

CROWN-OF-THORNS STARFISH CONTROL PROGRAM

The Crown-of-thorns Starfish (COTS) Control Program delivers a targetable, adaptive, scalable and proven effective coral protection action that supports the resilience of the Great Barrier Reef.

Vessels with highly-skilled dive teams are strategically deployed across the Great Barrier Reef to survey more than 200 reefs annually and reduce numbers of the coral-eating starfish to sustainable levels via manual culling.

Since 2012, the Program has delivered more than 155,000 diver hours, culled over 1.4 million starfish, and suppressed outbreaks across 452 reefs – protecting coral from COTS predation across more than 832,000 ha of Reef habitat.

During the 2024-2025 financial year, six (6) Program vessels collectively delivered 1,247 on-water days and almost 20,000 diver hours to action 234 reefs for surveillance and culling where required. Over 18,000 manta tow surveys and 3,448 cull dives were deployed across more than 56,000 ha of Reef habitat. More than

73,000 COTS were culled, and sustainable densities were achieved at 84 per cent of actioned cull sites.

The Program currently contracts four small to medium enterprises, including one Indigenous business, to deliver on-water operations, providing direct employment for more than 100 people in regional Queensland.

Strengthening Reef resilience through evidence-based management actions, including the COTS Control Program is vital as climate change pressures on the ecosystem amplify.

All Program contracts support the Australian Government's Indigenous Procurement Policy and the Net Zero Emissions by 2030 Strategy.



Scan the QR code for more
information on the Crown-of-thorns
Starfish Control Program.

