



**Gondwana**



**Riversleigh**



**Wet Tropics**



**K'gari  
(Fraser Island)**



**The  
Great Barrier Reef**



# Queensland First Nations World Heritage Strategy



## Acknowledgement



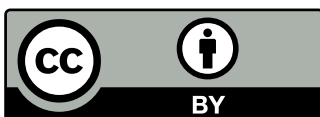
The design elements used in this publication feature the artwork of Elaine Chambers, a Kuku Yalanji and Koa woman. It was created with all elements in mind; water resources, land management, rural lands and coastal areas.

Prepared by: Department of Environment and Science

© State of Queensland, 2022.

The Department of Environment and Science acknowledges Aboriginal peoples and Torres Strait Islander peoples as the Traditional Owners and custodians of the land. We recognise their connection to land, sea and community, and pay our respects to Elders past, present and emerging.

The department is committed to respecting, protecting and promoting human rights, and our obligations under the *Human Rights Act 2019*. The Queensland Government supports and encourages the dissemination and exchange of its information. This work is licensed under a Creative Commons Attribution 4.0 International License.



Under this licence you are free, without having to seek our permission, to use this publication in accordance with the licence terms. You must keep intact the copyright notice and attribute the State of Queensland as the source of the publication.

For more information on this licence, visit <https://creativecommons.org/licenses/by/4.0/>

November 2022 | #32283

# Minister's foreword

Queensland's natural and cultural heritage is irreplaceable. The World Heritage Convention, adopted by UNESCO in 1972 and ratified by Australia in 1974, is an important agreement between nations to identify, protect, conserve and present places of outstanding cultural and natural value around the world. This commitment is met in partnership between governments, First Nations people, members of the scientific and broader community and a raft of volunteers.

Australia's First Nations peoples represent the oldest continuing cultures in the world—the importance of protecting these cultures cannot be overstated. The Queensland First Nations World Heritage Strategy establishes the principles and values that guide the state's approach to World Heritage. It integrates First Nations leadership and recent international policy shifts that have brought local and First Nations communities front and centre in World Heritage management and the nomination of new World Heritage areas.

This strategy reflects contemporary World Heritage management practices and makes transparent the Queensland Government's commitment to embedding the principles of Free, Prior and Informed Consent of First Nations peoples—establishing a rights-based approach to World Heritage and acknowledging that First Nations cultural rights are human rights.



This strategy puts these principles into action. It was designed with First Nations peoples with interests in Queensland's World Heritage areas, who generously shared their time, expertise and ideas. First Nations leadership provided a strong foundation for the development of a culturally secure and sustainable strategy, with strong community support.

Queensland's First Nations World Heritage Strategy aims to ensure that First Nations peoples can take a leading role in National and World Heritage nominations for and management of their Country. It builds on the Department of Environment and Science's commitment to reframe relationships with First Nations partners through the [Gurra Gurra Framework 2020–2026](#).

*Meaghan*

**Meaghan Scanlon MP**

Minister for the Environment

and the Great Barrier Reef

Minister for Science and Youth Affairs



# Acknowledgement of Country

The Department of Environment and Science acknowledges Country and all First Nations peoples. We pay our respect to Elders, past, present and emerging. We acknowledge the continuous living cultures of First Nations Queenslanders including diverse languages, customs and traditions, knowledges and systems. We acknowledge the deep relationship, connection and responsibility to land, sea and sky Country as an integral element of First Nations identity and culture.

This Country is sacred. Everything on the land has meaning and all people are one with it. We acknowledge First Nations peoples' sacred connection as central to culture and being.

First Nations people speak to Country, listen to Country, sing up Country, dance up Country, understand Country and long for Country. We acknowledge and thank First Nations peoples for the enduring relationship connecting people, Country and ancestors—an unbreakable bond that safely stewarded and protected the land, waters and sky for thousands of generations.

*Gurra Gurra Framework 2022–2026*



Doomadgee Dance at Riversleigh  
© Queensland Government



# Contents

Minister’s foreword .....	3
Acknowledgement of Country .....	4
Introduction.....	6
Summary of commitments .....	7
Queensland’s World Heritage areas .....	8
Developed in partnership with First Nations peoples .....	10
Integrating First Nations rights, interests and knowledge.....	11
1. First Nations led pathways to World Heritage nomination.....	13
2. A collaborative governance approach.....	19
3. Planning in partnership .....	25
4. World Heritage management .....	31
Conclusion.....	37
Appendix 1: Legislative environment .....	39
Appendix 2: Planning for Queensland’s World Heritage protected areas.....	41

# Introduction

*Effective, direct, and meaningful representation and participation of Indigenous peoples at all stages and levels of decision-making related to the World Heritage Convention must be recognized, respected, enabled and ensured.*

(International Work Group for Indigenous Affairs, Copenhagen 2012).

The above statement is part of a call to action from the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organisation (UNESCO) International Expert Work Group for Indigenous Affairs. It represents a key turning point in UNESCO's World Heritage policy development, shifting its focus towards First Nations peoples human rights, traditional knowledge and sustainable development.

After the trauma and devastation of World Wars I and II, UNESCO decided it was a priority that countries work together to protect the world's special places. UNESCO adopted The Convention Concerning the Protection of the World's Cultural and Natural Heritage, known as [the World Heritage Convention](#), in Paris on 16 November 1972.

This Convention includes several management objectives for World Heritage areas known as the 'five Cs'—Credibility, Conservation, Capacity Building, Communication and Communities. [Communities](#) is the most recent management objective to be added to the Convention, recognising the importance of interactions between people and nature, and the fundamental need to preserve the balance between the two.

The UNESCO World Heritage Committee determines the policies for the assessment of areas for World Heritage listing. World Heritage areas are listed for their Outstanding Universal Values—attributes that make them important to all peoples of the world, regardless of where they are located. The World Heritage list includes iconic places such as the Great Barrier Reef, the Pyramids in Egypt and the Great Wall of China.

This First Nations World Heritage Strategy (the strategy) demonstrates how the Queensland Government is responding to this policy shift—empowering First Nations peoples and local communities to better protect, manage, present and maintain the irreplaceable values of World Heritage areas. This strategy is anchored in the acknowledgement that First Nations peoples have cared for their Country for tens of thousands of years and continue to have rights, interests and responsibilities to care for Country and people, irrespective of determination of native title. The Department of Environment and Science (the department) acknowledges the cultural rights of First Nations peoples, and the invaluable and unique role of traditional knowledge and expertise in the conservation and management of World Heritage areas and their wider landscapes.



# Summary of commitments

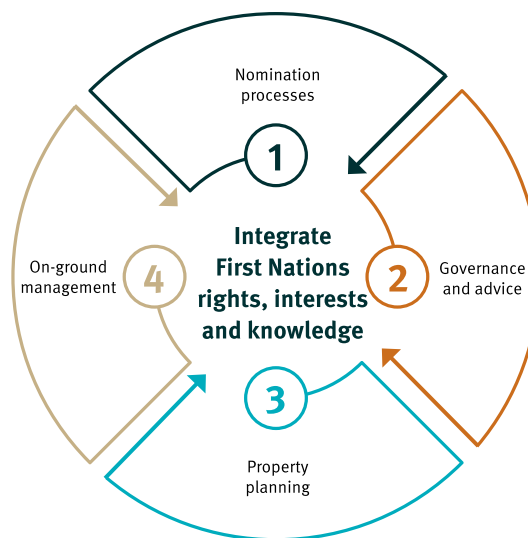
This diagram provides an overview of the commitments made within the First Nations World Heritage Strategy against the themes identified through co-design and consultation.

## On-ground management

- Integrate First Nations knowledge systems into planning and management
- Incorporate cultural values in the Values-Based Management Framework for national parks
- Deliver a Co-stewardship Framework for the protected area estate
- Deliver a First Nations Agreement Making Framework
- Increase contracts awarded to First Nations businesses through the Queensland Indigenous Procurement Policy

## Nomination processes

- Embed free, prior and informed consent
- Recognise cultural values
- First Nations lead heritage processes including new and renominations of existing areas
- Clarify processes, benefits, disbenefits and pathways
- Incorporate inclusive language across communications
- Ensure First Nations perspectives form the foundation of culturally appropriate heritage policies



## Property planning

- Prioritise co-design and development of World Heritage planning
- Develop considered responses to key management challenges including climate change, biosecurity and visitor management
- Seek opportunities to develop Country based plans (or similar)
- Integrate First Nations knowledge systems
- Integrate bio-cultural knowledge and skills

## Governance and advice

- Recognise and pay for cultural expertise and activities, and mutually agreed participation in management activities and delivery of services and products
- Strengthen First Nations leadership and perspectives in World Heritage governance
- Expand skills programs, career pathways and mentoring opportunities for participation in World Heritage matters, including intergenerational development opportunities and cross-property networking opportunities
- Support the restoration and operation of the Australian World Heritage Indigenous Network
- Facilitate ongoing collaborative arrangements to deliver on the Wet Tropics of Queensland Regional Agreement 2005

# Queensland's World Heritage areas

## Gondwana Rainforest of Australia (Qld section) (listed 1994)



Lamington National Park  
© Queensland Government

The Country of the Yugambeh, Yuggera Ugarapul and Githabul peoples.

Its **World Heritage listed values** include the most extensive area of subtropical rainforest in the world, with species and geography linking back to the Gondwana supercontinent which broke up approximately 180 million years ago. It includes **Main Range, Mt Barney, Mt Chinghee, Lamington and Springbrook National Parks**.

Governance of this property is coordinated by the Department of Environment and Science. [Click here](#) for more information about how the department collaborates with First Nations peoples to manage this property.

## Australian Fossil Mammal Sites (Riversleigh) (listed 1994)

The Country of the Waanyi people.

Its **World Heritage listed values** include the most outstanding examples of fossils from the Oligocene period to the Miocene period (10–30 million years ago) including wombat-like marsupials, carnivorous kangaroos, giant flightless birds, tree climbing crocodiles and horned turtles. It is located within **Boodjamulla (Lawn Hill) National Park**.

Governance of this property is coordinated by the Department of Environment and Science. [Click here](#) for more information about how the department collaborates with First Nations peoples to manage this property.



Boodjamulla (Lawn Hill)  
© Queensland Government

## K'gari (Fraser Island) World Heritage Area (listed 1992)



K'gari (Fraser Island)  
© Queensland Government

The Country of the Butchulla people.

Its **World Heritage listed values** include the world's largest unconfined aquifer on a sand island, half of the world's perched freshwater dune lakes, dune lakes, the world's only subtropical rainforest that grows entirely on sand as well as striking beauty and biodiversity. Most of the area is within the **K'gari (Fraser Island) Great Sandy National Park**.

Governance of this property is coordinated by the Department of Environment and Science. [Click here](#) for more information about how the department collaborates with First Nations peoples to manage this property.

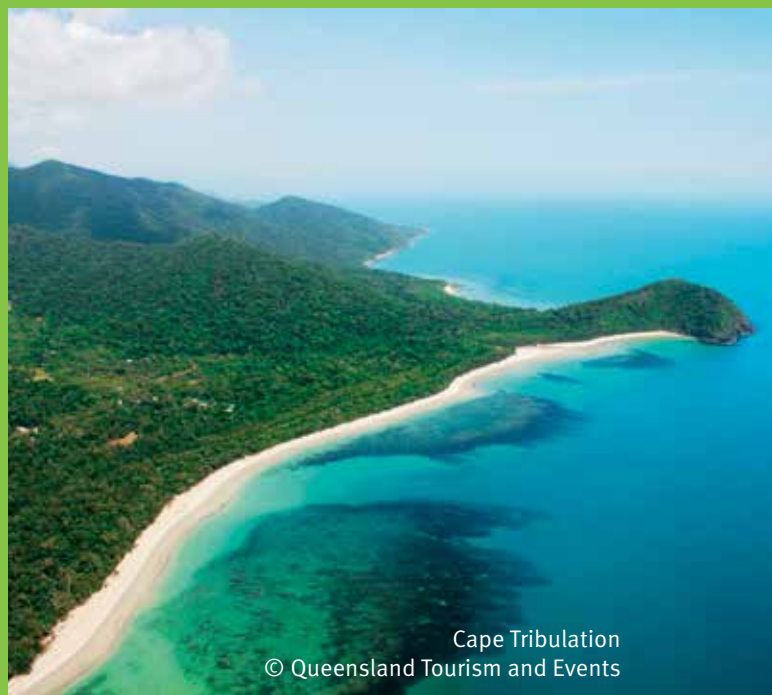


## Wet Tropics of Queensland World Heritage Area (listed 1988)

The Rainforest Aboriginal peoples are the Traditional Custodians of the Wet Tropics of Queensland World Heritage Area representing at least 20 tribal groups and 8 language groups.

Its World Heritage listed values include extensive tropical rainforest ecosystems rich in unique biodiversity including Gondwana era relicts providing insights into the evolution of Australian flora and fauna. The area was listed on Australia's National Heritage list in 2007 for its natural values and in 2012 for its Indigenous cultural values.

More than 87% of the area is protected as national parks, conservation parks, state forests and forest reserves. Governance of this property is coordinated by the [Wet Tropics Management Authority](#). [Click here](#) to learn about how the Wet Tropics Management Authority collaborates with First Nations peoples to manage this property.



Cape Tribulation  
© Queensland Tourism and Events

## Great Barrier Reef World Heritage Area (listed 1981)

There are some 70 Traditional Owner groups with authority for Sea Country management within the Great Barrier Reef World Heritage Area. Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples have been linked with the Reef since time immemorial.

Its [World Heritage listed values](#) include that it is the world's most extensive coral reef system and home to a massive diversity of sea life including threatened species such as dugong and the large green turtle. When originally listed in 1981, the Great Barrier Reef did not include cultural criteria, however in 2012 the retrospective statement acknowledged the cultural values and connection of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples as part of the Great Barrier Reef Outstanding Universal Value.

Governance of the Great Barrier Reef occurs through the Great Barrier Reef Intergovernmental Agreement between the Australian and Queensland governments. The agreement includes providing for joint management of the marine and national parks within the World Heritage area.

The governance of this World Heritage area is collaborative, involving First Nations peoples, the Great Barrier Reef Marine Park Authority, the Queensland Department of Environment and Science and the Australian Department of Climate Change, Energy, the Environment and Water. [Click here](#) for more information.

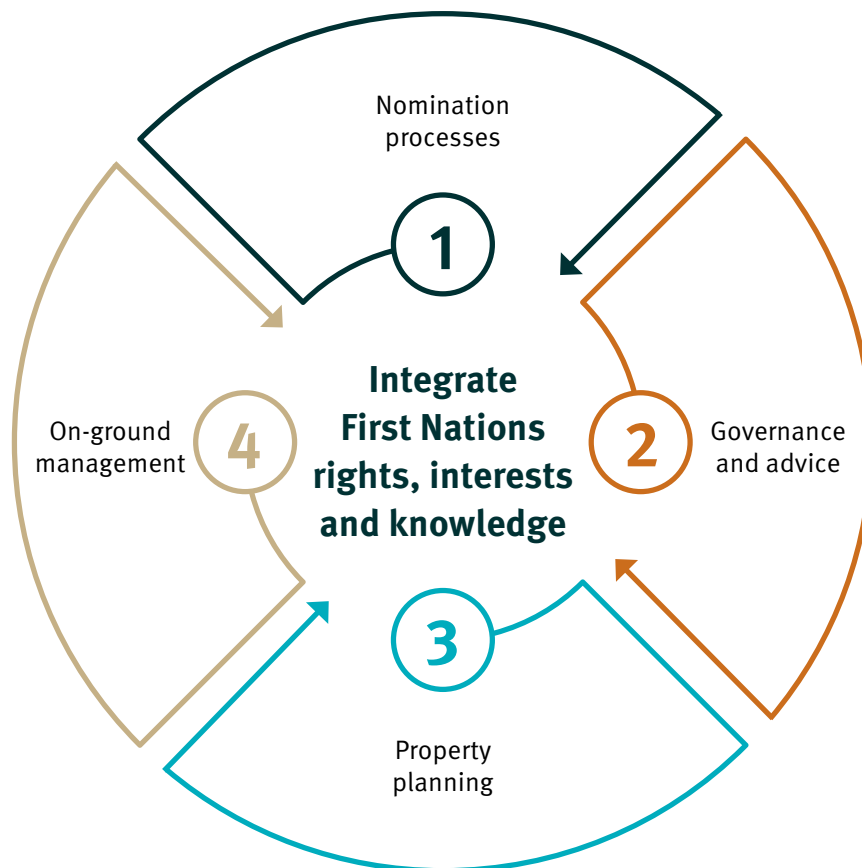


Great Barrier Reef  
© Queensland Government

# Developed in partnership with First Nations peoples

This strategy was developed through discussions and workshops, prioritising the voices of First Nations peoples from across Queensland’s World Heritage areas, followed by external World Heritage experts and departmental staff. The strategy also benefits from the long-term relationship between the department and First Nations communities across Queensland’s World Heritage areas.

Four main themes emerged from feedback provided—nomination processes, governance and advice, property planning, and on-ground management. Following these themes, this strategy explores how First Nations rights, interests and knowledge can be better integrated into the governance and management of World Heritage areas to meet World Heritage obligations and community expectations.





# Integrating First Nations rights, interests and knowledge

The concept of a rights-based approach to World Heritage was initiated in 2007 with the [United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples \(UNDRIP\)](#) which identified an ‘urgent need to respect and promote the inherent rights of Indigenous peoples... especially their rights to their lands, territories and resources’. It called on State Parties to adopt free, prior and informed consent as a pre-requisite for any activity that affects the ancestral lands, territories and natural resources of First Nations peoples. It was signed by Australia in 2009 and the [UNESCO Operational Guidelines for the Implementation of the World Heritage Convention](#) were amended to reflect UNDRIP in 2015.

Since 2015, the International Union for Conservation of Nature (IUCN) and the International Council on Monuments and Sites (ICOMOS) have been working collaboratively to explore new methods of recognition and support for the interconnectedness of nature and culture. This has been explored through the [Connecting Practice project](#). The project aims to shift conceptual and practice arrangements for the consideration of culture and nature within the World Heritage Convention and support biocultural and community-based approaches to sustainable development.

In 2020, Heritage Chairs of Australia and New Zealand welcomed and supported [Dhawura Ngilan: A vision for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Heritage in Australia](#) and the best practice standards in Indigenous cultural heritage management and legislation, providing a roadmap for improving approaches to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander heritage management in Australia.

In Queensland, this strategy aims to ensure First Nations peoples’ leadership in World Heritage nomination, governance, planning and management. It builds on important work across government that has already been done to recognise First Nations’ rights, interests and knowledge. This includes:

- Queensland Government [Reconciliation Action Plan 2018–2021](#), which aligns to the reconciliation themes of respect, relationships and opportunities.
- [Human Rights Act 2019](#), which acknowledges the importance of the right to self-determination to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Island Queenslanders and acknowledges First Nations rights as human rights.
- [Tracks to Treaty](#), which recognises the 2010 amendments to the preamble of the Queensland Constitution and reframing the relationship between Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Queenslanders and the Queensland Government.
- Department’s [Gurra Gurra Framework 2020–2026](#) (Gurra Gurra Framework) which embeds a principles and values-based approach to working with First Nations peoples and improving cultural capability in the department.
- [Wet Tropics of Queensland World Heritage Area Regional Agreement](#) (2005), which provides for the cooperative management of the Wet Tropics World Heritage Area by Rainforest Aboriginal people and the Australian and Queensland governments.
- [Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Heritage Strategy for the Great Barrier Reef Marine Park](#), which sets out a vision, guiding principles, objectives, actions and anticipated outcomes for how the Great Barrier Reef Marine Park Authority will work with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples.





Gondwana, Lamington National Park  
© Queensland Tourism and Events



# ① First Nations led pathways to World Heritage nomination

Australia ratified the [World Heritage Convention](#) in August 1974, becoming a State Party to the Convention. As a signatory to the World Heritage Convention, the Australian Government has a duty to identify, protect, conserve, present and transmit to future generations Australia's cultural and natural heritage. In 1992, the inclusion of Cultural Landscapes as a new criterion for World Heritage properties recognised the relationship between people and their environments. Australia's Uluru-Kata Tjuta National Park was listed under this criterion in 1994, in accordance with the wishes of the Yankunytjatjara and Pitjantjatjara people.

International policies on World Heritage have changed to align with the [UNDRIP](#). The World Heritage Operational Guidelines were amended in 2015 to reflect formal recognition that First Nations peoples are rightsholders and stakeholders in the identification, nomination, governance, management and protection of World Heritage properties, embedding the need for the free, prior and informed consent of First Nations peoples for World Heritage nominations.

Globally, First Nations-led nominations are influencing international policy change, enabling First Nations' values and priorities

to inform the way World Heritage places are protected and managed. Modern precedents are being set with rights-based approaches to World Heritage listing, including the Gunditjmara people who led a decades-long campaign to have part of their Country internationally recognised solely for its cultural values in 2020. The [Budj Bim Cultural Landscape](#) in southwest Victoria was the culmination of a decades-long campaign to see Country recognised as a World Heritage listed site. The International Indigenous Peoples Forum for World Heritage (IIPFWH) represents the voices of First Nations peoples.

The Australian Government is embedding the principles of [free, prior and informed consent \(FPIC\) in the work of the Australian Heritage Council](#). This involves, at minimum, early communication with First Nations peoples who have or may have rights and interests in the proposed area and developing a place-based approach for consent.

The department is also embedding the requirement for free, prior and informed consent across key areas of departmental business which also recognises that First Nations peoples can give or withhold their free, prior and informed consent in relation to a decision that may affect their Country and peoples.



Butchulla dancers, K'gari (Fraser Island)  
© Queensland Tourism and Events

## What we heard

During consultation for the preparation of this strategy, participants made several suggestions to strengthen the practice of First Nations-led World Heritage nominations.

Concerns were expressed regarding the comparative analysis component of World Heritage nominations, suggesting that it does not align with traditional cultural values. We heard that there are ongoing challenges in the adequate consideration of the biocultural relationship between First Nations peoples and Country. This is referred to as mutualism: recognising that Country and people are culturally interconnected and indivisible. However, the existing system recognises heritage values as natural *or* cultural.

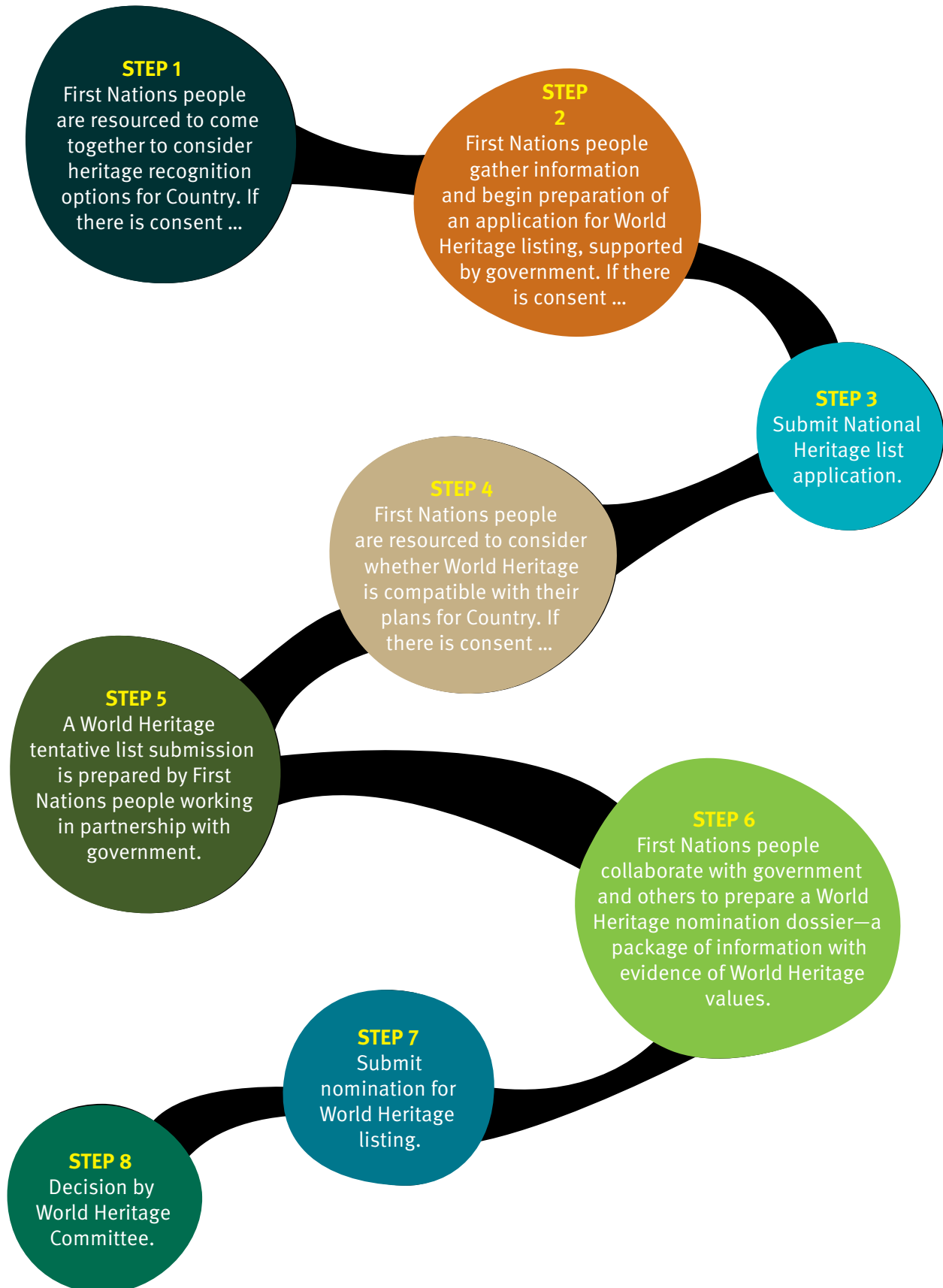
Many people expressed the view that government has an obligation to clearly communicate information about the nomination process, the benefits, disbenefits and risks of World Heritage listing, and the ongoing requirements to monitor, report and manage listed areas.

## Our commitments

### **The department is:**

- actively partnering with First Nations peoples for all new World Heritage nominations and re-nominations of existing World Heritage areas to embed free, prior and informed consent
- ensuring recognition of cultural values in new nominations and working with First Nations to add cultural values to existing World Heritage areas
- supporting First Nations peoples to lead heritage processes
- clarifying information about the process, benefits, disbenefits and pathways
- using inclusive language across World Heritage communications, appropriately incorporating First Nations language
- advocating for First Nations perspectives to form the foundation of culturally appropriate heritage policies.

**Diagram 1: First Nations led pathway to World Heritage listing**





## Case study

# Quandamooka World Heritage

The Quandamooka Yoolooburrabee Aboriginal Corporation (QYAC) is working in partnership with the Queensland and Australian governments to undertake the necessary steps to support consideration of Quandamooka Country on Australia's Tentative List.

Quandamooka Country is within the area known as Moreton Bay in southeast Queensland and includes the major islands of Minjerribah (North Stradbroke Island), Mulgumpin (Moreton Island) and the surrounding smaller islands.

The Quandamooka people and their ancestors have continuous connection to this area for tens of thousands of years, and their cultural knowledge and practice remains strong. The islands, marine and wetland environments are outstanding natural habitats for the protection of many naturally and culturally significant species.

The Quandamooka people have identified a World Heritage inscription to further promote and protect outstanding examples of natural habitat and wildlife, rich cultural heritage and continuous land and sea management for current and future generations.

The Quandamooka people are focusing on:

- the unique cultural relationship between Quandamooka people and Country over more than 20,000 years, a total area of 3,200 km<sup>2</sup> of open and sheltered marine environments
- Sea Country being home to the southernmost populations of dugong and several coral species
- Land Country featuring the most stable freshwater lake in the world.



Yulu Burri Ba dancers at Mooloomba, Minjerribah (North Stradbroke Island)  
© Queensland Tourism and Events

## Case study

# Recognition of cultural values in the Wet Tropics

The Wet Tropics of Queensland was inscribed on the World Heritage list in 1989 in recognition of its outstanding natural heritage.

The Rainforest Aboriginal People of the Wet Tropics have long advocated for their cultural heritage to be similarly recognised nationally and internationally. This was a key objective of the Regional Agreement (2005) which committed Rainforest Aboriginal people and governments to work together to formally recognise the Indigenous cultural values of the rainforest.

The National Heritage nomination process was led by Rainforest Aboriginal people as part of a research project which explored and revealed the interactions between culture and nature that produce a high level of biocultural diversity.

On 9 November 2012, the Rainforest Aboriginal people were successful in their nomination and their cultural values were included as part of the existing Wet Tropics of Queensland National Heritage listing. This includes recognition of the distinctiveness of the traditions and technical innovations such as the expertise needed to process and prepare toxic plants as food and the use of fire. The Wet Tropics is also the only place in Australia where Aboriginal people have permanently inhabited a tropical rainforest environment which is recognised as an outstanding heritage value to the nation.



Signing ceremony for the National Heritage Listing held on Djabugay Country  
© Wet Tropics Management Authority





Noah Creek, Cape Tribulation National Park  
© Queensland Government



## ② A collaborative governance approach

### Cultural rights and responsibilities

First Nations peoples have shaped Country for tens of thousands of years. First Nations cultural rights are human rights—these include rights to practice culture and to influence decisions made about Country and resources.

These rights are protected in international and domestic law and it is expected that First Nations peoples will participate in governance and decision-making and be empowered and supported to maintain cultural practices irrespective of whether cultural values are part of a World Heritage listing.

An effective governance and management system is anchored in the principles of: self-determination; participation in decision-making; good faith; free, prior and informed consent; respect for and protection of culture; and non-discrimination and equality. This system requires a thorough and shared understanding of the property and all values, whether they are internationally recognised or not.

### The responsibilities of governments

UNESCO details the obligations for management of World Heritage areas through the [World Heritage Convention](#). As a signatory or [State Party](#) to the World Heritage Convention, the Australian Government is responsible for meeting obligations to identify, protect, conserve, present and transmit Australia's cultural and natural heritage to future generations. The Australian Government shares this responsibility with the relevant state and territory governments.

Figure 1 describes the governance arrangements for World Heritage areas. Appendix 1 describes the legislative environment that relates to Queensland's World Heritage areas.

### Collective responsibility

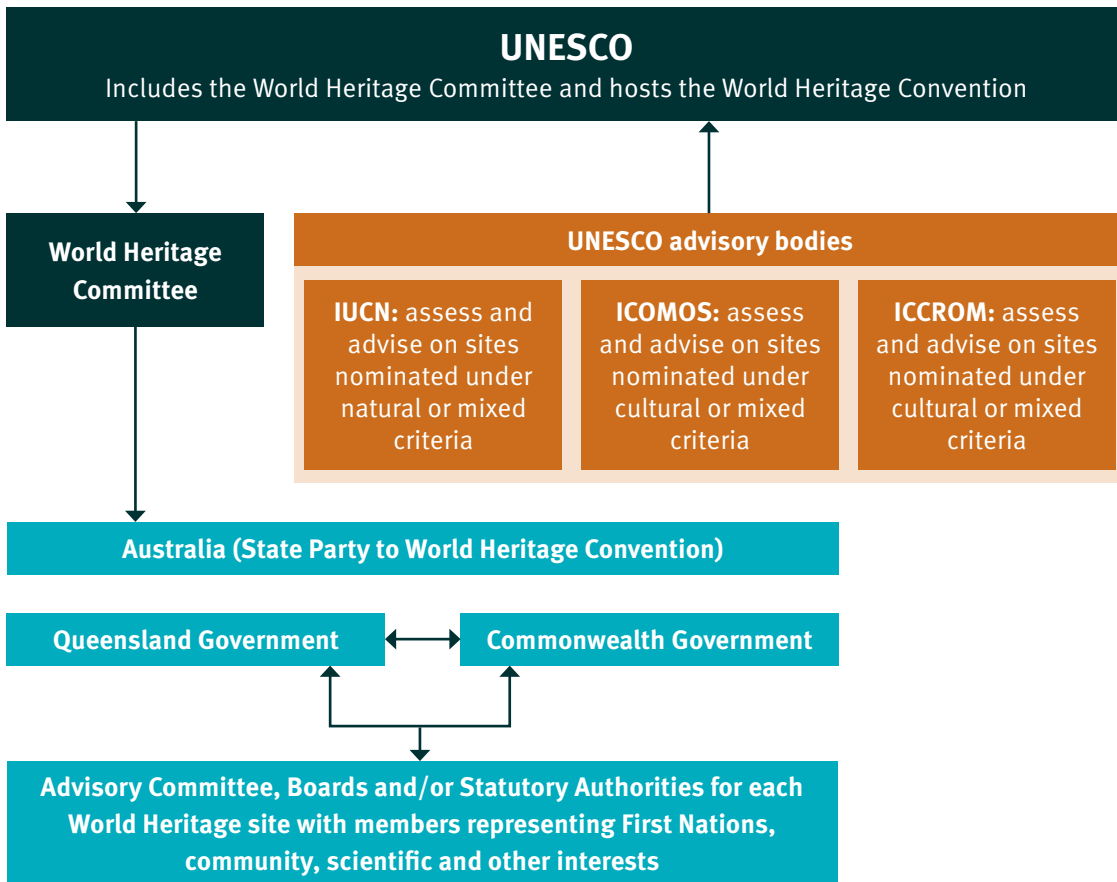
The [Australian World Heritage Advisory Committee \(AWHAC\)](#) comprises advisory committee Chairs from each Australian World Heritage property. AWHAC advises the commonwealth, state and territory governments on issues that affect Australia's World Heritage properties. AWHAC includes First Nations representatives to ensure connectivity with the Australian World Heritage Indigenous Network (AWHIN). Established by the Australian Government in 2002, AWHIN was designed to connect First Nations peoples from across Australia's World Heritage properties and to provide a First Nations perspective on management of World Heritage areas.

### **Gondwana Rainforests, K'gari (Fraser Island) and Australian Fossil Mammal Sites (Riversleigh section)**

The Australian World Heritage Intergovernmental Agreement (IGA) outlines the roles and responsibilities of the two levels of government. Five-year project agreements establish funding to support these arrangements. The Queensland Government facilitates and provides expert advice through advisory committees for each property, supported by an executive officer. Advisory Committees include First Nations, scientific and community perspectives and provide advice to the Australian and Queensland Government ministers responsible for World Heritage. As part of these arrangements, the department has responsibilities for supporting the progression of new National and World Heritage nominations.

**Figure 1: Governance arrangements for World Heritage areas**

- UNESCO** United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organisation
- IUCN** International Union for Conservation of Nature
- ICOMOS** International Council on Monuments and Sites
- ICCROM** International Centre for the Study of the Preservation and Restoration of Cultural Property



## Wet Tropics of Queensland

The Management Scheme Intergovernmental Agreement for the Wet Tropics of Queensland World Heritage Area sets out broad structural and funding arrangements for the management of this World Heritage Area. The *Wet Tropics World Heritage Protection and Management Act 1993* (Queensland) and the *Wet Tropics of Queensland World Heritage Area Conservation Act 1994* (Commonwealth) operationalise Australia's international obligations.

The [Wet Tropics Management Authority \(WTMA\)](#) was established in 1992 under the Queensland act to ensure Australia's obligations under the World Heritage Convention are met.

The Community Consultative Committee and Scientific Advisory Committee provide advice to the Authority and the Board—who's key function is to implement programs to meet Australia's obligations for the area.

The Board and both committees include Rainforest Aboriginal people as required under legislation.

A Partnership Agreement between the Authority and Queensland Parks and Wildlife and Partnerships (QPWS&P), provides funding allocated to the Department of Environment and Science (DES) for the collaborative management of the area. This includes having due regard to the rights and responsibilities of Traditional Owners and collective obligations to actively engage with Traditional Owners, to ensure Free, Prior and Informed Consent and acknowledging the significant contribution that Rainforest Aboriginal Peoples can make to the future management of cultural and natural heritage within the WTWHA.

## Great Barrier Reef

Governance of this World Heritage area occurs through the [Great Barrier Reef Intergovernmental Agreement](#) between the Australian and Queensland governments. This agreement provides for joint management of the marine and national parks within the World Heritage area through the Joint Field Management Program, operated as a partnership between the Great Barrier Reef Marine Park Authority (Reef Authority) and Queensland Parks and Wildlife Service and Partnerships (QPWS&P).

The Commonwealth and Queensland ministers responsible for the Great Barrier Reef preside over cross-jurisdictional responsibilities.

The Reef Authority's partnerships with First Nations peoples are guided by an Indigenous Reef Advisory Committee.

The Joint Field Management Program is governed by a Field Management Strategy Group which reports to the ministers. The Strategy Group comprises representation from the Reef Authority, the department and the Queensland Department of the Premier and Cabinet.

The program plans and delivers field operations within the Great Barrier Reef. This includes Commonwealth and State marine parks, island national parks and Commonwealth islands. The program is delivered jointly by the Reef Authority and QPWS. There are also established and evolving collaborative arrangements with First Nations peoples, allied government agencies, research institutions, industry and the community to work together to protect the World Heritage area.

The Great Barrier Reef Intergovernmental Agreement also provides for a shared approach to the management of other impacts to the Reef, particularly through the [Reef 2050 Long-Term Sustainability Plan](#).



## What we heard

During consultation on the development of this strategy, First Nations peoples expressed a desire for increased involvement in World Heritage area governance. Outside of legislative obligations such as Indigenous Land Use Agreements, First Nations peoples would like the opportunity to share their knowledge and expertise and expect that their knowledge will be valued, compensated and applied to influence decision-making about World Heritage areas.

First Nations peoples would like to build on knowledge about the World Heritage values on their Country and to raise awareness about this within the broader community. They would also like to be supported to formally record First Nations cultural values within World Heritage areas, and to share information where appropriate, to inform better management and protection. They would like to connect with First Nations peoples from other World Heritage areas to share experiences and build capacity, as well as connect with scientists, community members and others engaged in World Heritage management to foster co-learning and relationship building.

As part of the consultation, a number of stakeholders involved in World Heritage management also expressed the view that a lack of involvement of First Nations peoples and their knowledge into World Heritage decision-making hinders their ability to deliver on their cultural responsibilities to care for Country.

First Nations leadership should be incorporated into governance that informs decision-making and management of natural and cultural values in World Heritage areas.

Queensland's World Heritage properties were listed in the 1980s and 1990s in response to the need to protect Queensland's special places from growing development pressures. During this time, the primary driver was environmental—ensuring that special places were preserved for future generations. In many

cases, recognition of the indivisible relationship between unique natural values and First Nations cultural values was lacking.

## Our commitments

### The department is:

- redefining its relationships with First Nations partners in Queensland's World Heritage areas in accordance with international best practice and the department's [Gurra Gurra Framework](#)
- meeting our commitment to fair, equitable and consistent payments to First Nations peoples for the provision of cultural expertise, cultural activities, and mutually agreed participation in management activities and delivery of services and products
- progressively re-designing World Heritage advisory committees to ensure leadership and representation of First Nations peoples in governance forums for World Heritage areas
- expanding upskilling and cross-skilling programs, career pathways and mentoring opportunities for First Nations participation in World Heritage matters
- supporting intergenerational development opportunities for First Nations partners, which may include supporting younger peoples to convey messages from Elders
- supporting efforts to restore the AWHIN and enabling First Nations peoples from Queensland's World Heritage areas to engage in the Network
- supporting Queensland-based networking opportunities for First Nations groups from World Heritage areas to maximise peer-learning and capacity building opportunities
- supporting ongoing collaboration between Rainforest Aboriginal peoples, WTMA, and QPWS&P to deliver on commitments made in the Wet Tropics of Queensland Regional Agreement 2005.

## Case study

# Recognition of cultural research endorsement in the Wet Tropics

In 2019, with Rainforest Aboriginal people working in partnership with the Wet Tropics Management Authority and the department, an Application for Research Endorsement trial was introduced for proposed research activities in the Wet Tropics World Heritage Area.

Applying to scientific research applications made under the *Nature Conservation Act 1992*, the trial requires researchers to consult with Rainforest Aboriginal people in order to complete an [Application for Research Endorsement](#). The trial provides a formal process to enhance engagement with Rainforest Aboriginal people and supports opportunities for First Nations science and knowledge to be incorporated into research and prescription of cultural protocols.

The trial is consistent with the *Human Rights Act 2019*, which recognises the distinct cultural rights of Aboriginal peoples and Torres Strait Islander peoples to enjoy, maintain, control, protect and develop their identity and cultural heritage.



Fire Management in Yarrabah,  
Gungandji Country  
© Wet Tropics Management Authority



## Culturally inclusive World Heritage Advisory Committee for Gondwana Rainforests

The Gondwana Rainforests of Australia World Heritage Area extends from southeast Queensland to New South Wales. The New South Wales section was inscribed on the World Heritage list in 1986 and was expanded to include landscapes within Queensland in 1994.

Gondwana includes the Country of many First Nations groups including the Yugambeh, Yuggera Ugarapul and Githabul people in Queensland, and the Anaiwan, Banbai, Birpai, Bundjalung, Thunggutti, Geawegal, Githabul, Gumbaynggirr, Jukumbal, Ngarrabul, Wangerriburra, Widjabul Wia-bul, Wonaruah, Worimi and Yaegl in New South Wales.

Previously, two Advisory Committees were in place: the Technical and Scientific Advisory Committee, which provided advice from a scientific perspective, and the Community Advisory Committee, which provided advice from a community perspective. The Community Advisory Committee included two positions for First Nations peoples, one from Queensland and one from New South Wales.

Recognising the need to have the right people to speak for Country, the department partnered with Queensland's First Nations groups to consider a new culturally appropriate Advisory Committee structure. In response to feedback, the newly established Gondwana World Heritage Advisory Committee (Queensland Section) includes six positions across the three Queensland First Nations groups (Yugambeh, Yuggera Ugarapul and Githabul peoples):

- Yugambeh, Yuggera Ugarapul and Githabul peoples
- five scientific representatives
- five community members
- an independent Chair.

The Gondwana World Heritage Advisory Committee (Queensland Section) will work in close collaboration with the New South Wales Advisory Committee.



Purlingbrook Falls, Springbrook  
Credit: Dr Ian Gynther  
© Queensland Government



## 3 Planning in partnership

International and domestic legislation and policy require that First Nations peoples are empowered to co-develop property planning in a way that is self-determined and culturally appropriate. This is now reflected in recent changes to the World Heritage Operational Guidelines and is consistent with UNDRIP.

The World Heritage Convention requires that countries have an embedded approach to ensure the protection, conservation and presentation of World Heritage areas. The principles for World Heritage area management by state governments are established in the Australian Government's *Environment Protection and Biodiversity Conservation Act 1999* (EPBC Act) and Schedule 5 of the [EPBC Regulations](#) excluding the Wet Tropics of Queensland and Great Barrier Reef World Heritage Areas administered under their respective State and Commonwealth legislation.

Planning for protected areas in Queensland is undertaken in accordance with the *Nature Conservation Act 1992*. In addition, the [Values-Based Management Framework](#) (VBMF) applies an adaptive management approach for managing Queensland's public protected areas, including areas that have World Heritage status. Appendix 2 provides details of how the Values-Based Management Framework supports planning for Queensland's World Heritage areas.

The Queensland Government has developed partnerships with First Nations peoples to enable co-design of planning for protected areas in Queensland and in World Heritage areas. Co-design in the planning context seeks to develop management plans 'with, not for' people in a way that shares agency and centres First Nations perspectives.

Co-development of plans enables relationship building between government, First Nations peoples, and other stakeholders including

scientists, local communities and local governments. These partnerships are essential to generating a shared understanding of the World Heritage areas, their values and strategic priorities. Strategic planning processes include developing an understanding of the potential risks to the World Heritage values of a property. Establishing an understanding of key risks is an essential step in preparing for climate change impacts and major climate events.

The government is also supporting community-led, place-based planning where appropriate. Country Based Planning or Healthy Country Planning enables First Nations peoples to express their own vision, values, strategies and proposed actions for their Country, irrespective of the various layers of legislation and land ownership (tenures) and other constraints that have been in place since colonisation.

Supporting First Nations peoples to develop their own plan for Country provides the opportunity for First Nations peoples to share their knowledge and expertise and to fulfil their cultural obligations to care for Country. Through the Country based planning process, First Nations peoples engage with government agencies and other stakeholders such as landholders and other interest groups to build partnerships and support for achieving their vision.

### Planning responses to threats in World Heritage areas

Some of the most significant threats to World Heritage areas include biosecurity, visitor management and climate change, as [identified by UNESCO](#). Strategic planning for World Heritage areas enables consideration of responses for some of the key management challenges that World Heritage areas face and identifies research required to inform management and decision-making.

The threat of climate change includes increased extreme weather events such as droughts, bushfires and flooding as well as changes in temperature and humidity that are outside the tolerance zones of some species and can lead to significant changes in the integrity and distribution of World Heritage values. Understanding how these risks will impact on World Heritage values and implementing mitigation and adaptation measures is necessary to ensure the protection of the values of World Heritage areas for future generations.

Climate change also interacts with biosecurity and visitor management impacts. Biosecurity threats include weeds, feral animals, pathogens and diseases. Planning provides strategic direction on the prioritisation of biosecurity threats, coordinating efforts between government agencies, research institutions and community organisations to ensure effective responses. While visitation is an essential part of ensuring World Heritage properties have a life in their communities and the values that they protect are shared and advocated for into the future, increased visitation can have negative impacts, which can be addressed through effective planning and management.

While all properties are impacted by climate change in various ways, the Great Barrier Reef also faces significant impacts by external drivers outside of on-ground management—particularly catchment water quality and impacts to coastal ecosystems. Partnerships with First Nations peoples in the management of the catchment outside the World Heritage area are important to help protect the listed and cultural values of the Reef. These partnerships are guided by the Reef 2050 Traditional Owner Implementation Plan.

The [International Indigenous Peoples Forum on Climate Change](#) provides First Nations perspectives on climate change which is self determined as the key issue facing World Heritage properties.

Given the reliance of First Nations peoples on natural resources and ecosystems, they are disproportionately vulnerable to, and impacted by, climate change effects. For example, climate change can result in loss of land, and impact water and other resources relied upon by First Nations peoples and central to cultural practice. Climate change solutions must therefore include First Nations cultural knowledge, innovations and practices which have historically contributed to strong ecosystem and biodiversity conservation.

## What we heard

A key insight from the consultation was that a lack of incorporation of First Nations knowledge into World Heritage and protected area planning hinders First Nations peoples' ability to deliver on cultural responsibilities. Planning should be co-developed and include the protection and management of cultural values, regardless of whether these are part of the internationally listed values.

Some First Nations participants expressed the view that governments must respect First Nations terms of reference in building partnerships. This includes acknowledging and seeking to understand the diversity of First Nations groups and respect for their different obligations, priorities, interests and capacities. Partnerships should be created on the basis of invitation rather than expectation, and First Nations peoples should be supported to work within their own systems and timeframes, building on their strengths and priorities, and be appropriately remunerated for their input and expertise.

Supporting First Nations peoples to undertake Country based planning is a consent-based approach endorsed by First Nations peoples.

By supporting community-led planning, First Nations peoples are able to take the time and resources required to come together and make their own plans for Country. This approach better informs their own projects and priorities and equips them to influence planning and policy development.

Strategic planning is essential to adequately undertake risk assessments, management planning and adaptation strategies that are needed to respond to key challenges and threats, including climate change, increased visitation and biosecurity risks. The Queensland Government should explore the appropriate integration of First Nations knowledge, expertise

and experience to support robust social and ecological planning models. Numerous academics suggest that adaptive planning can help to manage fluctuations in visitation and subsequent visitor impacts.

## Our commitments

### The department is:

- prioritising co-design and development of World Heritage planning with First Nations peoples
- working with First Nations partners and other stakeholders to develop considered responses to key management challenges including climate change, biosecurity and visitor management
- seeking opportunities to support First Nations partners to develop Country based plans (or similar) for their Country
- integrating First Nations knowledge systems and western climate science approaches to deliver climate adaptation planning for K'gari World Heritage Area in partnership with the Butchulla people and the National Environmental Science Program, Science Systems Hub
- integrating bio-cultural knowledge and skills within Scientific Advisory Committees, as required by the Wet Tropics Management Authority.



## Raine Island Cultural Heritage Plan

Raine Island National Park (Scientific) is a very remote and highly significant park comprising Raine Island, Moulter Cay and MacLennan Cay. Since 2007, an Indigenous Land Use Agreement (ILUA) has been in place between Wuthathi people and Erubam Le, Meriam Le and Ugarem Le, and the State of Queensland. The ILUA includes the three islands and extends out to three nautical miles. Ten Traditional Owners sit on the ILUA Working Group which meets at least twice a year.

Raine Island is highly significant for several reasons:

- it has great cultural importance to Wuthathi and Meriam Nation (Ugar, Mer, Erub) Traditional Owners
- 90% of the northern Great Barrier Reef green turtle population nests here
- it is one of the most significant seabird nesting sites in the Great Barrier Reef
- it has a 14 metre high, heritage-listed, stone beacon built by convicts in 1844.

The department funded the development of a cultural heritage plan, working collaboratively with Wuthathi and Meriam Nations through workshops and field trips over an 18-month period. The Caring for Raine Island Country and Culture Strategic Plan for the Indigenous Cultural Heritage Management of the Raine Island Group details how Traditional Owners and partners work together to care holistically for the values of the Raine Island group. The ILUA working group continues to meet regularly to oversee the implementation of the plan.



Raine Island  
© Queensland Government



## Case study

# A planning partnership to protect K'gari's unique ecosystem

The results of a long-term partnership between the Butchulla Aboriginal Corporation, the Department of Agriculture and Fisheries and the Department of Environment and Science is informing climate adaptation and strategic planning for K'gari (Fraser Island).

The partnership commenced in 2018 when Myrtle rust was identified by the K'gari World Heritage Advisory Committee as a priority threat to K'gari's cultural and natural values. Myrtle rust is an exotic fungal pathogen originating from South America, first detected in New South Wales and has rapidly spread across the east coast of Australia. It attaches to trees and shrubs in the Myrtaceae family, which includes the bottle brush (*Callistemon* spp.), tea tree (*Melaleuca* spp.), lilly pillies (*Syzygium* spp.) and eucalypts (*Eucalyptus* spp., *Angophora* spp. and *Corymbia* spp.).

A successful Australian Heritage grant provided resources for the Butchulla Aboriginal Corporation and Butchulla Land and Sea Rangers to engage a biosecurity officer to work with both departments to identify and monitor Myrtle rust.

The biosecurity project resulted in the delivery of a forest health surveillance program to raise local awareness of the issue and increase myrtle rust tracking across K'gari. This involved specialist biosecurity and myrtle rust training for Butchulla rangers. Surveys included a focus on fire-affected vegetation, as young seedlings and new shoots are more susceptible to myrtle rust infestation.

This project focused on the identification of flora and fauna species, with special cultural significance to Butchulla people, which may be vulnerable to the Myrtle rust pathogen. The effects of a rapidly changing climate are predicted to exacerbate the effects of Myrtle rust.

The integration of Butchulla knowledge systems throughout this project will provide a sound foundation and inform future planning activities on K'gari. The information gathered during the biosecurity project will inform climate adaptation planning, and support Butchulla people to identify culturally significant plants and animals, which may be more vulnerable to climate change.



Biosecurity project team identifying and monitoring myrtle rust on K'gari (Fraser Island)  
© Queensland Tourism and Events





K'gari (Fraser Island)  
© Queensland Tourism and Events



## 4 World Heritage management

The World Heritage [Operational Guidelines](#) provide direction on conservation management systems for World Heritage areas. The Operational Guidelines are frequently updated to reflect decisions of the World Heritage Committee and the General Assembly of the States Parties, with the most recent update incorporating the rights of First Nations peoples, as committed to within [UNDRIP](#).

The IUCN provides resources for protected area management. Best Practice Guide no. 32 ‘[Cultural and spiritual significance of nature](#)’ (2021) responds to the growing need to make conservation more inclusive, effective and socially just by accommodating multiple worldviews; by treating natural and cultural heritage as interlinked; and by suggesting ways to empower all relevant groups and stakeholders in protected area management, implementing rights-based approaches.

In Queensland, a large portion of World Heritage areas is within the protected area estate with on-ground management coordinated by QPWS&P in partnership with First Nations peoples. [Queensland’s Protected Area Strategy 2020–2030](#) sets the Queensland Government’s future strategic direction for these areas and provides a pathway to progress towards a world-class protected area system. This system will play a central role in safeguarding Queensland’s biodiversity and its bio-cultural landscape into the future.

Parts of World Heritage areas that are not within the protected area estate are managed through relationships brokered with landholders and other organisations including local governments and research institutions.

Queensland’s [Indigenous Land and Sea Rangers](#) contribute to the management of protected areas and their broader bio-cultural landscape, working with QPWS rangers to coordinate optimal landscape outcomes, brokering relationships across the landscape both within

and outside of protected areas. Other First Nations ranger programs available include the Australian Government’s [Indigenous Ranger Program](#) and local community rangers.

First Nations rangers are involved in on-ground conservation management projects in Queensland’s World Heritage areas, including the Great Barrier Reef, Wet Tropics and K’gari (Fraser Island). At the time of publication, the Waanyi people were establishing a ranger group for their Country, which includes the Riversleigh World Heritage Area. Indigenous Land and Sea Rangers deliver co-designed work plans that reflect First Nations, local community and Queensland Government priorities. They deliver a range of services such as cultural burns, feral animal and pest plant control, soil conservation, cultural heritage site protection and biodiversity monitoring.

### Wet Tropics

The Wet Tropics is collaboratively managed through a range of legislation, agreements and programs that support economic and employment benefits and cultural outcomes. Wet Tropics legislation enables Cooperative Management Agreements with traditional owners. These agreements allow activities such as returning to live on Country in suitable areas, and building infrastructure to support tourism businesses or management of the area by Aboriginal ranger programs. In addition, there are many indigenous protected areas in which land and sea ranger programs are operating. In 2021, Joint Management arrangements between the State and Eastern Kuku-Yalanji People’s were established in the Daintree and nearby National Parks under the Cape York Peninsula Aboriginal Land Act (CYPAL). Supporting stronger management of the Wet Tropics World Heritage Area aligns with the principles and guidelines established under the Wet Tropics Management Plan 1998 and the 2005 [Regional Agreement](#).

## Great Barrier Reef

More than 70 Traditional Owner groups have long, continuing relationships with the Reef and its catchments. The Reef 2050 Long-Term Sustainability Plan process began almost a decade ago and partnership approaches to management continue to be established across the World Heritage area. Key actions are embedded in the [2021–2025 Reef 2050 Long-Term Sustainability Plan](#) and key Indigenous-led actions have been identified in the [Traditional Owner Implementation Plan](#). This plan focuses on three main priorities for implementation: coordination, cultural heritage and business capacity.

The Reef Joint Field Management Program details collaborative management of the World Heritage area and strategies for developing and strengthening partnerships guided by the Reef Authority's Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Heritage Strategy for the Great Barrier Reef Marine Park and the department's Gurra Gurra Framework 2020–2026. The engagement and involvement of Traditional Owners in field management of the World Heritage area is a core component of program delivery.

Traditional Owners work in partnership with the Reef Authority and QPWS&P to jointly manage the World Heritage area through Traditional Use of Marine Resources Agreements (TUMRAs). There are now 10 TUMRAs covering more than 40% of the Great Barrier Reef coastline.


## What we heard

During consultation, we heard First Nations peoples seek stronger involvement in management of World Heritage areas to deliver on cultural responsibilities to care for Country. We also heard that more needs to be done to promote positive interactions and respectful behaviour in World Heritage areas, particularly towards First Nations culture. This can include signage and interpretation, education for tour guides and visitors, or safeguarding of some areas from visitation.

We consistently heard that the unique values of Queensland's World Heritage areas should be reflected in the level of resourcing and management priority given to these areas—global recognition brings opportunities, obligations and international scrutiny. The tension between the increasing costs of management and the continued increasing constraints on government resources requires innovative thinking.

There is strong support for First Nations ranger programs, which provide opportunities for on-Country employment, stronger integration of First Nations knowledge and expertise, and improved monitoring and reporting of natural and cultural values. This approach aligns with the principles and values of the Gurra Gurra Framework, specifically the commitment to stronger employment pathways, business opportunities (service procurement), reduced barriers to participation and greater self-determination. This support is accompanied by continued calls to establish new First Nations ranger groups and expand existing ones.

Traditional knowledge is inseparable from people and culture and must continue to be owned and applied by First Nations peoples in the management of Country and must include appropriate consent and benefit-sharing arrangements.



## Our commitments

### The department is:

- integrating First Nations knowledge into operational management of World Heritage areas, while empowering First Nations peoples in governance of the application of that knowledge
- strengthening the incorporation of cultural values in the Values Based Management Framework for national parks within World Heritage areas
- co-designing and developing a Co-stewardship Framework for the protected area estate to foster genuine partnership arrangements collaboratively, centring the rights, interests and priorities of First Nations peoples
- co-designing and developing a First Nations Agreement Making Framework to enable consistent, transferrable, readable and repeatable processes, addressing the current and emerging commitments of the department including legal and procedural aspects such as Native Title
- growing the [Indigenous Land and Sea Ranger Program](#)
- working with other funders to establish First Nations World Heritage Rangers dedicated to working in listed areas to protect both cultural and natural values
- increasing the number and value of departmental contracts awarded to First Nations businesses across the state through the Queensland Indigenous Procurement Policy
- improving interpretive signage within existing World Heritage areas, developed in partnership with First Nations peoples, to communicate the cultural values of World Heritage areas
- working with First Nations partners to consider how to optimise economic opportunities which flow from World Heritage recognition.



Case study

## Great Barrier Reef Traditional Owner etiquette videos

As part of the ongoing commitments to strengthen relationships with Traditional Owners in the World Heritage area, the Reef Joint Field Management Program is developing cultural etiquette videos for working respectfully on Country.

The development of cultural etiquette videos highlights the intrinsic connection that Traditional Owners have to their Country and is seen as foundational to making this a tangible reality for others.

The short films provide the opportunity for Traditional Owners to share their stories, personal insights and experiences, and provide appropriate cultural guidance for working on Country in an engaging and effective medium.

The initial intent of the videos was for QPWS staff to watch prior to working in those areas of park recognised as Traditional Owner Sea Country. At the request of Traditional Owners the videos were published to the department's website for visitors to access prior to visiting Country. A number of videos developed with the Cape Melville, Flinders and Howick Islands Aboriginal Corporation are currently available <https://parks.des.qld.gov.au/parks/cape-melville/about/culture>.



The Reef Joint Field Management Program team filming the Yuku Baja Muliku cultural etiquette video  
© Queensland Government



Case study

## Riversleigh Fossil kits showcased to Gulf schools

A partnership between Waanyi people and the department resulted in a new initiative for Elders and schools in Doomadgee and Gununa to engage with the amazing animals that existed on Waanyi Country around 25 million years ago. A hands-on experience enabled Elders and students to investigate and hold ancient fossils from the Riversleigh World Heritage Area.

Increasing community knowledge of the values and governance of Riversleigh World Heritage Area was identified as a priority by the Waanyi people. Special fossil kits were developed, incorporating the science of palaeontology with the cultural significance of the fossil landscape, to deliver information to the young people of Waanyi schools in the lower Gulf region and to Waanyi Elders.

In November 2021, departmental staff and Waanyi representatives took fossil touring kits that were specially developed by the Queensland Museum to share the knowledge and values of World Heritage in Waanyi Country. The project demonstrated genuine engagement and acted to build a better environment for the future governance and understanding of the World Heritage area.

The Waanyi Prescribed Body Corporate is continuing to work with the department to better capture the cultural significance and importance of fossils in the landscape, to add to Riversleigh's international significance and rich fossil story.



The Riversleigh fossil kits being showcased to school students in Waanyi Country—lower Gulf of Carpentaria, Queensland  
© Claudette Albert, Waanyi PBC





Riversleigh World Heritage Area  
© Queensland Government



# Conclusion

This First Nations World Heritage Strategy is the first of its kind in Queensland and demonstrates our clear commitment that Country and people are central to all aspects of World Heritage across the state. This commenced with the process of co-designing the strategy, prioritising First Nations perspectives and expertise.

Throughout this process, we heard that First Nations rights, interests and obligations should inform and be integrated into planning, decision-making, governance and management of Queensland's World Heritage properties. This strategy aims to respond across the World Heritage life cycle: nomination processes, governance and advice, property planning and on-ground management.

We have detailed what the department is doing to help deliver the strategy and support the aspirations of First Nations peoples.

Queensland's World Heritage properties are managed within a complex legislative framework. This Strategy seeks to enable and empower First Nations leadership and participation across all aspects of planning, decision-making and management of World Heritage areas.

This commitment to working in true and genuine partnerships with First Nations peoples provides stronger outcomes for Country, people and all Queenslanders, and will ensure that these unique and iconic places are managed, protected and accessible for future generations.



Boodjamulla (Lawn Hill) at dawn  
© Queensland Government





Lady Musgrave Island  
© Queensland Government



## Appendix 1


# Legislative environment

All World Heritage properties in Australia are protected and managed under the Australian Government's EPBC Act as 'matters of national environmental significance'. The EPBC Act is the statutory instrument for implementing Australia's obligations under the World Heritage Convention. By law, any action that has, will have, or is likely to have, a significant impact on the listed values of a World Heritage property must be referred to the responsible Australian Government Environment Minister for consideration. Substantial penalties apply for taking such an action without approval.

Once a heritage place is listed, the EPBC Act requires the preparation of management plans that detail how the listed values of the site will be appropriately managed and protected. Importantly, the EPBC Act also protects matters of national environmental significance even if the threats originate from outside the property or if the values of the property are mobile (such as fauna).

In Queensland, additional legislation supports the protection and management of World Heritage sites and their OUVs at the State level, including:

- the *Nature Conservation Act 1992* (NCA), which establishes a framework for creation and management of protected areas, including World Heritage properties, and protection and management of native biodiversity
- the NCA and the *Vegetation Management Act 1999*, which regulate native species and vegetation in World Heritage properties
- the *Planning Act 2016*, which provides the framework for assessing and approving certain development, including consideration of environmental matters and sustainability in local government planning schemes
- the *State Planning Policy 2017*, which defines specific matters of State interest to be considered in land use planning and development, including World Heritage and attributes that contribute to Outstanding Universal Value
- the *Aboriginal Cultural Heritage Act 2003* and *Torres Strait Islander Cultural Heritage Act 2003*, which provide for the recognition, protection and conservation of First Nations cultural heritage, including a statutory 'duty of care' to take all reasonable and practicable measures to ensure no harm to First Nations cultural heritage
- the *Human Rights Act 2019* (Section 28), which acknowledges the cultural rights of First Nations peoples, including the right to self-determination
- the *Biosecurity Act 2014* and the *Biosecurity Regulation 2016*, which provide a framework to prevent or minimise impacts from biosecurity threats, such as weeds, pests and other invasive species on human health, social amenity, the economy and the environment
- the *Wet Tropics World Heritage Protection and Management Act 1993* and its regulation, and the Wet Tropics Management Plan 1998, which provide a legal framework for management of the Wet Tropics of Queensland World Heritage Area and the operation of the Wet Tropics Management Authority and the Wet Tropics Board
- the *Environmental Protection Act 1994* and *Environmental Protection Regulation 2019*, which provide for ecologically sustainable development, and the *Environmental Offsets Act 2014*, which provides additional protection for sensitive environmental values (e.g. World Heritage areas)

- 
- the *Environmental Offsets Act 2014* and *Environmental Offsets Regulation 2014* counterbalance the significant residual impacts of particular activities on prescribed environmental matters (including World Heritage areas) through the use of environmental offsets
  - the *Marine Parks Act 2004*, which establishes a framework for creation and management of marine parks including complementary management in the GBR WHA and K'gari (to the high-water mark)
  - the *Aboriginal Land Act 1991*, which provides for a system of land tenure including inalienable Aboriginal freehold land
  - the *Forestry Act 1959*, which provides for the management of state forests, timber reserves and other state land
  - the *Lands Act 1994*, which is the principal piece of legislation relating to the management of land and land tenure in Queensland
  - the *Recreation Areas Management Act 2006*, which provides for the establishment and management of recreation areas.



## Planning for Queensland's World Heritage protected areas

World Heritage areas are exceptional landscapes that require the highest quality standards in management and presentation. Much of the tenure of World Heritage areas in Queensland is protected area and on-ground management is the responsibility of QPWS in partnership with First Nations peoples. *Queensland's Protected Area Strategy 2020–2030* (Protected Area Strategy) sets the Queensland Government's future strategic direction for these areas and provides a pathway to progress towards a world-class protected area system. The Protected Area Strategy lays the foundation required for Queensland to develop and maintain a protected area system that is ecologically representative, well-connected and integrated into the wider landscape, and effectively and equitably managed to sustain ecological resilience. Such a system of protected areas will play a central role in safeguarding Queensland's biodiversity and bio-cultural landscape into the future.

Underpinning the delivery of the Protected Area Strategy, the *VBMF* applies a values-based adaptive management approach for managing Queensland's public protected areas, including areas that have World Heritage listing. In the Wet Tropics, a partnership agreement between the WTMA and the department formalises the respective roles, obligations and interests in the management of Outstanding Universal Value (OUV) of the Wet Tropics World Heritage Area.

The Protected Area Strategy revitalises our approach to managing terrestrial World Heritage areas. It reflects our commitment to partnership with First Nations peoples and evolving world's best practice management approaches.

### **A values-based approach to World Heritage protected area management**

The VBMF ensures that Queensland's World Heritage properties are managed in accordance with contemporary best-practice standards consistent with those set by the IUCN—to establish a monitoring, evaluation, reporting and improvement (MERI) framework and adaptive management approach. VBMF implementation is a staged approach and World Heritage protected areas are priority sites. Adaptive management through the VBMF process builds upon current management practices to improve the management of protected areas.

The VBMF ensures world class management of World Heritage protected areas by:

- exploring opportunities to integrate First Nations' knowledge into adaptive planning and operational management of World Heritage areas
- continuing to strengthen the incorporation of cultural values in the VBMF and prioritising this in planning for World Heritage areas
- establishing a management effectiveness evaluation process that defines what success looks like and measures whether management standards and objectives are being met
- planning that focuses on protecting key values which contribute to the OUV and meeting levels of service management standards for each park, co-designed with First Nations peoples
- bringing together systems and improving data availability and connectivity

- establishing a simple condition assessment for key values which contribute to the OUV
- evaluating performance against targets (conservation, legislative and risk management obligations)
- delivering simple evidence-based reporting, to meet World Heritage reporting requirements
- providing the information needed to prioritise the department's finite resources to ensure that each park within the World Heritage area meets or exceeds its desired management standards.

How the VBMF establishes a high standard level of planning, management, monitoring and evaluation for World Heritage areas can be defined as follows.

The core planning process ensures that existing management identifies and aligns with the park values identified in the OUV and meets legal and risk obligations until formal statutory planning can be undertaken. This assessment focusses on providing the essential data in the department's systems to build on effective management and undertake the VBMF cycle on individual protected areas.

Levels of service (LoS) benchmarks are used to set management standards across all protected areas in Queensland and define what good management looks like. In setting LoS for World Heritage protected areas, consideration is given to the World Heritage listing, importance and management needs of the key values that contribute to the OUV, legal obligations, and stakeholder partnerships. LoS guide effective day-to-day management of each protected area by defining the management standard to aim for and set key performance indicators to assess whether those standards have been met.

Statutory management plans and statements are co-designed with First Nations partners under the NCA to set formal strategic

management direction for key values and LoS. This ensures that the department's future management prioritises activities that will maintain or improve the condition of the OUV and other key values and deliver a high-level management standard consistent with the requirements of the World Heritage Convention. This includes:

- prioritising core planning for key World Heritage protected areas
- managing World Heritage listed protected areas will be managed in accordance with desired LoS standards
- co-designing management plans and statements under the NCA for key World Heritage protected areas with First Nations partners
- enhancing the condition of the OUV by providing management direction through management plans and statements and reviewing every 10 years.

### **Monitoring and research**

A monitoring program is essential for building knowledge, evaluating the effectiveness of management actions, and informing current and future management in World Heritage listed protected areas. Monitoring and research strategies set out requirements for monitoring programs including the QPWS Health Check program and identify opportunities for additional research and monitoring. Advisory committees provide guidance for establishing an appropriate monitoring program for World Heritage listed protected areas, particularly in relation to the assessment of OUV.

The health checks are simple assessment tools that allow rangers to regularly monitor the condition and trend of key values using indicators that can be assessed visually.



Having complete, reliable, and accessible monitoring data is fundamental to an ‘outcomes-based reporting’ approach to the condition and trend of key values. New research and monitoring projects identified during the development of the Monitoring and Research Strategy are outlined in the QPWS Research Prospectus database.

Should a decline in condition or significant emerging issue be noted through health checks or other monitoring programs, QPWS will consult with the Advisory Committee to determine an appropriate management response, such as:

- monitoring and research strategies will be developed for key World Heritage listed protected areas
- undertaking annual health checks on key World Heritage listed protected areas
- reflecting on the QPWS&P Research Prospectus new opportunities for detailed monitoring and research that focus on the values that contribute to the OUV.

## Evaluation

QPWS sets a high standard of governance and management for Queensland’s World Heritage areas, aligned with international obligations and to meet community expectations. LoS defines the appropriate management standard for each area and establishes KPIs for each of these standards. The evaluation program sets targets and thresholds to ensure that World Heritage areas meet or exceed these standards.

Park Review is a rapid management effectiveness evaluation program using key performance indicators that define what successful management looks like and how it is measured. Using a limited set of indicators, it is used to provide an annual snapshot of park condition and performance.

The comprehensive evaluation program is aligned with IUCN standards and assesses performance against good governance, sound design and planning, effective management and conservation outcomes, such as:

- establishing targets are established to ensure World Heritage listed protected areas meet or exceed desired LoS management standards
- undertaking the Park Review program annually on key World Heritage listed protected areas
- undertaking a comprehensive evaluation of management effectiveness every five years.

## Reporting

The QPWS reporting program establishes outcomes-based reporting on management effectiveness across all key World Heritage listed protected areas. This reporting is designed to align with IUCN reporting standards for World Heritage listed areas. Two reports will be developed to inform business decisions:

- Report cards—reporting annually on key World Heritage protected areas
- Comprehensive park reports—reporting five yearly on the State of each World Heritage area.

Results of evaluations feed into the suite of reporting mechanisms for monitoring World Heritage sites including:

- [Queensland State of the Environment Report](#)
- [IUCN World Heritage Outlook Reporting](#)
- [UNESCO Periodic Reporting](#)
- [National State of the Environment \(SoE\) Reporting.](#)

**Contact**

**w [www.parks.des.qld.gov.au](http://www.parks.des.qld.gov.au)**

**p 13 QGOV (13 74 68)**

**e [world.heritage@des.qld.gov.au](mailto:world.heritage@des.qld.gov.au)**

