



INFORMATION SHEET

World Heritage Reactive Monitoring Mission to the Great Barrier Reef report

The United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) World Heritage Centre has released the report from its Reactive Monitoring Mission (the Mission) to the Great Barrier Reef.

Recommendation to list the Reef as World Heritage in Danger

The report acknowledges Australia's unparalleled science and management of the Reef. It also recognises the outstanding work of the diverse stakeholders working to manage and conserve the Reef.

The report raised concerns about climate change, fisheries, and water quality in the Great Barrier Reef World Heritage Area.

The mission report concludes that, despite Australia's excellent management and unparalleled science, the Reef meets the criteria for inscription on the List of World Heritage in Danger, on the grounds of "potential danger".

Adding a property to the list of World Heritage in Danger aims to inform the international community of conditions that threaten the characteristics for which a property was inscribed as World Heritage, and to encourage corrective action.

Threats can be "ascertained" – specific and proven, imminent threats; or "potential" – when a property is faced with threats that could have negative effects on its World Heritage values.

The mission report is not a decision. The Reef has **NOT** been placed on the list of World Heritage in Danger.

Australia's response

The Australian Government does not support the recommendation to include the Reef on the list of World Heritage in Danger.

Australia knows that climate change is the greatest threat to the Reef but placing the Reef on the List of World Heritage In Danger is not the best way to address the problem. Practical action on climate change will better protect the Reef.

Australia is actively managing the threats to the Reef, including taking strong steps to decarbonise the economy.

Progress has been made in all areas raised in the report through new policy measures, strategies, and investments. These initiatives will take time to deliver results and demonstrate their effectiveness

The Reef is one of the best managed World Heritage properties globally, and its management is underpinned by strong science.

The Reef retains its resilience and integrity, and importantly, its Outstanding Universal Value.

Many Australians' livelihoods and regional economies are tied to a healthy Reef and the visitors it attracts. Inscription on the List of World Heritage in Danger could significantly jeopardise these economies and livelihoods.



The Reef

- The Great Barrier Reef is one of the most spectacular places on the planet. It is complex and unique and is of value to everyone – that’s why it is a World Heritage site. We encourage people to experience the Reef.
- The 2019 Outlook Report found that while the Reef is increasingly exposed to broadscale and cumulative impacts, the Reef’s Outstanding Universal Values remain whole and intact.
- The resilience seen across the Reef in the past year is very encouraging in the face of growing impacts from climate change.
- The AIMS Long-term Monitoring Program found coral cover in the northern and central parts of the Reef has increased over the past year and is the highest since records began.
- The increase in coral cover is mostly being driven by fast-growing Acropora corals, which are more fragile than slower growing corals, and susceptible to wave damage, coral bleaching and are the preferred prey for crown-of-thorns starfish.

Background: Mission and World Heritage Committee

UNESCO has been tracking the health and preservation of the Great Barrier Reef World Heritage Area since 2011. There have been several visits to Australia by UNESCO's experts to work with Australia to consider the property's conservation.

In July 2021, the World Heritage Committee considered the state of conservation of the Reef and decided not to place it on the list of World Heritage in Danger.

The Committee’s decision required Australia to submit a report on the state of conservation and invite international experts to undertake a “reactive monitoring mission”, which took place in March 2022.

The key purpose of the mission was to examine the effectiveness of the Reef 2050 Plan in managing the threats to the Reef.

Australia provided feedback on the experts’ draft report, after receiving it for review in late July. We also provided information on policy changes and new initiatives since March 2022.

Only the World Heritage Committee can decide to place a property on the list.

The Reef’s state of conservation will be considered at the 45th session of the World Heritage Committee. The date for this meeting has not yet been set.

The mission report will be one source of information to inform the Committee about the state of conservation of the Reef.

Further information about what the Australian and Queensland governments have done to protect the Reef since the mission in March will also be considered.

There are two advisory bodies to the World Heritage Committee. They will prepare a draft decision for the Committee to consider, which would be released publicly around six weeks before the meeting.

Sites on the List of World Heritage in Danger retain their Outstanding Universal Value. The OUV is considered to be under threat.

The Reef Authority's role

The Reef Authority is the lead management agency for the Great Barrier Reef Marine Park. Our role in responding to the World Heritage Committee’s concerns is to provide expert advice on the state of the Reef and its management.

- About 99 per cent of the Great Barrier Reef World Heritage Area is within the Great Barrier Reef Marine Park. The remaining one per cent includes islands, waters, and intertidal areas subject to Queensland legislation.