

Sea Country connections



Traditional Owners Looking After Sea Country Today

Caring for and protecting sea country

Traditional Owners have always had a unique respect for their land and sea country, recognising the importance of having a minimal impact on the environment in which they live, fish and hunt. This cultural tradition continues today with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples actively caring for their sea country, to leave a legacy for future generations to practice age old traditions and customs as part of their culture.

Traditional Owners have a wealth of knowledge about the Great Barrier Reef, which has been passed down from generation to generation, for thousands of years. This knowledge includes complex information about marine and coastal ecosystems, and practices for their sustainable use, with an overarching responsibility to protect and care for their sea country.

Today Traditional Owners continue to play an important role in caring for their sea country through:

- Turtle, dugong and seagrass monitoring programs
- Reporting sick, stranded and injured animals
- Maintaining cultural heritage sites
- Managing sustainable take of culturally significant animals
- Weed control programs
- Feral animal control programs
- Co-management arrangements with government agencies
- Formal agreements developed with Traditional Owners to ensure marine resources are being used sustainably



Artworks, such as this bark painting with dugong, illustrate Traditional Owner's connection to the sea and its creatures.

“ The land and the seas, the resources we take from it and what we give back to it, how we regulate it, the practice of hunting, the keeping of our laws, the rights of passage over all areas of country, these are customs which have continued over countless generations. It is our obligations and the right of our people to continue living on the land and sea. We have withstood the tests of time, invasion, drought and change, and the tides of time have not washed away our sovereign rights over country which we lawfully inherit from our forefathers. ”

Mervyn Jukarn Johnson, from Traditional Owner aspirations towards co-operative management of the Great Barrier Reef



Today Traditional Owners work closely with government agencies, including the Great Barrier Reef Marine Park Authority, to protect and care for their sea country.

REEF Beat

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