



THE HON TANYA PLIBERSEK MP
MINISTER FOR THE ENVIRONMENT AND WATER

MS23-001796

Ms Audrey Azoulay
Director-General
UNESCO
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Dear Director-General

I would like to thank UNESCO and the World Heritage Centre for your positive engagement with the Australian and Queensland Governments to maintain the Outstanding Universal Value of the Great Barrier Reef (the Reef). Australia's active progress towards the Reactive Monitoring Mission (Mission) report's recommendations and continued dialogue demonstrates our shared interest and urgency to protect and restore the Reef, and better manage it for the future as one of Australia's most precious and unique places.

Our Governments are pleased to further commit substantial actions to secure the future of the Reef. These measures include substantial fisheries reforms; accelerated action to improve water quality; and strong, legislated climate action. We have worked closely with the World Heritage Centre to ensure these actions meet your expectations and address the recommendations of the Mission report. Our detailed commitments are enclosed, and I would appreciate your confirmation that these, together with our other actions under the Reef 2050 Long-Term Sustainability Plan, address the concerns of UNESCO and the recommendations of the Mission report.

Australian and Queensland Governments' combined investment of A\$4.4 billion underpins the delivery of the Reef 2050 Long-Term Sustainability and confirms our resolve to secure the future of the Reef.

These new measures are an outstanding outcome and will lead to a stronger Reef. They underscore our Governments' commitment to work collaboratively and deliver on our commitment both to protect the Reef and to demonstrate international environmental leadership. The measures will be successful because of the important contributions and efforts of Australia's First Nations communities, Australian industry and the broader community working together for a common cause to safeguard the future of one of Australia and the World's most iconic places.

I also want to acknowledge the expertise and advice provided by UNESCO and the World Heritage advisory bodies and thank you for the constructive engagement that has informed these significant commitments.

Yours sincerely



TANYA PLIBERSEK

Enc Australian commitments document – May 2023

cc: Senator Nita Green – Envoy to the Great Barrier Reef
Mr Ernesto Ottone Ramirez – Assistant Director-General for Culture, UNESCO
Mr Lazare Eloundou Assomo – Director, UNESCO World Heritage Centre

25.5.2023

State of conservation of the Great Barrier Reef World Heritage property

Australian and Queensland government commitments for the protection of the Great Barrier Reef – May 2023

Water quality

Australia commits to enact, with immediate effect, a major shift in its water quality programs, alongside an AUD\$ 1 billion water quality investment through to 2030, with the aim to achieve the 2025 water quality targets and commence a drastic reduction in overall pollutant discharge into the property by 2030, in particular for fine sediment and dissolved inorganic nitrogen. This will put the property on a solid pathway to reach its full ecosystem health by 2050, consistent with the Reef 2050 Long-Term Sustainability Plan.

1. **By 31 December 2023:** Deliver a complete mapping of all priority areas of grazing land for gully repairs and associated restoration and remediation activities, the identification of the priority gullies where the repair, restoration and remediation action will have the greatest impact on sediment reduction, and a detailed timeline for the completion of the repair of the areas of highest priority.
2. **By 31 December 2023:** Initiate the delivery of a joint federal-state program that will start repairing and restoring the gullies of the highest priority with immediate effect and deliver significant and meaningful sediment reduction necessary to protect the ecology of the Great Barrier Reef including the most polluting catchment areas (e.g. Burdekin, Fitzroy and Burnett Mary catchments).
3. **By 30 June 2025:** Finalise the independent water quality science review and the Scientific Consensus Statement as the foundational scientific understanding to underpin the revision of the Reef Water Quality Improvement Plan and the establishment of new water quality targets for the period 2025-2030, to ensure consistency with the management frameworks adopted in the Reef 2050 Plan
4. **By July 2024:** expand the implementation of 2018 land clearing legislation and further strengthen protection to remnant and high value conservation areas, including, through an accelerated and enhanced compliance program to secure the protection of remnant native vegetation in areas of high conservation value in the Reef catchments.
5. **By February 2025:** accelerate progress to achieve all water quality targets through a program of sediment, nutrient and pesticide reduction through combined efforts in regulation, incentives, and accelerated landscape restoration programs, e.g. 60% reduction in dissolved inorganic nitrogen loads (remaining to target: 32.3%), 25% reduction in sediment loads (remaining to target: 9.8%), 20% reduction in particulate nitrogen loads (remaining to target: 5.6%), 20% in particulate phosphorous loads (remaining to target: 2.6%), and pesticides target of 99% of aquatic species protected at end of catchments (remaining to target: 2.3%).
6. **By January 2024:** Double compliance activity being undertaken across the regulated reef catchment areas comparative to what was being achieved in 2021 in order to enforce landholder compliance with reef protection regulated standards and respond to any non-compliance. Concurrently secure improved water quality outcomes by supporting increased industry participation in best management practice projects and programs, with

50% of sugarcane and banana areas operating above minimum practice standards by June 2026.

Fisheries

Australia commits to delivering a \$100 million fisheries structural adjustment package to significantly reduce net fishing and other high risk fishing activities impacting the Reef. A further \$62 million will support the implementation independent data validation and bycatch reduction to reduce risks to protected species from fishing gear. The package will:

1. Phase out all destructive gillnet fisheries to ensure the property as a whole will be gill-net free by 30 June 2027.
2. Establish a complete net free zone in the Northern third of the property (Cape Bedford to the tip of Cape York) and establish additional net-free-zones that expand net restrictions in the Gulf of Carpentaria (e.g., Mornington Island, rivers/foreshores adjacent to Weipa, Karumba and Mapoon), to further strengthen protections for threatened species that move between Great Barrier Reef and the Gulf, and ensure displaced fishing effort does not intensify threats to those species, as well as in other high value habitats of protected species identified through consultation, by 31 December 2023.
3. By 31 December 2023, complete implementation of the Sustainable Fisheries Strategy, including finalising all harvest strategies with defined quotas for all key species, and by 31 December 2027, working to achieve the target maximum economic yield (60% biomass)
4. By 1 December 2023, introduce legislation to mandate the use of Independent Data Validation on all commercial fishing vessels.
5. Immediately make threatened hammerhead sharks 'no take' for commercial fishers.

Climate Change

1. The Australian Government commits to set successively more ambitious emissions reduction targets, reflecting highest possible ambition, consistent with achieving net zero by 2050, and in alignment with efforts to limit global temperature increase to 1.5°C. These targets will be informed by advice from the independent Climate Change Authority. The Government will set a 2035 target and communicate it to the UNFCCC as Australia's second Nationally Determined Contribution under the Paris Agreement in advance of the Conference of the Parties serving as the meeting of the Parties to the Paris Agreement in 2025.
2. The Australian Government commits to update the Reef 2050 Plan (in consultation with the Queensland Government) to reflect (a) the new commitments taken under the *Climate Change Act 2022* and (b) Australia's overall commitment to work alongside global partners to tackle the climate crisis, achieve the goals of the Paris Agreement and pursue ambitious emissions reductions to limit the global temperature increase to 1.5° C above pre-industrial levels.

In support of these commitments:

- a. The Australian Government has legislated emissions reductions of 43 per cent by 2030 and net zero emissions by 2050.
- b. The Australian Government is required by law to prepare annual statements to Parliament under the *Climate Change Act 2022* - on progress towards national emissions reduction targets, international developments, climate risks, impacts and

policy. These statements must be informed by advice from the independent Climate Change Authority.

- c. The Australian Government commits to continually increasing its climate ambition, including by working urgently to implement its substantial and rigorous suite of new policies across the economy to maximize their emissions impact and drive Australia's transition to net zero. Australia's States, Territories and local governments are also implementing significant policies and programs to reduce emissions. The cumulative impact of action by governments at different levels, and industry, businesses, land managers and Australians, seek to deliver the greatest possible emissions reductions in this critical decade.
- d. The Australian Government commits to increase renewable electricity generation to 82 per cent by 2030.
- e. The Queensland Government has released its Energy and Jobs Plan to achieve, 70 per cent renewable energy by 2032 and 80 per cent by 2035. The plan will achieve a 50 per cent reduction in electricity emissions on 2005 levels by 2030 and a 90 per cent reduction in electricity emissions by 2035-36. It includes delivery of a 2 gigawatt 24 hour Borumba pumped hydro energy storage project and the world's largest 5 gigawatt Pioneer-Burdekin pumped hydro energy storage dam.
- f. By 2035 Queensland will have no regular reliance on coal for power production and will have more pumped hydro energy storage for renewable energy than the rest of Australia combined. Queensland's pumped hydro energy storage for renewable energy will be more than Europe, China or the US as a share of energy demand. This will provide Queensland with reliable, firm renewable energy combined with a SuperGrid to transmit renewable energy including a connection to Australia's largest renewable energy zone and the world class North West Minerals Province with over \$500 billion in new economy minerals needed to manufacture renewable energy technologies. That means Queensland will not only transition to renewable energy but will also play a key role in the global supply of new economy minerals and in the manufacturing of renewable technologies.