

**THE HON TANYA PLIBERSEK MP**

MINISTER FOR THE ENVIRONMENT AND WATER

Ministerial Statement of Expectations to the Great Barrier Reef Marine Park Authority**Issued by The Hon Tanya Plibersek MP on 19 December 2024**

This Statement of Expectations outlines my expectations, as the Minister for the Environment and Water, for the Great Barrier Reef Marine Park Authority's (Reef Authority) organisational performance as it relates to achieving its regulatory objectives, carrying out its regulatory functions, and exercising its powers.

Overview

This Statement of Expectations forms part of the Australian Government's commitment to good and effective corporate governance and acknowledges the performance of regulatory functions as guided by the *Public Governance, Performance and Accountability Act 2013* (PGPA Act). This is complemented by the APS Reform Agenda's four priorities: that the APS embodies integrity; puts people and business at the centre; operates as a model employer; and has the capability to do its job well.

The Australian Government is committed to a nature-positive approach to better protect, restore and manage our natural environment for the benefit of all Australians. The Reef Authority's world leading adaptive management of the Great Barrier Reef (Reef), is essential to maintaining the Outstanding Universal Value of this World Heritage listed icon.

The Reef Authority, as the lead managers of the Reef and through the *Great Barrier Reef Marine Park Act 1975* (Marine Park Act), plays a critical role in ensuring the long-term protection and conservation of the environment, biodiversity, and heritage values of the Region.

I expect the Reef Authority to deliver on other objects of the Marine Park Act and carry out its functions in accordance with other relevant environmental policy and legislation. This includes ensuring ecologically sustainable use of the Great Barrier Reef Region (Region), encouraging engagement in the protection and management of the Region, and assisting to meet Australia's international responsibilities for World Heritage.

Administration of regulatory functions

This Statement covers the following regulatory functions undertaken by the Reef Authority:

- *Great Barrier Reef Marine Park Act 1975*
- *Great Barrier Reef Marine Park Regulations 1999*
- *Great Barrier Reef Marine Park (Environmental Management Change-Excise) Act 1993*
- *Great Barrier Reef Marine Park (Environmental Management Charge-General) Act 1993*
- *Great Barrier Reef Marine Park Zoning Plan 2003*
- Plans of Management
 - Cairns Area Plan of Management 1998
 - Hinchinbrook Plan of Management 2004
 - Whitsundays Plan of Management 1998
 - Shoalwater Bay (Dugong) Plan of Management 1997

While recognising the independence of the Chief Executive Officer, as the Accountable Authority of the Reef Authority, I expect the agency to fulfil these regulatory functions in accordance with the requirements outlined in the Regulator Performance Resource Management Guide (RMG 128). This includes embedding the following best practice principles into regulatory functions and incorporating regulatory performance reporting into the agency's corporate plan and annual report, as required under the PGPA Act and the *Public Governance, Performance and Accountability Rule 2014* (PGPA Rule).

- **Continuous improvement and building trust:** regulators adopt a whole-of-system perspective, continuously improving performance, capability, and culture to build trust and confidence in Australia's regulatory settings.
- **Risk based and data-driven:** regulators manage risks proportionately, maintain essential safeguards, minimise regulatory burden, and leverage data and digital technology to support those they regulate to comply and grow.
- **Collaboration and engagement:** regulators are transparent and responsive communicators, implementing regulations in a modern and collaborative way.

My expectations are further elaborated below.

Adaptive Management

I expect the Reef Authority to use the adaptive management capabilities set out in its regulatory powers to address threats to the Reef, including being responsive to the immediate effects of climate change. This includes:

- Continuing to rely on the latest and best available science to inform rapid management responses to coral bleaching events and the impacts of storm events, including regulatory responses.
- Working closely with the science and research community to assess, trial and facilitate emerging restoration and adaptation actions to support reef ecosystem resilience to the impacts of climate change.

Continuous improvement, building trust, collaboration and engagement

The Government expects all regulators to commit to continuous improvement in their processes, governance and capabilities, and identify and develop organisational values and a positive culture that supports best practice.

This expectation extends to broader organisational performance and values as these are essential to building trust in the administration of regulatory functions. I expect the Reef Authority to deliver organisational improvement and build trust by:

- Ensuring it attracts and retains the best and brightest people so it can continue to fulfill its important national role.
- Ensuring the Reef Authority meets its obligations under the Public Service Act and APS values.
- Working collaboratively across government in the delivery of its functions.
- Managing expenditure to ensure financial sustainability.
- Ensuring expenditure is managed efficiently, effectively and economically in accordance with finance law (including but not limited to the PGPA) and the Commonwealth resource management framework.
- Engaging with stakeholders in a transparent, meaningful and timely way.
- Being responsive to feedback in the delivery of its functions.

Whole-of-system regulatory stewardship

I expect the Reef Authority to engage closely and collaboratively across the Australian Government, provide technical and policy guidance, and support the broader portfolio and other relevant portfolios where required. This includes supporting the Government's policy objectives and priorities, including the environmental reform agenda and commitment to strong climate action.

I expect the Reef Authority to build and maintain trust with the Australian Government, the Australian community, and the international community – both in its role of protecting and managing the Reef and in meeting Australia's World Heritage responsibilities.

Traditional Owners have close and enduring connections to the Reef, and I expect the Reef Authority will continue to support sea country management and Traditional Owner aspirations.

The Reef Authority will continue to work alongside government partners, Reef Traditional Owners, and other stakeholders to implement the Australian and Queensland government's Reef 2050 Long-Term Sustainability Plan.

I expect the Reef Authority to continue to collaborate with the Queensland Government, as outlined in the Great Barrier Reef Intergovernmental Agreement, and in complementary regulatory arrangements to improve the effectiveness and delivery of joint Reef management programs.

Relationship with Minister

The Reef Authority plays an essential role in ensuring the Australian Government and I are well-placed to respond promptly to challenges and opportunities arising from the administration of its regulatory functions. Accordingly, I expect the Reef Authority to provide accurate and timely technical and policy advice on significant issues relating to existing regulatory functions and regulatory reforms.

Significant issues include matters where the government is accountable in Parliament, external environmental factors influencing the state of the Reef, including climate change, material operational or budgetary issues, and policy change or matters that represent high reputational risk to the Reef Authority.

As the responsible Minister, I will provide an enabling environment for the Reef Authority to consistently implement best regulatory practice by ensuring you are well informed of the Australian Government's policy direction and priorities.

Transparency

I ask that this statement and your response be made available on the Reef Authority's website.