaboration with marine and social scientists. This was funded by OMPG3.[78]

The following collaborative management activities were identified that supported marine debris removal:

- Ghost Nets Innovation Solutions grants launched in October 2022 to support 10 organisations to undertake projects to better detect, collect and dispose of ghost nets and other harmful forms of marine debris in northern Australian waters. Some of the projects include *'Untrashing Arnhem'*, *'Intersecting Indigenous innovation, art and design'***,** and '*Toys for Turtles'*.[79]

Evidence from engagement:

First Nations partners provided positive feedback in relation to collaboration with Traditional Owners and Ranger groups to support marine park management. Specifically, Traditional Owner partners involved in the evaluation expressed strong appreciation for Parks Australia's efforts to enable their active participation in managing AMPs. One example highlighted by participants was funding provided by Parks Australia to support the Maningrida peoples in developing a Sea Determination Plan.

Action	Completion status
A23. Identify opportunities and mechanisms to engage Traditional Owners and First Nations Rangers in the management of marine parks	Ongoing

Evidence

This action was assessed as **ongoing**. The desktop review identified numerous examples of engagement with Traditional Owners and First Nations Rangers via a range of mechanisms and in a timely manner. Additionally, most First Nations partners consulted felt that Parks Australia had been proactive and effective in seeking opportunities to engage Traditional Owners and First Nations Rangers in the management of the marine parks.

Evidence from desktop review:

The desktop review identified the following efforts to effectively engage Traditional Owners and First Nations Rangers in marine park management via mechanisms such as meetings and forums:

- The Ghost Nets Forum was conducted to discuss the environmental and social impact of marine debris and ghost nets in Australia's northern beaches, coastal waters and communities. This forum involved participation from more than 50 First Nations rangers,

[78] *Our Marine Parks Round two projects: https://australianmarineparks.gov.au/static/2b7aff986015d07009d5d04fd9b13d48/our-marine-park-grants-round-two-projects.pdf*
[79] *Ghost nets initiative: ghost nets innovative solution grants: https://australianmarineparks.gov.au/management/partnerships/ghost-nets-initiative/ghost-nets-innovative-solutions-grants/*

Parks Australia, the Department of Agriculture, Fisheries and Forestry (DAFF), and Agency Projects.[80]

- Parks Australia undertook a facilitated workshop with Angkamuthi Clan and other members of the Ipima Ikaya Aboriginal Corporation in June 2021 to hear Traditional Owners' aspirations and concerns for Sea Country within the West Cape York Marine Park.[81]
- Several Parks Australia staff participated in a Nyiyanang Wuunggalu Culture and Policy Symposium in Feburary 2020 to examine how best to develop policy and programs in partnership with First Nations peoples and communities.[82]
- Meetings were held between Parks Australia and Traditional Owner groups, including the Torres Strait Regional Authority, around potential collaborative work to map habitat in areas of the Torres Strait Dugon Sanctuary that overlaps with the marine park.[83]
- On February 4, 2023, at the fifth International Marine Protected Areas Congress, Parks Australia co-hosted a joint knowledge sharing workshop titled '*Working together to understand, protect and manage Sea Country in partnership with Traditional Owners*'.[84]
- In November 2023, Parks Australia participated and presented at a two-day workshop led by the University of Technology Sydney, which explored options to enhance First Nations engagement in Commonwealth fisheries. Supported by 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.[85]
- 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.[86]
- While relevant for all networks and as discussed in relation to the actions above, OMPGs provided funding to support opportunities and mechanisms to engage First Nations communities in management of the North Network.[87]
- 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 all AMPs, including AMPs in the North Network.[88]

In addition to the evidence provided for A20-A22, the desktop review identified the following efforts to engage Traditional Owners and First Nations Rangers in marine park management via partnerships:

- Collaboration to scope cultural values mapping with groups in Wessel Marine Park.[89]

---

[80] *Ghost Nets Forum – sharing cultural knowledge: https://australianmarineparks.gov.au/news/ghost-nets-forum-sharing-cultural-knowledge/*
[81] *NMPAC Meeting 6 report: Internal document*
[82] *Ibid.*
[83] *NMPAC Meeting 4 report: Internal document*
[84] *NMPAC Meeting 9 report: Internal document*
[85] *Six-month management report: Internal document*
[86] *TEMPAC Meeting 11 paper: Internal document*
[87] *Our Marine Park Grants: https://australianmarineparks.gov.au/management/partnerships/our-marine-parks-grants/*
[88] *Indigenous engagement principles: https://australianmarineparks.gov.au/management/programs/indigenous-engagement-program/indigenous-engagement-principles/*
[89] *Foundation Implementation Plan Review 2018-2022: Internal document*

- Partnerships established between Parks Australia and Tiwi Resources and Tiwi Land Council via OMPG grant projects.[90]

The desktop review also found that 'Indigenous Engagement Principles' were developed in collaboration with First Nations representatives to support engagement across management activities in all AMPs, including the North Network.[91]

Evidence from engagement

First Nations peoples consulted broadly commended Parks Australia's efforts to support Traditional Owners and First Nations Ranger groups to manage AMPs through the establishment of strong, meaningful, long-term relationships, grounded in respect and the mutual aims of management. Other stakeholders also acknowledged these efforts, highlighting the emphasis on quality over quantity as a key factor in the success of engagement initiatives.

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

Evidence

This action was assessed as **ongoing**. The desktop review provided considerable evidence of partnerships being developed in a timely manner, and stakeholders provided positive feedback.

Evidence from desktop review:

See the partnerships referenced in A20—A22 (above).

Evidence from engagement:

Consultations with First Nations partners provided evidence of effective partnerships between Parks Australia and Traditional Owners to manage Sea Country in marine parks. For example, Parks Australia's financial support was noted as instrumental in the development of the *'Marranbala Land and Sea Country Plan'* (2023-2032)[92]. Traditional Owners in the Limmen Bight provided highly positive feedback on this support and partnership, highlighting it as a key example of successful implementation of this action.

[90] *Performance Criterion 3: Partnerships with Traditional Owners and/or other stakeholders enhance the management of Commonwealth parks and gardens for all Australians: https://www.transparency.gov.au/publications/agriculture-water-and-the-environment/director-of-national-parks/director-of-national-parks-annual-report-2023-24/chapter-4---annual-performance-statement/performance-criterion-3%3A-partnerships-with-traditional-owners-and%2For-other-stakeholders-enhance-the-management-of-commonwealth-parks-and-gardens-for-all-australians-%E2%80%93-results*

[91] *Indigenous engagement principles: https://australianmarineparks.gov.au/management/programs/indigenous-engagement-program/indigenous-engagement-principles/*

[92] *Marranbala Land and Sea Country Plan: https://namultja.org.au/wp-content/uploads/2025/06/Marra-LSCP-2023-DIGITAL-150ppi.pdf*

Action	Completion status
A25. Implement cultural awareness training for Parks Australia staff in association with Traditional Owners	Ongoing

Evidence

This action was assessed as **ongoing.** The review found evidence that cultural awareness training was conducted in a timely manner and most First Nations partners felt that Parks Australia staff exhibited respectful engagement.

Desktop review evidence

- All Parks Australia staff are required to complete cultural awareness training in accordance with annual requirements set by DCCEEW. Cultural awareness training at a national level has been undertaken by North Marine Parks staff. Regional cultural awareness training is being sought.[93]
- On Country cultural awareness training has occurred for staff when visiting remote communities, as well as via the cultural competency program delivered by DCCEEW in Hobart. However, further primary evidence for this has not been provided. [94]

Evidence from engagement:

Most stakeholders were unsure as to whether cultural awareness training had been conducted. Some also questioned the effectiveness of broad 'cultural awareness training' given the diverse First Nations peoples and cultures within the North Network. However, most First Nations partners indicated that Parks Australia staff had effectively demonstrated respectful and culturally responsive engagement, which they felt reflected the successful implementation of this action.

Action	Completion status
A26. Establish protocols for researchers working with Parks Australia to guide engagement with Traditional Owners	Partially completed or implemented

Evidence

This action was assessed as **partially completed**. Evidence suggests that protocols for researchers working with Parks Australia have been established to some extent, but further progress is needed to fully implement this action.

Desktop review:

The desktop review identified the following actions:

- Parks Australia collaborated with the Biodiversity and Conservation Division and the Heritage, Reef and Ocean Division at the Australian Government Department of Climate Change,

[93] *Foundational Implementation Plan Review 2018-2022:* Internal document
[94] *North self-assessment:* Internal document

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.[95]

- 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.[96]
- 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.[97]

[95] *TEMPAC Meeting 7 report (2021) – date ICIP protocols were developed are unknown. Internal document*
[96] *Ibid.*
[97] *TEMPAC Meeting 10 report (2023): Internal document*

7. Findings: Marine Science Program

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

7.1. Overall findings about the efficacy of program implementation

Grade

Good with some concerns

The Marine Science Program implementation was assessed good with some concerns, with all three of the overall outcomes of the management program rated as 'partially met'. Of the eleven planned actions, seven were assessed as 'completed' or 'ongoing', and four as 'partially completed'.

Whilst the evaluation identified significant efforts in relation to the establishment of baseline ecological datasets (which was noted as important given that the North Network had a very limited scientific evidence base at the start of the plan), much of the data collected was felt to be either poorly suited to measuring management effectiveness or insufficiently synthesised and communicated in a way that could effectively inform decision-making.

Strengths and achievements

The following strengths and achievements were identified for the Marine Science Program in the North Network:

- **Limited existing evidence base** – many stakeholders recognised that the North Network had a very limited scientific evidence base at the commencement of the plan, making the establishment of baseline data a substantial undertaking. Despite "starting from scratch" and facing the complexity of collecting data across a vast area of marine parks, Parks Australia was found to have made substantial progress.
- **Effective collaboration** – stakeholders felt that collaborations between Parks Australia and research partners, First Nations partners, government agencies and to a lesser extent, industry, had been a priority and a success of this program implementation. Several stakeholders felt Parks Australia had done well to maximise data collection through these partnerships.

Barriers, challenges and limiting factors

The North Network faced a range of challenges arising from the difficulty of obtaining robust marine science data:

- **Resourcing and time constraints** – given the limited scientific evidence base for the North Network at the commencement of the management plan, stakeholders acknowledged the significant cost, time and effort required to establish these datasets, particularly given the resource constraints facing the Parks Australia team. They noted that achieving meaningful outcomes for this program would require longitudinal monitoring data supported by baseline studies, to track changes over time, which was unlikely to be achievable within the ten year timeframe of the plan.

- **Patchy and unfocused data collection** – some stakeholders felt that data collection had been somewhat opportunistic and ad hoc, often "piggybacking" off existing research projects or other activities occurring in marine parks, rather than being designed specifically to measure progress against management actions or outcomes. While grants were viewed as a useful mechanism for supporting marine science activities, some stakeholders and Parks Australia staff noted that the grant funding model limited Parks Australia's ability to directly shape the focus of research projects. As a result, the data generated was not always well aligned with management, monitoring or evaluation needs.
- **Evaluative challenges** – the absence of baseline data, combined with limited synthesis and communication of available evidence, constrained the ability of stakeholders and Parks Australia to assess progress against marine science actions and outcomes. Without consistent, fit-for-purpose monitoring data, it was felt that the impacts of management could not be accurately measured. Additionally, gaps in the effective communication of data and scientific findings were felt to further limit their use in informing management decisions.

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. Whilst stakeholder confidence in the extent of this outcome's achievement was mixed, most agreed that some increase in understanding had occurred.

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 agreed that understanding had increased, though opinions varied on the extent of this improvement. Some perceived a significant increase, while others felt the progress had been more limited. Stakeholders consistently highlighted that marine science knowledge for the North Network was extremely limited at the start of the plan. Parks Australia representatives also emphasised this baseline and the challenges it posed for implementation.

A research sector stakeholder acknowledged that significant efforts had been made to establish baseline data. However, they noted that data from various sources had not been effectively

synthesised or communicated, which limited stakeholders' ability to develop a cohesive and shared understanding of the evidence-base.

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 assessed as **partially met**. While no documentary evidence was identified which clearly demonstrated an improved understanding of the effectiveness of marine park management, Parks Australia staff noted that baseline data collection (discussed further at A27) provided an initial step in developing this understanding.

However, external stakeholders generally felt that sufficient data had not been collected or made publicly available to support a robust assessment of the effectiveness of marine park management in protecting park values.

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

Evidence

The evaluation found that this outcome was **partially met**. This assessment was based on mixed-feedback from stakeholders in relation to the use of evidence in marine park management decisions.

Evidence from engagement:

Whilst some external stakeholders were positive about an improvement in the evidentiary basis of decision-making in the North, many were either unsure or sceptical that the data required to inform decision making had been collected, citing "patchy" and "opportunistic" efforts to collect data. These stakeholders noted that a robust assessment of the effectiveness of marine park management in protecting park values would require longitudinal monitoring data, underpinned by baseline studies, to track change over time against indicators relevant to ecological, social and economic values.

However, external stakeholders also broadly acknowledged the immense difficulty of establishing these datasets and recognised the limitations of resourcing available to the Parks Australia team.

Parks Australia staff noted that the marine science activities undertaken over the course of the plan (outlined against the actions below) contributed to both long- and short-term strategic decision-making. One example provided was the use of Reef Life Survey Data from the Gulf of Carpentaria Marine Park to identify the need for the National Environmental Science Program (NESP) reef desktop review. In turn, this review identified data gaps and provided the evidence-

base to commission a number of benthic mapping surveys. These surveys, coupled with socio-economic considerations (including consideration of cultural values mapping and monitoring reports concerning trawl fishing in the marine park) were reported to inform management decisions about future zoning arrangements and monitoring and compliance needs.

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

This action was assessed as **ongoing**. While the desktop review identified considerable efforts to establish ecological datasets and some efforts towards establishing social and economic baselines, stakeholders provided mixed ratings on the effectiveness of these efforts in supporting evidence-based decision-making and adaptive management.

Evidence from the desktop review:

Numerous efforts to establish baseline datasets in the North Network were conducted over the course of the plan, including:

- Self-reported evidence of ecological baselines established through bathymetry and benthic habitat mapping, baited remote underwater video stations (BRUVS) and drop cam analysis, fish surveys, and megafauna surveys in all eight of the North Marine Parks.[98]
- Australian Institute of Marine Science (AIMS) research collaborations, including: Biodiversity surveys of Carpentaria and Merkara Shoals from field work in 2022–23; 2021–2022 Bathymetry mapping and environmental DNA at Paxie Shoal and an unnamed shoal in the Arnhem Marine Park; Habitat and multibeam mapping of North Network Special Protection Zones (SPZs); Multibeam and Habitat Mapping in the North Network Marine Parks Network in the Gulf of Carpentaria; undertaking Sea Country Monitoring in Arnhem Marine Park (BRUVS, SST testing) with the Bawinanga Rangers; and undertaking Sea Country Monitoring in Joseph Bonaparte Gulf Marine Parks (BRUVS, Sea Surface Temperature testing, Sea Country observations) with the Thamarrurr Rangers.[99] [100]
- National Environmental Science Program (NESP) Marine Biodiversity Hub Report (2015–2021) that detailed established ecological baseline data to support adaptive management in the North:
    - The publication of eco-narratives for Joseph Bonaparte Gulf, Arafura and Wessel Marine Parks; biodiversity surveys and mapping completed in Arafura and Wessel Marine Parks; a Hub project that combined biodiversity data from previous Hub surveys with physical data

[98] *North network self-assessment: Internal document*
[99] *YEAR 6 (2023-24) ANNUAL PROGRESS REPORT: Internal document*
[100] *Habitat and Multibeam Mapping of Special Purpose Zones (Trawl) In North Network Marine Parks (2026): Internal document*

such as bathymetry to develop predictive models for the Oceanic Shoal Marine Park. [101] [102] [103] [104]

- Collaborations with James Cook (JCU) and Charles Darwin (CDU) Universities:
  - Part of Project D4 - A survey of fish and benthic communities of Wessel Marine Park Led by Dhimurru Aboriginal Corporation, in collaboration with JCU, Parks Australia, Australian Marine Parks, and the University of Tasmania (UTAS) Institute for Marine and Antarctic Studies (IMAS) (2020).[105]
  - Collaboration between li-Anthawirriyarra Rangers, JCU, CDU Northern Territory Parks and Parks Australia to map fish assemblages and benthic habitats in Marra Sea Country (which included Limmen Marine Park), as well as monitoring activities undertaken in 2025 in Limmen Marine Park in collaboration with Marra Traditional Owners.[106]
  - Monitoring of benthic habitats and fish communities in Angkamuthi Country with Angkamuthi Traditional Owners in West Cape York Marine Park (2024).
  - Benthic mapping in the Gulf of Carpentaria Marine Park in collaboration with Traditional Owners and Wellesley Islands Rangers (ongoing).
  - Monitoring and capacity building through the Our Marine Parks Grants (OMPG) Round 4 with Charles Darwin University (ongoing) to support Rangers to monitor Sea Country in Oceanic Shoals Marine Park and Arafura Marine Park.[107] [108]
- Reef Life Survey has long-term monitoring sites at Oceanic Shoals, Arafura, Arnhem, Wessel, Gulf of Carpentaria and West Cape York marine parks in the North Network.[109]
- Evidence of longitudinal monitoring with First Nations Rangers in 2026, including in Joseph Bonaparte Gulf and Arnhem Marine Parks.[110] [111]
- Publication of data across all eight Marine Parks in the North network made publicly available on the Seamap Australia website.[112]

---

[101] *NESP Marine Biodiversity Hub Final Report: https://www.nespmarine.edu.au/document/nesp-marine-biodiversity-hub-final-report-2015-2021.html*

[102] *NESP eco-narrative for banks and shoals within Arafura Marine Park*: *https://www.nespmarinecoastal.edu.au/historical-publications/arafura-marine-park-eco-narrative/*

[103] *NESP eco-narrative of Joseph Bonaparte Gulf Marine Park:* https://www.nespmarinecoastal.edu.au/historical-publications/an-eco-narrative-of-joseph-bonaparte-gulf-marine-park-north-marine-region/

[104] *AIMS media release - Abundant corals and fishes emerge from the ancient contours of Arafura Marine Park, 2020: https://www.aims.gov.au/sites/default/files/2020-11/Media%20release_Arafura%20Marine%20Park%20Survey_AIMS_17November2020.pdf*

[105] *Wessel Marine Park Post-Survey Report: https://www.nespmarine.edu.au/system/files/Przeslawski_2020_D4_M11_Wessel%20Post-Survey%20Report.pdf*

[106] *Fish Communities and Benthic Monitoring of Marra Sea Country in the Gulf of Carpentaria (2025): Internal document*

[107] *OMPG4 Grant Submission and Project Snapshot, beginning 2024, project ending 2027 – Fishing for Data - Connectivity of Tiwi Sea Country with the Oceanic Shoals Marine Park: Internal documents*

[108] *OMPG4 Grant Submission and Project Snapshot, beginning 2024, project ending 2026 – Developing marine megafauna monitoring and research capability for the Garngi Rangers in the Arafura Marine Park and adjacent sea country: Internal documents*

[109] *Foundational Implementation Plan Review 2018-2022: Internal document*

[110] *Indigenous Ranger Sea Country observing and temperature monitoring in the Joseph Bonaparte Gulf Marine Park (2026): Internal document*

[111] *Building Capacity of the Bawinanga Rangers to Monitor Sea Country in Arnhem Marine Park (2026): Internal Document*

[112] *Seamap Australia North Network webpage: https://seamapaustralia.org/region-reports/north/*

- The '*Social and Economic benchmarks of the Australian Marine Parks*' (2021) indicated the establishment of social and economic baselines. [113]

Evidence from engagement:

Stakeholders consistently emphasised the lack of baseline data available at the commencement of the plan, acknowledging that some progress had been made in establishing ecological, social and economic baselines. However, a range of less positive perceptions were identified amongst stakeholders, including:

- Limited confidence that baseline data had been used to inform evidence-based decision-making – as many stakeholders reported limited awareness of when and how this had occurred.
- 'Ad hoc' nature of base-line data collection – many stakeholders felt that baseline data had been collected in a "sporadic" and "opportunistic" fashion, with other existing data-collection initiatives forming the basis for this science. As such, these stakeholders questioned the extent to which baseline data collection had been aligned with the specific values, pressures and context of the North Network.
- Gaps in economic and social baseline data – some stakeholders, particularly those from the fishing sector, felt that social and economic marine park values had not been appropriately measured or understood over the course of the plan.

Parks Australia staff also cited a project exploring social values in Australian Marine Parks including the North Network, that was undergoing development at the time 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 Australian Marine Parks Science Strategy was not developed, the *'Parks Australia Science Strategy'* (2025) 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:

[113] *NESP Social and Economic Benchmarks of the Australian Marine Parks 2021: 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*

- Cited internal documents pertaining to Parks Australia Marine Science Strategy project initiation (2024).[114]
- Publication of the '*Parks Australia Science Strategy*' (2025).[115]

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, consultations gave context as to why the Australian Marine Parks 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 Science Strategy instead.
- A few other stakeholders, however, were less satisfied with the adoption of a broader strategy that encompassed both marine and terrestrial parks, as they felt that this approach did not adequately capture the specific issues, challenges and priorities of the North Network marine parks. Specifically, these stakeholders felt that a more tailored strategy could have gone some way to providing a more cohesive and coordinated approach to marine science activities in the North 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	**Ongoing**

Evidence

This action was assessed as **ongoing**. The desktop review identified clear evidence of consistent knowledge brokering activities, and most stakeholders felt at least moderately satisfied with Parks Australia's approach to collaborations and partnerships in relation to marine science.

Evidence from the desktop review:

The desktop review identified a number of collaborative efforts to encourage knowledge brokering across the range of intended partner types (i.e. members of the science community, private enterprise, citizen science initiatives and other government agencies). These activities were also found to take place throughout the course of the management plan, suggesting consistent efforts. More specifically, the following activities were identified:

[114] *Parks Australia Project Initiative Document: Cited internal document*

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

- Inception and bi-annual meetings of the North Marine Parks Advisory Committee (NMPAC) since 2019.[116]
- Self-reported strong collaborations and partnerships with JCU, CDU and AIMS through joint scientific activities referenced in the NESP Environmental Science Program Marine Biodiversity Hub Report (2015 – 2021) (referenced in A27).
- A survey of fish and benthic communities of Wessel Marine Park Led by Dhimurru Aboriginal Corporation, in collaboration with JCU, Parks Australia, Australian Marine Parks, UTAS and IMAS (2020).[117] Additionally, collaborative research led by AIMS on commonalities between the Wessel Marine Park and a culturally important site in the Dhimurru Indigenous Protection Area (2023).[118]
- Collaboration between li-Anthawirriyarra Rangers, JCU, CDU, NT Parks and Parks Australia to map fish assemblages and benthic habitats in Marra Sea Country (which included Limmen Marine Park).[119]
- Project 1.25 under the NESP – which involved consultative workshop with fishers, researchers, marine managers and regional planners in efforts to reduce sawfish bycatch (2022).[120]
- OMPG2- which enabled the Northern Territory Seafood Council to support citizen science by facilitating knowledge sharing between fishers and scientists to improve the knowledge of sawfish and river sharks in northern Australia.[121]

Evidence from engagement

The main collaborative activities identified by stakeholders were partnerships or collaborations with members of the science community (i.e. researchers and universities) such as via grants and the NESP. Some stakeholders reported that these activities had supported knowledge brokering and sharing within the science community, such as by facilitating relationships between researchers, requiring grant recipients to share their results, and initiatives to bring results and data from scientific studies together. However, a few stakeholders felt that research activities were undertaken in a siloed environment where results were not shared with or easily accessed by others.

---

[116] *North Marine Parks Advisory Committee Meeting Communiques: https://australianmarineparks.gov.au/management/partnerships/advisory-committees/north-marine-parks-advisory-committee/#meeting-news-section*
[117] *Wessel Marine Park Post-Survey Report: https://www.nespmarine.edu.au/system/files/Przeslawski_2020_D4_M11_Wessel%20Post-Survey%20Report.pdf*
[118] *Commonalities between the Wessel Marine Park and a culturally important site in the Dhimurru Indigenous Protection Area, 2023: Internal document*
[119] *Mapping fish assemblages and benthic habitats in Marra Sea Country: Implications for marine spatial planning in the Gulf of Carpentaria Report: https://researchonline.jcu.edu.au/87686/*
[120] *Sawfish bycatch reporting in northern Australian fisheries: https://www.nespmarinecoastal.edu.au/project/1-25/*
[121] *Foundational Implementation Plan Review 2018-2022: Internal document*

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 was operationalised in a timely manner. Data sharing arrangements were also established via the publicly accessible AODN. However, as noted above, a perception among a few 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.[122] This included a condition to enable data to be publicly available in portals such as the Open Access to Ocean Data (AODN) portal.
- Publication of North Network Marine Science projects on the Australian Marine Parks website.[123]
- Publication of data across all eight Marine Parks made publicly available on the Seamap Australia website.[124]

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	**Ongoing**

Evidence

This action was assessed as **ongoing**. The desktop review identified substantial evidence of collaboration with the marine science community (i.e. the National Marine Science Committee [NMSC] and NESP) through joint science initiatives and research collaborations. Whilst stakeholders were aware of these collaborations, some expressed reservations regarding their ability to improve the understanding of marine park values, pressures and management effectiveness.

Evidence from the desktop review:

The following collaborations supported a range of joint science initiatives and research partnerships, producing outputs that contributed to improved understanding of marine park

[122] *Australia Marine park permits: https://onlineservices.environment.gov.au/parks/australian-marine-parks/permits*
[123] *Australian Marine Parks Scientific Publications: https://australianmarineparks.gov.au/science/scientific-publications/*
[124] *Seamap Australia North Network webpage: https://seamapaustralia.org/region-reports/north/*

values, pressures and management effectiveness. Evidence indicates that these outputs were delivered progressively over the course of the plan period. More specifically, the following activities were identified:

- Parks Australia membership to the NMSC.
- Collaborations with NESP (referenced above in evidence for A27).
- Collaborations with AIMS (referenced above in evidence for A27).
- Collaborations with JCU and CDU (referenced above in evidence for A27).
- Citizen science collaborations via the Reef Life Survey (referenced above in evidence for A27).
- Publication of data across all eight Marine Parks in the North network made publicly available on the Seamap Australia website.[125]
- A collaboration with the AODN and the Integrated IMOS.
- A number of research collaborations including longitudinal monitoring and baseline data to support monitoring (referenced above in evidence for A27).
- OMPG4 funded project with Aquenal Pty Ltd to track coral diversity across AMPs with a specific project component conducting a detailed investigation of coral species distributions and trends in the North Network, including an assessment of drivers of change, and value-adding to prior analyses on habitat trends.[126]

Evidence from engagement:

A few stakeholders reported that collaborations with the science community had contributed to improved understanding of marine park values, pressures, and management effectiveness. Those more actively involved in research partnerships with Parks Australia were most positive about this development, with more understanding of the work that had been done.

However, some stakeholders expressed concerns about the lack of a strategic approach by Parks Australia to forming collaborations and undertaking projects. They suggested that Parks Australia should seek to better align grant priorities with the objectives of the marine park management plan, noting that without consistent, fit-for-purpose monitoring data, the effects of management cannot be measured effectively. One research sector stakeholder noted that, while collaborations had occurred, findings often remained siloed and needed to be better synthesised and communicated to stakeholders. Similarly, another stakeholder felt there had been insufficient transparency regarding the collaborations that had occurred, the rationale for these collaborations, and how they were intended to support management outcomes.

Parks Australia Staff explained that whilst numerous baseline datasets had been established across the network, some had not yet been uploaded or distributed to stakeholders, aligning with the stakeholder sentiment around the poor communication of scientific data.

[125] *Seamap Australia North Network webpage: https://seamapaustralia.org/region-reports/north/*
[126] *Aquenal Coral Diversity research: https://view.officeapps.live.com/op/view.aspx?src=https%3A%2F%2Faustralianmarineparks.gov.au%2Fstatic%2Fa053ef84e2f66ca2b161a83c80186913%2Famp-round-4-grant-recipients.docx&wdOrigin=BROWSELINK*

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	Ongoing

Evidence

This action was assessed as **ongoing**. There is evidence to suggest that Parks Australia has increased its use of innovative and effective technology in partnership with the scientific community and government agencies. However, some stakeholders felt there was room for greater collaboration in these efforts.

Evidence from the desktop review:

- Ranger-led ecological surveys in Arnhem Marine Park which employed the use of BRUVs, SST Monitoring and drop camera survey in data collection (commenced in 2021 and is ongoing).[127]
- Subtidal habitat mapping of North-west Marra Sea Country which employed the use of drop cameras and grab sampling (2023).[128]
- Spotter Wave Buoy Deployment in northern Australia, undertaken by IMOS and UWA (2020).[129]
- Experimental eDNA has been used in science projects in the North Marine Parks Network, including with the Mardbalk rangers and Hydro Office in Arnhem Marine Park, and on scientific research projects with AIMS in Arnhem Marine Park.[130]

Evidence from engagement:

Stakeholders held mixed views on Parks Australia's effectiveness in collaborating with the scientific community and government agencies to increase the use of innovative technology.

Many felt that Parks Australia had been at least moderately successful in implementing this action. However, some research sector stakeholders noted that the adoption of innovative technologies in the North Network had not progressed at the same rate as across the other networks. It was noted that opportunities to adopt innovative technologies across the North Network had been limited by the prioritisation of the establishment of foundational baseline datasets.

[127] *Ranger Led Marine Ecological Surveys Within Arnhem Marine Park: https://apps.aims.gov.au/metadata/view/d619b74d-ac37-4dcf-9513-b209c5628cf7*
[128] *Subtidal Habitat of North-West Marra Sea Country: https://researchonline.jcu.edu.au/87669/*
[129] *Introducing the New Technology Projects: Low cost wave buoy technology: https://imos.org.au/news/introducing-the-new-technology-projects-low-cost-wave-buoy-technology*
[130] *North Network Team: Self-assessment*

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 by 2026.

Evidence from desktop review:

The evaluation found that monitoring efforts across the North Network have primarily focused on ecological aspects rather than social and economic uses. Despite this, the desktop evidence identified the following:

- A social and economic benchmark survey of the Australian Marine Parks, with final publication of the survey data in 2021. Stakeholder feedback indicated that a repeat of this survey was underway, with publication projected for 2026.[131]
- Monitoring natural and cultural values of sea country with AIMS and the Thamarrurr and Bawinanga Rangers in Joseph Bonaparte Gulf and Arnhem Marine Parks respectively.[132]

Action	Completion status
A34. Monitor the condition of important habitats such as reef systems and their vulnerability to climate change	Completed

Evidence

This action was assessed as **completed**, with numerous efforts identified to establish monitoring programs from the early years of plan implementation.

Evidence from desktop review:

The desktop review identified the following evidence of habitat monitoring and the impacts of climate change over the course of the management plan:

- Reef Life Survey has long-term monitoring sites at Oceanic Shoals, Arafura, Arnhem, Wessel, Gulf of Carpentaria and West Cape York marine parks in the North Network (referenced above in evidence for A27).
- A NESP project integrating four decades of seagrass data from Torres Strait and the Gulf of Carpentaria (referenced above in evidence for A27).

[131] *NESP Social and Economic Benchmarks of the Australian Marine Parks 2021: 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*

[132] *YEAR 5 (2024-25) ANNUAL PROGRESS REPORT NORTH MARINE PARKS NETWORK MANAGEMENT PLAN 2018: Internal document*

- The '*Fishing for Data'* (2024) project – which facilitated data collection to support an understanding of oceanic climate change with Traditional Owners and rangers from the Tiwi Islands engaged citizen science in the collection of oceanic/ warming data (funded by OMPG4).[133]
- OMPG4 funded project with Aquenal Pty Ltd to track coral diversity across Australian Marine Parks (referenced above in the evidence for A31).
- A project with JCU and TropWATER to build a map of northern Australian seagrass (ongoing).[134]
- Ranger-led ecological surveys in Arnhem Marine Park (referenced above in evidence for A32).
- Collaborative monitoring work with the Thamarrurr and Bawinanga Rangers in Joseph Bonaparte Gulf and Arnhem Marine Parks (referenced above in evidence for A33).

Action	Completion status
A35. Monitor the impact of invasive species on marine park values and the effectiveness of management	**Partially completed or implemented**

Evidence

This action was assessed as **partially completed**, with only limited evidence of actions being taken to monitor the impact of invasive species. However, stakeholders noted that invasive species were considered a less significant threat to the North Network compared to other networks.

Evidence from the desktop review:

Parks Australia Staff reported some (albeit limited) evidence of Crown of Thorns Starfish (COTS) on reefs in the North Network. Observed impacts have generally been minimal, except for a reef in Wessel Marine Park, where impacts were recorded.[135]

Evidence from engagement:

Stakeholders provided limited feedback in relation to this action, though both Parks Australia staff and a few external stakeholders noted that invasive species were not a key pressure for the North Network. As such, stakeholders were not concerned about the lower prioritisation of the activity under this action.

[133] *Fishing for Data – Connectivity of Tiwi Sea Country with the Oceanic Shoals Marine Park: https://researchers.cdu.edu.au/en/projects/fishing-for-data-connectivity-of-tiwi-sea-country-with-the-oceani/*
[134] *Building a map of northern Australian seagrass: https://www.tropwater.com/projects/building-a-map-of-northern-australian-seagrass*
[135] *AIMS Crown Thorns Starfish: https://www.aims.gov.au/research-topics/marine-life/crown-thorns-starfish*

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. For example, 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**. Whilst numerous efforts to establish monitoring programs were established, most stakeholders felt the action had not been fully implemented.

Evidence from the desktop review:

- Evidence cited in A34.
- Collaboration with Northern Territory Government and Marra Traditional Owners through Federation Funding Agreement (FFA) projects, including the development and assessment of a cross-jurisdictional model for Traditional Owner-led marine park management.[136] [137]
- NESP project which developed a targeted monitoring program to support evidence-based management of AMPs (2022).[138]
- NESP project assessing the status of threatened and migratory species (2018).[139]
- Monitoring of benthic habitats and fish communities in Angkamuthi Country in West Cape York Marine Park (2024).
- Developing capacity and partnerships for the Garngi Rangers to lead marine megafauna monitoring in the Arafura Marine Park and adjacent Sea Country (ongoing).[140]

Evidence from engagement:

Across stakeholder groups, there was recognition of efforts to implement monitoring programs over the course of the plan. However, as previously mentioned, there was a shared view that there were limitations on the baseline data required to support long-term monitoring efforts (see A27 above). Additionally, one stakeholder noted that, while some monitoring data had been collected, it had not been effectively synthesised or communicated to stakeholders.

[136] *FFA Marine Management Capacity in the Northern Territory – Final Report (2026): Internal document*
[137] *Collaboration deed to support integrated marine park management in the south-west Gulf of Carpentaria and the development of new marine parks in Northern Territory waters, 2026: Internal document*
[138] *Designing a targeted monitoring program to support evidence-based management of Australian Marine Parks: https://www.nespmarinecoastal.edu.au/wp-content/uploads/2023/08/Project-1.3-Final-report.pdf*
[139] *Scoping a Seascape Approach to Managing and Recovering Northern Australian Threatened and Migratory Marine Species Final Report: https://www.nespmarine.edu.au/system/files/Kyne%20Scoping%20a%20seascape%20approach_Milestone%2017%20Final%20report_RPv3%202017_14Nov18.pdf*
[140] *Developing capacity and partnerships for the Garngi Rangers to lead marine megafauna monitoring in the Arafura Marine Park and adjacent Sea Country: https://researchers.cdu.edu.au/en/projects/developing-capacity-and-partnerships-for-the-garngi-rangers-to-le/*

Action	Completion status
A37. Investigate opportunities to extend citizen science programs	**Completed**

Evidence

This action was assessed as **completed**, as the evaluation identified sufficient evidence of investigation of citizen science initiatives.

Evidence from the desktop review:

Internal documentation provided by Parks Australia suggested that citizen science opportunities had been investigated, and that there was limited scope for citizen science activities in the North Network, predominately due to the remoteness of the network and dangers associated with the marine life that lived in it. However, the documentation highlighted existing First Nations Ranger programs, as well as the potential to develop junior ranger programs (subject to interest), as viable avenues for conducting citizen science within the network.[141]

In addition, the desktop review identified the following examples of citizen science in the North Network:

- Citizen science collaborations via the Reef Life Survey (referenced above in evidence for A27).
- The '*Fishing for Data'* project (referenced above in evidence for A34).
- The OMPG funded project '*Professional Fishers' Knowledge to Inform Research and Management of Sawfish and River Sharks'* conducted in collaboration with the Northern Territory Seafood Council (NTSC) and CDU.[142]

[141] *North Network Team: Self-assessment*
[142] *Sawfish and River Shark project: https://www.ntsc.com.au/content/sawfish-and-river-shark/sawfish-and-river-shark*

8. Findings: Assessments and Authorisations Program

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

8.1. Overall findings about the efficacy of program implementation

Grade	
Good with some concerns	Overall, the grade for the Assessments and Authorisations Program was assessed as 'good with some concerns'. The outcome of the program was assessed as 'partially met', and five of the seven actions were assessed as either 'completed' or 'ongoing', with one assessed as 'partially completed' and one 'not commenced'. While 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*) was assessed as 'not commenced', this was not considered to be a significant gap as other evidence was provided of new technologies and gear types being adopted where appropriate – hence suggesting that the non-completion of this action did not impede the overall aims of the management program.

Strengths and achievements

The evaluation identified two main strengths and achievements in relation to the Assessments and Authorisations Program, including the:

- **Development of a range of policies, processes and procedures** – to support the implementation of the planned actions and achievement of the outcome (as discussed in section 7.3 below).
- **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

- **Clarity and stability of standards** – some stakeholders in the commercial sector raised concerns about the lack of clarity in standards, describing them as overly dynamic and prone to changes. This was seen as a potential source of commercial instability, which could discourage investment.
- **Transparency and communication** – one stakeholder highlighted concerns about a lack of transparency in decision-making processes and insufficient proactive communication to stakeholders and the public regarding the factors considered in these decisions.

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	Partially met	Trend getting better

Evidence

This outcome was assessed as **partially met** with mixed sentiment from stakeholders on the effectiveness of Parks Australia's completion of this outcome.

Evidence from engagement:

The few stakeholders who spoke to this outcome expressed mixed sentiments on the extent to which it had been effectively achieved. One stakeholder reported that all authorisation decisions they were aware of had upheld the protection of marine park values. However, they noted limited clarity around these values and highlighted challenges in assessing risks, impacts, and the appropriateness of proposed activities due to a lack of robust data on marine park values. Another stakeholder raised concerns about insufficient transparency in decision-making processes and a lack of proactive communication to stakeholders and the public regarding the factors considered in these decisions.

A few stakeholders from the commercial sector expressed concerns about the clarity of standards for authorisations, describing them as overly dynamic and subject to changes that could create commercial instability and undermine sustainable use values. Additionally, a stakeholder from the environmental sector felt that the protection of marine park values was constrained by the strict boundaries of marine park zoning and insufficient consideration of how activities in adjacent waters might impact values within the parks.

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

This action was assessed as **completed**. Considerable documentary evidence of the timely development and application of best practice approaches in the early years of the plan 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 plans.[143]
- A commentary within the *'Guiding Actions'* section of 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.[144]
    - A Peer Review Permit checklist outlining the steps taken in the peer review process for authorisations.[145]
    - A data quality check register which documents the data quality checks undertaken on application and authorisation data to ensure their accuracy.[146] 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.[147]
    - A flowchart demonstrating the assessment process for internal use by Parks Australia staff.[148]
    - A guide to assessing commercial tourism operations for internal use by Parks Australia staff. [149]
- Transparency in authorisation decisions was evidenced by:
    - Development of the *'Australian Marine Parks Authorisation Consultation Guide'*.[150]
    - The standard operating procedures for AMP assessments and authorisations.[151]
    - The public record of permits and activity licences issued by the Director of National Parks (the Director) since 2018.[152]
    - The publicly available outline of the Authorisation and Assessments Program.[153]

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:

Most stakeholders believed this action had been implemented either moderately or to a significant extent, emphasising the robust authorisations process.

However, a few stakeholders expressed concerns around the clarity and consistency of standards. As previously noted, a few in the commercial sector felt the standards were overly dynamic, subject to changes arising from an overemphasis on executive discretion that could cause commercial instability and dissuade investment. Stakeholders from this sector highlighted that these perceived inconsistencies in assessment standards made it difficult to anticipate Parks Australia's assessment requirements, creating challenges in preparing applications that would potentially result in avoidable rejections.

Another stakeholder expressed concerns about the authorisations process, describing it as overly drawn out and a barrier to the timely commencement of meaningful projects that posed no threat to marine park values.

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	**Completed**

Evidence

Overall, this action was assessed as **completed**. Considerable documentary evidence of the investigation and implementation of innovative technologies was identified, as well as some evidence of collaboration with industry. Of the few stakeholders who were able to give feedback in relation to this action, most gave moderate to positive ratings.

Evidence from desktop review:

The desktop review identified the investigation and implementation of mandatory Vessel Monitoring Systems (VMS) as the key innovative compliance technology introduced over the 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 that increase the uptake of electronic and vessel monitoring systems by commercial fishers.[154]

---

[143] *Australian Marine Parks Assessment and Authorisations Policy. https://australianmarineparks.gov.au/static/6f5d83193c7046f4d03dff87df2dcefd/amp-document-dnp-policy-authorisations-and-assessments.pdf*
[144] *24 - 0.1 - Checklist: Internal document*
[145] *25 - 0.5 - Peer Review Permit review checklist: Internal document*
[146] *19 - 0.4 MP Assessments and Authorisations - CRM Procedure 02 - Data Quality Checks: Internal document*
[147] *Assessments and Authorisations - Standard Operating Procedure: Internal document*
[148] *Assessment process - flowchart: Internal document*
[149] *Guide to assessing commercial tourism operations: Internal document*
[150] *Australian Marine Parks Authorisation Consultation Guideline: Internal document*
[151] *Assessments and Authorisations - Standard Operating Procedure: Internal document*
[152] *Authorisations webpage https://australianmarineparks.gov.au/access-use/authorisations/*
[153] *Authorisations & assessments program web page: https://australianmarineparks.gov.au/management/programs/authorisations-assessments-program/*
[154] *Electronic & vessel monitoring systems assistance program webpage: https://australianmarineparks.gov.au/about/fisheries-assistance/electronic-vessel-monitoring-systems-assistance-program/*

- VMS installation became mandatory in 2024 for all commercial vessels operating in or transiting through Australian Marine Parks (AMPs).[155] 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).[156]

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 nationally, including VMS, sound traps and Bluebottle vessels.

Of the few external stakeholders who were aware of the efforts mentioned above in the desktop review, one expressed the sentiment that VMSs could be utilised more broadly and effectively within the commercial fishing sector, which bears the highest penalties for non-compliance.

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 Network Management Plan, Parks Australia deemed this action to not be relevant or required for the management plan as there were existing effective processes to assess the impacts and suitability of new technologies and gear types.[157] 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.

However, a few fishing sector stakeholders expressed a desire for more effective assessments for new fishing gear, as they felt that the current processes took “too long” to adapt to the latest technologies.

[155] *Mandatory Vessel Monitoring Systems (VMS) for commercial fishers in Australian Marine Parks webpage: https://australianmarineparks.gov.au/access-use/commercial-approvals/commercial-fishing/mandatory-vessel-monitoring-systems-vms-commercial-fishers-australian-marine-parks/*
[156] *Australian Marine Parks Compliance Report, Q1 2023: https://australianmarineparks.gov.au/static/e3c8ac92cec8e2c57dec4ea1cd44c048/amp-compliance-qtr-report-1-julsep-2023.pdf*
[157] *Parks Australia North self-assessment: Internal document*

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	**Partially completed or implemented**

Evidence

This action was assessed as **partially completed**. While the documentary evidence identified a timely guarantee of service, only some stakeholders felt the action had been implemented effectively.

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.[158]
- '*The Director of National Parks Corporate Plan'* 2024–2025. [159]
- The Australian Marine Parks Indigenous Engagement Program, which outlined 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.[160]

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, some external stakeholders expressed concerns in relation to the effectiveness of consultation regarding regulatory decisions. Despite the existence of a service guarantee, some stakeholders from the commercial fishing and environmental sectors felt that ongoing consultation regarding decisions had been insufficient.

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

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[161] and the publication of authorisations granted since 2018 online.[162]

Action	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**, with clear documentary evidence of authorisations being assessed and issued in and timely manner.

Evidence from desktop review:

The desktop review identified evidence of a number of authorisations being issued by the Director for the North Network since 2018.[163] 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 outlines the assessment process for licences and permits.[164]
- A flowchart outlining the process of assessment of approvals, permits or licenses.[165]
- The '*Australian Marine Parks Assessment and Authorisations Policy*'.[166] 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.[167]

---

[161] *Australian Marine Parks - Permit and license applications, online portal https://onlineservices.environment.gov.au/parks/australian-marine-parks*
[162] *Authorisations webpage https://australianmarineparks.gov.au/access-use/authorisations/*
[163] *Authorisations webpage https://australianmarineparks.gov.au/access-use/authorisations/*
[164] *17 - 0.2 MP Assessments and Authorisations - Standard Operating Procedure: Internal document*
[165] *21 - Authorisations Manual - flowchart for assessment of approval, permit or licence: Internal document*
[166] *Australian Marine Parks Assessment and Authorisations Policy https://australianmarineparks.gov.au/static/6f5d83193c7046f4d03dff87df2dcefd/amp-document-dnp-policy-authorisations-and-assessments.pdf*
[167] *03 - Guidance note - Petroleum Activities and Australian Marine Parks: Internal document. Refer to p. 8 "Consulting with the Director of National Parks"*

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 **ongoing**, with documentary and reported evidence of activity in support of the experience and consistency of approaches for those seeking authorisations.

Evidence from desktop review:

The desktop review identified the following collaborative activity with Commonwealth and state/ territory government agencies to support the experience and consistency of approaches for authorisations:

- A joint public statement with the National Offshore Petroleum Safety and Environmental Management Authority (NOPSEMA)[168] about the legislative regime for petroleum activities in and around all marine parks (including the North Network). This document was intended to assist petrol titleholders nationally to understand their regulation and authorisation obligations.

Evidence from engagement:

Parks Australia staff reported working closely with a range of other government agencies (e.g. NOPSEMA) to enhance consistency in the authorisations process for park users, as well as aligning Commonwealth and state rules where possible to reduce confusion/ complexity in the application process.

While most stakeholders were unsure whether the action had been completed, none expressed dissatisfaction with the alignment between Commonwealth, state and territory government agencies' approaches for people seeking authorisations.

[168] *Petroleum activities and Australian Marine Parks:* Internal document

9. Findings: Parks Protection and Management Program

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

9.1. Overall findings about the efficacy of program implementation

Grade

Good

The Parks Protection and Management program was assessed as 'good', 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 deemed 'partially completed'. For these actions, the evidence suggests that efforts were trending positively.

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 collaborate in marine park protection activities** – collaboration with Traditional Owners, First Nations Ranger groups, government organisations and relevant agencies to undertake practical management actions was highlighted as a key strength of program implementation. Marine debris clean-up activities were cited as a clear example of this collaborative approach, demonstrating how Parks Australia has worked with partners to support on-ground protection of marine park values.

Barriers, challenges and limiting factors

Stakeholders generally reported limited knowledge and awareness of the activities delivered under the 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, and stakeholder perceptions were mixed on the effectiveness of this outcome.

Evidence from engagement:

Of the few stakeholders who were able to provide feedback in relation to this outcome, one reported a positive example, citing a ban on mooring (i.e. that now excludes trawling) that had led to a reduction in harm to marine park values. However, another stakeholder expressed concerns about the permit application process, describing it as overly drawn out and a barrier to the timely commencement of meaningful projects that could help reduce pressures on marine park values, and posed no threat.

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

This action was assessed as **partially completed**. Although a risk-based assessment process was identified as having been developed in a timely manner, the desktop review found limited evidence of this being applied in the North Network.

Evidence from desktop review:

The desktop review identified the following examples of the development of a risk-based assessment process across all marine parks/ marine park networks:

- A network-wide Risk Management Matrix which was included in the *Australian Marine Parks Assessment and Authorisation Policy'* (2021).[169]

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

- 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.[170]

However, no evidence demonstrated that this risk-based assessment process had been applied to the North Network. In comparison, evidence of application was identified for 2 of the 5 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 as **completed**, with the output found to have been delivered in a timely manner.

Evidence from 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 the Australian Maritime Safety Authority (AMSA) and relevant agencies.[171] 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.[172]

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. However, the remoteness of marine parks in the North Network (and hence an absence of visitors) was felt to make this action of lower relevance.

[170] *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*
[171] *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*
[172] *AMP Incident and Exercise Register: Internal document.*

Evidence from desktop review:

The '*Australian Marine Parks Mooring Policy*' was developed and finalised in 2021.[173]

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

This action was assessed as **ongoing**, with the desktop review finding evidence of Parks Australia supporting the removal of marine debris and ghost nets from marine parks through partnerships in the North Network. Many stakeholders believed effective collaboration had been achieved to support this removal.

Evidence from desktop review:

- Across all marine parks, the Ghost Nets Initiative was deployed, which involved collaboration across Commonwealth and state agencies (including the Australian Fisheries Management Authority [AFMA], 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.[174]
- The '*Australian Marine Park Marine Debris Strategy*' was developed which outlined Commonwealth level collaborations and partnerships to respond to marine debris.[175]
- Ongoing collaborative activities associated with the initiative were demonstrated by multiple communiqués, including references to clean-ups piloted by First Nations Ranger groups.[176] [177] [178]

Evidence from engagement:

This action was widely assessed by stakeholders as completed, with no reports of dissatisfaction regarding its implementation. Both external stakeholders and Parks Australia staff highlighted the important role of the fishing industry and collaboration with organisations such as Sea Shepherd in achieving this outcome.

---

[173] *Australian Marine Parks Mooring Policy: https://australianmarineparks.gov.au/static/179c407a2f3aedc78a01ad6ca7b8835e/amp-document-amp-mooring-policy.pdf*
[174] *Ghost Nets and Marine Debris Initiative: https://australianmarineparks.gov.au/management/partnerships/ghost-nets-and-marine-debris-initiative/*
[175] *Australian Marine Park Marine Debris Strategy: Internal document*
[176] *NMPAC Meeting #3 Communiqué: https://australianmarineparks.gov.au/static/bc50e63faf186d5d453f8bef94a0a279/amp-document-nmpac-meeting-three-communique.pdf*
[177] *NMPAC Meeting #5 Communiqué: https://australianmarineparks.gov.au/static/c73db510ea027498a194925b78f38a8e/amp-document-nmpac-meeting-5-communique-24june.pdf*
[178] *NMPAC Meeting #6 Communiqué: https://australianmarineparks.gov.au/static/5a780036e179074a6bf90fbe41380aed/amp-document-nmpac-meeting-6-communique.pdf*

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**. While limited desktop review evidence was located for the completion of Australia's obligations under international agreements, many stakeholders felt the action had been implemented effectively.

Evidence from the desktop review

The desktop review identified some self-reported evidence of contribution to relevant national and international laws and agreements, including close work with the Australian Government Department of Climate Change, Energy, the Environment and Water (DCCEEW) Threatened Species and Marine Species Team to ensure projects are complementary wherever possible.[179] The evaluation also notes that the North Network Management Plan itself was developed to support compliance with the Environment Protection and Biodiversity Conservation (EPBC) Act.

Evidence from engagement:

Parks Australia stakeholders indicated that responsibility for this action primarily sat with colleagues at AFMA, who were perceived as successfully managing the fulfilment of these obligations.

Limited stakeholder feedback was provided in relation to this action. While stakeholders had low awareness of specific international or national frameworks relevant to Parks Australia's work, many felt confident that Parks Australia would be adhering to such agreements as required.

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

Evidence

This action was assessed as **completed**. Whilst most stakeholders were not aware of activities taken to implement this action, the desktop review identified the delivery of a range of infrastructure at Arnhem Marine Park through the Infrastructure Register.[180]

Stakeholders also felt that, given the limited visitation to marine parks in the North Network (due to the remote nature of the network, limited accessibility and dangers posed by marine life), limited infrastructure would be required to support visitor safety.

[179] *North Network team self-assessment: Internal document*
[180] *MPA Infrastructure 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)	Partially completed or implemented

Evidence

This action was assessed to be **partially completed**, with some of the required outputs identified as being completed in a timely manner.

Evidence from desktop review:

The previously referenced Ghost Nets Initiative and associated grant program (see A48 above) indicated that some collaboration had occurred to support marine debris removal. However, no evidence was identified of other collaborative programs to support invasive and protected species management.

Evidence from engagement:

Stakeholders broadly felt this action had been implemented well, although very few provided detailed reasons for this assessment.

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**, based on evidence from stakeholders, and particularly Parks Australia staff.

Evidence from engagement:

Parks Australia staff reported that no such incidences had occurred in the North Network yet, but that an incident response strategy had been prepared should an incident or accident occur.[181] Given the lack of incidents over the course of the management plan, external stakeholders were unable to provide feedback in relation to this action.

[181] *AUSTRALIAN MARINE PARKS - STRATEGY Environmental Incident and Emergency Response: https://australianmarineparks.gov.au/static/4d3102f2098731e86292992d9f15b739/amp-document-mpa-environmental-incident-and-emergency-response-strategy.pdf*

Action	Completion status
A53. Collaborate with Traditional Owners and Indigenous Ranger groups to undertake management actions	Completed

Evidence

Overall, this action was assessed as **completed**. Timely collaboration was identified via the desktop review, and most stakeholders and First Nations partners consulted felt the action had been implemented effectively.

Evidence from the desktop review

The desktop review identified the following documentary evidence of collaborative management activities with Traditional Owners and First Nations Ranger groups:

- A media release on grant funding provided to Dhimurru Rangers through the Ghost Nets Initiative to support management activities.[182]
- Dhimurru Aboriginal Corporation annual reports indicating ongoing partnerships and collaboration in management as well as support of knowledge exchange.[183] [184]
- A report from the '*Ranger Led Marine Ecological Survey*' which cites contributions from Parks Australia.[185]
- Communiqués reporting ongoing on Country meetings with Traditional Owners, including to discuss collaborative marine park management.[186] [187]

Evidence from engagement:

Most stakeholders and First Nations partners felt confident that this action had been implemented, highlighting the establishment of strong relationships and partnerships with Traditional Owner groups and First Nations Ranger groups to support park management (as discussed in Chapter 4, above).

[182] *AMCS article – Ghost net funding lifeline for remote Indigenous Rangers in northern Australia: https://www.marineconservation.org.au/ghost-net-funding-lifeline-for-remote-rangers-in-northern-australia/*
[183] *Dhimurru Aboriginal Corporation 2021-22 Annual Report: https://www.dhimurru.com.au/wp-content/uploads/2025/09/2021-22-annual-report_Web.pdf*
[184] *Dhimurru Aboriginal Corporation 2022-23 Annual Report: https://www.dhimurru.com.au/wp-content/uploads/2025/09/2022_2023_annual_report.pdf*
[185] *AIMS data and final report – Ranger led marine ecological surveys within the Joseph Bonaparte Gulf Marine Park: https://apps.aims.gov.au/metadata/view/e72fea7c-8959-4fcc-b504-54c9b1ba1d88*
[186] *NMPAC Meeting #3 Communiqué: https://australianmarineparks.gov.au/static/bc50e63faf186d5d453f8bef94a0a279/amp-document-nmpac-meeting-three-communique.pdf*
[187] *NMPAC Meeting #11 Communiqué: https://australianmarineparks.gov.au/static/3f05a1e681d801b60d4d444ece4bb6e9/nmpac-11-communique.pdf*

10. Findings: Compliance Program

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

10.1. Overall findings about the efficacy of program implementation

Grade	
Significant concerns	Overall, the Compliance Program was assessed as having 'significant concerns'. Of the four planned outcomes, two were assessed as 'partially met', one 'substantially met' and one 'not met'. Of the six planned actions, three were assessed as 'completed' or 'ongoing' and three were assessed as 'partially completed'. Stakeholders identified several strengths and achievements of the Compliance Program, including the effective use of new technologies However, overall success was limited by several factors, including the number of non-compliance incidents, challenges in measuring voluntary compliance, practical barriers to enforcement in remote offshore parks and perceptions among some commercial fishers that the program's initial approach lacked sufficient emphasis on education and awareness-raising.

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 and subsequent use of 'Bluebottles' (i.e. autonomous vessels used to detect illegal fishing activity) was 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** – evidence of collaborations with the Australian Fisheries Management Authority (AFMA), the Australian Maritime Safety Authority (AMSA) and the Australian Border Force were found to have supported compliance, monitoring and enforcement activities across the North Network.

Barriers, challenges and limiting factors

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

- **Challenges in measuring voluntary compliance** – stakeholders reported challenges in measuring and tracking the number of marine park users who voluntarily complied with marine park rules and regulations as it was difficult or impossible to measure the number of marine park users who chose *not* to undertake an illegal activity.

- **Challenges of enforcement in offshore parks** – the remote and expansive nature of many of the marine parks in the North 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.[188] [189]
- **Perceived "overly punitive" approach** – some stakeholders in the commercial fishing sector felt efforts to increase awareness of marine park rules in the early stages of the plan's implementation had not focused enough on education and had jumped to strict "punitive" measures at an unfair speed, before awareness of the new zonal arrangements had fully permeated the sector, creating frustration among some users.
- **Levels of non-compliance across the network** – as outlined in O14 and O15 below, a comparatively high level of non-compliance was identified in comparison to other networks.
- **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 challenging 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		

Based on the available 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

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

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:

Stakeholders expressed mixed sentiments on the effectiveness of this outcome, with many unsure. Some felt awareness had improved as a result of activities undertaken by Parks Australia. However, stakeholders also reported that the lack of data collected on awareness of marine park rules amongst users made it difficult to assess. In addition, stakeholders reported that low overall awareness of AMPs amongst recreational users could be indicative of similarly low awareness of AMP rules.

Parks Australia self-reported that, while they felt user awareness of marine park rules had increased over the course of the plan's implementation, this improvement varied across stakeholder groups. Awareness was felt to be higher among user groups directly affected by the rules, such as commercial fishers, but remained lower among the broader public.

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

Evidence

The evaluation assessed this outcome as **substantially met**. This was based on the low numbers of non-compliance incidents among Australian marine park users and positive feedback from stakeholders.

Evidence from desktop review:

The review identified high overall levels of compliance by marine park users, with the exception of illegal foreign fishers, as outlined further in O14 (below). While this likely suggests that voluntary compliance among Australian marine park users was high over the course of the management plan, the review was unable to identify any data which specifically measured or tracked levels of voluntary compliance and self-regulation by park users over time.

Evidence from engagement:

Stakeholders also reported that they felt there were generally high levels of voluntary compliance and self-regulation amongst marine park users, based on their observations of low levels of non-compliance incidents across the network. However, some stakeholders (including Parks Australia staff) reported that this outcome was hard to accurately assess as it was difficult or impossible to measure the number of marine park users who chose to *not* undertake an illegal activity, or those who were non-compliant without being detected.

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

Evidence

The evaluation assessed this outcome as **partially met** based on desktop review evidence of non-compliance incidents. However, stakeholders provided some positive feedback.

Evidence from desktop review:

The review identified evidence of high and increasing levels of non-compliance incidents across the North Network over the latter part of the management plan, specifically in relation to foreign fishing. However, it is important to note that this increase in non-compliance incidents may reflect displacement of illegal foreign fishing activity from the North-west Network following the ABF and DAFF Operation LEEDSTRUM to respond to high levels of illegal foreign fishing in the North-west.[190] Furthermore, as noted above, responsibility for the deterrence and penalisation of foreign fishing largely sits outside Parks Australia's remit. The desktop review also identified evidence of Operation LUNAR, which commenced in 2025 to address the increase in non-compliance in the North Network.[191]

In addition, the desktop review also identified the 2022–2024 '*Treatment Progression Register*', which provides comprehensive documentation of compliance activities undertaken across all marine park networks.[192]

Evidence from engagement

While most stakeholders were unsure about the overall levels of compliance across the North Network, many reported high overall levels of compliance amongst themselves and other park users in their networks. Where a few stakeholders were aware of non-compliance, they felt this had been unintentional (e.g. fishers mistakenly entering protected zones).

[190] *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*
[191] *Official Launch of Operation Lunar to Combat Illegal Fishing, 2025: https://minister.homeaffairs.gov.au/TonyBurke/Pages/official-launch-operation-lunar.aspx*
[192] *2022-2024 FY Treatment Progression Register: Internal document*

Outcome	Outcome effectiveness	Trend rating
O15. A decrease in the number of non-compliances	Not met	Trend getting worse

Evidence

Based on the identified evidence, the evaluation assessed this outcome as **not met**. Many stakeholders were unsure about the completion of this outcome, and a trend of increasing non-compliance incidents was identified.

Evidence from desktop review:

Parks Australia compliance data indicates an increase in non-compliances in the North Network since 2022, specifically in relation to foreign fishing. As discussed above, this may be attributable displacement of foreign fishing incidents following operations to respond to incidents occurring in other networks.

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.

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.[193]
- The 2024 internal document '*Australian Marine Parks Internal Procedure: Marine Compliance Operations Standard Operating Procedure (SOP)'*, which consolidates all marine park compliance procedures, including guidance on how to deal with specific compliance issues or tasks.[194]
- The '*Australian Marine Park Enforcement Guidelines*' (2025), which outlines the process for assessing, investigating and responding to reported non-compliance incidents.[195] These 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.[196]

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.[197]
- The 2022–2024 RA Treatment Progression Register, which provides comprehensive documentation of compliance treatments undertaken across all marine park networks.[198]

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

Evidence

Overall, this action was assessed as **completed**. Clear documentary evidence of timely and consistent collaboration was identified, and whilst most stakeholders could not speak to this action, those for whom it was relevant provided positive feedback.

Evidence from desktop review:

[193] *Australian Marine Parks Internal procedure: Compliance Risk Assessments (Marine), 2024: Internal document*
[194] *Australian Marine Parks Internal Procedure: Marine Compliance Operations Standard Operating Procedure (SOP), 2024: Internal document*
[195] *Australian Marine Park Enforcement Guidelines, 2025: Internal document*
[196] *Director of National Parks Internal Procedure - Appointing Wardens and Rangers (Marine and Terrestrial): Internal document*
[197] *Compliance program: webpage. https://australianmarineparks.gov.au/management/programs/compliance-program/*
[198] *2022-2024 FY Treatment Progression Register: Internal document*

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 or collaborations with Australian, state and territory government agencies:

- A signed Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) between the Director of National Parks and AMSA regarding the provision of aircraft to support incident monitoring and compliance surveillance in AMPs.[199]
- An activities schedule under the MoU between Parks Australia and AFMA to provide a range of services to support compliance in AMPs, including VMS installation.[200]
- A signed contract between the NSW Department of Primary Industries and Regional Development and the Director of National Parks for the provision of surface vessel patrols in support of compliance efforts.[201]
- The 2022–2024 RA '*Treatment Progression Register*' (referenced in the evidence provided above for A54). This includes the type and completion status of compliance treatments, as well as documentation of any collaborating agencies involved in the treatments.
- An internal email chain outlining communication the between the Australian Government Department of Climate Change, Energy, the Environment and Water (DCCEEW) and the Australian Defence Force (ADF) regarding how to streamline a permit process for the HydroScheme 2026 surveys across AMPs.[202]
- An internal email chain outlining communication between the Bureau of Meteorology (BOM) and Parks Australia regarding permit agreements and compliance for ships entering the North, North-west and South-west Marine Parks Networks.[203]

Evidence from engagement:

Overall, most stakeholders felt that effective collaboration had occurred between Parks Australia 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 were reported as critical given that Parks Australia 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.

[199] *Memorandum of understanding about the provision of aircraft on an opportunity basis between the Australian Maritime Safety Authority and Director of National Parks (2020): Internal document*
[200] *AFMA VMS MoU Activity Schedule for 2024/25 and 2025/26 FYs: Internal document*
[201] *Collaboration deed for activities in support of cooperative management of the North Marine Parks Network and NSW marine parks, 2022: Internal document*
[202] *Internal email chain provided to ORIMA Research*
[203] *Internal email chain provided to ORIMA Research*

- **Collaborative and comprehensive risk assessment processes** – Parks Australia staff reported that consultation with internal and external stakeholders was undertaken every two years to assess and understand relevant risks for the North Network. The compliance and strategy teams were reported to use the findings from these consultations to guide their work, with bi-monthly meetings in place to support ongoing implementation.

- While most external stakeholders were unable to speak to the action in any detail, the collaboration with AFMA was highlighted as an effective example as evidence of this action's completion.

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 and communicates satellite networks to land-based receiving stations. 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 (to be installed no later than 1 July 2028).[204]
- 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.[205]
- A trial of 'Bluebottles' – that is, autonomous vessels that can monitor areas using day/ night infrared cameras, radar and satellite communications, to monitor marine park areas for non-compliant activities.[206] 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.[207]

[204] *VMS system monitoring: https://australianmarineparks.gov.au/access-use/commercial-approvals/commercial-fishing/mandatory-vessel-monitoring-systems-vms-commercial-fishers-australian-marine-parks/*
[205] *Alert service in partnership with Australian Fisheries Management Authority: https://australianmarineparks.gov.au/alert-service/*
[206] *'Bluebottles to sting illegal fishers in Australian Marine Parks' (2021): webpage https://australianmarineparks.gov.au/news/bluebottles-sting-illegal-fishers-australian-marine-parks/*
[207] *'New technology to monitor Australian marine parks' (2022): webpage https://minister.dcceew.gov.au/plibersek/media-releases/new-technology-monitor-australian-marine-parks*

- A trial of uncrewed aerial vehicles (UAV), a type of drone, to monitor marine park areas for non-compliant activities.[208] [209]

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

This action was assessed as **partially completed.** Whilst some activities were evidenced by the desktop review, only a few stakeholders felt the action had been implemented effectively.

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. Specifically, these included:

- A factsheet published by Parks Australia about the North Network Management Plan, including an overview of the rules for various activities with links directing readers to more detailed further information.[210]
- A factsheet about AMPs and permitted activities for commercial fishers developed by Parks Australia.[211]
- 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.[212]
- Providing preseason briefings to Northern Prawn Fishery operators.[213]
- Development of workplans with Namultja Aboriginal Corporation and the Marranbala Land and Sea Rangers as well as an MoU with the Dhimurru Aboriginal Corporation and Rangers to undertake integrated management and ongoing patrolling of Sea Country.[214]

Evidence from engagement

Many stakeholders for whom this action was relevant felt that more could be done to promote understanding of marine park rules and how to comply. In addition, a few stakeholders felt that

[208] *Australian Marine Parks drone trial project plan (2021): internal document*
[209] *'Australian Marine Park Surveillance RPAS' (2023): webpage https://hoveruav.com.au/resource-centre/australian-marine-park-surveillance/*
[210] *North Marine Parks Network Management Plan 2018 Zoning and rules: https://australianmarineparks.gov.au/static/3b7018fa7f0f94d27a3d6ecb48274c88/amp-document-factsheet-north-management-plan.pdf*
[211] *Commercial fishing in Australian Marine Parks factsheet: https://australianmarineparks.gov.au/static/2c26f0c718876001f2d2cab11834e537/amp-document-commercial-fishing-factsheet.pdf*
[212] *Petroleum activities and Australian Marine Parks guidance note: https://www.nopsema.gov.au/sites/default/files/documents/2021-03/A620236.pdf*
[213] *NFP preseason briefing: https://www.afma.gov.au/news/2022-banana-prawn-pre-season-briefings*
[214] *Internal email chain provided to ORIMA Research*

that awareness-raising should be more educative, focusing on communication efforts to prevent instances of non-compliance rather than punishment after the fact, particularly for the commercial fishing sector where the consequences of inadvertently breaching rules was significant.

Parks Australia staff self-reported that they felt that user awareness had increased over the course of the plan's implementation, providing a specific example of their work with remote communities and rangers to promote marine park rules, including provision of information pamphlets. However, this improvement was felt to vary across stakeholder groups, with awareness being higher among direct user groups and notably lower within the broader public.

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	Partially completed or implemented

Evidence

This action was assessed as **partially completed**. While some outputs were achieved (see evidence for A55), stakeholders and First Nations partners consulted did not believe that actions to deter illegal activities and encourage voluntary compliance had been fully implemented.

Evidence from desktop review:

The desktop review found evidence of collaboration with other Commonwealth and state government agencies, as detailed in the desktop review evidence for A55.

Evidence from consultations:

While collaboration mechanisms were positively acknowledged (see A55), stakeholders and First Nations partners noted that, beyond these, collaborative actions specifically aimed at deterring illegal activities and encouraging voluntary compliance had not been pursued.

Action	Completion status
A59. Collaborate with Commonwealth, state and territory government agencies in surveillance, including water and aerial patrols	Partially completed or implemented

Evidence

Overall, this action was assessed as **partially completed**. While both the desktop review and stakeholder engagement identified some evidence of timely collaboration to support surveillance activities, few stakeholders believed the action had been fully completed.

Evidence from desktop review:

The desktop review found evidence of completed joint surveillance actions, including water and aerial patrols in the North Network as required, as detailed in:

- A range of compliance reports with data regarding how many aerial, surface and vessel patrols were completed across each AMP between 2023-2025.[215] [216] [217]
- A spreadsheet tracking all aerial and surface patrols which have occurred in the North Marine Parks Network since 2018.[218]

Evidence from engagement:

Many stakeholders were unsure whether collaborative surveillance activities had occurred, and some expressed limited confidence in assessing the action's delivery. However, a few stakeholders raised concerns about perceived gaps in surveillance activities as well as the limited response to reports of non-compliance in remote areas of the network.

[215] *Quarterly Compliance Report July, August and September 2023: Internal document*
[216] *2024/2025 Compliance Operations Annual Summary': Internal document*
[217] *Monthly Compliance Report November 2025: Internal document*
[218] *North patrol and air surveillance tracking spreadsheet: Internal document*

11.Conclusions

The evaluation of the North Network Management Plan highlighted **notable progress in implementing actions and achieving intended outcomes** across the seven management programs. **Strengths** included the development of robust frameworks and policies, engagement with First Nations peoples, significant ecological baseline data collection, and effective program prioritisation. Collaborations with some First Nations partners and non-indigenous stakeholders, including the science community and government agencies, were identified as key drivers of success. However, **challenges** such as the remote nature of parks, the lack of robust scientific data in the North Network to inform decisions, and difficulties balancing the protection of ecological, social and economic values also impacted the overall effectiveness of implementation.

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

- **'Good'** – assigned to the 'Indigenous Engagement' and 'Parks Protection and Management' programs. Success in the former was attributed to Parks Australia's concerted, ongoing efforts to engage with Traditional Owners and First Nations ranger groups via culturally responsive partnerships, and the latter benefited from the development and adherence to tangible processes and strategies that support the protection and management of marine parks.
- **'Good with some concerns'** – assigned to the 'Communications, Education and Awareness', 'Marine Science' and 'Assessments and Authorisations' 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 'Compliance' program. While good progress was made in this program, the number of non-compliance incidents as well as challenges, measuring voluntary compliance, practical barriers to enforcement in remote offshore parks, and perceptions among some commercial fishers that the program's early approach to compliance lacked sufficient focus on education and awareness-raising all reduced the success of this management program. **'Critical'** – assigned to the 'Tourism and Visitor Experience' program area. This assessment does not indicate poor performance by Parks Australia. Instead, it reflects the limited relevance of this program to the values of the North Network and the appropriate decision to focus resources and efforts on programs that are more aligned with the region's specific needs and priorities.

A range of **key learnings and recommendations for the development of the future North 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 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
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	All of the success measures/targets were fully met.
Substantially met	All of the success measures/targets were fully or substantially 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	At best, half or less than half of the success measures/targets were partially met.
Unknown	There is insufficient information or data available to make a judgement.

Trend rating categories (outcomes)

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

↑ **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 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 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. • 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. • 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. • 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 evaluated together with Activity 8 below – same assessment criteria)	• Establishment and operation of the North Marine Parks Advisory Committee (NMPAC). • Effective operation of the NMPAC.	• 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. • Stakeholder feedback.	• Administrative data/ desktop review. • Stakeholder engagement conducted by ORIMA.
	Actions specific to the North				
	A6. Develop information on marine parks in the Network to encourage increased awareness and understanding of their values and management arrangements (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. • 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 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 NMPAC.	• 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. 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	• Documentary evidence of actions taken to encourage tourism operators to liaise with Traditional Owners to promote culturally sensitive tourism. • Feedback from Traditional Owners	• Stakeholder engagement conducted by ORIMA (with tourism operators/ Traditional Owners).

	Actions/ Outcomes	Output(s)	Measure of success	Indicator(s)	Data source(s)/ collection method(s)
			encourage tourism operators to liaise with Traditional Owners.	and tourism operators.	
	A14. 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).
	A15. 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 Marine Park Network).
	Actions specific to the North				
	A16. Promote visitor experiences that foster curiosity and appreciation of natural and heritage values in the Network	• 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 other Commonwealth, state and territory 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 other Commonwealth, state and territory 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 other Commonwealth and state and territory government agencies and the tourism industry) conducted by ORIMA.
	A18. Facilitate partnerships between First Nations peoples and tourism operators	• Partnerships between First Nations peoples and tourism operators.	• Documentary evidence of partnerships being facilitated. • Most stakeholders assess that partnerships between First Nations peoples and tourism operators have been facilitated.	• Documentary evidence. • Feedback from key stakeholders (including First Nations partners).	• Administrative data/ desktop review. • Stakeholder engagement conducted by ORIMA.

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 programs in marine parks.	• Agreements in place in timely manner. • Increasing First Nations Ranger representation in the management of marine parks.	• Documentary evidence of agreements to support First Nations Ranger programs in marine parks. • Feedback from First Nations partners.	• Administrative data/ desktop review. • First Nations engagement (with 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	• 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

	Actions/ Outcomes	Output(s)	Measure of success	Indicator(s)	Data source
			provided in an appropriate way.		Traditional Owners) conducted by ORIMA).
	Actions specific to the North				
	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 (including Traditional Owners, First Nation Ranger groups and relevant 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, relevant partners and First Nations advisory committees.	• Administrative data/ desktop review. • First Nations engagement (with Traditional Owners, First Nations Ranger groups, relevant partners and First Nations advisory committees) conducted by ORIMA.
	A23. Identify opportunities and mechanisms to engage Traditional Owners and First Nations Ranger groups in the management of marine parks	• Formal identification of partnership opportunities and mechanisms for engagement with Traditional Owners and First Nations Rangers in marine park management.	• Completion of outputs in a timely manner. • First Nations partners feel appropriate and adequate efforts have been made to identify opportunities and mechanisms to engage Traditional Owners and First Nations Rangers in the management of the marine park.	• Documentary evidence of formal identification of partnership opportunities (including the provision of grants). • Feedback from Traditional Owners, First Nations Rangers and the First Nations community.	• Administrative data/ desktop review. • First Nations engagement (with First Nations Rangers, First Nations community and 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	• Delivery of partnerships in a timely manner.	• Documentary evidence of partnerships	• Administrative data/ desktop review. • First Nations engagement (with

	Actions/ Outcomes	Output(s)	Measure of success	Indicator(s)	Data source
		partnerships in relevant marine park management.	• First Nations partners feel appropriate and adequate efforts have been made to partner in management of Sea Country.	(including the provision of grants). • Feedback from Traditional Owners and First Nations groups.	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	• 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/	• Documentary evidence. • Feedback from Traditional Owners.	• Administrative data/ desktop review. • Engagement with Traditional Owners conducted by ORIMA.

			cultural/ economic benefits have been achieved from marine park management.		
	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. • Evidence of baselines utilisation in decision-making to support adaptive management.	• Documentary evidence of baseline datasets/ reports. • Evidence of use of datasets – including references to baseline data in decision-making.	• Administrative data/ desktop review. • Stakeholder engagement conducted by ORIMA.
	A28. Develop an Australian Marine Parks science strategy to prioritise and encourage research and	• Science strategy developed.	• Outputs delivered in a timely manner.	• Documentary evidence of marine	• Administrative data/ desktop review.

	Actions/ Outcomes	Output(s)	Measure of success	Indicator(s)	Data source
	monitoring of park values, pressures and management effectiveness, and foster science communication and knowledge uptake	• 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.	• 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.	parks science strategy. • Feedback from stakeholders.	• 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, state and territory agencies.	• 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, citizen science organisations and other Commonwealth, state and territory agencies.) • Feedback from stakeholders.	• Administrative data/ desktop review. • Stakeholder engagement (with science community, private enterprise, citizen science organisations and other Commonwealth, state and territory agencies) conducted by ORIMA.

	Actions/ Outcomes	Output(s)	Measure of success	Indicator(s)	Data source
	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 and systems including sensor technology.	• Most stakeholders feel collaborations with the science community have increased use of innovative and effective technologies 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.	• Documentary evidence of joint initiatives to increase the use of innovative and effective technology and systems including sensor technology. • Feedback from stakeholders (science community).	• Administrative data/ desktop review. • Stakeholder engagement conducted by ORIMA.

	Actions/ Outcomes	Output(s)	Measure of success	Indicator(s)	Data source
	Actions specific to the North				
	A33. Monitor social and economic uses and their benefits and impacts on marine parks	• 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 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.	• Administrative data/ desktop review.
	A35. Monitor the impact of invasive species on marine park values and the effectiveness of management	• 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.	• 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. For example, 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, marine park users and the science sector delivered.	• Outputs delivered and maintained over life of plan. • Most relevant stakeholders agree that collaborative long-term monitoring programs have been supported and sustained.	• Documentary evidence of monitoring partnerships. • Stakeholder feedback.	• Administrative data/ desktop review. • Stakeholder engagement (with Commonwealth, state and territory 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 marine park management in protecting park values. • Most stakeholders report an improved understanding of the effectiveness of marine park management in protecting park	• Relevant survey addressing understanding of the effectiveness of marine park management in protecting park values. • Stakeholder feedback.	• Park user surveys. • Stakeholder engagement conducted by ORIMA.

			values within their networks/ organisations/ interest groups.		
	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.
	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	• Outputs delivered over course of the plan. • Most stakeholders agree there has been adequate action taken to investigate innovative technologies and systems (including	• Documentary evidence of collaborations. • Stakeholder feedback.	• Administrative data/ desktop review (e.g. compliance data). • Stakeholder engagement (with businesses and individuals) conducted by ORIMA.

	Actions/ Outcomes	Output(s)	Measure of success	Indicator(s)	Data source
		industry in relation to compliance technologies and systems.	vessel monitoring systems) that can assist businesses and individuals to comply with regulatory requirements.		
	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 consulted regarding regulatory decisions.	• Documentary evidence of service guarantee publication. • Stakeholder feedback.	• Administrative data/ desktop review. • Stakeholder engagement (marine park users and interest groups) conducted by ORIMA.
	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/ Outcomes	Output(s)	Measure of success	Indicator(s)	Data source
	Actions specific to the North				
	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 including 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 improve experiences of people seeking authorisations. • Consistent approaches achieved for 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). • 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	• Stakeholder feedback.	• Stakeholder engagement conducted by ORIMA.

			activities in marine parks.		

	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 marine park values and visitor experience.	• Output delivered in a timely manner.	• Documentary evidence of strategy completion.	• Administrative data/ desktop review (e.g. strategy documentation).
	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				
	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.
	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. • 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	• Documentary evidence of joint incidence responses. • Key stakeholder feedback.	• Administrative data/ desktop review (e.g. incident reports). • Stakeholder engagement conducted by ORIMA.

			taken place to respond to environmental incidents and accidents.		
	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 pressures on marine park values. • Most stakeholders feel the impact of pressures on marine park values has been minimised as far as reasonably practicable.	• Documentary evidence. • Stakeholder feedback.	• Administrative data/ desktop review. • 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 potential illegal activities.	• Outputs delivered consistently.	• Documentary evidence of assessment, trialling or implementation of new technologies to assist in the detection of potential illegal activities.	• Administrative data/ desktop review.
	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.	• Administrative data/ desktop review. • Stakeholder engagement conducted by ORIMA.

				• Stakeholder feedback.	
	Actions specific to the North				
	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.

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 with the rules to be high.	• Survey based metrics of compliance attitudes and behaviours. • Documentary records of rates of compliance/ non-compliance (e.g. investigations). • Stakeholder feedback.	• Park user surveys. • Administrative data/ desktop review (e.g. compliance monitoring records/audits). 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.