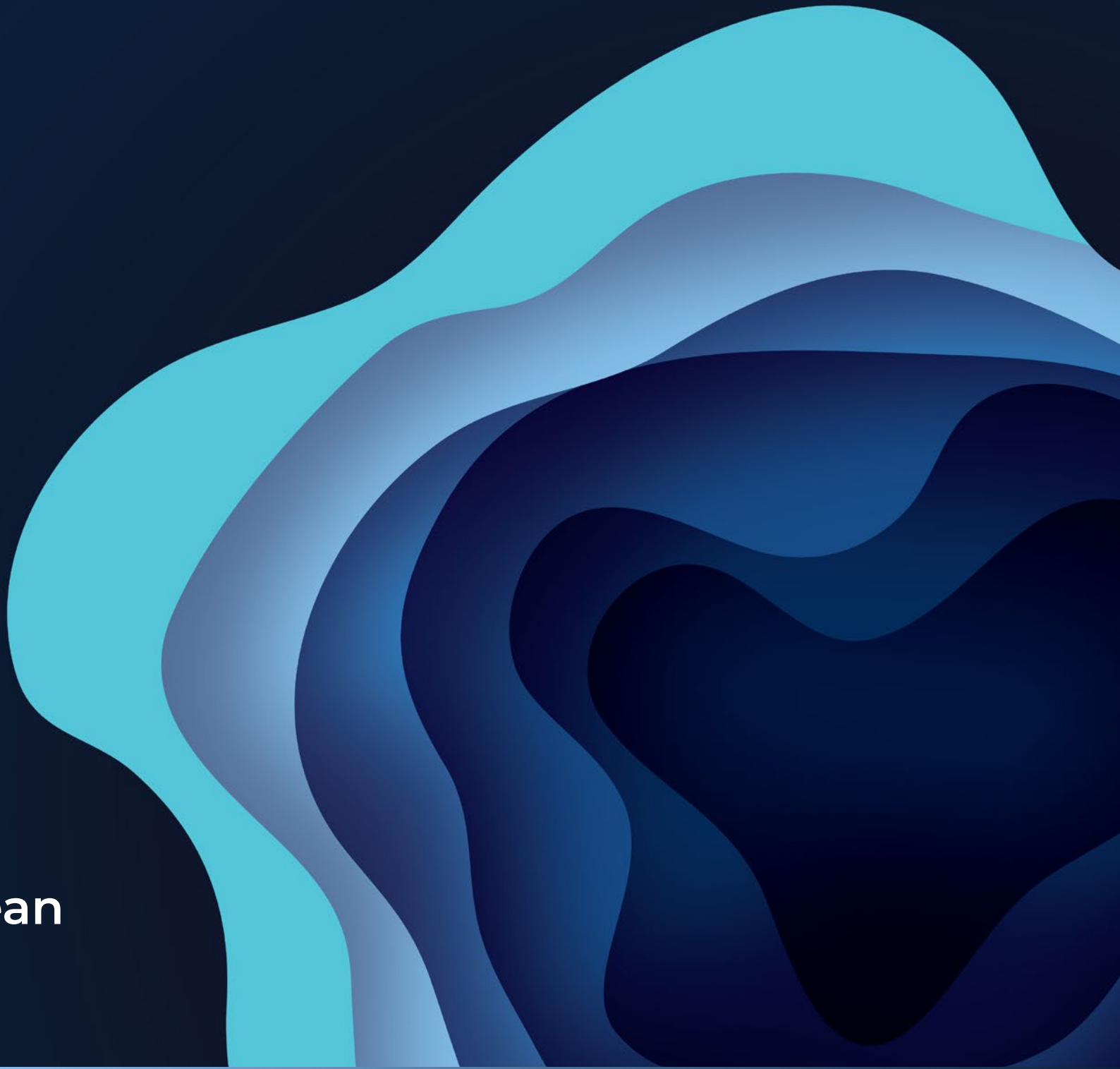
Australian Government



Australia's Sustainable Ocean Plan

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Acknowledgement of Country

We acknowledge the Traditional Owners of Country throughout Australia and recognise their continuing connection to land, waters, seas and skies. We pay our respects to their Elders past and present.



How the plan was developed

The plan was informed by engagement with more than 800 people and organisations over 2 years. Workshops were held with all jurisdictions, First Nations peoples and the seafood sector. Cross-sector workshops and a dedicated Ocean Dialogue alongside the Global Nature Positive Summit were also held. Participants in the plan's development included:

- ocean sectors and industries including fishing and aquaculture; coastal and marine tourism; energy exploration and production; carbon sequestration; defence; trade, shipping and transport; ports; and space
- First Nations groups, including a First Nations Sustainable Ocean Reference Group
- researchers and scientists
- recreational users and organisations
- non-government organisations and members of the community, including young people
- Australian, state, territory and local governments.

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Disclaimer

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Ocean **snapshot**

Australia is at the junction of 3 great ocean basins – the Pacific, Indian and Southern. We have the third-largest marine jurisdiction in the world. It supports international trade and connects us to our regional neighbours and the world.

The ocean provides half the world's oxygen and regulates our climate. Australia has some of the most biodiverse ecosystems in the world that are home to more than 33,000 recorded marine plant and animal species.

We have some of the world's most sustainable fisheries, over 4.6 million km^2 of marine protected areas and our beaches, reefs and islands attract tourists from all over the world. And while the ocean has always provided a share of our energy needs, we are embracing ocean-based renewable energy.

Australia's ocean industries generate $229 billion in economic output each year and support more than 700,000 jobs. Ocean industries – including fishing and aquaculture, tourism and renewable energy production – provide opportunities to:

- find and deliver climate change solutions
- support Australia's transition to renewable energy
- ensure long-term food security
- help protect, restore and adapt coastal and ocean ecosystems.

The ocean is part of our national identity, and contributes to our security, way of life and prosperity. First Nations peoples have known and cared for land and sea for at least 65,000 years, with ongoing Traditional Knowledge of ecosystems and species, and aspirations for leadership roles in the growing ocean economy. Nearly 9 in 10 Australians live within 50 km of the coast, and Australians rely on the ocean for services such as food production, health, recreation and climate regulation.

As a marine nation, Australia leads the world in understanding, sustainably managing, protecting and restoring the ocean through the efforts of its scientists, industries and marine managers, and stewardship by Traditional Owners of sea Country.

Our ocean is under pressure from a range of threats, particularly climate change. Sea-level rise and increasing frequency and intensity of extreme events – such as marine heatwaves, storms, coral bleaching and harmful algal blooms – are testing the resilience of marine ecosystems and affecting the industries and communities that rely on the ocean.

As a member of the High Level Panel for a Sustainable Ocean Economy, Australia has committed to sustainably manage 100% of our ocean, guided by a sustainable ocean plan. The plan will help improve our stewardship of the ocean, address key ocean challenges and support Australia's growing ocean economy.

The plan builds on the significant progress Australia has already made towards a sustainable ocean economy. It identifies a vision for the future and flagship actions, and highlights areas for further action. It was informed by extensive engagement with a wide range of ocean users, managers and custodians. It provides the foundation for us to sustainably manage 100% of Australia's ocean.

Achieving the plan's vision for a healthy ocean that supports a strong ocean economy is a shared responsibility of all ocean users, managers and custodians in line with their respective priorities, responsibilities and capacity.

A case for **action**

The ocean is central to Australia's way of life

1.5x Our ocean is **1.5 times larger than our land mass***

87%
of our population lives near the coast; 99% of trade by volume is transported by sea; 99% of digital connectivity is via undersea cables

The ocean economy's influence is nation-wide, providing food, energy, goods and services, and contributing to interconnected supply chains

Our ocean is at the forefront of our regional and national security

$229b
contributed by ocean industries to our economy annually, and 700k+ jobs supported

33,000+
recorded marine species, including some of the world's most biodiverse ecosystems

65,000+
years of First Nations' deep and enduring connection to sea Country

But it's under pressure, and challenges are growing

Ocean and coastal environments are under increased **cumulative pressure**

Climate change is causing ocean system changes and leading to sea-level rise and more frequent extreme events

Marine biodiversity is in decline

Pollution, plastics, biosecurity threats, and coastal development impact the environment

Use of the ocean is increasingly contested as existing uses evolve and new industries and technologies emerge

There are opportunities for greater cross-sectoral collaboration and better cross-jurisdictional ocean management

There are calls for policy and regulatory approaches to keep pace with changing economic and environmental conditions

We have a strong foundation of sustainable ocean management

100% Australia has committed to sustainably manage 100% of the ocean within our national jurisdiction

Our laws and regulations support sustainable, safe and fair use of the ocean

85%
of fish stocks rated as sustainable or recovering and Australia is home to some of the world's most sustainable fisheries

52%
of our ocean is protected in marine protected areas (MPAs) and we have committed to protecting at least 30% of our ocean in highly protected areas by 2030

We have set a national target for priority degraded areas to be under effective restoration by 2030

We collaborate regionally and globally to address transboundary threats and protect the high seas

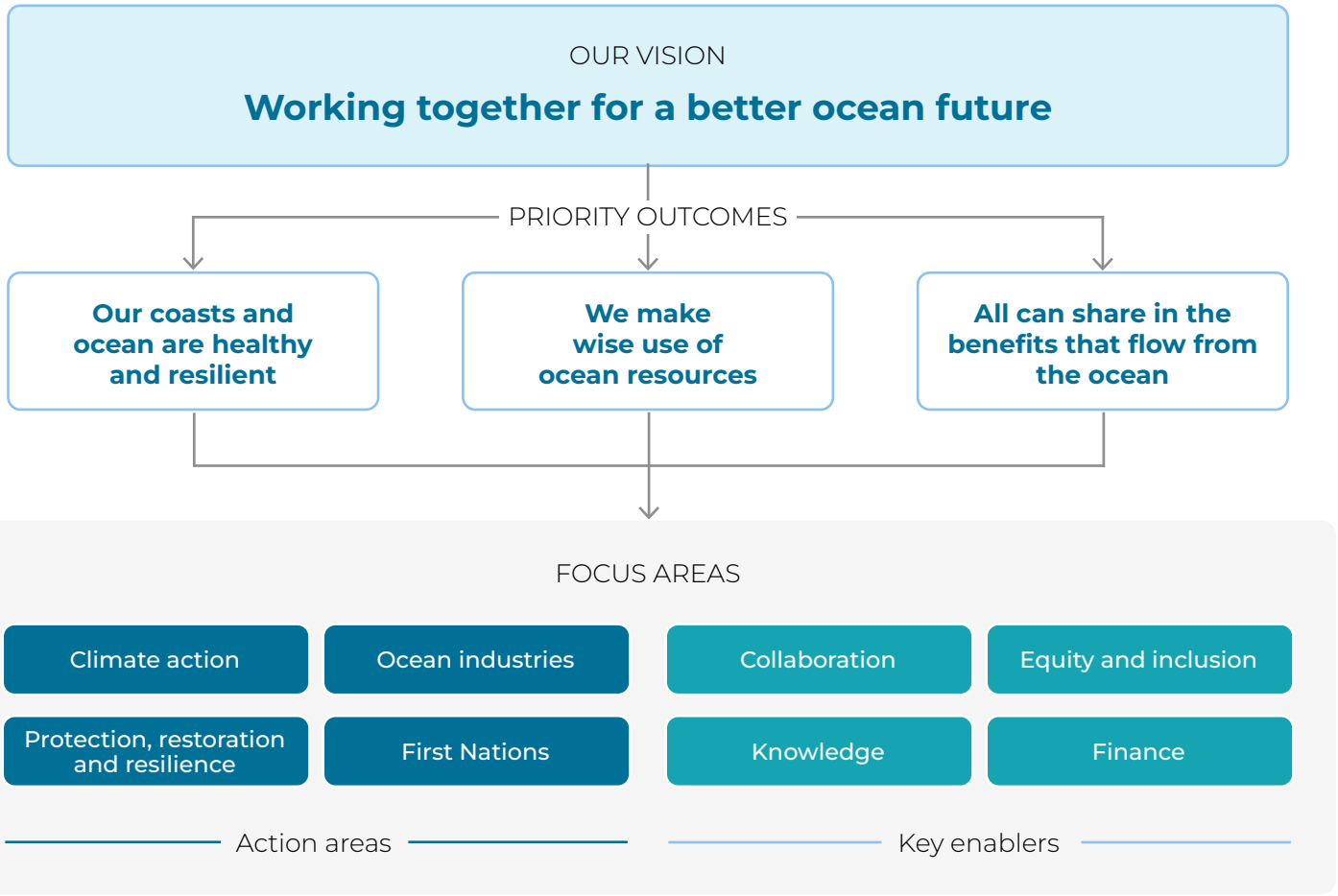
Many sector and topic-specific forums and networks support ocean collaboration

**not including the Australian Antarctic Territory and adjacent marine jurisdiction*

... but there is more to be done.

Australia's **vision** for a sustainable ocean future





To achieve the national vision and priority outcomes we will **focus our collective national efforts** on:

- Taking **climate action**, growing **ocean industries**, working with **First Nations**, and **protecting**, **restoring and building the resilience** of our unique marine environment as the foundation for a strong blue economy.
- **Collaboration**, **equity and inclusion**, **knowledge** and **finance** as the key enablers that will provide the foundations, data, governance arrangements, principles and systems that will help achieve the plan's outcomes and the national vision.

Focus areas

Climate action

Objective

To improve understanding of the impacts of climate change on the ocean to inform effective planning, management and response actions; to strengthen the resilience and adaptive capacity of ocean ecosystems, species and industries; and to enable ocean-based climate action that supports ocean ecosystems and industries to contribute to Australia's net zero emissions target.

Context

Climate change is the greatest threat to ocean health and the sustainable growth of our ocean economy. Rising ocean temperatures and sea levels, melting ice sheets, increasing acidification and severe weather events are threatening the ocean and coasts, affecting ocean currents, and altering the diversity, productivity and distribution of marine life. Extreme events such as marine heatwaves, coral bleaching and harmful algal blooms are becoming more frequent.

At the same time, the ocean can provide solutions to climate change, including through nature-based actions such as protecting and restoring wetlands, mangroves, seagrasses and kelp that are major stores of carbon, reducing emissions from shipping, investing in low-emissions seafood, supporting the transition to renewable energy, and offshore carbon capture and storage.





Image: Alex Pike, Ocean Image Bank

Protection, restoration and resilience

Objective

To ensure a healthy ocean by addressing key threats, protecting threatened species and ecosystems, and supporting their resilience and recovery.

Context

Australia's ocean ecosystems are some of the most biodiverse in the world. Australia engages globally and has laws, policies and programs in place domestically to protect important species and protect and restore ecosystems to build their resilience. Despite these efforts, our ocean, coastal habitats and dependent species and ecosystems remain under pressure from risks such as climate change, extreme marine events, pollution, biosecurity threats and habitat loss.

Focus areas

Ocean industries

Objective

To support the development and operation of current and emerging ocean-based industries and to deliver economic benefits while safeguarding environmental integrity.

Context

Ocean industries are an essential pillar of Australia's food and energy security, create and maintain hundreds of thousands of jobs – including in rural and remote communities – and produce valuable exports for Australia. As the ocean and our use of the ocean change, marine industries and their operations will also change as they navigate evolving environmental and other regulatory requirements and maintain social and cultural licence to operate.





Top right image: iStock/Getty Images courtesy of NOPSEMA

Focus areas

First Nations

Objective

To enable First Nations peoples to play an increasing role in the ocean economy, fulfil cultural responsibilities to care for sea Country, and contribute to sea Country decision-making and development and implementation of ocean policy.

Context

First Nations peoples have been sustainably managing sea Country for thousands of years and maintain an enduring connection with sea Country. Sea Country is central to cultural identity and a healthy ocean supports community wellbeing, cultural continuity, intergenerational knowledge sharing along with economic benefits to First Nations peoples.



Image: Queensland Events & Tourism

First Nations **reflections** on focus areas

Collaboration

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

Climate action

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

First Nations

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

Ocean industries

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

Protection, restoration and resilience

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

Knowledge

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

Equity and inclusion

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

Finance

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

Collaboration

Objective

To strengthen collaboration and coordination in the management of Australia's ocean and ocean economy across jurisdictions and sectors; to position Australia as a global leader in the protection and sustainable management of the ocean; and to effectively address shared transboundary challenges through regional and international partnerships.

Context

The ocean is a shared resource. As Australia's ocean economy grows and the environment changes, it is increasingly important to improve collaboration and coordination within and across jurisdictions, sectors, groups and communities. Many of the threats to the ocean are transboundary (e.g. climate change, marine pollution, marine pests, and illegal, unreported and unregulated fishing), meaning collaborative action at all scales – local, national, regional and global – is needed to achieve a sustainable future for our shared ocean.





Image: Sabine Rock

Equity and inclusion

Objective

To ensure the benefits derived from ocean resources are shared; that the connections between ocean health and human health and wellbeing are recognised and respected; and that decision-making about the use and management of the ocean is inclusive and transparent.

Context

Ocean industries, scientists, marine managers, Traditional Owners of sea Country and other ocean stakeholders all highlight the importance of inclusive and transparent decision-making in matters that affect our ocean and the ocean economy. These groups want their knowledge, views and rights to be respected and acknowledged, and to share in the benefits that our ocean provides.

Knowledge

Objective

To enable comprehensive ocean accounts so the ocean's value is better understood and demonstrated; to strengthen knowledge of ocean systems and pressures to support sustainable use, heritage and conservation outcomes; to bring together Indigenous and western knowledge systems; and to improve knowledge-sharing within and between sectors and bolster ocean literacy.

Context

Australia has strong institutional foundations – including CSIRO, the Australian Institute of Marine Science, the Bureau of Meteorology, Geoscience Australia, the Australian Antarctic Program, the Fisheries Research and Development Corporation, the National Marine Science Committee, the National Collaborative Research Infrastructure Strategy (NCRIS) and the Integrated Marine Observing System – and well-developed arrangements for marine science, ocean monitoring and sharing of ocean data. The scale of Australia's ocean estate and the rate of change in our ocean environments and economy mean there are still many gaps in ocean knowledge that may present challenges to effective management and decision-making. Building on Australia's strong knowledge foundations and further integrating Traditional Knowledge will make it easier to address the environmental challenges facing our ocean and support growth of the ocean economy.



Image: RV Investigator, CSIRO



Finance

Objective

To mobilise and align public and private finance to drive a sustainable and resilient ocean economy; and to support the protection and restoration of ocean ecosystems, underpinned by clear, credible and internationally aligned standards and frameworks.

Context

Government funding is central to supporting sustainable ocean action, but private-sector investment and philanthropic funding are also needed. Government can help create the enabling conditions to support the transition to a sustainable ocean economy through policy and regulatory frameworks. Collaboration between government and the private sector can help shift financial flows and investment towards sustainable ocean management and sustainable ocean industries.

Flagship actions: **Working together and tracking progress**

The flagship actions are cross-cutting and Australian Government-led. They will deliver on multiple priorities across the plan and lay the foundation to move towards a 100% sustainably managed ocean economy. However, achieving Australia's vision will require all ocean users, managers and custodians to work together, supported by:

National Ocean Steering Committee

A National Ocean Steering Committee will bring together the Australian and state and territory governments to improve national coordination and collaboration on ocean issues.

It will prepare an implementation plan to:

- prioritise actions for implementation guided by the focus areas for collective national action
- define roles and responsibilities
- outline timeframes for delivery
- agree ways of measuring, monitoring and reporting on performance.

Adoption of the workplan will be a matter for each government, in line with their respective priorities and capacity.

National Ocean Advisory Group

A National Ocean Advisory Group will bring together First Nations peoples, marine sectors (including fishing and aquaculture, shipping and ports, tourism, recreation, defence, restoration and energy sectors), non-government organisations, researchers and scientists, and young people to strengthen collaboration and action across all ocean interests, and support jurisdictions.

During implementation, these governance bodies will consider and identify further areas for collective national action to be led by governments and others.

Tracking progress

To enable all Australians to track the implementation and impact of our collective efforts to achieve the vision and outcomes, reporting will be guided by the National Ocean Steering Committee and the National Ocean Advisory Group and updated on ocean.gov.au.



Image: Emilie Ledwidge, Ocean Image Bank

Flagship actions spotlight: **Achieving 30% high protection by 2030**

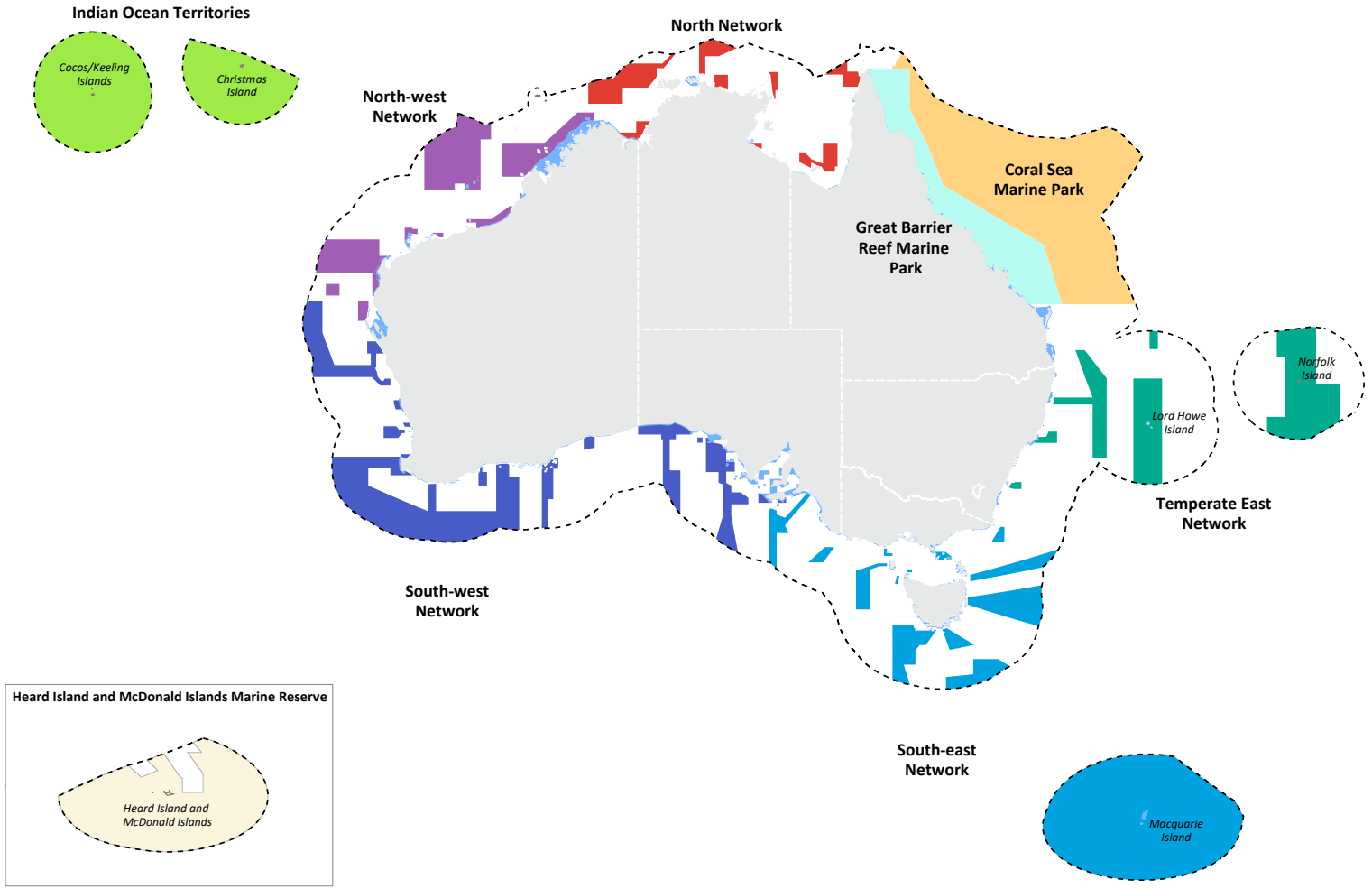
Australia has one of the largest marine protected area estates in the world.

It is managed by the Australian, state and territory governments and **covers 52% of our ocean** (approximately 4.6 million km^2), with 24% under a high level of protection.

The Australian Government is working toward achieving **30% high protection by 2030**.

Our main opportunity to achieve this is through the **review** of 5 Australian Marine Park network management plans (covering 44 marine parks), which is underway and involves close stakeholder consultation.

Beyond our own waters, we are working within our region and globally to champion **high seas marine protected areas** under the High Seas Biodiversity Treaty, also known as the Biodiversity Beyond National Jurisdiction Agreement (BBNJ).



Flagship actions

Flagship actions	3 months	6 months	12 months	18 months +	Focus areas
Establish the National Ocean Steering Committee to strengthen cross-jurisdiction and cross-portfolio collaboration	• Determine membership of committee and define terms of reference	• Prioritise cross-jurisdictional actions and set targets		• Ongoing regular meetings to support implementation of shared ocean priorities, track progress and coordinate reporting to governments and the public	All focus areas
Establish the National Ocean Advisory Group to strengthen cross-sector collaboration	• Determine membership of group and define terms of reference	• Advise National Ocean Steering Committee on cross-jurisdictional actions and collaborate on cross-sectoral actions		• Ongoing regular meetings to support implementation of shared ocean priorities, track progress and advise government	All focus areas
Support the reduction of shipping emissions	• Consultation and engagement on green shipping corridors	• Implementation of green shipping corridors		• Implementation of the Maritime Emissions Reduction National Action Plan	Climate action Ocean industries Protection, restoration and resilience Collaboration Knowledge
Collaborate on actions aligned with the industry-led Futures of Seafood Project	• Consultation and engagement	• Action development and commence implementation	• Action implementation		Ocean industries Protection, restoration and resilience First Nations Collaboration Knowledge
Collaborate on the establishment of a priority high seas marine protected area in our region under the new High Seas Biodiversity Treaty (or BBNJ)	• Develop and consult on Australian priority proposal	• Consider supporting other early marine protected area proposals		• Submit proposal at future BBNJ Conference of the Parties	Protection, restoration and resilience Collaboration
Build preparedness for extreme marine events	• Engage across jurisdictions, including lessons from the South Australia harmful algal bloom	• National Ocean Steering Committee considers progress and outcomes as part of its initial workplan			Climate action Ocean industries Protection, restoration and resilience Collaboration Knowledge

Flagship actions

	3 months	6 months	12 months	18 months +	Focus areas
Protect at least 30% of Australia's ocean in 'highly protected' areas by 2030	• Progress statutory review of management plans for the Temperate East, North, North-west and South-west marine park networks and the Coral Sea Marine Park, which are due to expire in 2028				Ocean industries; Protection, restoration and resilience; First Nations; Collaboration; Knowledge
Build a national framework to accelerate restoration and adaptation of coastal and ocean ecosystems	• Rapid identification and prioritisation of areas for restoration		• Consider pilot programs to restore priority areas and ecosystems identified in the national approach	• Review policy and regulation levers relating to restoration	Climate action; Protection, restoration and resilience; Collaboration; Knowledge; Finance
Build on existing successful ocean science and monitoring collaborations between institutions and support integrated ocean data and information sharing	• Engage in the new $35 million Australian Research Council Centre of Excellence for Our Future Oceans to uncover vital information about our changing ocean • Expand coastal research and monitoring infrastructure, including through $58 million NCRIS funding for the next stage of CoastRI • Support implementation of the National Marine Science Strategy 2026–2036 and ocean data standards			• Enhance coordination of AusSeabed (map more of our ocean)	Collaboration; Knowledge
Facilitate First Nations-led ocean actions, participation and capacity-building	• Support ReefTO • Deliver the Indigenous Ranger Biosecurity Program • Deliver the Ghost Nets and Marine Debris Initiative • Continue to support establishment and implementation of sea Country Indigenous Protected Areas			• Support Indigenous Women Rangers Network Australia capacity building	First Nations; Protection, restoration and resilience; Collaboration; Equity and inclusion; Knowledge
Work to ensure appropriate settings are in place to attract and retain private and philanthropic investment in sustainable ocean actions	• Consult with government, ocean business, finance leaders and non-government organisations to identify opportunities and barriers to investment			• Continue to build on the progress of the 31st United Nations Climate Change Conference (COP31) to unlock investment for the blue economy	Climate action; Ocean industries; Equity and inclusion; Finance

Australian Government **actions underway***

Abbreviations

ABF Australian Border Force | **ABS** Australian Bureau of Statistics | **ACS** Australian Climate Service
AFMA Australian Fisheries Management Authority | **AMSA** Australian Maritime Safety Authority
BoM Bureau of Meteorology | **DAFF** Department of Agriculture, Fisheries and Forestry
DCCEEW Department of Climate Change, Energy, the Environment and Water
DD Department of Defence | **DE** Department of Education
DFAT Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade | **DHA** Department of Home Affairs
GA Geoscience Australia | **ILSC – PM&C** Indigenous Land and Sea Corporation – Prime Minister and Cabinet | **NIAA** National Indigenous Australians Agency

Climate action

– Climate Adaptation Program	**AFMA**
– Net Zero Plan	**DCCEEW**
– National Climate Risk Assessment	**ACS**
– National Adaptation Plan	**DCCEEW**

Protection, restoration and resilience

– National Marine Pest Surveillance Strategy	**DAFF**
– Threatened Species Action Plan	**DCCEEW**
– Australia's Strategy for Nature	**DCCEEW**
– Reef 2050 Plan	**DCCEEW**
– Illegal, unreported and unregulated (IUU) fishing deterrence	**ABF, AFMA**
– Review of Australian Marine Park Network management plans	**DCCEEW**
– Ghost Nets and Marine Debris Initiative	**DCCEEW**

Ocean industries

– National Fisheries Plan	**DAFF**
– National Aquaculture Strategy	**DAFF**
– National Food Security Strategy	**DAFF**
– AQUAPLAN 2022–2027	**DAFF**
– Sustainable Tourism Framework and Toolkit	**Austrade**

First Nations

– Indigenous sea Country Protected Areas	**DCCEEW**
– Indigenous Rangers Program	**NIAA**
– National Indigenous Land and Sea Strategy	**ILSC – PM&C**
– Indigenous Ranger Biosecurity Program	**DAFF**

Collaboration

– 2050 Strategy for the Blue Pacific Continent	**DFAT**
– National Plan for Maritime Environmental Emergencies	**AMSA**
– Civil Maritime Security Strategy	**DHA**
– Southeast Asia Maritime Partnerships	**DCCEEW, DFAT**
– National Plan of Action to Prevent, Deter and Eliminate Illegal, Unreported and Unregulated Fishing	**DAFF**

Equity and inclusion

– Women in Maritime	**AMSA**
– Engage! A strategy to include young people in the decisions we make	**DE**

Knowledge

– AusSeabed	**GA**
– Resourcing Australia's Prosperity	**GA**
– National Ecosystem Accounts and Environmental-Economic Accounting	**DCCEEW, ABS**
– HydroScheme Industry Partnership Program	**DD**
– Climate and Oceans Support Program in the Pacific (Phase 3)	**BoM**
– National Collaborative Research Infrastructure Strategy	**DE**

Finance

– Sustainable Finance Roadmap	**Treasury**
– Australian Infrastructure Financing Facility for the Pacific	**DFAT**

**Not exhaustive*



Australian Government

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