



NSW Marine Estate Community Wellbeing Report

# Connections to Sea Country

## Aboriginal People of Coastal NSW Wave 1

Prepared by NSW Department of Primary Industries and Ipsos ATSIURU  
November 2022

Ipsos reference: 20-008762-01



Department of  
Primary Industries



**GAME CHANGERS**



DPI and Ipsos ATSIURU (2022). NSW marine estate community wellbeing report. Connections to Sea Country – Aboriginal people of coastal NSW (Wave 1).

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Contacts:

NSW Department of Primary Industries

**BELINDA CURLEY** [belinda.curley@dpi.nsw.gov.au](mailto:belinda.curley@dpi.nsw.gov.au)

**NATALIE GOLLAN** [natalie.gollan@dpi.nsw.gov.au](mailto:natalie.gollan@dpi.nsw.gov.au)

Ipsos Public Affairs

**STUART CLARK** [stuart.clark@ipsos.com](mailto:stuart.clark@ipsos.com)

**OLIVIA MCDONALD** [olivia.mcdonald@ipsos.com](mailto:olivia.mcdonald@ipsos.com)

Ipsos ATSIURU

**SHARON BARNES** [sharon.barnes@ipsos.com](mailto:sharon.barnes@ipsos.com)

**MICHAEL BARNES** [michael.barnes@ipsos.com](mailto:michael.barnes@ipsos.com)

Level 2, 51 Berry Street, North Sydney NSW 2060

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# Executive summary

# Executive summary

## Research context

### Background

The Marine Estate Management Strategy (the Strategy) provides the overarching framework for coordinated management of the marine estate to deliver its vision for ‘a healthy coast and sea, managed for the greatest wellbeing of the community, now and into the future’. Progress towards implementing the Strategy and delivering the vision will be measured and reported through the Marine Integrated Monitoring Program (MIMP).

There is currently no systematic monitoring of the social, cultural and economic (or human) dimensions of the NSW marine estate to meet the requirements of the MIMP. This lack of data was identified by the statewide Threat and Risk Assessment as a key threat and knowledge gap. In order to address this, a body of research was undertaken with 4 key audiences: coastal residents, coastal visitors, youth (aged 14–17 years) and Aboriginal people.

The report presents the established methodology and the findings from the survey of NSW Coastal Aboriginal people, focusing on connections to Sea Country.

### Objectives

The key objectives of this research were as follows:

- develop a methodology to collect long-term data for Aboriginal peoples of coastal NSW (hereafter Aboriginal peoples) that allows for robust analysis of spatial and temporal trends in community wellbeing
- collect baseline data for Aboriginal peoples on impacts to their cultural connection to compare with future survey waves
- collect baseline data against a suite of relevant outcome indicators identified in the [NSW Marine Estate Integrated Monitoring and Evaluation Framework](#)<sup>1</sup>
- fill key cultural knowledge gaps identified in the statewide Threat and Risk Assessment.

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<sup>1</sup> Report - Integrated monitoring and evaluation framework for the Marine Integrated Monitoring Program (MIMP), Aither, 2019. [https://www.marine.nsw.gov.au/data/assets/pdf\\_file/0004/1193296/MIMP-Framework.pdf](https://www.marine.nsw.gov.au/data/assets/pdf_file/0004/1193296/MIMP-Framework.pdf).

## Methodology

The Sea Country survey was conducted by the Ipsos Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Research Unit (ATSIRU) and Ipsos Public Affairs.

Ipsos ATSIIRU's work is conducted to work 'with' and 'as' Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander people, and to not undertake research or evaluations 'on' and 'for' Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander people.

A face-to-face survey 40 minutes in length was developed by NSW Department of Primary Industries (DPI), Ipsos ATSIIRU, and Ipsos Public Affairs.

Ipsos ATSIIRU employed, trained, mentored and supported 22 local Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander researchers across 11 coastal locations to promote and conduct the Sea Country survey. Recruitment of Aboriginal people for the face-to-face survey was conducted in person by the local researchers within the communities.

- Due to COVID-19 restrictions and other factors, fieldwork was conducted using a staggered approach between the periods of Wednesday 5 May 2021 to Sunday 4 July 2021 and Thursday 14 October 2021 to Sunday 9 January 2022.

In line with the Guidelines for Ethical Research in Australian Indigenous Studies, ethical approval was sought and received from the Australian Institute of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Studies (AIATSIS) as needed throughout fieldwork.

An overall sample size of  $n = 600$  was a key target. Location quotas were applied to the sample. Preferred gender and age quotas were applied to the sample at each location, to ensure the sample was not skewed towards a particular age or gender.

The final sample size of Aboriginal peoples ( $n = 562$ ) enabled subgroup analysis and reporting by Sea Country area and age.

Only instances where relevant statistically significant differences were detected are mentioned in the report.

Further detail of the research methodology is available in Section 1.3.

## Findings

### Interactions with Sea Country

The research showed that just under half (48%) of Aboriginal people visited their local Sea Country at least once a week to undertake cultural activities or traditions.

The most popular engagement with Sea Country was for recreation (reported by 75% of Aboriginal people), followed by hook and line fishing (61%) and camping/staying and being on Sea Country (57%). Many also

participated in caring for Sea Country (45%) and hand gathering of food from shorelines (41%). Trapping (31%) and diving to catch food (30%) were undertaken by a smaller proportion of the community.

At a statewide level, approximately 9 in 10 (91%) Aboriginal people participated in at least one cultural activity or tradition on Sea Country in the past 12 months. The 3 most commonly undertaken activities were cultural celebrations (69%), funerals or sorry business (56%) and having passed on or received cultural knowledge (45%).

## Importance of Sea Country for quality of life

Given the high degree of cultural connection to the coast, it is unsurprising that participants also rated Sea Country as an extremely important factor in contributing to their quality of life. The overall importance of the NSW coast to quality of life was rated 9.3 on a scale from 0 to 10, with nearly 4 in 5 (79%) indicating that it is very important (i.e. a score of 10).

When asked to explain the ways in which Sea Country contributes to their quality of life, the most frequently mentioned contributing factors were as a source of food (22%), cultural connection (16%) and a conduit for mental and emotional health (16%). The verbatim quotes below illustrate the contribution of Sea Country to Aboriginal peoples' wellbeing:

*"To be out on Country is very important to my quality of life. I have grown up on Sea Country my whole life. It is a part of who I am. It helps my health, mental health and wellbeing to stay culturally connected to mother earth and passing on knowledge to my kids through being able to take them out on Country. Showing and sharing stories and teaching them culture is uplifting."*

*"The connection to Sea Country is my identity. It's a part of me, just like everything else in our ecosystem, we are all connected. It provides a sense of healing and cleansing for the soul."*

*"I have always lived near the beach. The sound of the ocean helps soothe my soul. I take my children swimming at the beach and in the river. We go fishing. I share my culture with my children. Sea Country contributes greatly to my quality of life."*

The importance of connection to Sea Country is further emphasised by the level of contribution it makes to the social, cultural and spiritual aspects of Aboriginal peoples' lives. They rated Sea Country as most important in contributing to their ability to spend time with family and community (a mean score of 9.4 on a scale from 0 to 10), their cultural identity (9.3), and their emotional and mental health (9.1). Sea Country's contribution to spirituality (8.9), physical health (8.9), nutritional needs (8.6) and cost of living (8.3) were rated slightly lower, but still highly important.

## Cultural connections to Sea Country

Aboriginal people reported specific cultural connections and relationships with a wide diversity of Sea Country fish and animals. This included fishes (e.g. bream, flathead, mullet, salmon, sharks; 10%), dolphins and whales (12%), birds (e.g. sea eagle, osprey, black duck, black swan; 10%) and invertebrates (e.g. oysters, abalone, pipis,

6%). Others articulated a connection to all Sea Country wildlife and/or those that inhabit a particular area of Country.

The following verbatim quotes express Aboriginal peoples' connections and relationships to animals in more detail:

*"I am a saltwater woman and have an incredibly strong relationship with the sea and coastal area. My totem is the osprey, but we care for and respect all things from the ocean and associated with the area."  
"I have a strong connection culturally to the land and sea. My family have lived off the sea for generations, fishing, diving, collecting bush foods and medicines. My lore totem is the salmon, so I have a strong connection to that sea animal, which I have to protect and honour."*

Connections or relationships with particular places on Sea Country were also diverse. About one in 5 (22%) said that they were most connected to their own cultural Nation's Sea Country, 17% to a specific area within their Nation (e.g. Ballina), 9% to specific sites such as a headland, creek or beach, and 9% to areas with family or traditional connections. One in 20 (6%) indicated a connection to all Sea Country.

The following verbatim quotes describe Aboriginal peoples' connections and relationships to places in more detail:

*"Mainly along the Bundjalung coastal line, as my ancestors had walked for thousands of years practising cultural connections."  
"My family, my ancestors have lived in Lapa/Yarra Bay all my life and generations before me. The beach and ocean is my spiritual home, and always will be. I hold my local beach close to my heart, as do my kids."*

## Caring for Sea Country

Aboriginal people agreed that the health of Sea Country is critical to protecting Aboriginal cultures and traditions, with an average score of 9.2 on a scale from 0 to 10. Nearly 4 in 5 (79%) strongly agreed (i.e. a score of 10).

There was also a strong feeling of personal responsibility, with 73% agreeing strongly they have cultural responsibilities to care for Sea Country (mean score of 8.8).

When asked what caring for Sea Country means to them, Aboriginal people provided a range of different responses. Keeping it clean (19%) was the most common, along with taking care of or protecting Sea Country in general (19%). The next 3 most common responses highlight the cultural significance of Sea Country: it means everything/a lot (16%), preservation for future generations (15%), and importance to culture (12%).

The following verbatim quotes describe what caring for Sea Country means to Aboriginal peoples in more detail:

*"It's very important for Aboriginal people. We look after the Country and the Country looks after us."*

*“Looking after the waterways and land so our future generations can enjoy the land and have cultural connections.”*

*“Ensuring that all living things in Sea Country, including people, are well and healthy and that we can hunt, gather, tell stories, sing and dance for Sea Country so that it connects with us and we connect with it and care for it.”*

## Community perceptions of environmental health

Just over three-quarters of Aboriginal people reported being at least moderately concerned about global environmental problems (77%) and environmental problems that impact the way they use and value Sea Country (76%). More than half were extremely concerned about each of these issues.

Less than half (44%) consider that Sea Country in their local area is currently in good health. Among those who felt that Sea Country was in good health, the main reasons for the view were that it is clean or has no rubbish (20%), there is abundant seafood (14%), and that it is maintained and looked after by community (13%).

Among the 22% who rated the health of Sea Country in their local area as poor, pollution was the top reason (28%), followed by less food/people taking too much (27%), and litter/rubbish (22%). Other reasons included overdevelopment/land clearing, flooding and runoff, not maintained or cared for, over population, and not enough engagement around management or use of cultural knowledge.

## Impact of key threats on cultural connections with Sea Country

Aboriginal people were asked to rate the impact of 11 key threats on their cultural connections to Sea Country. These related to climate change, damage to or loss of habitats, poor water quality, reduction in abundance of seafood, seafood contamination, decline in totemic or culturally significant wildlife, illegal activities, limited or lack of access to culturally significant sites and resources due to management, and overcrowding.

At a statewide level, all threats were perceived to have a major impact on cultural connections, with average impact scores ranging between 7.4 and 8.2 (on a scale of 0–10).

Further, 43–52% rated the threats as having a severe impact (i.e. score of 10) on cultural connections.

Several themes emerged concerning how the threats had impacted Aboriginal people’s connections with Sea Country. These included impacts to emotional, mental and spiritual health; cultural identity; cultural practices such as dancing and other forms of connection with Sea Country; traditional food collection practices; and Aboriginal people’s ability to pass down traditional teachings to future generations.

The following verbatim quotes describe aspects of these impacts in more detail:

*“Poor water quality leads to extinction of animals. As an Aboriginal person, of course I am concerned about all animals, all of the environment. Destroy the waterways and the water quality and the culture is being destroyed.”*

*“Due to overfishing, there is less resources for us to culturally fish and access, thus reducing our cultural activities.”*

*“Any loss of natural habitats ruins Country therefore again making it harder for us to connect with Country. Those old people and spirits may no longer be there.”*

*“All Sea Country wildlife is important to us. We dance and sing for these animals. So, decline in wildlife impacts us mentally.”*

*“Climate change is ruining the environment for the next generations. This impacts on how we can teach the young ones about the environment.”*

*“Sea levels rising can ruin and cover our rock engraving sites, impacting our ability to visit those places. Storm surges and climate change also cause erosion on sandstone where most of our sites are.”*

*“Not being able to visit our sites prevents us from learning our stories and ultimately stops us from connecting with our Culture.”*

## **Perceptions of/attitudes to Sea Country management**

Overall, Aboriginal people were dissatisfied with management of Sea Country, with at least one in 5 (20%) reporting they were ‘not satisfied at all’ (a score of 0 out of 10). Aboriginal people were mostly dissatisfied with the statement that current rules around Sea Country recognise Aboriginal cultural rights (3.7). A similar level of dissatisfaction was also reported for the statement that current rules allow me to easily undertake cultural activities and traditions (3.9).

Reasons identified by Aboriginal people for their dissatisfaction with Sea Country management included overdevelopment and destruction of sites on land due to low understanding of the importance of cultural sites and Sea Country among non-Aboriginal people, fears of being fined or being unable to access areas due to restrictions, and lack of ability to pass on cultural knowledge and practices.

Overall, Aboriginal people were dissatisfied with engagement and communication from NSW Government agencies on how their local Sea Country is managed. Across the statements measured, all mean scores lay between 3.3 and 3.7 on a scale from 0 to 10, and at least 23% indicated they were ‘not at all satisfied’ (a score of 0 out of 10).

Aboriginal people were least satisfied with the statement that information about how and why decisions are made is easy to find (3.3). A similar level of dissatisfaction was also reported for the statement that information about how and why decisions are made is easy to understand (3.4). Around one in 10 (11%) Aboriginal people reported that they have been consulted by the NSW Government to talk about management of Sea Country. The majority of people reported that they have not been consulted (75%).

Overall, Aboriginal people disagreed that there are opportunities related to Sea Country, such as training, employment and joint management. Across the statements measured, all mean scores lay between 3.7 and 4.0 on a scale from 0 to 10, and at least 22% indicated they ‘strongly disagreed’ (a score of 0 out of 10).

Levels of disagreement were highest with the statement that there are opportunities for developing Aboriginal fishing and aquaculture interests (3.7), in addition to opportunities for outright (3.7) or joint (3.8) management of Sea Country by Aboriginal people.

## **Employment related to Sea Country**

The vast majority of Aboriginal people (87%) reported that they do not receive income from work that relates to Sea Country. Just 5% reported that they did receive income from this source.

Among those who have received an income, more than one in 4 (29%) reported that they received it from work in Sea Country management or research (e.g. for government, universities or other organisations). One in 5 received it for work in cultural tourism (21%), Sea Country education (18%) or arts and crafts made from Sea Country resources or inspired by Sea Country (also 18%). More than half were in full-time employment (57%). Approximately one in 10 (11%) were employed part-time, and 18% were casual.

## **Involvement with and interest in government-led Sea Country programs**

At a statewide level, one in 7 (14%) had been involved in programs related to caring for Sea Country (e.g. clean ups, replanting native flora, and bird monitoring) and one in 10 (10%) had been involved in Sea Country education and awareness programs.

Around half indicated that they were interested in being involved with most of these government programs in the future. Interest was highest for Sea Country education and awareness programs (55%), followed by caring for Sea Country (54%) and Sea Country training (52%). Only 15% were not interested in being involved in any of the government programs.

## **Demographic differences**

The research also indicated that some of the results discussed differ according to age and location (place of residence on the NSW coast). While these differences are highlighted throughout the report, further research would be required to verify their accuracy. This particularly relates to location differences where limited sample sizes could be obtained.



# Research context

# 1 Research context

## 1.1 Background

The NSW marine estate includes the state's coastal waters out to 3 nautical miles. It includes estuaries, coastal lakes and lagoons, coastal wetlands and adjacent coastal lands influenced by oceanic processes, including beaches, dunes, headlands and rock platforms. The NSW community derives social, cultural and economic benefits from the marine estate, underpinned by good water quality, healthy habitats and diverse and abundant marine life.

A statewide Threat and Risk Assessment was undertaken in 2017 to identify and prioritise the threats to community benefits and environmental assets.

The outcomes of the TARA informed the development of the [NSW Marine Estate Management Strategy 2018-2028](#). The Strategy provides the overarching framework for reformed and coordinated management of the marine estate to deliver its vision for 'a healthy coast and sea, managed for the greatest wellbeing of the community, now and into the future'.

Progress towards implementing and delivering the vision of the Strategy will be measured and reported through the Marine Integrated Monitoring Program (MIMP).

The primary objectives of the MIMP are to:

- 1) monitor the condition and trend of environmental assets and community benefits to inform a 5-year health check
- 2) evaluate the effectiveness of management initiatives and actions that aim to reduce priority threats and risks
- 3) fill knowledge gaps that were identified as part of the statewide TARA process.

There is currently no systematic monitoring of the social, cultural and economic (or human) dimensions of the NSW marine estate to meet the requirements of the MIMP. A lack of data for these dimensions was considered as a key threat and knowledge gap in the statewide TARA.

A body of research was undertaken to address this knowledge gap, consisting of a NSW Coastal Residents survey, a NSW Coastal Visitors survey, a survey of NSW Coastal Aboriginal people and a survey of NSW Coastal Residents aged 14–17 years.

The report will present the established methodology and the findings from the survey of NSW Coastal Aboriginal people, focusing on connections to Sea Country. 'Sea Country' is a term used by Aboriginal peoples to describe areas associated with the sea or saltwater and includes islands, beaches, headlands, rocky shores, the ocean and estuaries.

## 1.2 Objectives

The overall aim of this survey was to improve understanding of the ways Aboriginal peoples of coastal NSW value and culturally connect to Sea Country, and impacts to these connections.

The survey also provides information to track progress in achieving cultural outcomes related to the Strategy to inform decision-making.

The key objectives of this research were as follows:

- develop a methodology to collect long-term data for Aboriginal peoples of coastal NSW (hereafter Aboriginal people or Aboriginal peoples) that allows for robust analysis of spatial and temporal trends in community wellbeing
- collect baseline data for Aboriginal peoples on impacts to their cultural connection to compare with future survey waves
- collect baseline data against a suite of relevant outcome indicators identified in the [NSW Marine Estate Integrated Monitoring and Evaluation Framework](#)<sup>2</sup>
- fill key cultural knowledge gaps identified in the statewide Threat and Risk Assessment.

## 1.3 Methodology

The fieldwork approach was designed to provide a ‘future proof’ survey instrument that facilitates the collection of robust and comparable data in future waves and to ensure the research was inclusive of different Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities. For these reasons, a face-to-face survey methodology was the most suitable approach to the research.

A survey of 40 minutes in length was co-developed by NSW DPI, Ipsos ATSIIRU and Ipsos Public Affairs.

Due to COVID-19 restrictions and other factors, fieldwork was conducted in stages over the periods of Wednesday 5 May 2021 to Sunday 4 July 2021 and Thursday 14 October 2021 to Sunday 9 January 2022. Ethical approval was sought and received from AIATSIS.

Location quotas were applied to the sample. Preferred gender and age quotas were applied to the sample at each location to ensure the sample was not skewed towards a particular age or gender. An overall sample size of n = 600 was a key target, which assumed no more than n = 75 and no fewer than n = 30 per location, with each of the 11 locations equating to around 9–10% of the overall sample.

Ipsos ATSIIRU employed, trained, mentored and supported 22 local Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander researchers across the 11 locations to promote and conduct the Sea Country survey. All participants who

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<sup>2</sup> Report - Integrated monitoring and evaluation framework for the Marine Integrated Monitoring Program (MIMP), Aither, 2019. [https://www.marine.nsw.gov.au/data/assets/pdf\\_file/0004/1193296/MIMP-Framework.pdf](https://www.marine.nsw.gov.au/data/assets/pdf_file/0004/1193296/MIMP-Framework.pdf).

completed the survey were given a \$25 EFTPOS card for their participation, knowledge and time. The local researchers also had a list of support services in case any participants required assistance.

The total sample size for the Sea Country survey was n = 562. This sample size enabled subgroup analysis and reporting for sampling locations and by age groups.

### **1.3.1 Ipsos Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Research Unit (ATSIRU)**

Fieldwork for the Sea Country survey was co-ordinated by the Ipsos ATSIRU and Ipsos Public Affairs.

Ipsos ATSIRU was created in 2016. Their work within Australia is done so that Ipsos ATSIRU work ‘with’ and ‘as’ Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander peoples and to not conduct research or evaluations ‘on’ and ‘for’ Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander peoples.

More information about Ipsos ATSIRU is available at <https://www.ipsos.com/en-au/atsiru>.

### **1.3.2 Ethical approval of research**

All research projects that involve Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples require ethical clearance approval before the project begins. This provides Australian Indigenous communities who are involved in the research with assurance that their rights, culture and heritage are respected, that they understand the aims and methods of the research, and that they will share in the results of this work. This is a requirement of the [Guidelines for ethical research in Australian Indigenous studies](#) (GERAIS), which embody the best standards of ethical research and human rights<sup>3</sup>.

A requirement under the AIATSIS Ethical Guidelines is to ensure that ‘Community Support’ has been received from each of the communities that will participate in the project. To be able to obtain this ‘Community Support’, community consultations must be conducted to ensure that Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples are fully informed of the project and agree to the project being conducted in their community.

Ipsos ATSIRU liaised via email with Local Aboriginal Land Councils and other contacts to request letters of support for the Ethics application. However, due to the COVID-19 pandemic, Ipsos ATSIRU was not able to conduct their normal process of face-to-face consultation with each of the communities.

However, once restrictions were lifted and it was possible to travel to these sites, face-to-face community engagement was conducted with some communities to discuss the project and obtain the required community letters of support in person.

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<sup>3</sup><https://aiatsis.gov.au/research/ethical-research/application-process>

For the Sea Country survey, ethical approval was sought and received from AIATSIS in October 2020, April 2021 and again in October 2021 to account for changes to locations, the questionnaire and fieldwork delays due to COVID-19.

### 1.3.3 Questionnaire development

A face-to-face survey of 40 minutes in length was developed by the NSW DPI, Ipsos ATSIU and Ipsos Public Affairs.

Content for the survey was drafted by DPI and was based on previous work conducted by the Marine Estate Management Authority, including published reviews of benefits and threats to Aboriginal peoples' connections with Sea Country in NSW, and specific concerns raised by Aboriginal community representatives at engagement workshops for the NSW Threat and Risk Assessment<sup>4 5 6 7</sup>. Survey content was finalised through review and discussion with the MIMP cultural technical working group and Marine Estate Management Authority (MEMA) staff with relevant cultural expertise.

Questions and response options were designed to allow for the calculation of means and standard errors (where appropriate) and considered the spatial and temporal scales in which questions were posed (e.g. 'in your local area', 'in the last 12 months') to accurately reflect community experiences. This allows the priority indicators to be tracked over time in a user-friendly manner; for example, the variation of a mean score over time is a simple concept to understand.

No questions were compulsory (except location and consent), and participants could withdraw at any time from the survey.

A copy of the final questionnaire is included in Appendix B: Questionnaire.

#### Scale logic

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<sup>4</sup> [Sea countries of New South Wales: a benefits and threats analysis of Aboriginal people's connections with the marine estate \(PDF, 13035.55 KB\)](#) (Feary, 2015)

<sup>5</sup> [Peer review of 'Sea countries of New South Wales: a benefits and threats analysis of Aboriginal people's connections with the marine estate' \(PDF, 242.54 KB\)](#) (Schnierer, 2015)

<sup>6</sup> [NSW Marine Estate Threat and Risk Assessment Final Report \(PDF, 5144.96 KB\)](#) (BMT WBM, 2017)

<sup>7</sup> [Draft statewide threat and risk assessment – Aboriginal workshop report \(PDF, 1790.26 KB\)](#) (Origin Communications Australia, 2017)

In the survey, different ratings scales were used for different types of questions.

An 11-point scale is particularly useful for ratings questions where it is beneficial to have a greater degree of sensitivity and variability within responses than is achieved in a 5-point or 7-point rating scale.

5-point and 7-point scales were used for some questions, as they reduce burden on participants. They are appropriate when there is typically variation found across response options and provide enough detail to determine levels of variability within a sample.

In addition to the size of the scale, the type of data generated was also a key consideration. Numerical scales allowed for the calculation of mean scores and standard errors providing greater insight than could be deduced from categorical scales.

### 1.3.4 Sampling approach

#### Location quota

Location quotas were applied to the sample. Preferred gender and age quotas were applied for each location to ensure the sample was not skewed towards a particular age or gender. However, due to the small sample size in each location, and the low incidence of the survey's target population, strict quotas on gender and age were not applied.

Initial quota targets, as agreed prior to the COVID-19 pandemic, had to be revised due to the face-to-face nature of the research. Best efforts were made to ensure at least 30 interviews (surveys) were completed in each of the 11 locations, to allow subgroup analysis and significance testing to be conducted for all locations.

The sample frame was structured into 11 locations to reflect the following Aboriginal Nations along the NSW coast:

- Ballina (Bundjalung)
- Coffs Harbour (Gumbaynggirr)
- Kempsey (Dainggatti)
- Port Macquarie (Biripi)
- Port Stephens (Worimi)
- Newcastle (Awabakal/Darkinjung)
- Gosford (Kuring-gai)
- La Perouse (Eora)
- Wollongong (Tharawal)
- Moruya (Yuin)
- Eden (Yuin).

An overall sample size of  $n = 600$  was a key target, which assumed no more than  $n = 75$  and no less than  $n = 30$  participants per location, with each of the 11 locations equating to around 9%–10% of the overall sample.

### Recruitment of participants

Recruitment of Aboriginal people for the face-to-face survey was conducted in person by the local Ipsos ATSIRO researchers within the communities.

To qualify for the Sea Country survey an Aboriginal person had to:

- be at least 18 years old
- reside in one of the 11 Coastal Aboriginal Communities in NSW where support to participate in the survey was received
- identify as being an Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander person.

All participants who completed the survey were given a \$25 EFTPOS card for their participation, knowledge and time. The local researchers also had a list of support services if any participants required assistance.

Prior to participation, all participants were given an information sheet and asked to sign a hard copy consent form, which they were also given a copy of by a local researcher. A copy of the information sheet is available in Appendix C: Participant information sheet, and a copy of the consent form is available in Appendix D: Participant consent form.

## 1.3.5 Survey implementation

### Survey programming and testing

Following approval of the final questionnaire, the survey was programmed online by the Ipsos data processing team. The survey was tested to ensure all skip instructions, screening questions and question wording had been implemented correctly.

The questions were all programmed to be non-mandatory, and participants could withdraw at any time from the survey. The final survey link was then made available to the interviewers, allowing them to begin fieldwork.

### Recruitment and training of local Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander researchers

Ipsos ATSIRO employed, trained, mentored and supported 22 local Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander researchers across the 11 locations to promote and conduct the Sea Country survey.

Ipsos ATSIRO developed a recruitment flyer that was dispersed throughout the communities for local Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander researchers. In order to be selected as a researcher, a range of criteria had to be met, for example, being able to demonstrate that they are accepted as an Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander person from the area, and the ability to understand and uphold confidentiality requirements.

All successful applicants participated in a full-day (9am to 4pm) face-to-face training, for which they were paid.

Once training was complete, interviewers were responsible for facilitating the interviewing and data collection and were able to contact the Ipsos ATSIRU Team as and when needed via phone or email.

## Fieldwork

Samsung Tablets were provided to local researchers for the purpose of completing interviews.

Once fieldwork was able to commence, after one day of interviewing, the data was checked to ensure the programming was working as expected, e.g. question wording was clear to the interviewers and participants. Following completion of all data checks, fieldwork continued with any *ad hoc* questions from interviewers, or any concerns with the interviewing tablets, being addressed.

No identifying information (such as name, address or date of birth) was recorded during the interview. Once the interview was completed, the local researchers were not able to re-open any interviews, and the data was automatically uploaded into the server as soon as it was possible to connect to an internet service.

The only identifiable information collected was the information on the paper-based participant consent forms, which have not been stored or collated with the survey data.

The average survey completion time was 40 minutes (from a planned interview length of 15 minutes).

Due to the COVID-19 pandemic, additional hygiene and social distancing measures were also taken to keep participants and local researchers safe.

## Data quality checks

Following completion of fieldwork for the Sea Country survey, data was checked to ensure the final sample matched ATSIRU records of completed interviews per location, and to remove any test-data that may have been remaining from the testing phase of the data collection.

### 1.3.6 Sample profile

The total sample size for the Sea Country survey was  $n = 562$ . As the original target of 600 exceeded the final sample size of 562, the unweighted sample counts and proportions presented in Table 1 are not identical to quotas.

Weighting was not applied to the sample due to the low sample size in each location and the lack of accurate population-level age data to set target weights. The findings should therefore be considered a snapshot of the experiences of participants, rather than a robust representation of the views of each community. Likewise, at a state level, the sample should be considered a snapshot of participants, rather than a representation of the views of all Aboriginal peoples of coastal NSW.



Due to this sampling approach, we cannot make any assumptions about the responses we would obtain if the whole population were sampled (i.e. we cannot estimate ‘true values’ in a statistically robust way).

**Table 1. Sample profile (unweighted)**

Sample		Count	Proportion
Sample type		Unweighted	Unweighted
<b>Total</b>		<b>562</b>	<b>100%</b>
Gender	Male	258	46%
	Female	301	54%
	Other	2	0%
	Prefer not to say	1	0%
Age	18–29	169	30%
	30–49	216	38%
	50+	170	30%
	Prefer not to say	7	1%
Location	Ballina	52	9%
	Coffs Harbour	64	11%
	Kempsey	40	7%
	Port Macquarie	49	9%
	Port Stephens	83	15%
	Newcastle	64	11%
	Gosford	34	6%
	La Perouse	47	8%
	Wollongong	30	5%
	Moruya	69	12%
	Eden	30	5%

## Preparation of final dataset

A final datafile was prepared by the Ipsos data processing team, which involved a second data checking process followed by a thorough data cleaning process, including checks such as ensuring question and response option wording was identical to wording in the questionnaire. Following coding of the open-ended questions, the coded data was added to the final dataset. Please see further detail of these processes in Section 1.3.9 Coding of open-ended questions and ‘other (specify)’ options.

## 1.3.7 Interpreting the data

### Subgroups of interest

The sample size of  $n = 562$  Aboriginal people enabled subgroup analysis and reporting for sampling locations and by age groups.

Subheadings of ‘Location’ and ‘Age group’ have been used to signpost to meaningful differences in the data at each question.

### Confidence intervals

As discussed in Section 1.3.6, we can predict the variation between the results of a question and the true value by using the size of the sample on which results are based and the number of times a particular answer is given.

The confidence with which we make this prediction is 95% – that is, the chances are 95 in 100 that the true value will fall within a specified range (the ‘95% confidence interval’). The estimated margin of error for this survey is  $\pm 4.13\%$ . For example, if 50% of Aboriginal peoples surveyed indicated that they agree it is important to maintain the abundance and diversity of Sea Country fish and animals, there is a 95% likelihood that the true value (which would have been obtained if the whole population had been surveyed) will fall within the range of  $\pm 4.13\%$  (that is, that between 45.87% and 54.13% of all Aboriginal peoples think it is important).

It should be noted that these estimates are based on the assumption that the surveyed population has no substantial differences to the population at large.

## 1.3.8 Interpretation of numerical scales

In the report, questions with numerical 11-point scales are presented in bar charts broken into discrete categories to aid in visualisation of the data, with mean scores and standard errors also provided. The mean scores are the sum of all values divided by the total number of values in a given set (e.g. for a given questions). The standard error measures how much discrepancy there is likely to be in a sample’s mean compared with the actual populations mean.

The anchoring points in each scale (0, 5 and 10) are presented as individual categories, with the points in between broken into categories containing 2 numerical values on the scale (e.g. 1–2, and 3–4). The size of each category allows for a more detailed examination of variation within these particular measures.

### **1.3.9 Coding of open-ended questions and ‘other (specify)’ options**

Open-ended questions have been analysed via coding. The process of coding involves sorting typed verbatim responses into thematic categories appropriate to the question in order to present them in the same format as other non-open-ended questions (i.e. as a chart). A similar approach was taken for questions with an open-ended option for ‘other’ responses, where participants specified what their ‘other response’ was. These ‘other’ verbatims were either sorted into one of the existing response options (if applicable) or were sorted into new response options. Remaining ‘other’ responses that were not able to be categorised in either of these ways form the ‘other’ response option.

All of the verbatims for open-ended questions and ‘other specify’ response options were coded.

Due to small sample sizes, findings from the following sections have been analysed qualitatively, alongside relevant verbatim quotes, rather than analysed quantitatively using charts, tables and significance testing:

- 2.7.1 Key threats – factors impacting experiences
- 2.8.1.1 Impacts of Sea Country management.

Findings from the following sections have been analysed quantitatively, but reported alongside relevant verbatim quotes to provide further context and detail:

- 2.3.1 Contribution of Sea Country to quality of life (How Sea Country contributes to Aboriginal peoples’ quality of life)
- 2.4.1 Cultural connections with Sea Country fish or animals
- 2.4.2 Cultural connections with areas of Sea Country
- 2.5 Caring for Sea Country (What Caring for Sea Country means to Aboriginal peoples)
- 2.6.2 Perceptions of the current health of Sea Country (Reasoning for a positive rating of health of Sea Country and Reasoning for a negative rating of health of Sea Country).

### **1.3.10 Usage and treatment of verbatim quotes**

Analysis of open-ended questions has also been supported by the usage of a selection of verbatim quotes. Verbatim text has not been edited, with the exception of missing words or letters which have been indicated by the use of parentheses.

### **1.3.11 Statistical analyses**

Significance testing was undertaken by testing the proportion of Aboriginal peoples from a particular group who gave a particular response, against the proportion of all other Aboriginal peoples who gave that same

response. Two-sided t-tests for numerical data were used, with a significance level ( $\alpha$ ) of 0.05. The False Discovery Rate correction was applied to minimise type one errors (false positives) in multiple comparisons.

As noted above, the sample is not representative of the communities of interest due to the sampling approach and lack of weighting applied to the data. All statistical analyses should be considered with these limitations in mind, and significant differences treated as guides to the true values for the populations of interest.

Only instances where relevant statistically significant differences are detected are mentioned in the report.

Significant differences are denoted by directional arrows (▲▼) showing statistically higher or lower responses than the average of all other groups.

### 1.3.12 Charting conventions

Base statements for each chart present the question text and sample size only, unless question-specific notes are deemed relevant, in which case they are clearly indicated within the base statement. A number of standard conventions were applied to the charts in this report, which are listed below for reference:

- Analysis was not conducted on base sizes less than  $n = 10$ .
- Significance testing was not conducted on base sizes less than  $n = 30$ .
- Where 'don't know', 'not applicable' or 'prefer not to say' response options were included in questions with a scale, this data was removed prior to analysis and charting to allow accurate calculation of mean scores. For some charts, this means columns may not always add to 100%.
- Findings under 3% were not shown in stacked bar charts in order to de-clutter the chart for ease of reference.
- Bar charts are sorted in descending order, with the exception of 'don't know', 'none' and 'other' response options which are always found at the bottom of the chart.
- Stacked bar charts without mean scores showing only statewide data are sorted in descending order of the NET figures on the right-hand side of the chart.
- Stacked bar charts showing statewide, regional and subgroup data are sorted in this order.
- Stacked bar charts with mean scores showing only statewide data are sorted in descending order of the mean scores on the right-hand side of the chart.
- Where a question had multiple response options, the chart and corresponding table (if applicable), present the data from the 10 response options with the highest frequency of response, in addition to 'don't know', 'none' and/or 'other' response options. Use of this convention is indicated in the base statement.
- 'Location' findings are presented from north to south (i.e. from Ballina to Eden).

## 2 Findings

### 2.1 Sample profile

This section presents the demographic profile of Aboriginal peoples of coastal NSW surveyed. The data shown is unweighted in order to present the true demographic distribution present in this sample of Aboriginal peoples. Refer to research context table and Appendix A: Demographics.

### 2.2 Interactions with Sea Country

#### 2.2.1 Frequency of visitation to Sea Country for cultural reasons

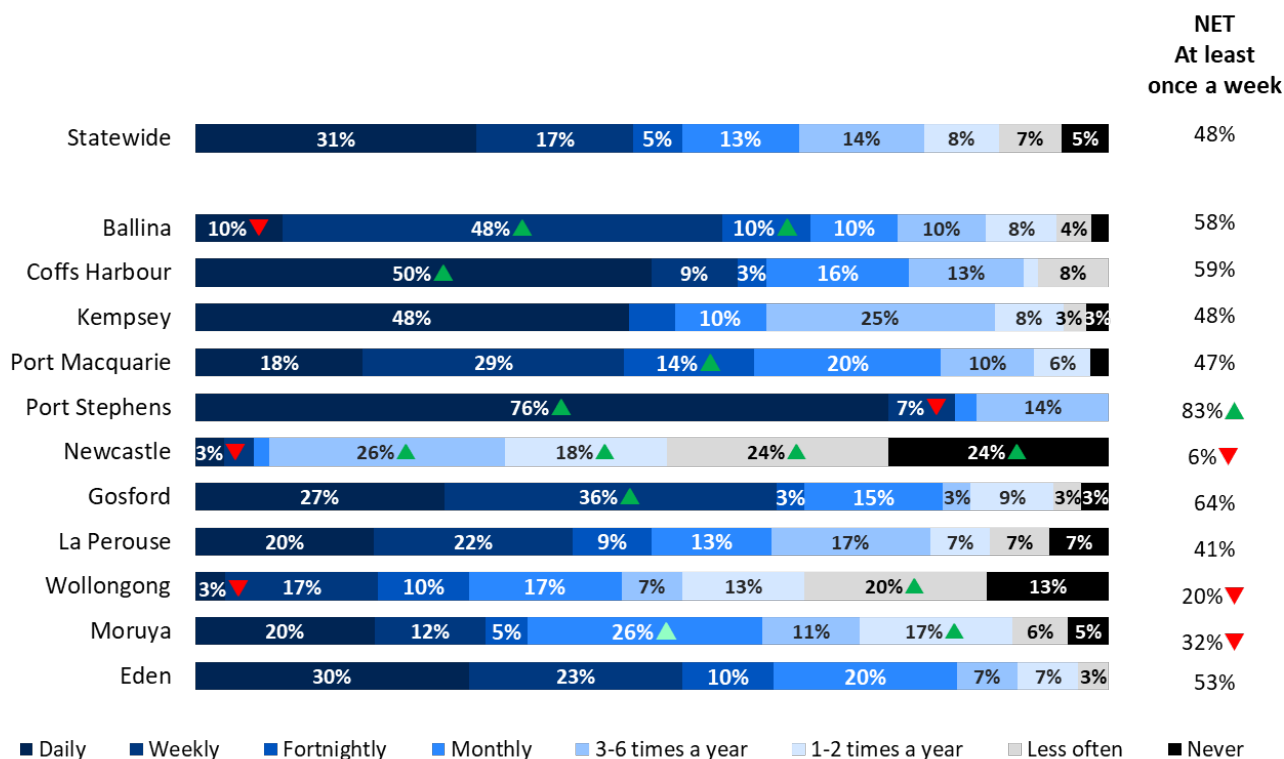
Aboriginal people were asked how often they participate in cultural activities or traditions in their local area (Figure 1).

At a statewide level, around half (48%) visited their local coastal area at least once a week, while around one in 3 (31%) visited their local coastal area daily. Similar proportions visited monthly (13%), 3–6 times a year (14%) and less frequently or never (12%).

#### Location differences

Aboriginal people of Port Stephens were more likely to have visited their local Sea Country area at least once a week (83%), with this being mostly driven by significantly higher daily visitation (76%). Aboriginal people of Coffs Harbour were also more likely to visit on a daily basis (50%), while those from Ballina (48%) and Gosford (36%) were more likely to visit on a weekly basis. In contrast, Aboriginal people of Newcastle (6%), Wollongong (20%) and Moruya (32%) were less likely to visit regularly (at least once a week).

Figure 1. Frequency of visitation to Sea Country at a statewide level and by location



Base: n = 555 Aboriginal coastal residents | Ballina n = 52 | Coffs Harbour n = 64 | Kempsey n = 40 | Port Macquarie n = 49 | Port Stephens n = 83 | Newcastle n = 62 | Gosford n = 33 | La Perouse n = 46 | Wollongong n = 30 | Moruya n = 66 | Eden n = 30  
 Q1. How often do you participate in cultural activities or traditions in your local Sea Country area?

### 2.2.2 Participation in Sea Country cultural activities and traditions

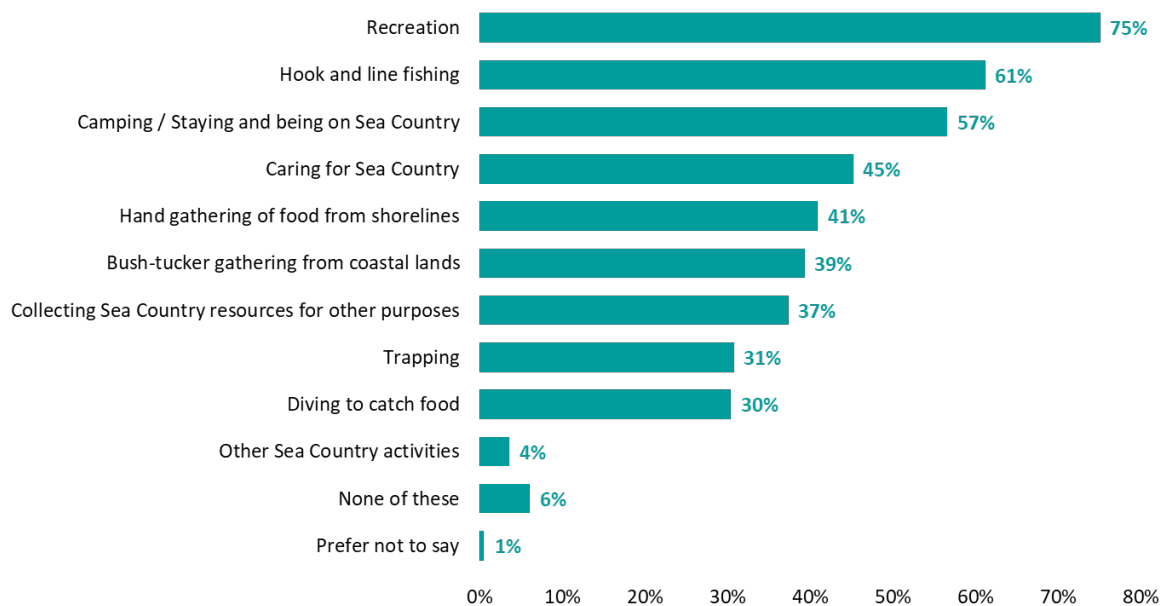
Aboriginal people were asked about their participation in a range of cultural activities on Sea Country in the past 12 months (Figure 2).

At a statewide level, the 3 most common cultural activities undertaken by Aboriginal people were:

- Recreation, e.g. swimming, walking, surfing, snorkelling, boating (75%)
- Hook and line fishing (61%)
- Camping/staying and being on Sea Country (57%).

Many also participated in caring for Sea Country (45%) and hand gathering of food from shorelines, i.e. rock platforms, beaches, mangroves (41%). The activities of trapping e.g. for fish, crabs, lobster (31%) and diving to catch food, e.g. lobsters, muttonfish, fish (30%), were undertaken by a smaller proportion of the community.

Figure 2. Cultural activities undertaken on Sea Country in the past 12 months at a statewide level



Base: n = 562 Aboriginal coastal residents

Q2. Which, if any, of the following cultural activities have you done on Sea Country in the past 12 months?

### Location differences

Aboriginal people of Port Stephens were more likely to engage in all cultural activities listed, and those from Kempsey (83%) and Coffs Harbour (80%) were more likely to undertake hook and line fishing in particular (Table 2). Conversely, Aboriginal people of Newcastle were less likely to engage in most cultural activities, with similar findings observed among those from Eden.

### Age group differences

The activities undertaken by Aboriginal people did not vary greatly by age group. However, those aged 30–49 were more likely to engage in camping/staying and being on Country (65%) than those aged 50+ (48%).

Table 2. Cultural activities undertaken on Sea Country in the past 12 months at a statewide level, and by location and age

	State wide	Areas of Sea Country											Age		
		Ballina	Coffs Harbour	Kempsey	Port Macquarie	Port Stephens	Newcastle	Gosford	La Perouse	Wollongong	Moruya	Eden	18-29 years	30-49 years	50+ years
Base	562	52	64	40	49	83	64	34	47	30	69	30	169	216	170
Recreation	75%	62%	88%	73%	90%	89%▲	88%	74%	79%	60%	54%▼	47%▼	79%	77%	69%
Hook and line fishing	61%	65%	80%▲	83%▲	63%	93%▲	19%▼	24%▼	49%	50%	64%	53%	56%	66%	60%
Camping / Staying and being on Sea Country	57%	48%	59%	60%	65%	89%▲	36%▼	47%	36%▼	57%	59%	37%	55%	65%▲	48%▼
Caring for Sea Country	45%	56%	48%	58%	53%	89%▲	5%▼	35%	45%	37%	26%▼	20%▼	46%	47%	43%
Hand gathering of food from shorelines	41%	44%	55%	38%	33%	84%▲	0%▼	29%	34%	30%	45%	17%▼	39%	43%	42%
Bush-tucker gathering from coastal lands	39%	44%	59%▲	43%	39%	78%▲	2%▼	38%	30%	37%	20%▼	20%	39%	38%	42%
Collecting Sea Country resources for other purposes	37%	35%	39%	28%	51%	83%▲	0%▼	41%	43%	20%	29%	7%▼	34%	37%	41%
Trapping	31%	37%	45%▲	20%	27%	84%▲	2%▼	21%	11%▼	17%	23%	0%▼	30%	30%	34%
Diving to catch food	30%	19%	41%	18%	16%	76%▲	0%▼	9%▼	32%	13%	36%	33%	33%	33%	25%
Other Sea Country activities	4%	0%	0%	3%	4%	1%	2%	9%	13%▲	3%	4%	7%	2%	4%	4%
None of these	6%	10%	3%	8%	0%	0%	6%	12%	11%	7%	10%	7%	6%	4%	9%
Prefer not to say	1%	0%	0%	0%	0%	0%	0%	3%	2%	0%	1%	0%	0%	0%	1%

Base: n = 562 Aboriginal coastal residents

Q2. Which, if any, of the following cultural activities have you done on Sea Country in the past 12 months?

Aboriginal people were then asked about their participation in a range of other cultural activities and traditions on Sea Country in the past 12 months (Figure 3).

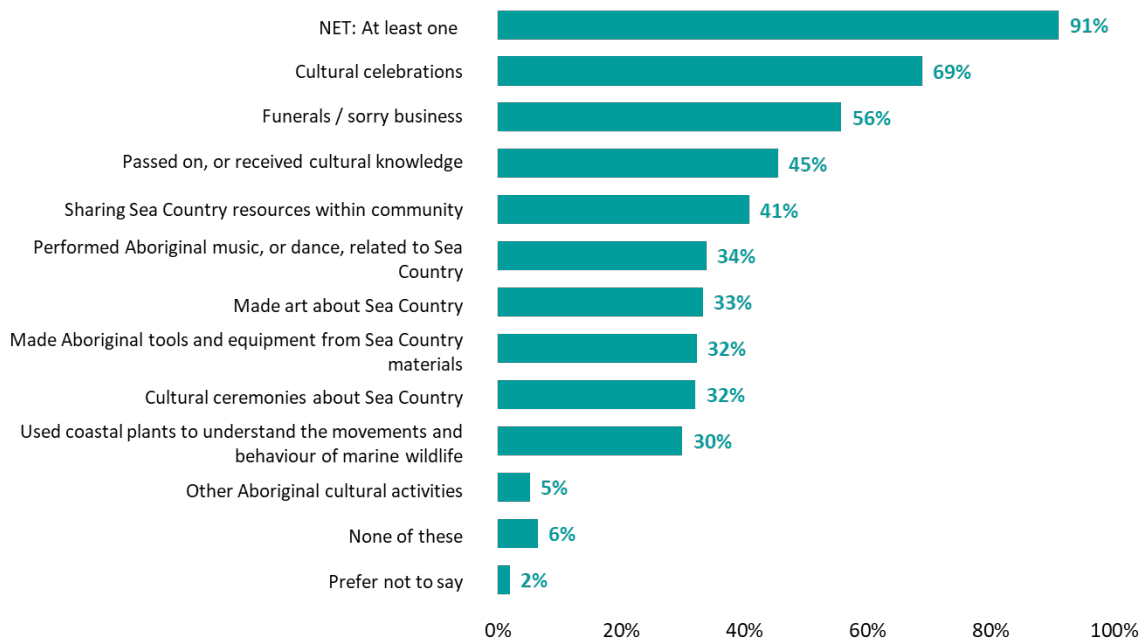
At a statewide level, about 9 in 10 (91%) Aboriginal people had participated in at least one cultural activity or tradition on Sea Country. The 3 most common cultural activities were:

- Cultural celebrations (69%)
- Funerals / sorry business (56%)
- Having passed on or received cultural knowledge, e.g. use of plants, animals, stories, responsibilities to care for Sea Country (45%).

Many also participated in sharing Sea Country resources within community (41%) and performed Aboriginal music or dance, related to Sea Country (34%). The activities of cultural ceremonies about Sea Country (32%) making Aboriginal tools and equipment from Sea Country materials (32%) and using coastal plants to understand the movements and behaviour of marine wildlife (30%) were undertaken by fewer Aboriginal people.



Figure 3. Cultural activities and traditions undertaken on Sea Country in the past 12 months at a statewide level



Base: n = 562 Aboriginal coastal residents

Q3. Which, if any, of the following cultural activities/traditions have you participated in over the past 12 months?

### Location differences

Aboriginal people of Port Stephens were again more likely to engage in almost all cultural activities and traditions listed, while those from Newcastle were less likely (Table 3).

### Age group differences

There were no meaningful differences in results by age group.

**Table 3. Cultural activities and traditions undertaken on Sea Country in the past 12 months at a statewide level, and by location and age**

	State wide	Areas of Sea Country											Age		
		Ballina	Coffs Harbour	Kempsey	Port Macquarie	Port Stephens	Newcastle	Gosford	La Perouse	Wollongong	Moruya	Eden	18-29 years	30-49 years	50+ years
Base	562	52	64	40	49	83	64	34	47	30	69	30	169	216	170
NET: At least one	91%	94%	86%	78% ▼	96%	98%	89%	91%	87%	83%	94%	90%	90%	90%	92%
Cultural celebrations	69%	69%	80%	70%	73%	87% ▲	72%	71%	53%	50%	58%	47% ▼	68%	65%	75%
Funerals / sorry business	56%	52%	66%	33% ▼	51%	89% ▲	25% ▼	35%	51%	43%	72% ▲	57%	51%	54%	63%
Passed on, or received cultural knowledge	45%	60%	53%	20% ▼	51%	81% ▲	2% ▼	56%	51%	60%	30% ▼	23%	43%	42%	52%
Sharing Sea Country resources within community	41%	50%	48%	35%	35%	83% ▲	3% ▼	32%	36%	37%	33%	27%	37%	39%	47%
Performed Aboriginal music, or dance, related to Sea Country	34%	38%	50% ▲	38%	29%	70% ▲	2% ▼	50%	26%	17%	14% ▼	20%	36%	34%	32%
Made art about Sea Country	33%	50% ▲	47%	23%	37%	71% ▲	0% ▼	32%	30%	20%	14% ▼	13%	34%	31%	36%
Made Aboriginal tools and equipment from Sea Country materials	32%	37%	38%	18%	39%	69% ▲	2% ▼	41%	32%	10% ▼	23%	20%	33%	31%	32%
Cultural ceremonies about Sea Country	32%	33%	45%	43%	24%	77% ▲	2% ▼	29%	26%	13%	14% ▼	13%	29%	30%	39%
Used coastal plants to understand the movements and behaviour of marine wildlife	30%	37%	38%	13%	41%	71% ▲	2% ▼	24%	28%	13%	22%	0% ▼	26%	27%	37%
Other Aboriginal cultural activities	5%	6%	6%	3%	14% ▲	0%	0%	3%	15% ▲	3%	7%	0%	2%	4%	8%
None of these	6%	2%	11%	13%	2%	1%	11%	3%	9%	17%	3%	7%	8%	6%	5%
Prefer not to say	2%	4%	0%	10% ▲	0%	0%	0%	3%	2%	0%	3%	3%	1%	3%	1%

Base: n = 562 Aboriginal coastal residents

Q3. Which, if any, of the following cultural activities/traditions have you participated in over the past 12 months?

## 2.3 Importance of Sea Country for quality of life

### 2.3.1 Contribution of Sea Country to quality of life

#### Quality of life

Aboriginal people were asked how important Sea Country is in contributing to their quality of life on a scale of 0 (not important at all) to 10 (very important).

At a statewide level, the mean score of perceived importance was high at 9.3, with nearly 4 in 5 (79%) indicating it is ‘very important’ in contributing to their quality of life (Figure 4).

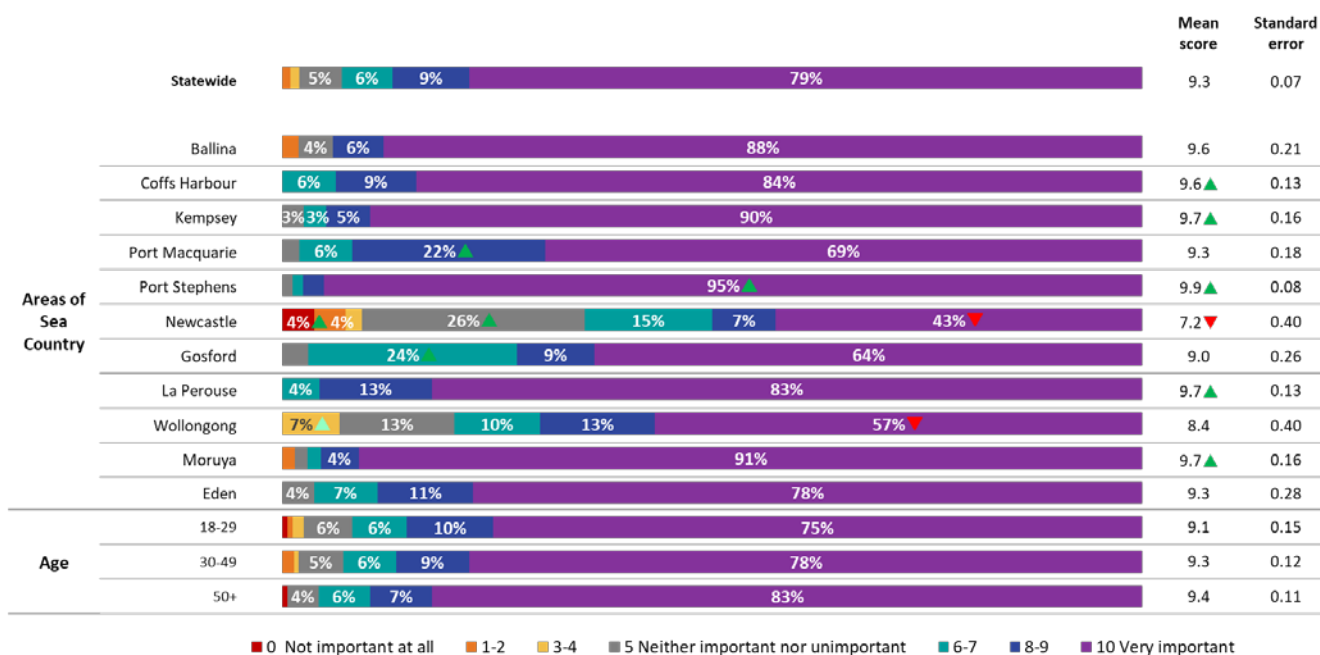
#### Location differences

Aboriginal people of Port Stephens (9.9), Kempsey (9.7), La Perouse (9.7), Moruya (9.7) and Coffs Harbour (9.6) reported Sea Country as being of high importance to their quality of life, whereas those from Newcastle perceived Sea Country as being of lesser importance (7.2).

### Age group differences

There were no meaningful differences in results by age group.

Figure 4. Contribution of Sea Country to quality of life at a statewide level, and by location and age



Base: Aboriginal coastal residents n = 542 | Ballina n = 51 | Coffs Harbour n = 64 | Kempsey n = 39 | Port Macquarie n = 49 | Port Stephens n = 82 | Newcastle n = 54 | Gosford n = 33 | La Perouse n = 46 | Wollongong n = 30 | Moruya n = 67 | Eden n = 27 | 18–29 years n = 159 | 30–49 years n = 211 | 50+ years n = 166

Q6. How important is Sea Country in contributing to your quality of life?

Note: Significance testing was not conducted on base sizes less than n = 30.

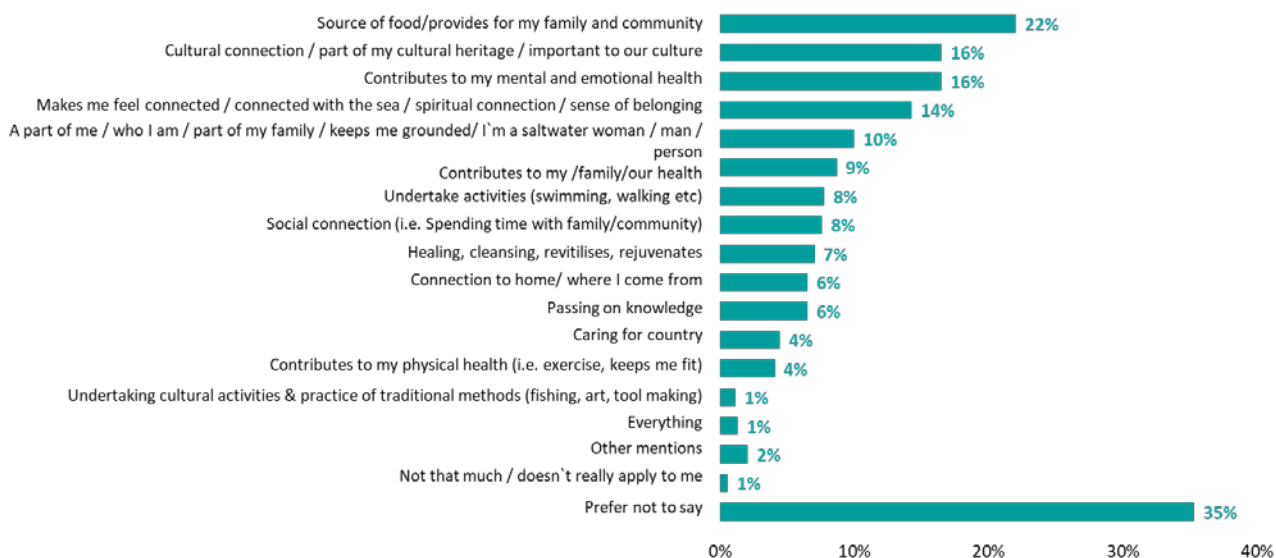
### How Sea Country contributes to Aboriginal peoples’ quality of life

Aboriginal people were then asked to explain how Sea Country contributes to their quality of life (Figure 5).

At a statewide level, the 3 most common contributing factors were:

- Source of food/provides for my family and community (22%)
- Cultural connection/part of cultural heritage/important to our culture (16%)
- Contributes to my mental and emotional health (16%).

Figure 5. How Sea Country contributes to quality of life at a statewide level



Base: n = 541 Aboriginal coastal residents

Q7. Please explain how Sea Country contributes to your quality of life.

The following verbatim quotes describe the contribution Sea Country has to Aboriginal peoples' wellbeing in more detail:

*"The sea is a traditional food source that I have used for many years and have now started to teach the next generation of Traditional Owners."*

*"My connection to Sea Country contributes to my health and wellbeing. It's my medicine and keeps me connected to my culture."*

*"I rely on the beach as a form of cleansing. Similar to a traditional smoking ceremony, the beach can wash away any negative energy or spirits. The salt also has many health benefits. Being able to visit rock engraving sites (many on Sea Country) are extremely important to practising my culture. These things positively impact my quality of life."*

*"I have always lived near the beach. The sound of the ocean helps soothe my soul. I take my children swimming at the beach and in the river. We go fishing. I share my culture with my children. Sea Country contributes greatly to my quality of life."*

*"It is part of my cultural identity – Family, Uncle, Grandfather, Community member, Brother, for me."*

*"The connection to Sea Country is my identity. It's a part of me, just like everything else in our ecosystem, we are all connected. It provides a sense of healing and cleansing for the soul."*

*"I am saltwater woman. My wellbeing encompasses all I breathe – the sounds, the feel of Country ... I heal through the interaction with my spiritual place on Country."*

*"To be out on Country is very important to my quality of life. I have grown up on Sea Country my whole life, it is a part of who I am, it helps my health, mental health and wellbeing to stay culturally connected to mother earth and passing on knowledge to my kids through being able to take them out on Country. Showing and sharing stories and teaching them culture is uplifting."*

*“For me, it’s a spiritual connection and I still practise ceremonies that have been done for thousands of years. I was born on Sea Country, not in the hospital. For me, I’m spiritually connected to certain areas by the sea.”*

*“As a young person, we were taught how to fish, gather food, cook on the beach, walking the beaches and pathways from community to beaches. Gathering natural resources for use and art. Gave me knowledge and practices to pass on to jarjums. Gives me pride and self-worth as an Aboriginal person. Bush tucker food is healthy.”*

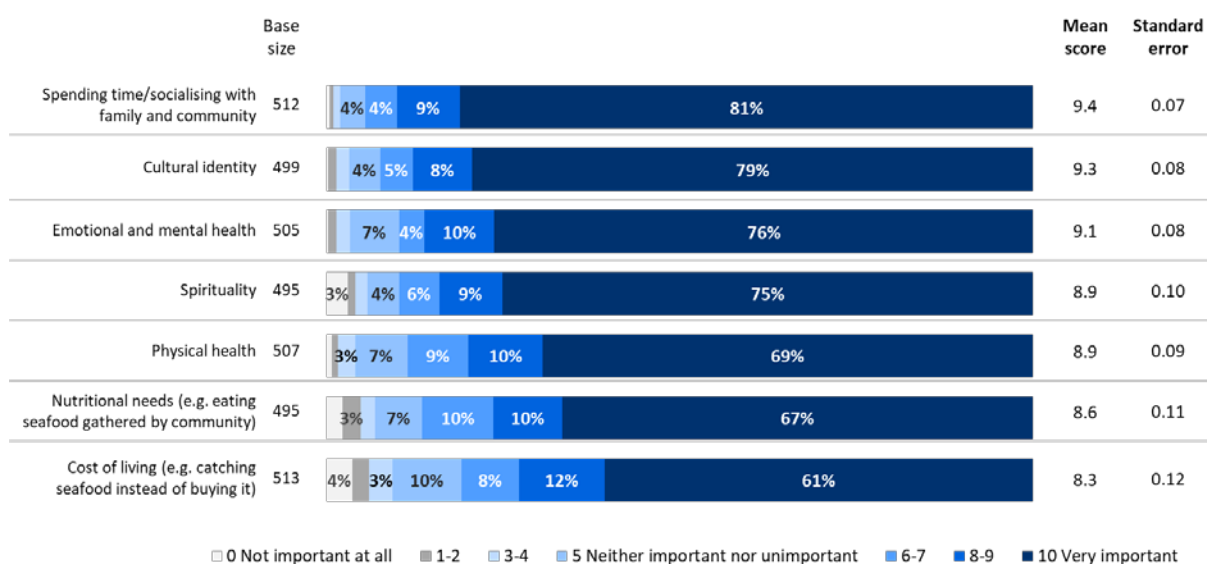
*“Sea Country has a grounding effect that is hard to explain. I find that being near the saltwater is rejuvenating and is a place of healing and deep reflection. When times are difficult and the weight of responsibility of marriage, mortgages, fatherhood and employment cause me to lose perspective, the ocean proves a salient reminder that life is much bigger than my individual physical and conscious self and that we are blessed just to ‘be’.”*

### 2.3.2 Contribution of Sea Country to personal health and wellbeing

Aboriginal people were asked about their perceptions of Sea Country’s contribution relating to their personal health and wellbeing (Figure 6) on a scale of 0 (not important at all) to 10 (very important).

At a statewide level, Sea Country was seen by many Aboriginal people as being an important contributor to all elements of their personal health (mean score of 8.3 or higher for all aspects). Sea Country’s contribution to spending time/socialising with family and community, cultural identity and emotional and mental health were rated as the most important aspects, ranging between 9.1 and 9.3.

Figure 6. Contribution of Sea Country to personal health and wellbeing at a statewide level



Base: n = 495 – 513 Aboriginal coastal residents

Q8. How important is Sea Country in contributing to the following parts of your life?

#### Location differences

The relative importance of Sea Country in contributing to different aspects of personal health and wellbeing was mostly consistent across the regions (Table 4). However, Aboriginal people of Port Stephens and Coffs Harbour perceived Sea Country’s contribution as important for all aspects of their personal health and wellbeing, while those from Newcastle were less likely to perceive Sea Country’s contribution as important for all aspects.

### Age group differences

Aboriginal people aged 50+ years were more likely to perceive Sea Country’s contribution to time spent socialising with family and community (9.6) and their nutritional needs, e.g. eating seafood gathered by community (9.0), as being important.

Table 4. Contribution of Sea Country to personal health and wellbeing at a statewide level, and by location and age

	State wide	Mean score												Age		
		Areas of Sea Country											18-29 years	30-49 years	50+ years	
		Ballina	Coffs Harbour	Kempsey	Port Macquarie	Port Stephens	Newcastle	Gosford	La Perouse	Wollongong	Moruya	Eden				
Base	512	49	63	36	48	80	50	32	46	25	59	24	153	202	151	
Spending time/socialising with family and community	9.4	9.7	9.9▲	9.5	9.4	9.8▲	8.0▼	8.9	9.5	8.6	9.5	9.5	9.2	9.3	9.6▲	
Base	499	47	61	33	47	78	48	32	45	25	58	25	144	197	152	
Cultural identity	9.3	9.6	9.8▲	9.8	9.0	9.7▲	7.6▼	8.5	9.5	8.4	9.4	9.4	9.1	9.2	9.5	
Base	505	47	63	33	49	79	49	32	45	26	59	23	151	196	152	
Emotional and mental health	9.1	9.4	9.9▲	9.9	9.3	10.0▲	5.5▼	9.0	9.4	8.7	9.5	8.9	9.0	9.1	9.3	
Base	495	49	60	35	48	78	46	33	45	25	54	22	145	191	153	
Spirituality	8.9	9.3	9.8▲	9.7	9.0	10.0▲	5.3▼	8.5	8.9	8.2	9.2	9.1	8.7	8.9	9.3	
Base	507	47	62	34	49	81	48	32	45	28	60	21	147	200	154	
Physical health	8.9	9.3	9.5▲	9.6	8.9	9.9▲	6.1▼	7.7	8.9	8.0	9.3	8.8	8.8	8.9	8.9	
Base	495	48	63	31	47	76	51	32	45	23	55	24	148	190	151	
Nutritional needs (e.g. eating seafood gathered by community)	8.6	9.2▲	9.5▲	9.5	8.0	9.7▲	5.8▼	6.1	9.1	7.5	9.4▲	8.8	8.3	8.5	9.0▲	
Base	513	47	64	33	49	79	54	32	44	25	61	25	152	196	159	
Cost of living (e.g. catching seafood instead of buying it)	8.3	9.2	9.6▲	9.3	7.4	9.4▲	5.3▼	5.2	8.7	6.8	9.1▲	8.5	7.9	8.2	8.7	

Base: n 495 – 513 Aboriginal coastal residents

Q8. How important is Sea Country in contributing to the following parts of your life?

Note: Significance testing was not conducted on base sizes less than n = 30.

## 2.4 Cultural connections to Sea Country

### 2.4.1 Cultural connections with Sea Country fish or animals

Aboriginal people were asked if they had any connection/s to Sea Country fish or animals (Figure 7).

At a statewide level, Aboriginal people had strong connection to a wide diversity of Sea Country wildlife and places and values such as:

- Fish/various species of fish e.g. bream, flathead, sharks etc. (8%)
- All Sea Country fish and animals/plants (7%)
- Dolphins/guparr/dolphin is totem to my people (6%).

Figure 7. Cultural connections or relationships to Sea Country fish or animals at a statewide level



Base: n = 551 Aboriginal coastal residents

Q4. Do you have a cultural connection or relationship with particular Sea Country fish or animals?

The following verbatim quotes describe Aboriginal peoples' connections and relationships with particular Sea Country fish or animals in more detail:

*"All sea creatures are very important to my people in many ways – foods, totems, stories."*

*"For the Dharawal people the humpback whale, or Burri Burri, is very important as it is a significant ancestral being and a part of our dreaming stories. We're also connected to mullet as we have traditionally netted the mullet when they come into Botany Bay each autumn."*

*"I have an extremely strong cultural connection with Tungii (Abalone)."*

*"Garby saltwater people, we have a strong cultural connection to all Sea Country animals and plants, which are very important to me and my people."*

*"I am a saltwater woman and have an incredibly strong relationship with the sea and coastal area. My totem is the osprey, but we care for and respect all things from the ocean and associated with the area."*

*"My cultural connection to the Sea Country is by the song lines that connects me to the Country, and also hunting and gathering."*

*“I have a strong connection culturally to the land and sea. My family have lived off the sea for generations, fishing, diving, collecting bush foods and medicines. My lore totem is the salmon, so I have a strong connection to that sea animal which I have to protect and honour.”*

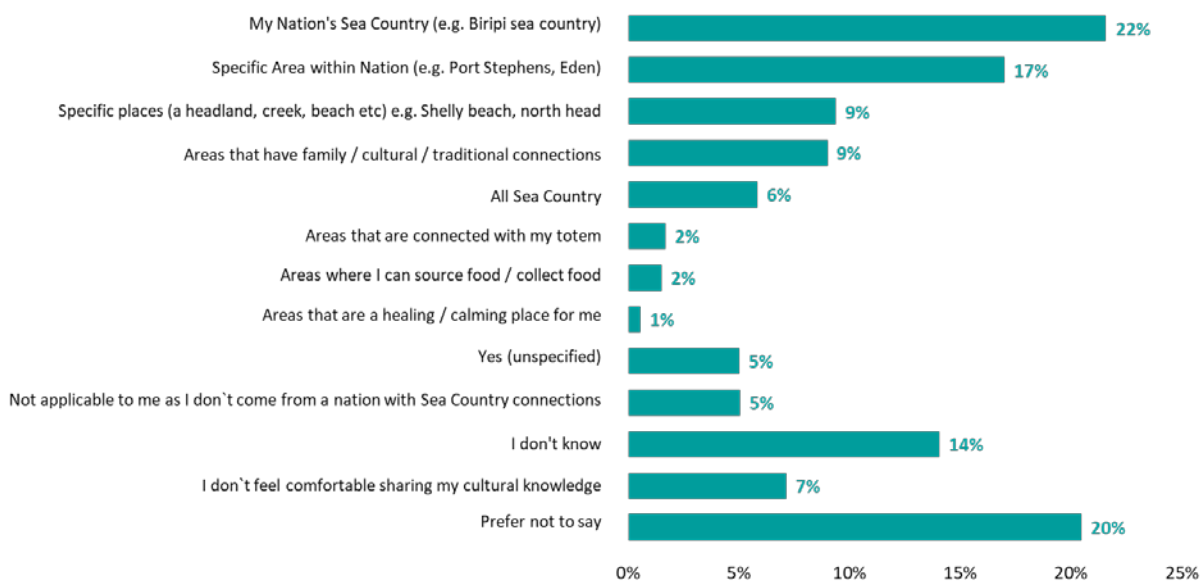
## 2.4.2 Cultural connections with areas of Sea Country

Aboriginal people were asked about their cultural connections and relationships with particular areas of Sea Country (Figure 8).

At a statewide level, the most common connections were with:

- My Nation’s Sea Country (e.g. Biripi Sea Country) (22%)
- Specific area within my Nation (e.g. Port Stephens, Eden) (17%)
- Specific places (a headland, creek, beach, etc.), e.g. Shelley Beach, North Head (9%)
- Areas that have family/cultural/traditional connections (9%)
- All Sea Country (6%).

Figure 8. Cultural connections and relationships with particular areas of Sea Country at a statewide level



Base: n = 533 Aboriginal coastal residents

Q5. Do you have a cultural connection or relationship with particular areas of Sea Country?

The following verbatim quotes describe Aboriginal peoples’ connections and relationships with particular areas of Sea Country in more detail:

*“As an Aboriginal Garby Elder, I have a deep relationship with all Sea Country everywhere, but more so with Garby Country.”*

*“Mainly along the Bundjalung coastal line as my ancestors had walked for thousands of years practising cultural connections.”*



*“I have connection to the sea from Nowra all the way down to the Victorian border, where there are ancient stories and teachings that have been passed down for generations that still live in this area. One main connection I have is the fish traps of Mystery Bay, which is an ancient fish trap that works with the tide of the ocean.”*

*“I have a strong connection with one of our beaches. It provides connection when I feel disconnection. I feel a strong feminine energy when I’m at this beach.”*

*“The beach in particular is very healing. I regularly go for swims in the ocean for this reason. Also, sandstone platforms near the ocean can contain Aboriginal rock art, which is also very important to us.”*

*“Yes my totem is a whale. I was born and bred on the mission at [Aboriginal Coastal Community in NSW]. We have stories about how we survived and lived on the beach. My grandfather whistled and could tell what fish were in the water. These stories have been passed down before I was born and I know my great grandparents’ stories.”*

*“My family, and my ancestors have lived in Lapa/Yarra Bay all my life and generations before me. The beach and ocean are my spiritual home, and always will be. I hold my local beach close to my heart, as do my kids.”*

*“All estuaries and creeks are important, especially on Garby Country and Gumbaingirr lands.”*

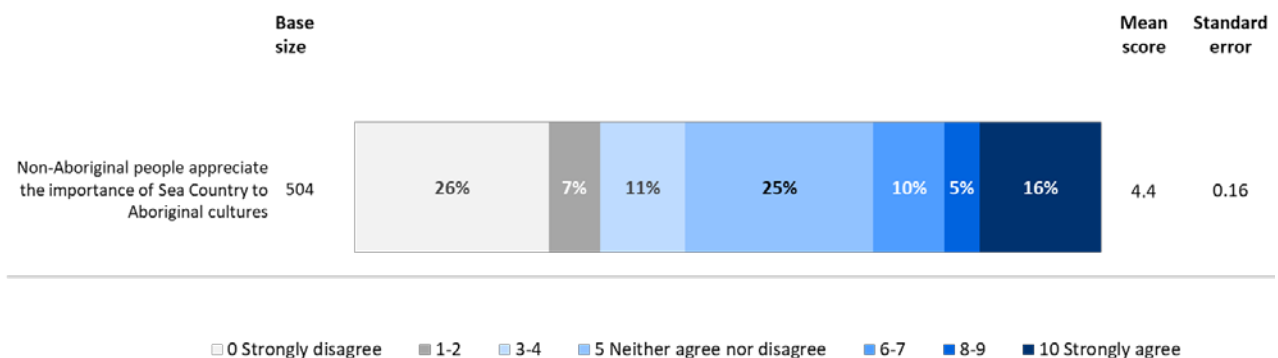
*“Towra oint in Botany Bay.”*

### 2.4.3 Perceived appreciation of Sea Country’s cultural importance by non-Aboriginal people

Aboriginal people were asked to rate whether they agree that non-Aboriginal people appreciate Sea Country’s importance to Aboriginal cultures on a scale from 0 ‘Strongly Disagree’ to 10 ‘Strongly Agree’ (Figure 9.).

At a statewide level, Aboriginal people disagreed with this statement, with an average score of 4.4.

Figure 9. Perceived appreciation of Sea Country’s cultural importance by non-Aboriginal people at a statewide level



Base: n = 504 Aboriginal coastal residents  
 Q9. How much do you agree with the following statements?

#### Location differences

Aboriginal people of Port Stephens were far more likely to disagree (1.3) that non-Aboriginal people appreciate the importance of Sea Country to Aboriginal cultures. Those from Kempsey (6.4), Newcastle (6.0) and Gosford (5.8) were more likely to agree.

### Age group differences

There were no meaningful differences in results by age group.

**Table 5. Perceived appreciation of Sea Country’s cultural importance by non-Aboriginal people at a statewide level, and by location and age**

	Mean score														
	State wide	Areas of Sea Country											Age		
		Ballina	Coffs Harbour	Kempsey	Port Macquarie	Port Stephens	Newcastle	Gosford	La Perouse	Wollongong	Moruya	Eden	18-29 years	30-49 years	50+ years
Base	504	46	56	36	46	75	55	33	42	28	65	22	150	196	152
Non-Aboriginal people appreciate the importance of Sea Country to Aboriginal cultures	4.4	4.2	3.6	6.4▲	5.0	1.3▼	6.0▲	5.8▲	4.8	5.5	4.0	6.5	4.5	4.6	4.2

Base: n = 504 Aboriginal coastal residents

Q9. How much do you agree with the following statements?

Note: Significance testing was not conducted on base sizes less than n = 30.

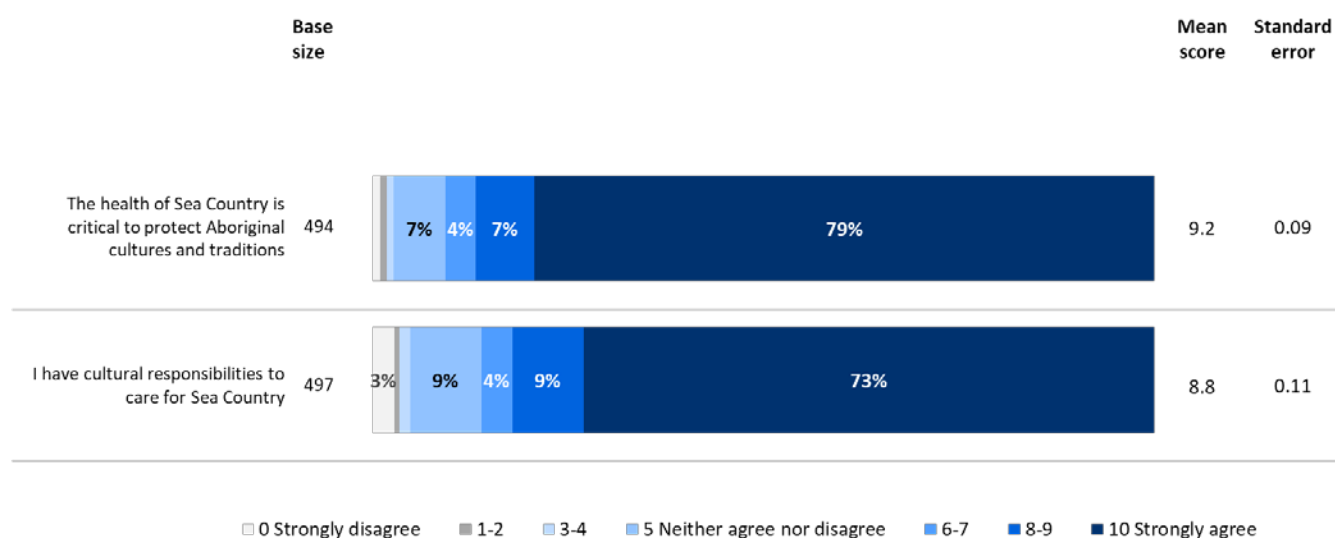
## 2.5 Caring for Sea Country

Aboriginal people were asked to what extent they agree with 2 statements relating to caring for Sea Country, on a scale from 0 ‘Strongly Disagree’ to 10 ‘Strongly Agree’ (Figure 10.).

At a statewide level, Aboriginal people agreed that the health of Sea Country is critical to protect Aboriginal cultures and traditions, with an average score of 9.2. Nearly 4 in 5 (79%) Aboriginal people indicated that they ‘strongly agree’ with the statement (i.e. a score of 10 out of 10).

Strong agreement that they have cultural responsibilities to care for Sea Country was also observed, with an average score of 8.8. Nearly 3 in 4 (73%) indicated that they ‘strongly agree’ with the statement (i.e. a score of 10 out of 10).

Figure 10. Attitudes to caring for Sea Country at a statewide level



Base: n = 494 – 497 Aboriginal coastal residents  
 Q9. How much do you agree with the following statements?

### Location differences

Aboriginal people of Port Stephens were more likely to agree with both statements relating to care of Sea Country, while those from Newcastle were less likely to agree (Table 6). Additionally, those from Ballina (9.5), Coffs Harbour (9.5) and Moruya (9.4) were more likely to agree that they have cultural responsibilities to care for Sea Country.

### Age group differences

Aboriginal people aged 50+ years were also more likely to agree that they have cultural responsibilities to care for Sea Country (9.2).

Table 6. Attitudes to caring for Sea Country at a statewide level, and by location and age

	State wide	Mean score											Age		
		Areas of Sea Country											18-29 years	30-49 years	50+ years
		Ballina	Coffs Harbour	Kempsey	Port Macquarie	Port Stephens	Newcastle	Gosford	La Perouse	Wollongong	Moruya	Eden			
Base	494	48	63	31	47	69	55	32	42	27	54	26	146	190	152
The health of Sea Country is critical to protect Aboriginal cultures and traditions	9.2	9.2	9.5	9.2	9.5	9.7▲	7.3▼	9.5	9.5	9.2	9.5	9.2	9.0	9.2	9.4
Base	497	48	60	31	48	72	50	32	43	27	62	24	145	190	156
I have cultural responsibilities to care for Sea Country	8.8	9.5▲	9.5▲	9.1	9.0	9.9▲	4.7▼	8.9	8.9	9.1	9.4▲	8.6	8.6	8.7	9.2▲

Base: n = 494 – 497 Aboriginal coastal residents  
 Q9. How much do you agree with the following statements?  
 Note: Significance testing was not conducted on base sizes less than n = 30.

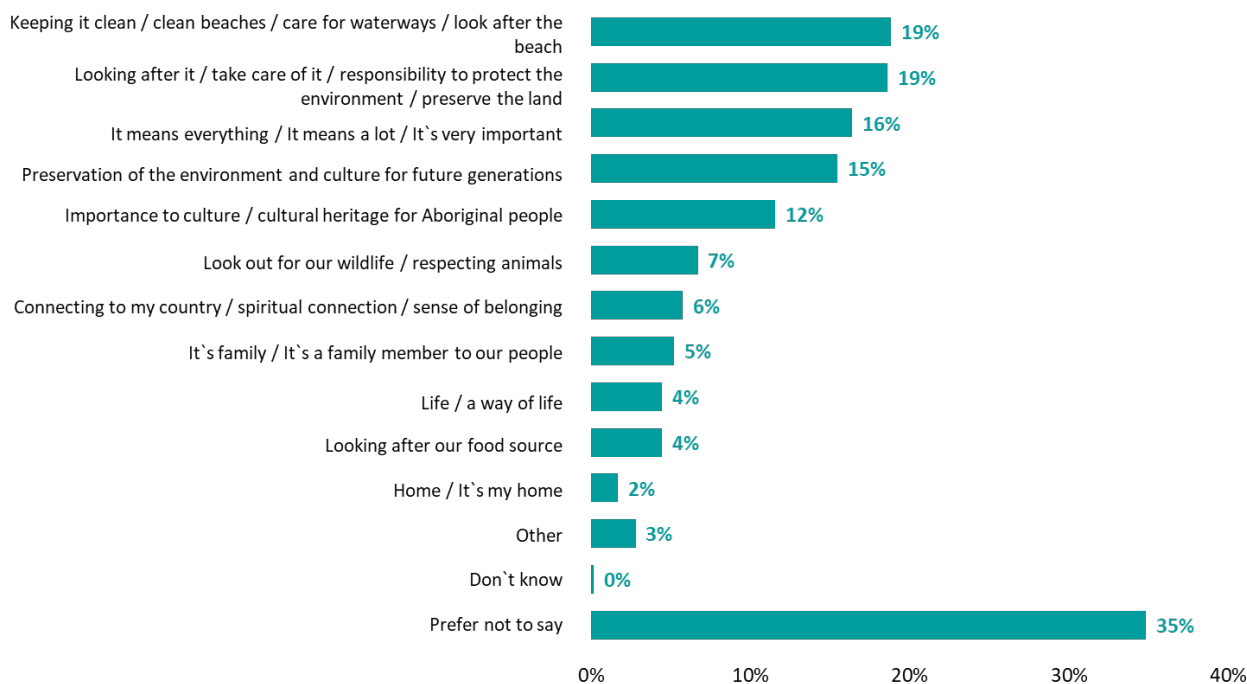
### 2.5.1 What caring for Sea Country means to Aboriginal peoples

Aboriginal people were then asked what caring for Sea Country means to them (Figure 11).

The most common responses were:

- Keeping it clean/clean beaches/care for waterways/look after the beach (19%)
- Looking after it/take care of it/responsibility to protect the environment/preserve the land (19%)
- It means everything/it means a lot/it’s very important (16%)
- Preservation of the environment and culture for future generations (15%)
- Importance to culture/cultural heritage for Aboriginal people (12%)

Figure 11. What caring for Sea Country means at a statewide level



Base n = 537 Aboriginal coastal residents

Q13. What does caring for Sea Country mean to you?

The following verbatim quotes describe what caring for Sea Country means to Aboriginal peoples in more detail:

*“Caring for Sea Country means looking after our environment, including our waterways and Country, not polluting the sea and waterways.”*

*“Caring for Sea Country to me means to care for my culture, beliefs, values, creation stories, living things and spirits. Caring for not only Sea Country but all of Country brings value to society.”*

*“Ensuring that all living things in Sea Country, including people, are well and healthy and that we can hunt, gather, tell stories, sing and dance for Sea Country so that it connects with us and we connect with it and care for it.”*

*“Wellbeing, as one together with Sea Country like family members, makes you a whole person.”*  
*“It’s a healing place for me and if we don’t care for our Country then we can’t care for ourselves.”*  
*“It’s very important for Aboriginal people – we look after the Country and the Country looks after us.”*  
*“This is extremely important, as if we don’t care and look after the water and sea creatures, this will affect our way of life, as we won’t be able to feed our family and community.”*  
*“It means more than words can explain. I have children and family that need it to be around for their generation and many generations to come.”*  
*“Looking after the waterways and land so our future generations can enjoy the land and have cultural connections.”*  
*“It means a lot, and it is important to teach others to RESPECT the land and hand down knowledge to humanity as a whole.”*

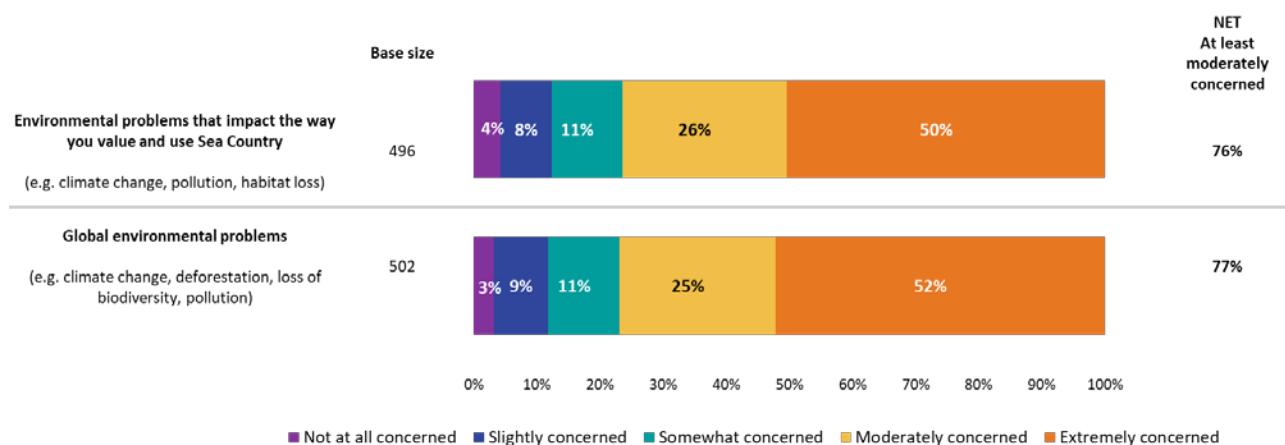
## 2.6 Community perceptions of environmental health

### 2.6.1 Concern about environmental problems

Aboriginal people were asked about their level of concern about global environmental problems in general, and environmental problems that impact the way they value and use Sea Country (Figure 12).

At least 3 in 4 Aboriginal people were at least moderately concerned for both environmental problems that impact the way they use and value Sea Country (76%) and global environmental problems in general (77%), with at least half being extremely concerned (50% to 52%).

Figure 12. Concern about environmental problems at a statewide level



Base: n = 496 – 502 Aboriginal coastal residents  
 Q12. How concerned are you about the following?

#### Location differences

Aboriginal people of Port Stephens were more likely to be concerned about both environmental problems that impact the way they value and use Sea Country (96%) and global environmental problems (91%), while those from Newcastle were less likely (21% for both) (Table 7).

### Age group differences

There were no meaningful differences in results by age group.

**Table 7. Concern about environmental problems at a statewide level, and by location and age**

	At least moderately concerned														
	State wide	Areas of Sea Country											Age		
		Ballina	Coffs Harbour	Kempsey	Port Macquarie	Port Stephens	Newcastle	Gosford	La Perouse	Wollongong	Moruya	Eden	18-29 years	30-49 years	50+ years
Base	496	46	57	27	49	80	48	29	46	26	63	25	146	191	153
Environmental problems that impact the way you value and use Sea Country	76%	80%	88%	70%	88%	96%▲	21%▼	76%	83%	81%	76%	56%	73%	76%	82%
Base	502	47	59	31	47	80	47	32	47	26	63	23	147	193	156
Global environmental problems	77%	91%	88%	68%	87%	91%▲	21%▼	75%	83%	73%	81%	57%	76%	76%	79%

Base: n = 496–502 Aboriginal coastal residents

Q12. How concerned are you about the following?

Note: Significance testing was not conducted on base sizes less than n = 30.

## 2.6.2 Perceptions of the current health of Sea Country

Aboriginal people were asked to rate the current health of Sea Country in their local area, including aspects such as the cleanliness of beaches, water quality, and coastal habitats, flora and wildlife (Figure 13).

At a statewide level, less than half (44%) of Aboriginal people rated the current health of Sea Country in their local area as ‘good’ or ‘very good’.

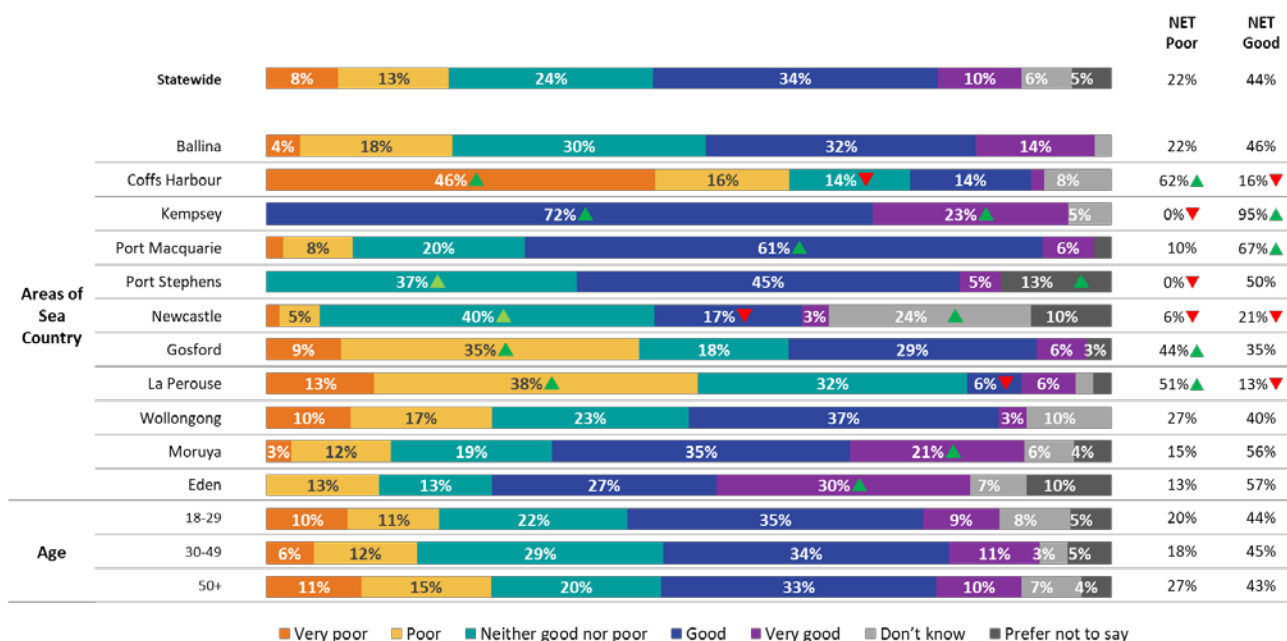
### Location differences

There was a high level of variation observed by area of Sea Country. Aboriginal people from Kempsey (95%) and Port Macquarie (67%) were more likely to rate the health of Sea Country in their local area as ‘good’ or ‘very good’, while those from Coffs Harbour (62%), La Perouse (51%) and Gosford (44%) were more likely rate the health of Sea Country in their local area as ‘poor’ or ‘very poor’.

### Age group differences

There were no meaningful differences in results by age group.

Figure 13. Perceptions of current health of Sea Country at a statewide level, and by location and age



Base: Aboriginal coastal residents n = 555 | Ballina n = 50 | Coffs Harbour n = 63 | Kempsey n = 39 | Port Macquarie n = 49 | Port Stephens n = 82 | Newcastle n = 63 | Gosford n = 34 | La Perouse n = 47 | Wollongong n = 30 | Moruya n = 68 | Eden n = 30 | 18–29 years n = 166 | 30–49 years n = 213 | 50+ years n = 169

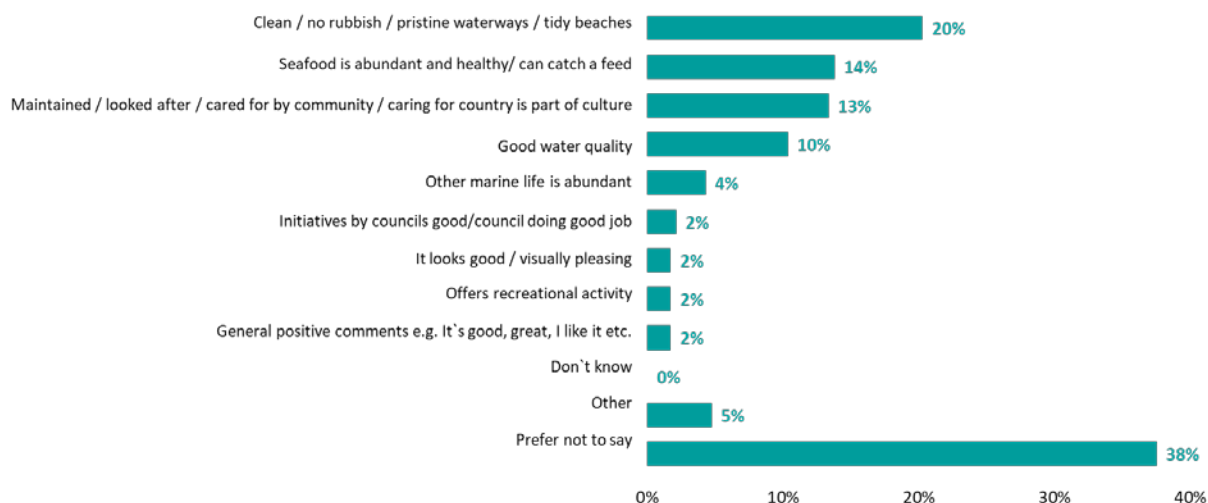
Q10. How would you rate the current health of Sea Country in your local area?

### 2.6.3 Reasoning for a positive rating of current health of Sea Country

Aboriginal people were asked to explain the reasoning behind their rating of the health of local Sea Country. Figure 14 presents the reasons for positive ratings (defined as a rating of ‘good’ or ‘very good’). The 3 most common reasons for a positive rating were:

- Sea Country is clean/no rubbish/pristine waterways/tidy beaches (20%)
- seafood is abundant and healthy/can catch a feed (14%)
- Sea Country is maintained/looked after/cared for by community/caring for Country is part of culture (13%).

Figure 14. Reasons for positive rating of current health of Sea Country in local area at a statewide level



Base: n = 232 Aboriginal coastal residents who rated the current health of Sea Country as 'Good'

Q11. Please explain why you think the health of your local Sea Country is ...

The following verbatim quotes describe Aboriginal peoples' positive ratings of Sea Country health in more detail:

*"The health of my local Sea Country is pretty good because most of the time it is well maintained, both plants and animals are thriving and nourishing around it. Most people understand the cultural importance around Sea Country so do what they can to maintain it."*

*"People in our area actually do take time out to try and look after our Sea Country with cleaning up rubbish."*

*"I'm still able to go out on weekends and get a good feed of fish or oysters, even mutton fish and lobsters, depending on the weather."*

*"We are still able to catch and collect the food, which our ancestors had done."*

*"We have clean, nice beaches. We are renowned for our beaches and, because of this, I believe council strive to keep them upkept for tourism purposes and work with the Aboriginal community for best practices."*

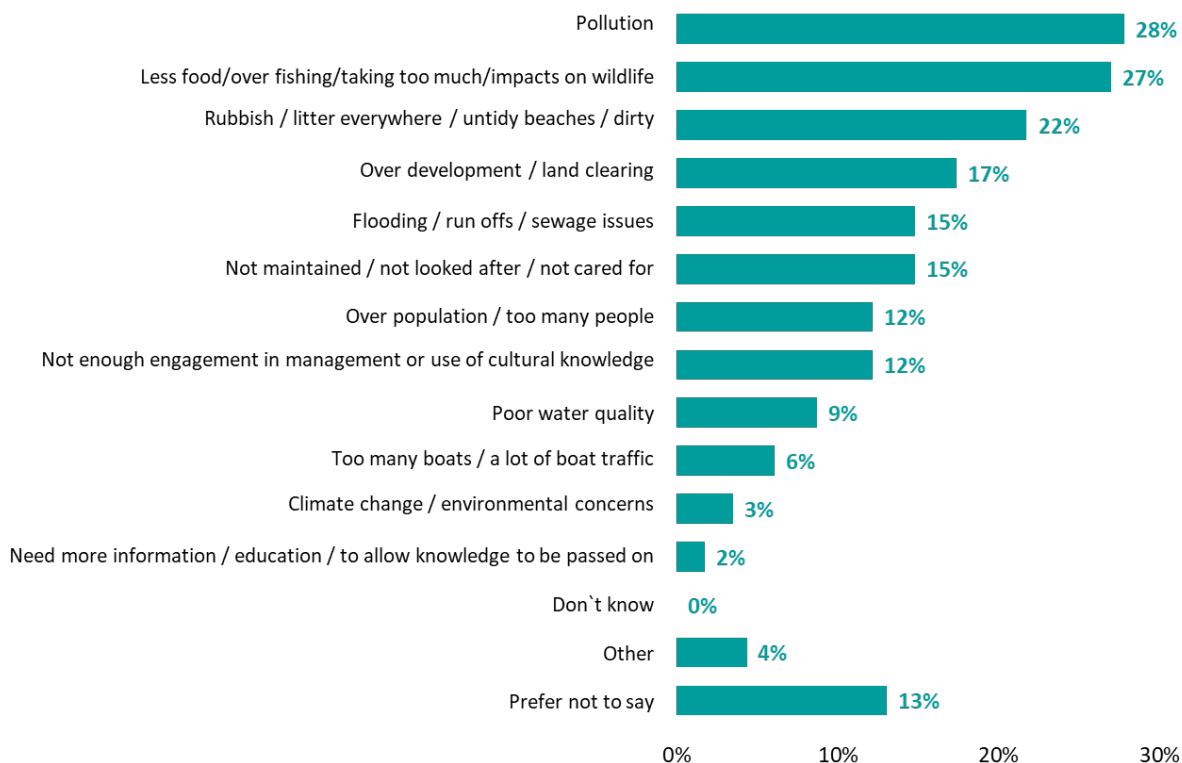
## 2.6.4 Reasons for a negative rating of current health of Sea Country

Figure 15 presents the reasons for negative ratings (defined as a rating of 'poor' or 'very poor') of the health of local Sea Country. The 3 most common reasons for a negative rating were:

- pollution (28%)
- less food/overfishing/taking too much/impacts on wildlife (27%)
- rubbish/litter everywhere/untidy beaches/dirty (22%).



Figure 15. Reasons for negative rating of current health of Sea Country in local area at a statewide level



Base: n = 115 Aboriginal coastal residents who rated the current health of Sea Country as 'Poor'.  
 Q11. Please explain why you think the health of your local Sea Country is...

The following verbatim quotes describe Aboriginal peoples' negative ratings of Sea Country health in more detail:

*“Because of pollution, degradation and damage to the fauna and flora. Development runoff is a big part of pollution and damage to the environment, damages to Sea Country where it gets its runoff.”*

*“The waterways and beaches are polluted with plastics, oil and other rubbish. The water has high levels of nano plastic particles. Animals are still getting caught up in plastics. Sand dunes are being eroded. Beach areas are being built for those who can afford that luxury and all with little or no consideration for the cultural significance.”*

*“There is pollution everywhere. It's in the water on the beach. Cigarette butts, plastic and dog poo. The ocean is being over fished.”*

*“Less quality of local seafood and non-existence of some species in the local area.”*

*“Many of the traditional foods are disappearing due to climate change, and the clearing of the lands.”*

*“Usually good but recent floods have made water dirty, and people holidaying leaving rubbish.”*

*“Sometimes when huge rains come through, the storm water comes out with pollution. All that storm water and sewerage water, plus the oil spills from the airport and Caltex. So many tourists with not a big enough area to hold them. It is just crowded. On them busy days, it turns from Lapa to a mini city.”*

*“Recent floods have contaminated the water, plus so much rubbish is in there because people don't dispose of rubbish correctly and it flows out to sea via river and drainage systems.”*

*“As people are destroying the habitats that live on the shoreline, and driving cars over sand dunes which are damaging middens that are thousands of years old. So it makes the quality of our local Sea Country poor.”*

*“Over development in wrong areas, beaches eroding, creeks clogged up with farmers' topsoil and fertiliser runoff.”*

## 2.7 Impact of key threats on cultural connections with Sea Country

The purpose of this section was to assess the level of impact of key threats identified in the NSW Marine Estate Threat and Risk Assessment (TARA) to Aboriginal cultural heritage and use. Aboriginal people were asked about the level of impact that specific threats were currently having on their cultural connections to Sea Country in their local area (Figure 16).

Aboriginal people reported the impact of the threats on an 11-point scale from 0 ‘No impact’ meaning ‘you never noticed it’ to 10 ‘Severe impact’ meaning ‘it always affects your experience to the point that you had to stop doing the activity’.

At a statewide level, all threats were perceived to have a major impact on cultural connections. Average impact scores ranged between 7.4 and 8.2 (Figure 17).

More than three-quarters of Aboriginal people rated the impact of all threats as ‘major’ (i.e. a score between 7 and 9 out of 10) or ‘severe’ (i.e. a score of 10 out of 10) (Figure 16).

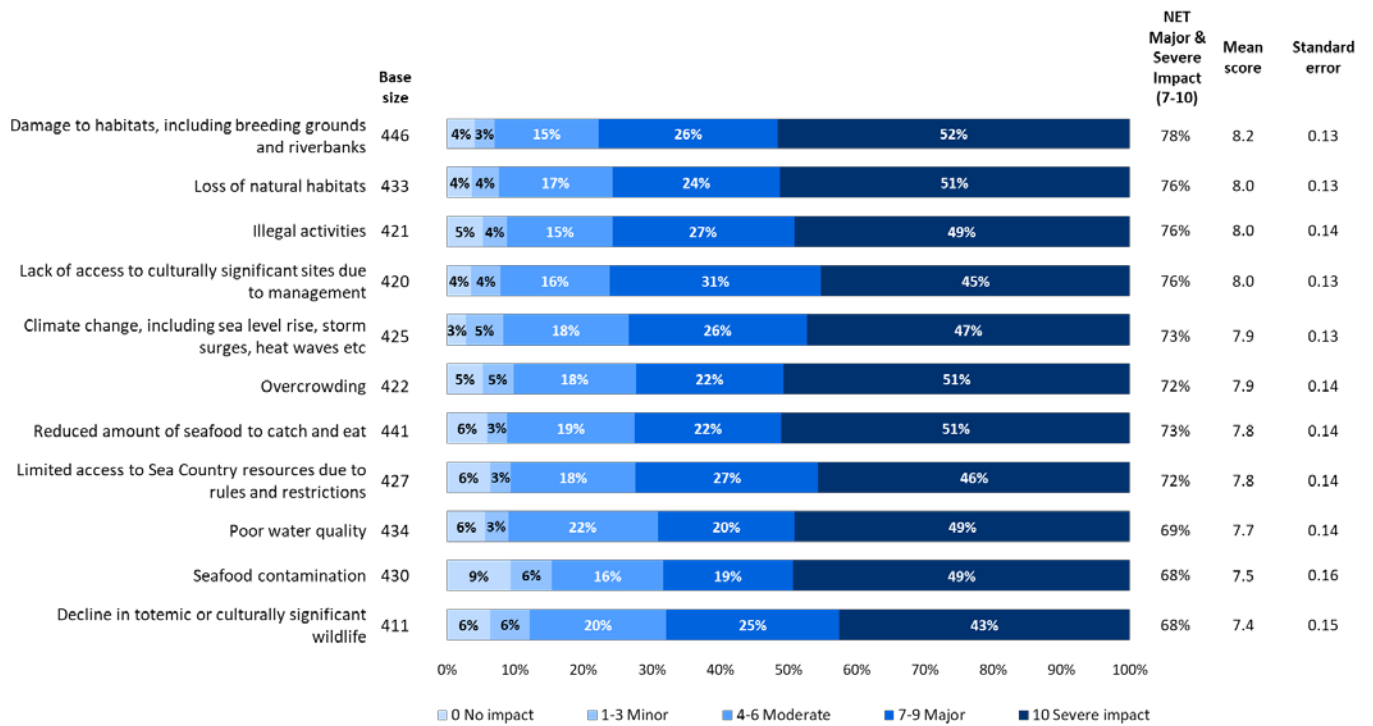
The highest ‘net’ percentages were observed for:

- Damage to habitats, including breeding grounds and riverbanks (78%)
- Loss of natural habitats (76%)
- Illegal activities (76%)
- Lack of access to culturally significant sites due to management (76%).

And the lowest ‘net’ percentages were observed for:

- Decline in totemic or culturally significant wildlife (68%)
- Seafood contamination (68%).

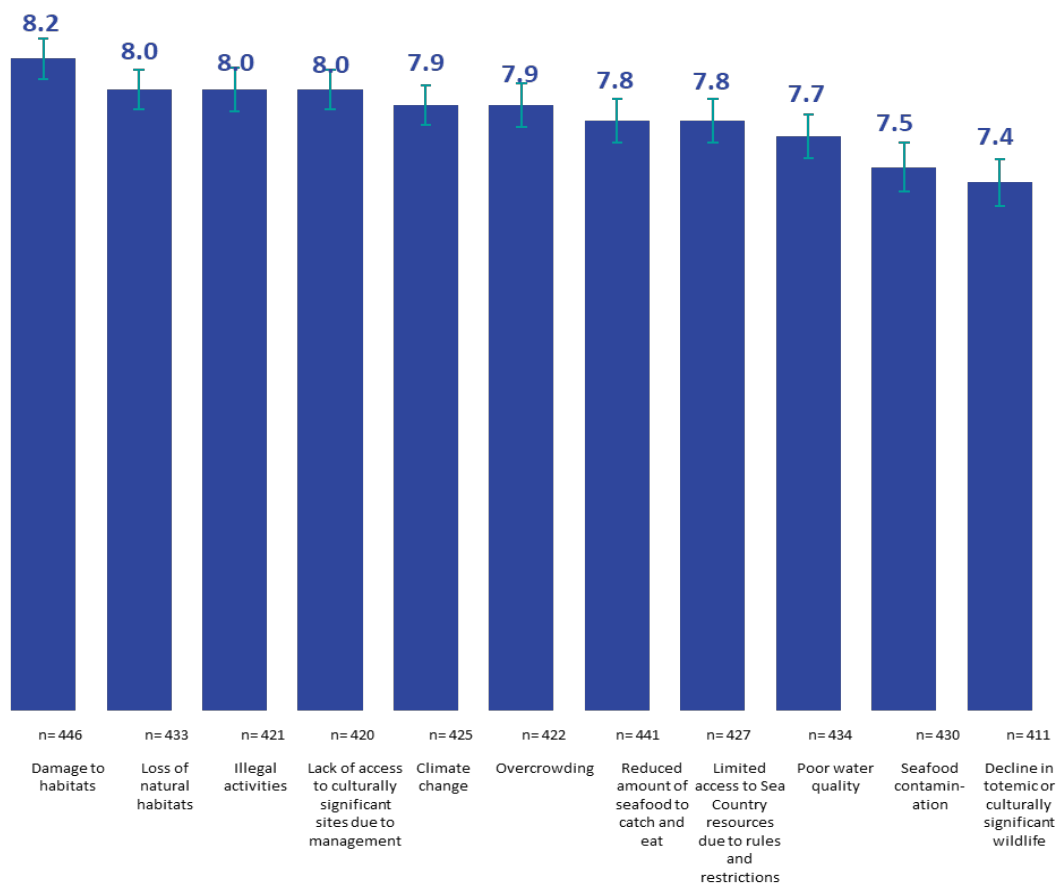
Figure 16. Impacts of key threats to cultural connections with Sea Country at a statewide level



Base: n = 411 – 446 Aboriginal coastal residents

Q14. How much of an impact do you think the following aspects currently have on your cultural connections to Sea Country in your local area?

Figure 17. Impacts of key threats to cultural connections with Sea Country mean score and standard at a statewide level



Base: n = 411 – 446 Aboriginal coastal residents

Q14. How much of an impact do you think the following aspects currently have on your cultural connections to Sea Country in your local area?

### Location differences

Aboriginal people of Coffs Harbour and Port Stephens were more likely to report that almost all threats prompted in the survey were having a greater impact on their cultural connection to Sea Country. On the other hand, Aboriginal people of Newcastle reported that the threats were having a significantly less impact on their connection to Sea Country (Table 8).

### Age group differences

Aboriginal people aged 50+ years were more likely to report that most threats were impacting their cultural connection, with a significantly lower average score recorded for these threats. Younger Aboriginal people aged 18–29 were less likely to report loss of natural habitats (7.5) and lack of access to culturally significant sites due to management (7.4) were impacting their cultural connection.

Table 8. Impacts of key threats to cultural connections with Sea Country at a statewide level, and by location and age

	Mean score														
	State Wide	Areas of Sea Country											Age		
		Ballina	Coffs Harbour	Kempsey	Port Macquarie	Port Stephens	Newcastle	Gosford	La Perouse	Wollongong	Moruya	Eden	18-29 years	30-49 years	50+ years
Base	446	46	56	20	46	79	47	26	38	21	46	21	130	172	137
Damage to habitats, including breeding grounds and riverbanks	8.2	8.7	9.1▲	8.5	8.0	9.2▲	8.0	6.7	8.4	7.5	7.0▼	5.8	7.8	8.2	8.5
Base	433	41	55	18	45	78	44	29	36	23	43	21	128	170	130
Loss of natural habitats	8.0	8.8	8.8▲	8.1	7.6	9.5▲	6.3▼	6.9	8.8	7.8	7.0	6.2	7.5▼	7.9	8.8▲
Base	421	42	53	19	43	79	41	29	38	20	37	20	122	166	128
Illegal activities	8.0	9.0▲	9.2▲	6.9	7.5	9.3▲	6.8	7.1	8.3	7.8	6.2▼	6.6	7.5	8.0	8.5
Base	420	42	55	15	43	76	41	25	38	23	43	19	126	165	124
Lack of access to culturally significant sites due to management	8.0	8.9▲	9.0▲	7.7	7.6	8.8▲	5.9▼	6.5	8.5	7.7	8.4	6.2	7.4▼	7.9	8.7▲
Base	425	45	56	19	45	77	39	28	37	21	41	17	126	168	126
Climate change, including sea level rise, storm surges, heat waves etc	7.9	8.5	9.0▲	8.0	7.6	9.0▲	6.1▼	6.8	7.9	7.8	7.0	6.5	7.5	7.8	8.5▲
Base	422	43	47	19	45	77	40	29	39	23	40	20	119	171	128
Overcrowding	7.9	7.7	9.3▲	7.4	7.8	9.5▲	4.8▼	7.2	8.4	8.3	7.3	5.8	7.4	7.8	8.4
Base	441	43	56	17	46	78	41	29	40	23	46	22	125	174	136
Reduced amount of seafood to catch and eat	7.8	8.8▲	9.1▲	7.5	7.3	9.6▲	4.6▼	5.8	8.2	7.5	7.5	6.9	7.6	7.7	8.3
Base	427	44	54	18	43	80	40	25	37	24	43	19	129	168	125
Limited access to Sea Country resources due to rules and restrictions	7.8	8.3	8.5	7.1	7.6	9.3▲	4.7▼	6.0	8.2	7.8	7.9	6.2	7.6	7.6	8.3▲
Base	434	45	55	19	44	75	41	30	40	21	43	21	128	173	127
Poor water quality	7.7	8.4	8.4	6.8	7.3	9.4▲	5.3▼	6.3	8.8▲	7.3	6.4▼	6.8	7.7	7.3	8.3▲
Base	430	46	54	17	44	76	41	28	40	21	42	21	129	168	127
Seafood contamination	7.5	8.7▲	8.9▲	7.6	7.1	9.6▲	3.3▼	5.4	8.9▲	7.4	5.9▼	5.2	7.1	7.2	8.1▲
Base	411	41	56	13	43	78	40	26	35	20	39	20	123	160	123
Decline in totemic or culturally significant wildlife	7.4	7.7	8.5▲	7.2	7.2	9.1▲	4.9▼	5.9	8.5▲	7.0	6.0▼	5.9	7.0	7.4	7.9

Base: n = 411 – 446 Aboriginal coastal residents

Q14. How much of an impact do you think the following aspects currently have on your cultural connections to Sea Country in your local area?

Note: Significance testing was not conducted on base sizes less than n = 30.

### 2.7.1 Key threats – factors impacting experiences

The following section provides an overview of the main aspects of experience that were mentioned by Aboriginal people collectively when asked to describe in more detail how that aspect had impacted their cultural connection to Sea Country. Due to the low number of open-ended responses provided, these findings will be analysed qualitatively with a selection of verbatim quotes.

#### Damage to habitats, including breeding grounds and riverbanks

Aboriginal people frequently mentioned the destructive impact of four-wheel drive vehicles as a key aspect of this threat. Four-wheel drives were reported to have a highly damaging effect on habitat, wildlife and culturally significant sites along shorelines. Firmer restrictions, such as reducing the number of vehicles on the shoreline at one time, were seen as a way to minimise this damage.

The following verbatim quotes describe this in more detail:

*“Illegal driving on the shores of the ocean damaging habitat and wildlife.”*

*“Stop four-wheel driving in national parks as they have no respect and don't know what they could be driving over, as many sites are only known by Elders and significant tribes.”*

*“I understand that people want to do four-wheel driving, it needs to be in a controlled manner. Stockton beach and areas south of the Great Lakes need more control on the four-wheel drive recreational users. I am sure there are other areas too. Damaging sand dunes damages habitats and animals.”*

*“Too many drivers not respecting our cultural places. There should be more signage to indicate this place is a spiritual place and has a connection to our stories of significance.”*

Land clearing was also mentioned by some as a cause of damage to habitats on Sea Country.

The following verbatim quote describes this in more detail:

*“The clearing of our Country with no regard for our fauna and flora or special sites.”*

*“Seagrass is habitat and anchors damage them.”*

*“Cutting down of our native forests, more roads. Heavy rain leads to degradation. Rubbish in our waterways killing our wildlife.”*

Crucially, this damage to Sea Country habitats was described as having a significant emotional, spiritual and cultural impact on Aboriginal peoples, affecting their wellbeing and ability to enjoy and spend time on Sea Country.

The following verbatim quotes describe this in more detail:

*“Makes me angry to see natural grounds being damaged.”*

*“Emotionally, culturally, my wellbeing is reduced due to this.”*

*“Because our community respected the land, as we use it for our food purposes, it was always good to us, but now as it has been developed, the wildlife and sea life are no longer around.”*

*“Again, it's disheartening to find the destruction of midden sites by four-wheel drives and development. It makes me resentful that more isn't done by government to stop this from happening.”*

## Loss of natural habitats

Aboriginal people highlighted many aspects of natural habitat loss on Sea Country. Development was a key contributing factor, leading to negative impacts such as loss of significant cultural sites such as middens and loss of totemic species. This further leads to difficulty connecting with Sea Country and a lack of places for quiet reflection and spiritual practices.

The following verbatim quotes describe this in more detail:

*“Special sites get destroyed by development. Wetlands get filled in for development. Housing estates are built on what used to be wetlands.”*

*“Loss of middens along the shorelines.”*

*“Any loss of natural habitats ruins Country, therefore again making it harder for us to connect with Country. Those old people and spirits may no longer be there.”*

*“No quiet places to go to.”*

*“Like I said before with the loss of habitats, there is a loss of totems and loss of self.”*

Natural habitat loss was also reported to impact on cultural food collection practices such as fishing and diving, and changes in Sea Country environments have led to a decline in bush tucker in some areas. The wider impacts of these changes were also highlighted, with these population declines known to impact other aspects of the environment and other species.

The following verbatim quotes describe this in more detail:

*“Unable to collect traditional food due to change in environment.”*

*“There are areas that we used to fish and dive. Some of those places can't be accessed because of development like housing estates.”*

*“Elders told us about the way they hunted and fished in the younger days and now are unable to hunt or fish as there are little animals about because of the habitats.”*

*“Less and less Country to collect bush tucker. Bush tucker foods are declining.”*

*“Loss of local species and reduction of populations makes it harder to find fish and is bad for environment and resources.”*

*“When habitat is lost, it further contributes to the decline in those species reliant on that habitat. This affects Country and in turn affects community.”*

## Illegal activities

Aboriginal people raised the illegal activity of vandalising culturally significant sites as a key aspect of this threat. This threat impacted on cultural connections including feelings of disrespect, inability to enjoy these sites for cultural practices such as dancing and other forms of connection with Sea Country, lack of access to these sites following vandalism, and destruction of stories passed down from their ancestors.

The following verbatim quotes describe this in more detail:

*“Community gaining illegal access to some of our sites are vandalising and impacting the wildlife, plant species, and middens.”*

*“Mainly vandalism of sites for me personally, as there are cultural sites we utilise to dance and can't use those sites until they are fixed due to the risk of harm. It's also embarrassing that these sites are graffitied.”*

*“Vandalism of sites is painful to see and prevents us connecting with culture and the land without the natural ways. It makes us on-edge and not comfortable in certain areas.”*

*“Vandalism of sacred sites by people who do not respect Aboriginal culture and beliefs.”*

*“Vandalism to our sites ruins them, the stories on those sites are no longer clear.”*

*“Can't access some places as they have been closed off due to misuse and abuse of the sites.”*

Illegal fishing and illegal driving were also described as having a negative impact on connections to Sea Country.

The following verbatim quotes describe this in more detail:

*“Overfishing is very annoying. No one should take more than they need.”*

*“I feel shame when other Aboriginal people abuse cultural licences. They understand the significance of taking only what is needed. When they take the little mutton fish, they ruin it for others.”*

*“Taking away a food source that my family needs, as the price of food is so high.”*

*“Because of the misuse of vehicles along the beaches, which destroy the sand dunes and sacred sites.”*

As previously mentioned by Aboriginal people, education was seen as crucial to reducing the impact and incidence of illegal activities on Sea Country, with more teachings needed around the importance of Aboriginal sites and for information to be shared within communities by Elders to help some community members foster a healthier connection with Sea Country.

The following verbatim quotes describe this in more detail:

*“Educational programs are needed to share our special places, so people understand it’s a place of respect, not to be destroyed in any way.”*

*“Need to educate people about the importance of Aboriginal sites.”*

*“We need more information and connection and stories to be told by people or Elders.”*

### Lack of access to culturally significant sites due to management

Aboriginal people saw the privatisation of Sea Country land as a key aspect of this threat. This was described as having a serious impact on their cultural identity, as land that has been passed down through generations is no longer accessible or blocked by private land owners, negatively impacting their cultural identity.

The following verbatim quotes describe this in more detail:

*“There are sites that are on private lands and the community are no longer able to visit. This disadvantages the passing down of traditional culture.”*

*“Mostly through private ownership and development, not just of sites themselves but also land that blocks the way there.”*

*“Some culturally significant sites are either locked up or on private property, which damages our identity.”*

Lack of access to culturally significant sites has also impacted traditional food collection practices, hindering or completely restricting ancestral hunting and gathering traditions, while others from the wider community may still have access to certain areas.

The following verbatim quotes describe this in more detail:

*“Not being able to hunt and gather, being restricted, not feeling my freedom on Country.”*

*“No access to the culture we were brought up with, certain places our ancestors have showed us to hunt and gather.”*

*“Aboriginal people not given fair access to land.”*



Lack of access to culturally significant sites has also prevented some Aboriginal people from undertaking practices that care for Sea Country and participating in cultural visits and learnings, damaging their connection to Sea Country.

The following verbatim quotes describe this in more detail:

*“The inability to access some sites means local Aboriginal communities can't care for sacred sites.”*

*“Not being able to visit places that family always used to go to for many years.”*

*“Not being able to visit our sites prevents us from learning our stories. And ultimately stopping us from connecting with our Culture.”*

*To improve access, adjustments to rules, particularly regarding registrations and permits, were suggested as an option to remove barriers to connecting with Sea Country.*

The following verbatim quotes describe this in more detail:

*“Need rules changed for us to get access to all our cultural significant sites.”*

*“I have not been able to access the council land behind my house for bush regeneration unless I register with land care, which should not be the case for an Aboriginal person.”*

### Climate change (including sea level rise, storm surges, heat waves, etc.)

Aboriginal people described a range of impacts stemming from climate change. Unprecedented heat waves were reported to have devastated native tree populations, and damage from storm surges has caused farmland topsoil to be washed away into local rivers and creeks, impacting habitats and water flows.

The following verbatim quotes describe this in more detail:

*“I have seen the now destruction of our native trees to heat waves, never previously seen.”*

*“Our river and creeks are clogged up with farmland topsoil, which causes tide marks.”*

More specifically, Aboriginal people explained how the damage from extreme climate events such as fire, flood, and drought have led to severe erosion and pollution, which has damaged culturally significant sites and restricted access to these sites.

The following verbatim quotes describe this in more detail:

*“Through the destruction of our sacred sites by fire or flood, or the damage caused to habitat through drought and mismanagement.”*

*“Sea level rising can ruin and cover our rock engraving sites, impacting our ability to visit those places. Storm surges and climate change also cause erosion on sandstone, where most of our sites are.”*

*“Dune erosion, storm pollution on beaches, closing lakes, sand movement on beaches.”*

*“Erosion of sand dunes and culture sites due to these environmental events reduces ability to access sites.”*

*The negative impact of climate change on Sea Country fish and animals – stemming from habitat damage, loss and high water temperatures – was also highlighted.*

The following verbatim quotes describe this in more detail:

*“The changing climate ... can affect the connections and resources of the animals surrounding the land.”*  
*“I have noticed our waters are becoming warmer and this would be impacting upon the animals in our waters. This has made me sad to think about the ecological impact this will have.”*

The impact of climate change on future generations was also strongly felt, with some describing how climate change related environmental damage will affect their ability to pass down traditional teachings to future generations and others, highlighting how future generations will be affected by their damaged environment.

The following verbatim quotes describe this in more detail:

*“It will affect our way of teaching traditional ways to our young people in the future.”*  
*“Climate change is ruining the environment for the next generations. This impacts on how we can teach the young ones about the environment.”*  
*“Yes, I believe in climate change. We need to make changes now, otherwise it will affect everyone in the future.”*

## Overcrowding

Increased pressure on and damage to the natural environment from overcrowding were reported as a key impact on cultural connections.

The following verbatim quotes describe this in more detail:

*“Overcrowding is a problem. We have more and more houses being built. The population is increasing, and our natural supply of fish, oysters and pipis is declining.”*  
*“The clearing of land in order for our population means more pollution added to our ecosystems and environment.”*  
*“So many people making erosion and incidental damage worse.”*  
*“Overcrowding is overuse of the land and leads to human-related changes and damages and does not allow natural caring and healing, thus reducing the cultural connectivity.”*  
*“Too many people are trying to access various Sea Country sites and are illegally parking and damaging the area with their vehicles.”*

Another aspect of overcrowding highlighted by Aboriginal people was the impact of an increasing population and housing density on access to important places and how they undertake cultural and spiritual practices. The loss of privacy and access to quiet places to enjoy Sea Country are also mentioned, impacting how people connect to Sea Country and their overall wellbeing.

The following verbatim quotes describe this in more detail:

*“No quiet places to go to learn.”*  
*“Reduced access to culturally significant areas and reduces my ability to undertake culturally important practices.”*  
*“Competition, more difficult to practice cultural practices.”*

*“No longer privacy to conduct ceremony at our coastal sites.”*

*“When our Sea Country is overcrowded, it is hard for us to deeply connect with Country. A part of connecting with Country is sitting quietly and listening to Country.”*

### Reduced amount of seafood to catch and eat

Aboriginal people explained how they had noticed a strong decline in seafood over the years, with past stories of abundant seafood starkly contrasting with current populations. Declines in pipi, octopus and stingray populations were highlighted. Pollution, overdevelopment, overcrowding, overfishing and habitat change were mentioned as possible causes for the decline in seafood. This can impact cultural connections and the ongoing practice of traditional fishing practices.

The following verbatim quotes describe this in more detail:

*“Over the years, it is getting harder to catch fish.”*

*“Unable to catch seafood as I did when I was younger and now it is harder to collect because of habitat being changed.”*

*“There used to be plenty of beaches to get a feed of pipis. That's gone and that's sad. I grew up on pipis. Too many people and too much development.”*

*“Due to overfishing, there are less resources for us to culturally fish and access, thus reducing our cultural activities.”*

*“Can't connect with larger family gatherings and harvest from the land sustainably.”*

Specifically, the decline in seafood populations was noted as directly impacting on Aboriginal peoples' lifestyles and wellbeing, as it is now more difficult to catch a good feed. As freshly caught seafood from Sea Country has been a key part of Aboriginal peoples' diet for thousands of years, losing these resources has had a severe impact on them and their families.

The following verbatim quotes describe this in more detail:

*“Struggle with this because this is community's way of life and if we can't catch a good feed we can't eat and my family starves.”*

*“Price of seafood going up, can't afford.”*

*“Loss of our dignity and food resources.”*

*“Restricted numbers of catch to distribute to family.”*

*“These days we have to buy most of our food instead of collecting from the lands around us because of loss of habit and extraction.”*

### Limited access to Sea Country resources due to rules and restrictions

A key aspect of this threat highlighted by Aboriginal people was how limited access to Sea Country resources (due to rules and restrictions) makes it very difficult to undertake significant cultural practices such as burials, and day-to-day practices such as fishing, gathering and camping.

The following verbatim quotes describe this in more detail:

*“Limits Aboriginal people from keeping cultural connection and practices, fishing and gathering and camping, access.”*

*“Cultural events and gatherings are affected by this.”*

*“Limits family during events and cultural feasts.”*

*“Where we do our burials, we have to get permission from the council and national parks and escort us to the areas. We can't just go there if we want. Too many formalities and we should just go there if we want. We got bones back repatriation and we had to go through all this red tape just to do it. We have to get permission, which is not right.”*

*The accessibility of boat licences was also highlighted as having a negative impact on connecting to Sea Country, as some Aboriginal people can't afford a boat and a licence, which restricts their ability to visit specific areas of Sea Country.*

The following verbatim quotes describe this in more detail:

*“Need for a boat licence is impossible for me to gain, as I can't afford it or a boat to get there, therefore restricting where I can visit to connect.”*

*“Cost of boat and boat licence, and abalone and lobster limits, don't allow us to feed community.”*

*Fishing restrictions on culturally significant species such as pipis and traditional fishing methods such as spearing, netting and trapping also have a negative impact. At the same time, limits to the amount of seafood that can be collected can mean some cannot collect enough to feed their families.*

The following verbatim quotes describe this in more detail:

*“Not being able to collect pipis for personal consumption.”*

*“Placing restrictions on cultural fishing practices such as spearing, netting, trapping.”*

*“With limited bags, we are unable to feed our families, and a disengagement is happening with society between Aboriginal families.”*

In regard to revising current rules and restrictions to be more sensitive to Aboriginal culture, some highlight that, while rules are needed, they should be decided in collaboration with Aboriginal people to reduce the negative impact on their people and culture.

The following verbatim quotes describe this in more detail:

*“I understand rules are needed. Rules should be made in consultation with Aboriginal people.”*

*“More government organisations need to work with us to ensure the lands are being looked after.”*

## Poor water quality

Aboriginal people described the threat of poor water quality directly impacting on their Sea Country food resources due to a decline in quality and quantity of food and greater difficulty catching seafood due to reduced visibility. Pollution was highlighted as a key causal factor due to run-off, large development sites, contamination of water by chemicals and bacteria.

The following verbatim quotes describe this in more detail:

*“This has affected the quality and quantity of foods provided by Sea Country.”*

*“More pollution in and around the wetlands, rivers, headlands, lakeside, etc. Large development sites near water ways are increasing risk to destroy our natural food source with harmful chemicals and bacteria.”*

*“Can't see the fish in the water, so can't use old gathering method of suffocating the water with wattle leaves.”*

*“Runoff going into natural fish traps.”*

*“Sewage and runoff destroying any chance of eating our local fishes.”*

*“With oil spills, cars on the roads and sewerage runoff, the water quality has declined over the last 30 years.”*

Poor water quality also impacts Aboriginal peoples' cultural practices involving water, such as cleansing ceremonies and other cultural activities in the water and along the shorelines. Due to unclean water, these practices are avoided due to health concerns, while poor water quality was also noted as dangerous for Sea Country fish and animals.

The following verbatim quotes describe this in more detail:

*“If the water quality is poor this prevents me from swimming. The beach is a form of cleansing, like a cultural smoking ceremony. Cleansing away bad energy is a part of our culture.”*

*“Less likely to conduct cultural activities due to health concerns.”*

*“Poor water quality leads to extinction of animals. As an Aboriginal person, of course I am concerned about all animals, all of the environment. Destroy the waterways and the water quality and the culture is being destroyed.”*

*“The runoff is what turns us off eating the oyster in them areas, and near the sewage.”*

*“Unable to collect oysters and mussels off the rocks because they could have some kinds of toxins inside.”*

*“This is painful when it is from development of land and areas. Cultural connectivity can be with the land and sea.”*

## Seafood contamination

Many aspects of seafood contamination were highlighted as having a negative impact on Aboriginal peoples' lifestyles and health. Some described how local Sea Country seafood was contaminated, meaning they had to travel to fish and gather, while others highlighted the potential causes of seafood contamination, including floods, leading to run-off of debris and hazardous chemicals.

The following verbatim quotes describe this in more detail:

*“Don't get to eat our local seafood. We have to travel elsewhere to gather because of the contamination, which damages the habitat and makes bad water quality.”*

*“Pipis, oysters and other seafood have been contaminated from the floods, with runoff of debris, pesticides and chemicals in the water.”*

*“It's hard to gauge the quality of the shellfish, so sometimes we choose not to eat them in case it's full of toxins.”*

Seafood contamination was also described as directly impacting Aboriginal peoples' connections to Sea Country, restricting or preventing consumption of traditional foods that have been shared in Aboriginal communities for thousands of years.

The following verbatim quotes describe this in more detail:

*"Reduces the availability of culturally significant foods, which impacts carrying on cultural traditions and knowledge-sharing for future generations."*

*"Not being able to eat traditional foods, as they are contaminated, stops us from practising traditional culture."*

*"When the oyster farms and natural oysters were polluted in Narooma, it had a huge impact on cultural activities. This also happened on the North Coast."*

Others also raised the impact this threat has on their health, with contamination leading to a more restricted, less healthy diet.

The following verbatim quotes describe this in more detail:

*"Less things to eat, not good for my diet."*

*"Lack of healthy food source for cultural events and eating."*

### Decline in totemic or culturally significant wildlife

Aboriginal people also described how declines in totemic or culturally significant wildlife impacted them and their community. Many reported that sightings of totemic or culturally significant wildlife were much rarer now and that this has broader impacts on the health of Sea Country. Perceived causes included development, overcrowding, recreation and providing more public access to certain areas of Sea Country, in addition to low awareness of the cultural significance of this wildlife for Aboriginal people.

The following verbatim quotes describe this in more detail:

*"Whales don't come in anymore. The Bare Island seahorses are rare now."*

*"They have opened up the riverside banks, making it accessible for more people to use but losing places for animals to breed, as they don't have protection."*

*"Development and population growth to Sea Country areas without understanding cultural significance."*

*"We don't have many olphins in our waters anymore because of overpopulation, which is sad because they are recorded all over the rock as an important totem."*

*"This has had a massive impact on how we look at the environment. Just imagine if each town had a totem that they had to protect, just imagine the impact."*

*"As more people are wanting to use Sea Country for recreation, I have personally noticed a decline in fish numbers and sizes. If a small section of the population is looking after Country ... but a large number aren't, it can be very disheartening and mentally fatiguing."*

*"People's lack of understanding of totems and the significant meaning of totems to our culture."*

More specifically, the cultural and spiritual impact of the decline in these species was described as a loss of cultural identity and as having a substantial negative impact on Aboriginal peoples' mental and emotional health.

The following verbatim quotes describe this in more detail:

*"Loss of cultural identity."*

*"All Sea Country wildlife is important to us. We dance and sing for these animals. So, decline in wildlife impacts us mentally."*

*"Emotional and spiritual wellbeing is being impacted by the decline."*

*"I would sit on the beach and listen to the story that my grandfather would tell me about how they would fish and hunt turtles for dinner and all the mob would help gather food, either from the sea or around the area, but these days you are lucky if you see a turtle in the sea."*

The future impacts of these current declines were also raised as being a concern, with Aboriginal people describing how they worry this important wildlife won't be able to survive long enough for future generations to learn from and connect with.

The following verbatim quotes describe this in more detail:

*"Yeah, it impacts me because our kids won't see it the way we see it."*

*"I want to see more wildlife thrive, and for future generations."*

*"Less sightings of whales and dolphins. Possibility of losing that connection for our kids."*

## 2.8 Perceptions of/attitudes to Sea Country management

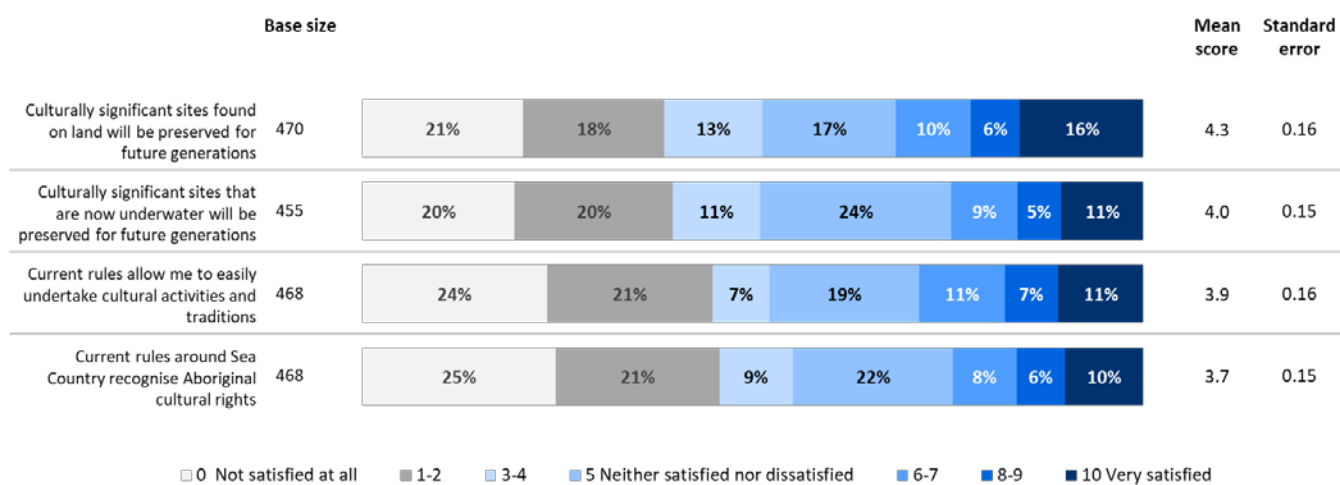
### 2.8.1 Satisfaction with Sea Country management

Aboriginal people were asked to rate their satisfaction with a set of statements on Sea Country management on a scale from 0 'Not satisfied at all' to 10 'Very satisfied' (Figure 18).

At a statewide level, Aboriginal people were dissatisfied with many components of Sea Country management, with at least one in 5 (20%) reporting they were 'not satisfied at all' (a score of 0 out of 10).

Aboriginal people were mostly dissatisfied with the statement that current rules around Sea Country recognise Aboriginal cultural rights (3.7). A similar level of dissatisfaction was also reported for the statement that current rules allow me to easily undertake cultural activities and traditions (3.9). Slightly lower dissatisfaction was reported for the statements that culturally significant sites that are now underwater will be preserved for future generations (4.0) and culturally significant sites found on land will be preserved for future generations (4.3).

Figure 18. Satisfaction with Sea Country management at a statewide level



Base: n = 455 – 470 Aboriginal coastal residents

Q16. Thinking about Sea Country in your local area, how satisfied are you with each of the following aspects?

### Location differences

Aboriginal people of Port Stephens were most likely to be dissatisfied by all aspects of Sea Country management (Table 9). Similar findings were observed among Aboriginal people of Coffs Harbour, who were more likely to be dissatisfied by most aspects of Sea Country management. In contrast, Aboriginal people of Newcastle were less likely to report dissatisfaction, indicating that they are neither satisfied nor dissatisfied.

### Age group differences

Aboriginal people aged 50+ years were more likely to report dissatisfaction that current rules allow them to easily undertake cultural activities and traditions (3.2).



Table 9. Satisfaction with Sea Country management at a statewide level, and by location and age

	Mean score														
	State wide	Areas of Sea Country											Age		
		Ballina	Coffs Harbour	Kempsey	Port Macquarie	Port Stephens	Newcastle	Gosford	La Perouse	Wollongong	Moruya	Eden	18-29 years	30-49 years	50+ years
Base	470	49	58	27	46	74	49	32	44	27	44	20	140	181	143
Culturally significant sites found on land will be preserved for future generations	4.3	4.5	3.7	5.3	5.0	2.1▼	5.7▲	4.1	4.2	5.1	4.2	6.6	4.4	4.7	3.7
Base	455	48	57	22	42	75	47	30	41	27	49	17	137	167	145
Culturally significant sites that are now underwater will be preserved for future generations	4.0	5.0	2.9▼	5.5	4.1	2.3▼	4.8	3.6	3.8	5.4	4.2	6.5	4.2	4.2	3.6
Base	468	48	58	25	44	73	48	28	45	28	54	17	136	181	145
Current rules allow me to easily undertake cultural activities and traditions	3.9	4.2	2.5▼	5.5	4.6	1.9▼	5.3▲	4.6	4.7	5.3	3.2	6.2	4.5	4.1	3.2▼
Base	468	49	53	24	47	75	50	31	45	27	50	17	137	179	146
Current rules around Sea Country recognise Aboriginal cultural rights	3.7	4.1	2.7▼	5.3	4.5	2.1▼	4.7▲	4.0	4.0	4.6	2.8	6.4	4.2	3.7	3.2

Base: n = 470 Aboriginal coastal residents

Q16. Thinking about Sea Country in your local area, how satisfied are you with each of the following aspects?

Note: Significance testing was not conducted on base sizes less than n = 30.

### 2.8.2 Impacts of Sea Country management on cultural connections

Aboriginal people who were dissatisfied with management were asked how the particular aspect of management had impacted their cultural connection to Sea Country.

#### Culturally significant sites found on land will be preserved for future generations

Overdevelopment was frequently mentioned by Aboriginal people as a factor in their dissatisfaction that culturally significant sites on land will be preserved for future generations. Aboriginal people reported that governments and non-Aboriginal organisations have an inadequate understanding of their culturally significant sites on land and that sites have been cleared and destroyed without consultation with their communities and Elders. This has negatively impacted efforts to build trust between their communities, the government, and non-Aboriginal organisations.

The following verbatim quotes describe this in more detail:

*“Lots of special places have been destroyed by development all around Australia. We don't trust government systems when we get no respect to share our real heart matters. Just simply not hearing our voices.”*

*“Sites are being lost due to landholders not understanding the cultures and stories of local peoples.”*

*“There is no plan to preserve cultural sites, and development also impacts their preservation.”*

*“Sites are being lost due to landholders not understanding the cultures and stories of local peoples.”*

*“Some key sites are recognised, but others are ignored when it is not convenient for development, the council or people in charge.”*

*“Many sites are being cleared and they have not consulted Elders or community members who are from this land, as they know where sites are.”*

*“Because only the sites that don't inconvenience the dominant culture will be preserved and that isn't very many.”*

Aboriginal people also explained how they felt the Sea Country rules and regulations inhibited their ability to undertake activities that enable them to care for and preserve Sea Country. They also felt that environmental changes, and damage caused by pollution, had a negative impact on being able to preserve these culturally significant sites for future generations. Some thought more funding would help provide the resources needed to keep Sea Country healthy.

The following verbatim quotes describe this in more detail:

*“Current rules do not allow for full preservation of cultural land in the area.”*

*“No, because we have to go through all this red tape.”*

*“Pollution and lack of care and knowledge about our significant sites.”*

*“Not at all, we need better funding to support out ancestor sites on shorelines and maintain the area.”*

### Culturally significant sites that are now underwater will be preserved for future generations

Aboriginal people highlighted a widespread lack of recognition and understanding of the cultural significance of Sea Country as a key factor in why their underwater sites are under threat and why they may not be preserved for future generations. Some believed it was easier to ignore damage to cultural sites and areas of Sea Country that are underwater, as they are far less visible than land-based sites and areas. Lack of consultation by relevant government departments and organisations was also mentioned. Some believed greater education of the wider community could help raise awareness of Sea Country's significance to Aboriginal communities.

The following verbatim quotes describe this in more detail:

*“There is insufficient recognition given [by Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal people/organisations] to the traditional cultural value and significance of Sea Country to Aboriginal people, and society broadly fails to recognise the importance of Sea Country to everyone's sense of place and value of life now.”*

*“Nothing that holds cultural significance to Aboriginal people is respected and recognised by the Australian population as significant. This has been displayed in the past with treatment and management of Aboriginal cultural sites.”*

*“Shark habitats off Bass Point are being destroyed by mining. I think the councils and governments really don't care about what the public cannot see. Cultural sites that are underwater won't be preserved.”*

*“How will the council look after our things? There is no accountability.”*

*“No, because we don't even get told.”*

*“They need to educate the people about Aboriginal sites.”*

### Current rules allow me to easily undertake cultural activities and traditions

Aboriginal people mentioned that current Sea Country rules were impacting important cultural practices, such as cultural fishing. Negative impacts include fears of being fined, traditional activities requiring permits and licences, being unable to collect food in a traditional way, and being unable to access certain areas of Sea Country.

The following verbatim quotes describe this in more detail:

*"I fear I will be fined whenever I hunt."*

*"Due to the rules by white man, we are no longer able to practice our traditional way of collecting food."*

*"Current rules do not allow Aboriginal peoples to fish and undertake cultural activities without applying for permits and licences and comfortably practising events and gathering on the land and sea."*

*"Many places we have gone to do cultural activities are now blocked off or got gates now, with no access to the sites because of rules."*

*Aboriginal peoples also described how current rules do not allow them to pass down and teach cultural knowledge related to food collection (such as trapping) and other kinds of cultural Sea Country activities that would otherwise be shared as a community.*

*"I cannot show my younger family and community members the way our community sources our food from the sea with traditional trappings."*

*"Yes, rules are a big problem when it comes to taking my grandchildren out to teach cultural activities, and others."*

*"There is currently a prohibition on harvesting pipis. Our children are not learning about their culture and the importance of this food in our diet and stories."*

*"Stops our mob doing cultural practices as a community and mob."*

*"No Cultural Rights recognised."*

### Current rules around Sea Country recognise Aboriginal cultural rights

Many factors were highlighted by Aboriginal people when explaining their satisfaction with how current rules around Sea Country recognise their cultural rights. Dissatisfaction was being driven by key barriers, including negative past experiences with government employees such as compliance officers, in addition to the police, when carrying out traditional cultural practices on Sea Country.

The following verbatim quotes describe aspects of this threat in more detail:

*"Our youth can't fish in peace without rangers harassing them."*

*"When I was younger, I could jump in the water and get a feed for my mum, my dad and myself. Now I'm scared to go to jail."*

*"Doesn't take in our cultural needs and values."*

More specifically, rules and regulations were perceived by many as being based on a lack of understanding of their culture and their connection with Sea Country.

Some thought greater awareness of the regulations could be achieved by providing more information at a community level.

*“No, because of costs and access of permits, licences, etc.”*

*“Not aware on all our fishing rights. More information shared in our community would be good.”*

*“No, they don't. We have to get permission.”*

*“The rules should not apply to my people. We own the land and the water resources.”*

The lack of past opportunities to discuss Sea Country rules and management with the government and non-Aboriginal organisations also contributed to feelings of dissatisfaction.

*“Need to give more say in cultural sites to be protected.”*

*“Lack of opportunities for First Peoples.”*

*“No one has ever been consulted in our community around sea life, etc.”*

*“Simply, why tell us not to eat what we catch at water's edge at the beach or inlet. We are only doing what we know. It's our freedom.”*

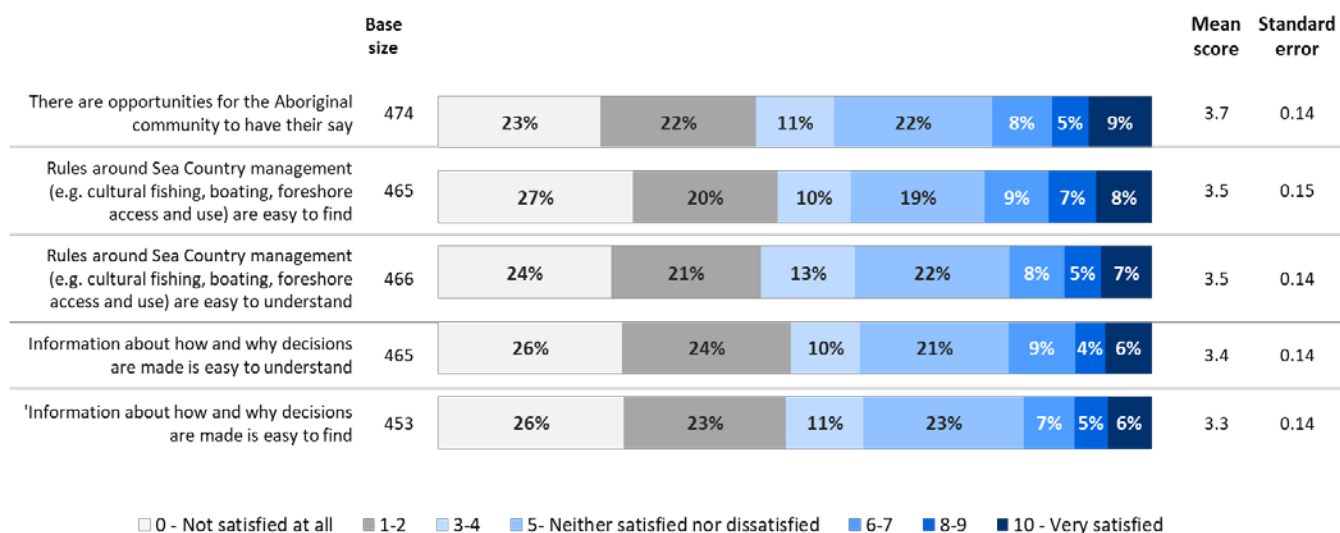
### **2.8.3 Satisfaction with engagement and communication on Sea Country management**

To understand Aboriginal people's satisfaction with engagement and communication from NSW Government agencies on how their local Sea Country area is managed, Aboriginal people were asked to rate their satisfaction with a set of statements on a scale from 0 'Not satisfied at all' to 10 'Very satisfied' (Figure 19).

At a statewide level, Aboriginal people appeared to be dissatisfied with most components of engagement and communication on Sea Country management, with at least 23% reporting they were 'not satisfied at all' (a score of 0 out of 10).

Aboriginal people were least satisfied that information about how and why decisions are made is easy to find (3.3). A similar level of dissatisfaction was also reported for the statement that information about how and why decisions are made is easy to understand (3.4). Slightly lower dissatisfaction was reported for the statements that rules around Sea Country management (e.g. cultural fishing, boating, foreshore access and use) are easy to understand, and easy to find (both 3.5), and that there are opportunities for the Aboriginal community to have their say (3.7).

Figure 19. Satisfaction with engagement and communication on Sea Country management at a statewide level



Base: n = 453 – 474 Aboriginal coastal residents

Q18. Thinking about the way Sea Country in your local area is managed, how satisfied are you with ...

### Location differences

Aboriginal people of Port Stephens and Coffs Harbour were most likely to be dissatisfied by all aspects of Sea Country management (Table 10). Similar findings were observed among Aboriginal people of Moruya, who were also more likely to be dissatisfied by most aspects of Sea Country management. In contrast, Aboriginal people of Newcastle reported higher levels of satisfaction for most aspects, and those of Gosford were neither satisfied nor dissatisfied overall that rules around Sea Country management are easy to find (5.0) and understand (5.1).

### Age group differences

Aboriginal people aged 50+ years+ were more likely to be dissatisfied that information around why and how decisions are made is easy to find and understand (both 2.8).

**Table 10. Satisfaction with engagement and communication on Sea Country management at a statewide level, and by location and age**

	Mean score														
	State wide	Areas of Sea Country											Age		
		Ballina	Coffs Harbour	Kempsey	Port Macquarie	Port Stephens	Newcastle	Gosford	La Perouse	Wollongong	Moruya	Eden	18-29 years	30-49 years	50+ years
Base	474	48	60	30	46	75	41	31	40	27	57	19	130	187	153
There are opportunities for the Aboriginal community to have their say	3.7	4.5	2.4 ▼	4.8	4.2	1.8 ▼	4.9 ▲	4.5	4.0	6.2	2.4 ▼	5.8	4.1	3.7	3.4
Base	465	48	58	29	45	75	40	30	40	26	55	19	134	182	146
Rules around Sea Country management (e.g. cultural fishing, boating, foreshore access and use) are easy to find	3.5	4.0	2.1 ▼	4.9	4.2	1.6 ▼	4.9 ▲	5.0 ▲	3.5	5.4	2.1 ▼	6.7	3.8	3.7	3.0
Base	466	46	57	27	46	78	42	31	40	28	54	17	128	185	150
Rules around Sea Country management (e.g. cultural fishing, boating, foreshore access and use) are easy to understand	3.5	3.4	2.1 ▼	5.0	4.2 ▲	1.8 ▼	4.8 ▲	5.1 ▲	3.6	4.9	2.3 ▼	5.9	3.7	3.7	3.0
Base	465	47	55	28	46	75	42	30	39	26	56	21	132	186	144
Information about how and why decisions are made is easy to understand	3.4	3.7	2.0 ▼	5.1	4.0	1.6 ▼	4.6 ▲	4.3	3.2	5.3	2.5	5.1	3.6	3.6	2.8 ▼
Base	453	43	54	27	45	76	39	30	40	27	58	14	130	175	144
'Information about how and why decisions are made is easy to find	3.3	3.4	2.1 ▼	5.2	3.7	1.8 ▼	4.4 ▲	4.4	3.4	5.9	2.1 ▼	5.1	3.7	3.4	2.8 ▼

Base: n = 453 – 474 Aboriginal coastal residents

Q18. Thinking about the way Sea Country in your local area is managed, how satisfied are you with ...

Note: Significance testing was not conducted on base sizes less than n = 30.

### 2.8.4 Satisfaction with consultation

Aboriginal people were asked whether they have previously been consulted by the NSW Government to talk about management of Sea Country (Figure 20). The majority of Aboriginal people reported that they have not been consulted (75%). About one in 10 (11%) reported that they have been consulted, while a similar proportion (9%) preferred not to say.

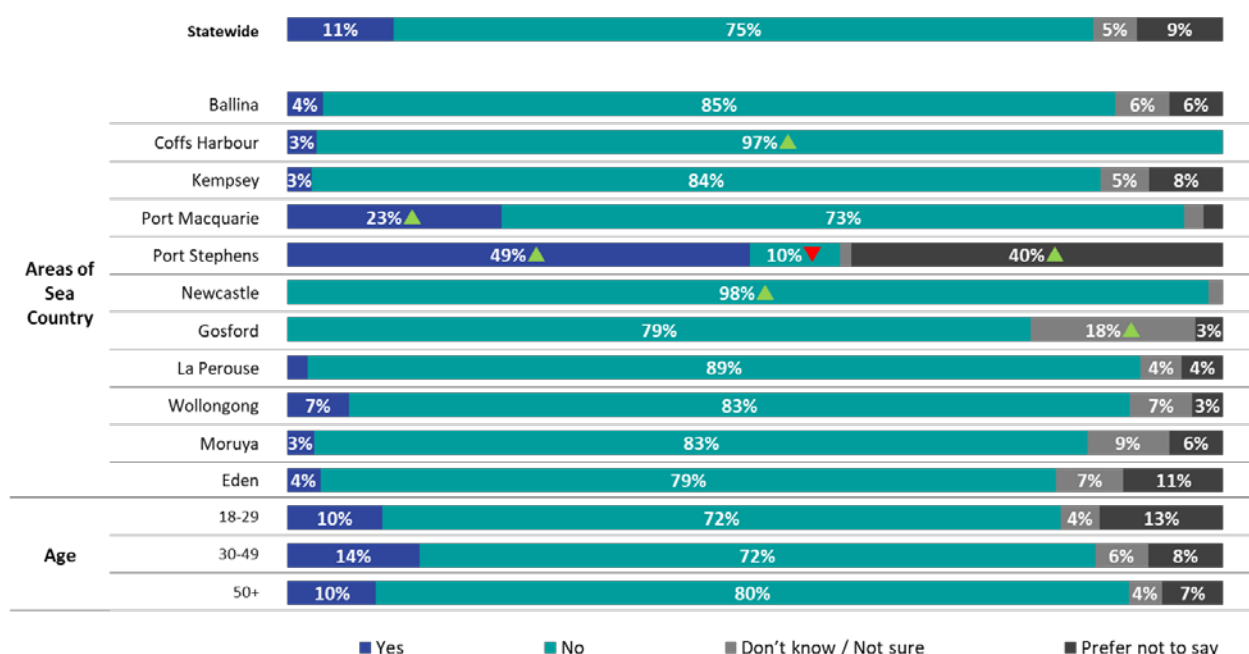
#### Location differences

Nearly one in 2 (49%) Aboriginal people of Port Stephens reported they had been consulted by the NSW Government to talk about management of Sea Country, and those of Port Macquarie were also more likely to have been consulted (23%). Conversely, Aboriginal people of Newcastle (98%) and Coffs Harbour (97%), were more likely not to have been consulted.

#### Age group differences

There were no meaningful differences in results by age group.

Figure 20. Participation in consultations on Sea County management at a statewide level, and by location and age



Base: Statewide n = 554 | Ballina n = 52 | Coffs Harbour n = 64 | Kempsey n = 38 | Port Macquarie n = 48 | Port Stephens n = 83 | Newcastle n = 63 | Gosford n = 34 | La Perouse n = 45 | Wollongong n = 30 | Moruya n = 69 | Eden n = 28 | 18–29 years n = 167 | 30–49 years n = 212 | 50+ years n = 168

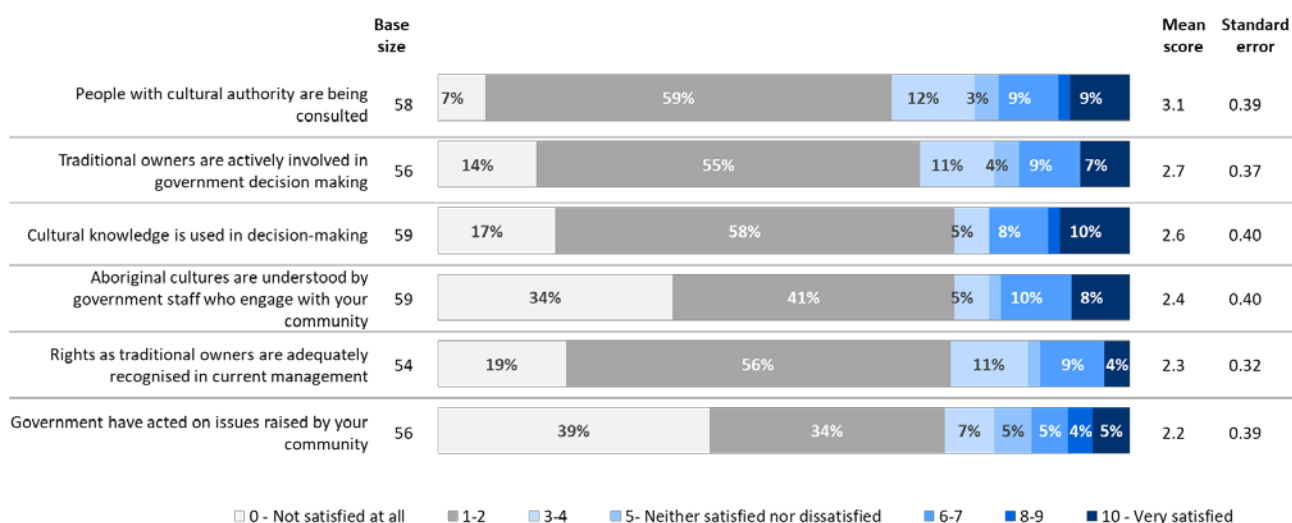
Q19. Have you previously been consulted by the NSW Government to talk about the management of Sea Country?

Note: Significance testing was not conducted on base sizes less than n = 30. Satisfaction with NSW Government’s approach to consultation

Aboriginal people who have been consulted by the NSW Government to talk about the management of Sea Country were then asked to rate their satisfaction with key aspects of the NSW Government’s approach to consultation, on a scale from 0 ‘Not satisfied at all’ to 10 ‘Very satisfied’ (Figure 21).

At a statewide level, Aboriginal people were dissatisfied with most components of Sea Country management, with similar levels of dissatisfaction observed for all statements. Lower mean scores were recorded for the statements relating to government acted on issues raised by their community (2.2), that rights as Traditional Owners are adequately recognised in current management (2.3), and that Aboriginal cultures are understood by government staff who engage with their community (2.4).

Figure 21. Satisfaction with NSW Government’s approach to consultation at a statewide level



Base: n = 54 – 58 Aboriginal coastal residents who have been consulted by the NSW Government to talk about the management of Sea Country

Q20. Thinking about when you have been consulted by government to talk about the management of Sea Country, how satisfied are you with each of the following aspects?

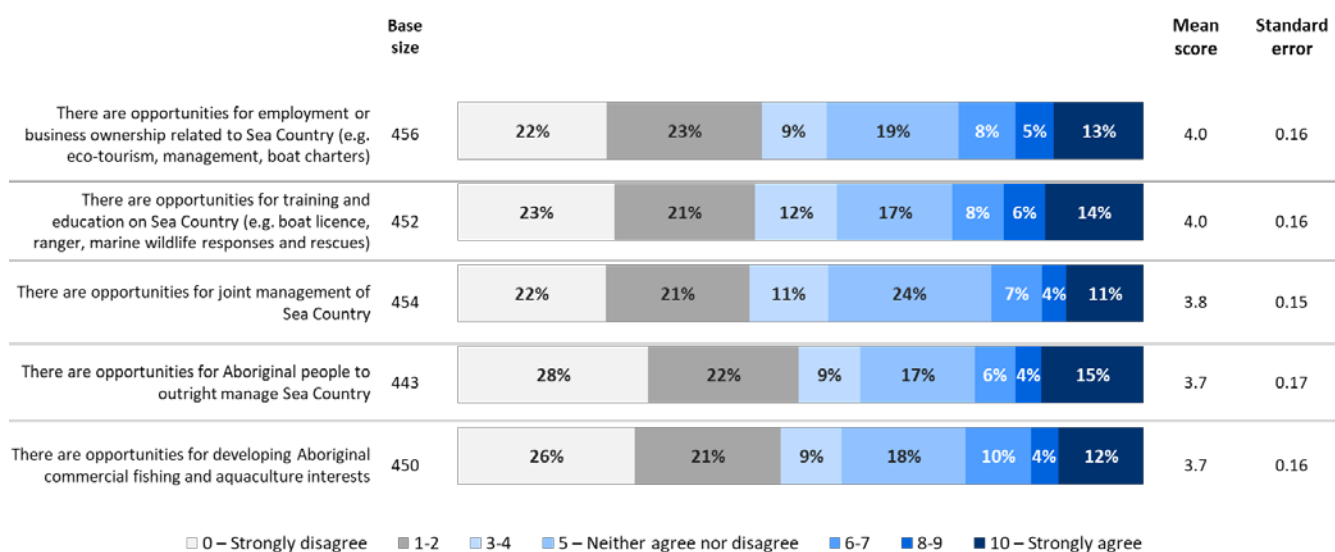
### 2.8.5 Perceptions of opportunities related to Sea Country

In order to understand Aboriginal people’s perceptions of opportunities related to Sea Country, such as training, employment and joint management (Figure 22), they were asked to what extent they agree with a set of statements, on a scale from 0 ‘Strongly disagree’ to 10 ‘Strongly agree’.

At a statewide level, Aboriginal people tended to disagree with each statement, with at least one in 5 (22%) reporting that they ‘strongly disagree’ (a score of 0 out of 10). Similar levels of disagreement were noted for each statement, with stronger disagreement observed for the statements regarding opportunities for Aboriginal people to outright manage Sea Country and opportunities for developing Aboriginal commercial fishing and aquaculture interests (both 3.7). Similar levels of disagreement were also reported for the statements suggesting that there are opportunities for joint management of Sea Country (3.8), that there are opportunities for training and education on Sea Country (e.g. boat licence, ranger, marine wildlife responses and rescues), and employment or business ownership related to Sea Country (e.g. eco-tourism, management, boat charters) (both 4.0).



Figure 22. Perceptions of opportunities related to Sea Country at a statewide level



Base: n = 443 to 456 Aboriginal coastal residents

Q21. How much do you agree with the following statements?

### Location differences

Aboriginal people of Coffs Harbour, Port Stephens and Moruya were more likely to disagree that they had these opportunities (Table 11). In contrast, those from Newcastle were more likely to report that they neither agreed nor disagreed with all statements related to Sea Country opportunities.

### Age group differences

There were no meaningful differences in results by age group.

Table 11. Perceptions of opportunities related to Sea Country at a statewide level, and by location and age

	Mean score													Age		
	State wide	Areas of Sea Country											18-29 years	30-49 years	50+ years	
		Ballina	Coffs Harbour	Kempsey	Port Macquarie	Port Stephens	Newcastle	Gosford	La Perouse	Wollongong	Moruya	Eden				
Base	456	50	45	24	46	71	50	29	40	24	56	21	135	172	142	
There are opportunities for employment or business ownership related to Sea Country (e.g. eco-tourism, management, boat charters)	4.0	5.2▲	1.7▼	4.7	4.8	1.5▼	5.1▲	5.7	4.6	6.5	2.5▼	5.9	4.3	4.1	3.5	
Base	452	50	48	25	46	71	46	32	40	19	54	21	137	172	137	
There are opportunities for training and education on Sea Country (e.g. boat licence, ranger, marine wildlife responses and rescues)	4.0	5.1	1.6▼	4.0	5.2▲	1.7▼	5.2▲	5.6	5.6▲	6.0	2.6▼	5.8	4.2	4.1	3.7	
Base	454	48	46	26	46	71	52	30	42	21	52	20	133	171	144	
There are opportunities for joint management of Sea Country	3.8	4.7	1.7▼	4.1	4.8▲	1.5▼	5.2▲	4.9	4.5	5.9	2.7▼	5.9	3.9	3.8	3.6	
Base	443	48	46	24	43	70	48	31	43	18	50	22	129	170	138	
There are opportunities for Aboriginal people to outright manage Sea Country	3.7	5.0▲	1.6▼	4.3	3.8	1.5▼	4.9▲	5.3	4.4	5.9	2.3▼	6.5	4.2	3.7	3.2	
Base	450	49	46	24	45	70	48	29	42	19	57	21	133	170	141	
There are opportunities for developing Aboriginal commercial fishing and aquaculture interests	3.7	4.6	1.2▼	4.0	4.7▲	1.6▼	5.1▲	5.5	4.5	6.6	2.6▼	6.0	4.0	3.9	3.4	

Base: n = 443 – 456 Aboriginal coastal residents

Q21. How much do you agree with the following statements?

Note: Significance testing was not conducted on base sizes less than n = 30.

## 2.9 Employment related to Sea Country

### 2.9.1 Current employment in work related to Sea Country

Aboriginal people were asked if they currently receive income from work that relates to Sea Country, with the vast majority (87%) reporting that they do not. Only 5% reported that they did receive income from work related to Sea Country (Figure 23).

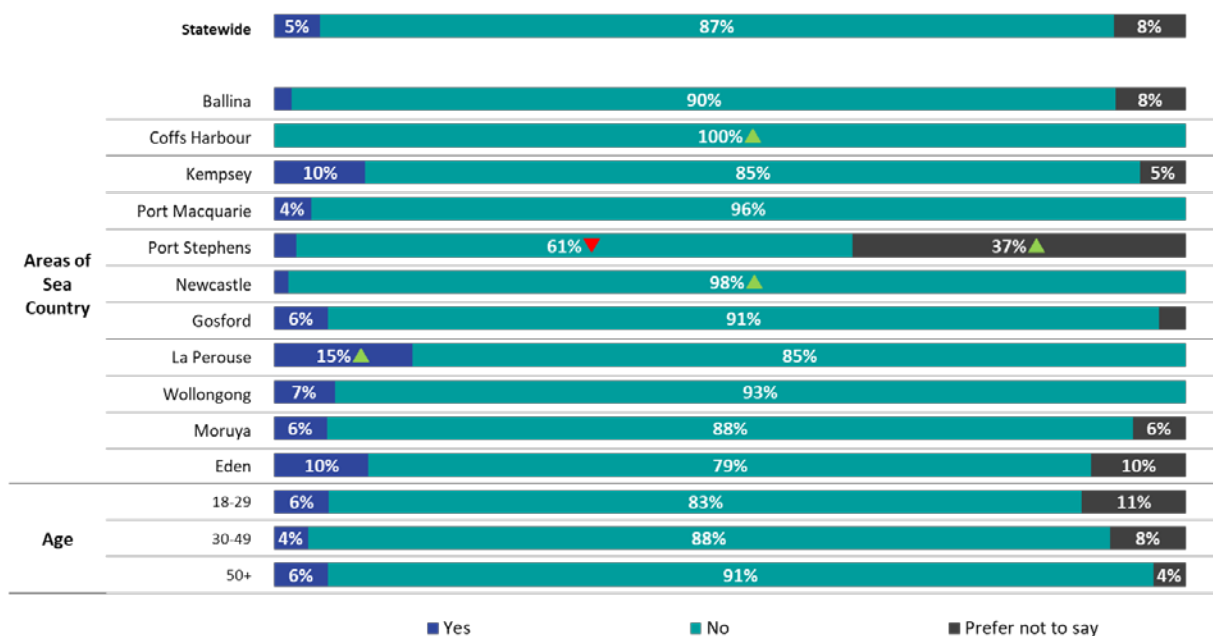
#### Location differences

Aboriginal people of La Perouse (15%) were more likely to report that they receive income from work related to Sea Country. In contrast, those from Coffs Harbour (100%) and Newcastle (98%) were more likely to report that they did not. More than one in 3 (37%) of Aboriginal people of Port Stephens preferred not to say.

#### Age group differences

There were no meaningful differences in results by age group.

Figure 23. Income related to Sea Country at a statewide level, and by location and age



Base: Statewide n = 559 | Ballina n = 52 | Coffs Harbour n = 64 | Kempsey n = 40 | Port Macquarie n = 49 | Port Stephens n = 82 | Newcastle n = 64 | Gosford n = 34 | La Perouse n = 46 | Wollongong n = 30 | Moruya n = 69 | Eden n = 29 | 18–29 years n = 166 | 30–49 years n = 216 | 50+ years n = 170

Q22. Do you currently receive income from work that relates to Sea Country?

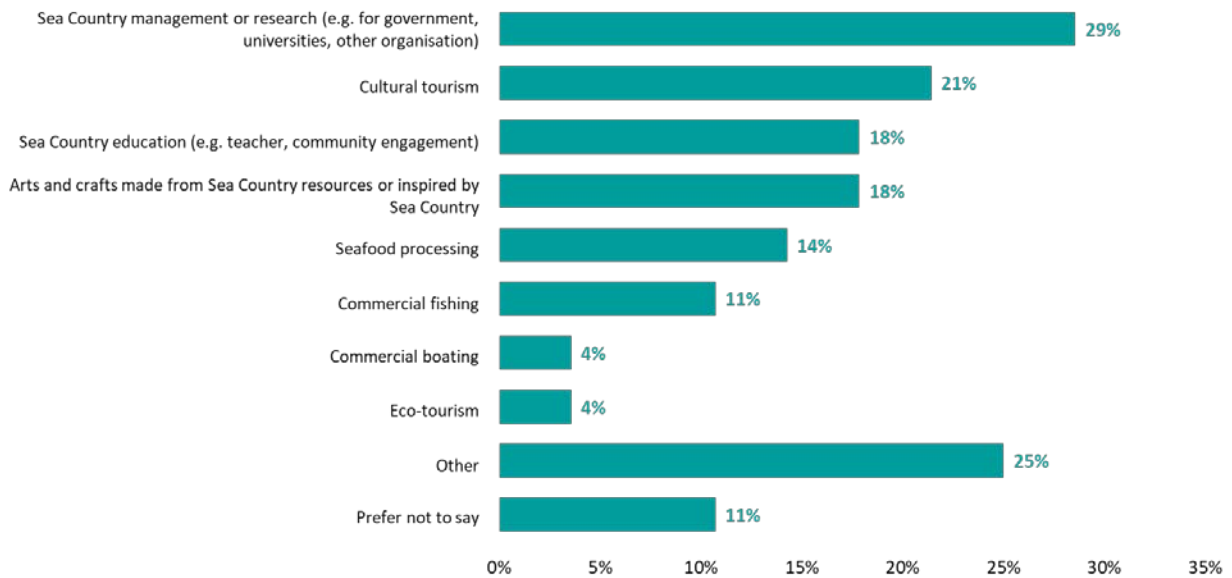
Note: Significance testing was not conducted on base sizes less than n = 30.

### 2.9.2 Employment type

Aboriginal people who had received income from work that related to Sea Country were then asked what kind of work they received this income from (Figure 24).

At a statewide level, more than one in 4 (29%) reported that they received this income from work in Sea Country management or research (e.g. for government, universities or other organisations), while around one in 5 cited work in cultural tourism (21%), Sea Country education (e.g. teacher or community engagement) or arts and crafts made from Sea Country resources or inspired by Sea Country (both 18%). Work in commercial boating and eco-tourism was mentioned by just a minority (both 4%).

Figure 24. Types of jobs related to Sea Country at a statewide level

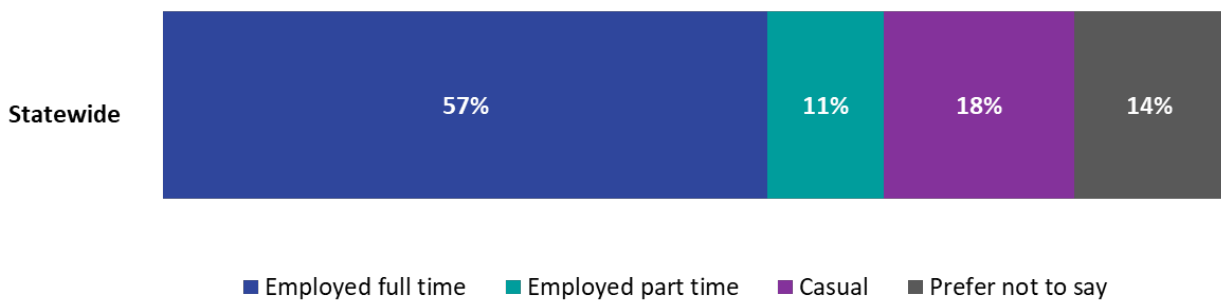


Base: n = 28 Aboriginal coastal residents receiving income from Sea Country–related work  
 Q23. What kind of work do you do?

Aboriginal people who had received income from work that related to Sea Country were also asked what type of employment they received this income from (Figure 25).

At a statewide level, nearly 3 in 5 (57%) of those who receive income from Sea Countryrelated work reported that they receive this income from full-time employment, while around one in 5 (18%) reported they were employed casually. 11% reported that they receive this income from part-time employment, while 14% preferred not to say.

Figure 25. Type of employment related to Sea Country at a statewide level



Base: n = 28 Aboriginal coastal residents receiving income from Sea Country–related work  
 Q24. What is your employment situation?

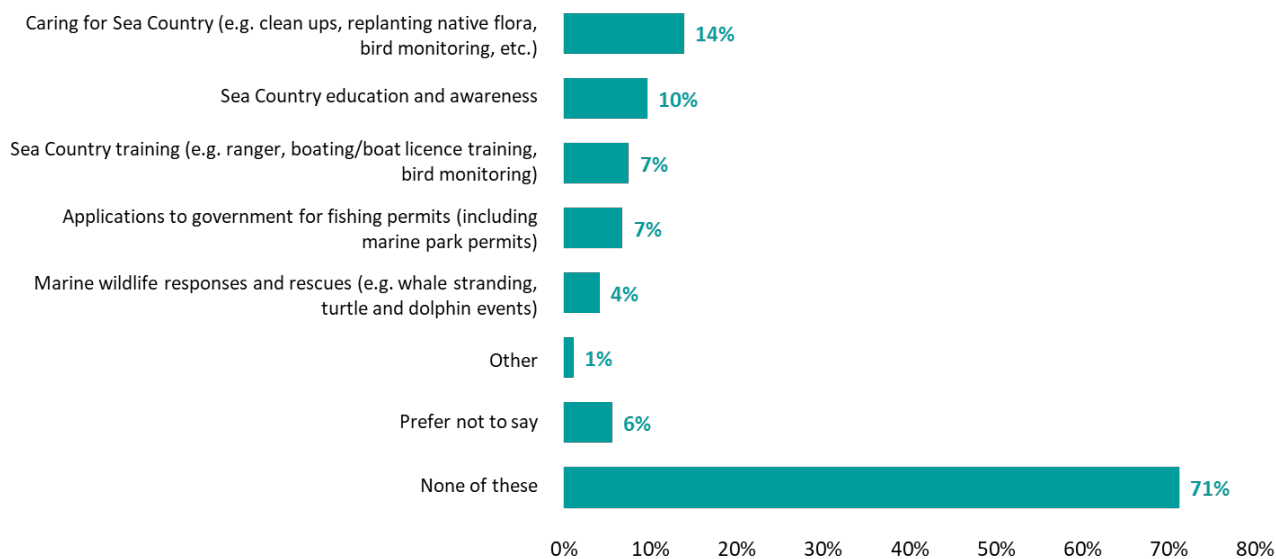
## 2.10 Involvement and interest in government-led Sea Country programs

### 2.10.1 Involvement in government-led Sea Country programs

Aboriginal people were also asked if they had been involved in any government-led programs related to Sea Country since 2018 (Figure 26).

At a statewide level, only about one in 7 (14%) had been involved in programs related to caring for Sea Country (e.g. clean ups, replanting native flora, bird monitoring) and one in 10 (10%) had been involved in Sea Country education and awareness programs. Involvement in other programs relating to Sea Country training (e.g. ranging, boating/boat licence training, bird monitoring) (7%), applications to government for fishing permits (including marine park permits) (7%), and marine wildlife responses and rescues (e.g. whale stranding, turtle and dolphin events) (4%) was less common.

Figure 26. Involvement in government-led programs related to Sea Country at a statewide level



Base: n = 562 Aboriginal coastal residents

Q25. Have you been involved in any of the following government-led programs since 2018?

#### Location differences

Aboriginal people of La Perouse were more likely to have been involved in government-led programs related to caring for Sea Country (34%) and marine wildlife responses and rescues (15%). Those from Coffs Harbour (91%) and Newcastle (89%) were more likely to have not been involved in any programs.

#### Age group differences

There were no meaningful differences in results by age group.

Table 12. Involvement in government-led programs related to Sea Country at a statewide level, and by location and age

	State wide	Areas of Sea Country											Age		
		Ballina	Coffs Harbour	Kempsey	Port Macquarie	Port Stephens	Newcastle	Gosford	La Perouse	Wollongong	Moruya	Eden	18-29 years	30-49 years	50+ years
Base	562	52	64	40	49	83	64	34	47	30	69	30	169	216	170
Caring for Sea Country (e.g. clean ups, replanting native flora, bird monitoring, etc.)	14%	10%	5%	15%	22%	18%	2%▼	15%	34%▲	7%	13%	17%	11%	16%	15%
Sea Country education and awareness	10%	8%	6%	18%	16%	16%	3%	9%	15%	3%	3%	10%	6%	11%	12%
Sea Country training (e.g. ranger, boating/boat licence training, bird monitoring)	7%	10%	5%	5%	8%	6%	5%	3%	17%	3%	9%	13%	8%	7%	8%
Applications to government for fishing permits (including marine park permits)	7%	4%	5%	3%	16%	7%	5%	6%	6%	10%	7%	7%	4%	6%	11%
Marine wildlife responses and rescues (e.g. whale stranding, turtle and dolphin events)	4%	4%	3%	3%	4%	5%	2%	0%	15%▲	0%	4%	3%	4%	5%	4%
Other	1%	2%	0%	0%	8%▲	0%	0%	0%	2%	0%	0%	0%	1%	1%	1%
Prefer not to say	6%	4%	2%	20%▲	4%	1%	6%	6%	4%	3%	7%	10%	8%	6%	3%
None of these	71%	67%	91%▲	53%	47%▼	80%	89%▲	71%	53%	77%	71%	63%	74%	70%	71%

Base: n = 562 Aboriginal coastal residents

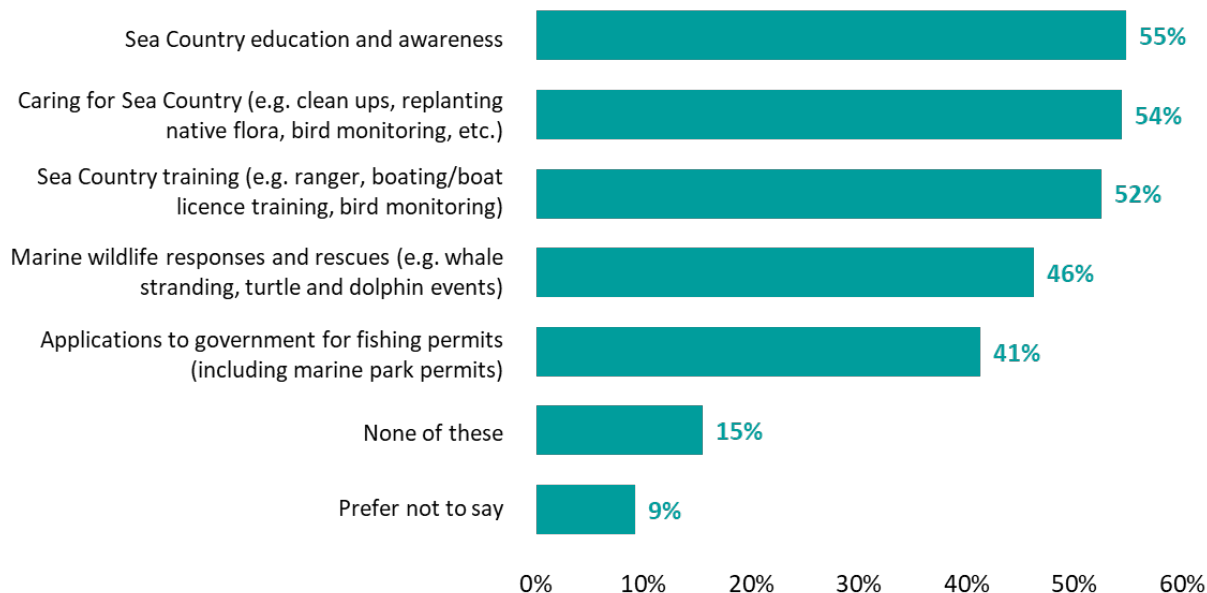
Q25. Have you been involved in any of the following government-led programs since 2018?

### 2.10.2 Interest in future involvement in government-led Sea Country programs

Aboriginal people were then asked if they would be interested in being involved with any of these government-led programs in the future (Figure 27).

At a statewide level, around half were interested in being involved with programs relating to Sea Country education and awareness (55%), caring for Sea Country (54%) and Sea Country training (52%). Around 2 in 5 were interested in being involved with programs relating to marine wildlife responses and rescues (46%) and applications to government for fishing permits (41%), while 15% were not interested in any of these programs.

Figure 27. Interest in government-led programs related to Sea Country at a statewide level



Base: n = 562 Aboriginal coastal residents  
 Q26. Would you like to be involved in any of these programs?

### Location differences

Aboriginal people of Coffs Harbour and Port Stephens were more likely to be interested in all government-led programs listed, while those from Kempsey were less likely to be interested (Table 13). Aboriginal people of Newcastle were also less likely to be interested in most of the programs.

### Age group differences

Younger Aboriginal people aged 18–29 years were more likely to be interested in being involved with programs relating to marine wildlife responses and rescues (58%), while those aged 50+ years and over were less likely to be interested (36%).

Table 13. Interest in government-led programs related to Sea Country at a statewide level, and by location and age

	State wide	Areas of Sea Country											Age		
		Ballina	Coffs Harbour	Kempsey	Port Macquarie	Port Stephens	Newcastle	Gosford	La Perouse	Wollongong	Moruya	Eden	18-29 years	30-49 years	50+ years
Base	562	52	64	40	49	83	64	34	47	30	69	30	169	216	170
Sea Country education and awareness	55%	56%	78%▲	33%▼	59%	90%▲	36%▼	38%	64%	43%	36%▼	27%▼	60%	53%	54%
Caring for Sea Country (e.g. clean ups, replanting native flora, bird monitoring, etc.)	54%	63%	72%▲	33%▼	49%	92%▲	36%▼	35%	64%	33%	43%	30%▼	61%	56%	47%
Sea Country training (e.g. ranger, boating/boat licence training, bird monitoring)	52%	52%	72%▲	30%▼	47%	87%▲	30%▼	35%	55%	47%	42%	50%	57%	56%	46%
Marine wildlife responses and rescues (e.g. whale stranding, turtle and dolphin events)	46%	44%	77%▲	23%▼	22%	88%▲	13%▼	35%	60%	30%	38%	40%	58%▲	45%	36%▼
Applications to government for fishing permits (including marine park permits)	41%	21%▼	72%▲	20%▼	31%	80%▲	30%	32%	45%	27%	28%▼	27%	47%	39%	39%
None of these	15%	21%	5%▼	28%	4%	4%▼	38%▲	15%	11%	20%	17%	17%	14%	14%	18%
Prefer not to say	9%	6%	0%▼	28%▲	10%	2%	16%	15%	13%	3%	12%	3%	8%	9%	9%

Base: n = 562 Aboriginal coastal residents

Q26. Would you like to be involved in any of these programs?

## 2.11 Life satisfaction

Aboriginal people were asked to rate their general satisfaction with life on a scale from 0 (not at all satisfied) to 10 (very satisfied). This question measures a person’s overall wellbeing using the Global Life Satisfaction measure, widely used in Australian and international wellbeing surveys (Figure 28).

At a statewide level, Aboriginal people were satisfied with their life as a whole, with an average rating of 7.6.

### Location differences

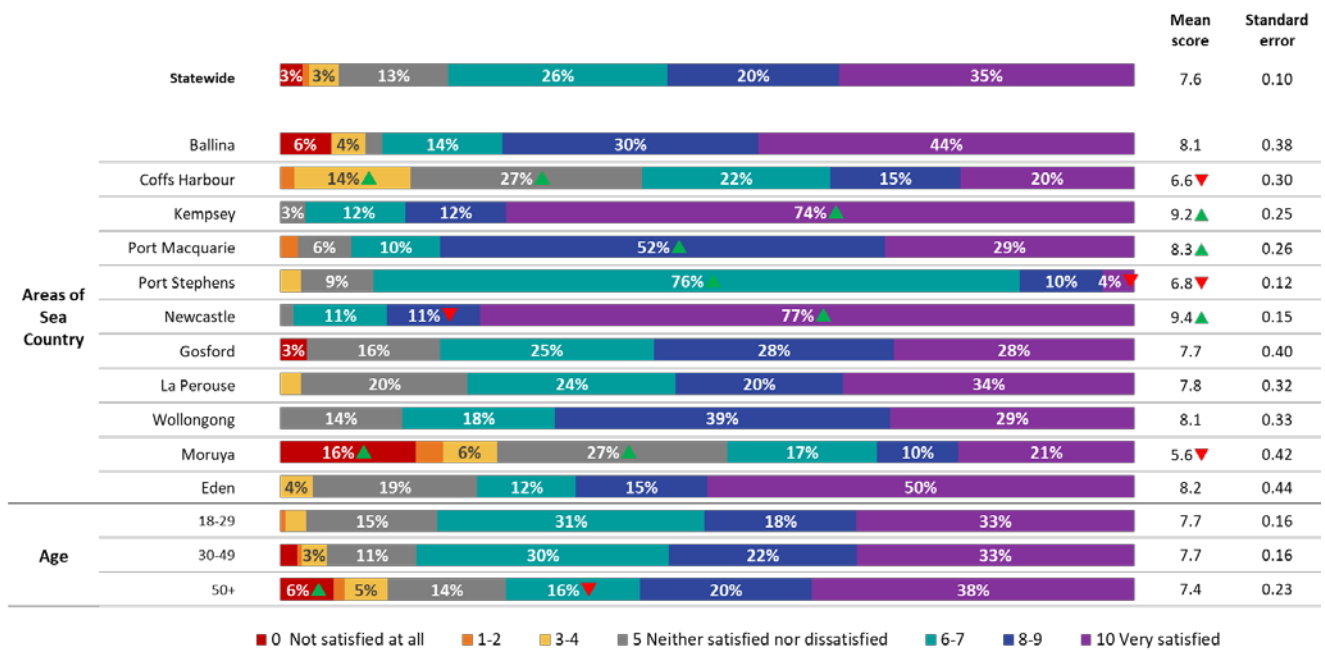
Life satisfaction varied greatly between different areas of Sea Country. Life satisfaction was highest among Aboriginal people of Newcastle (9.4), Kempsey (9.2) and Port Macquarie (8.3), while it was lowest among those from Moruya (5.6), Coffs Harbour (6.6) and Port Stephens (6.8).

### Age group differences

There were no meaningful differences in results by age group.



Figure 28. Satisfaction with life as a whole at a statewide level, and by location and age



Base: Aboriginal coastal residents n = 527 | Ballina n = 50 | Coffs Harbour n = 59 | Kempsey n = 34 | Port Macquarie n = 48 | Port Stephens n = 82 | Newcastle n = 64 | Gosford n = 32 | La Perouse n = 41 | Wollongong n = 28 | Moruya n = 63 | Eden n = 26 | 18–29 years n = 163 | 30–49 years n = 200 | 50+ years n = 159 |

Q27. Thinking more broadly about your life in general, how satisfied you with your life are as a whole?

Note: Significance testing was not conducted on base sizes less than n = 30.

# 3 Appendices

## 3.1 Appendix A: Demographics

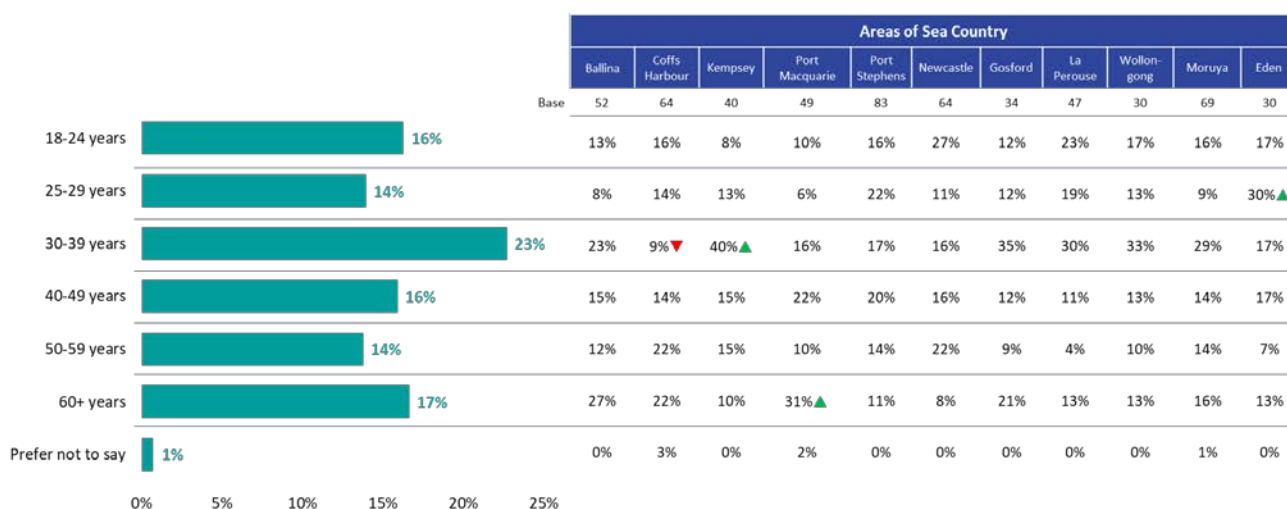
### 3.1.1 Age

Figure 29 shows the age distribution of the sample at a statewide level and broken down by area of Sea Country.

Around one in 5 (23%) are 30–39 years old, while similar proportions are 18–24 years old (16%), 25–29 years old (14%), 40–49 years old (16%), 50–59 years old (14%) and 60+ years old (17%).

A high proportion of sample aged 25–29 years is observed in Eden (30%), while a high proportion of 30–39-year-olds is seen in Kempsey (40%). Aboriginal people from the Port Macquarie sample tended to be older, with nearly one-third (31%) aged 60+ years.

Figure 29. Age at a statewide level, and by location



Base: n = 562 Aboriginal coastal residents

SQ1. In which of the following age groups do you fall under?

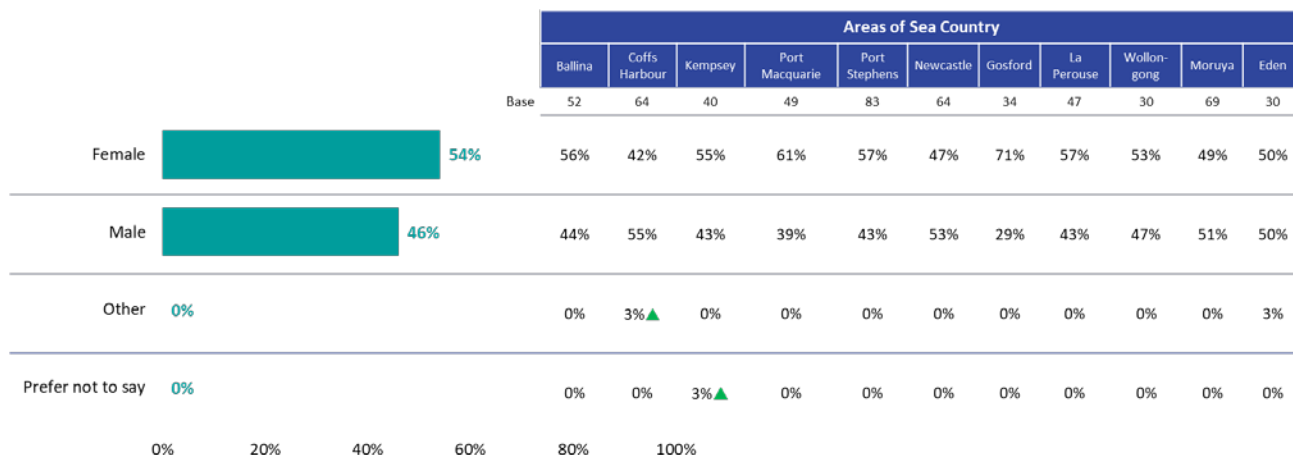
### 3.1.2 Gender

Figure 30 shows the gender distribution of the sample at a statewide level and broken down by area of Sea Country.

At a statewide level the sample is equally split between male (46%) and female (54%).

This distribution is consistent across all areas of Sea Country, however, a higher proportion of sample from Coffs Harbour describe themselves as a gender other than male or female (3%).

Figure 30. Gender at a statewide level, and by location



Base: n = 562 Aboriginal coastal residents

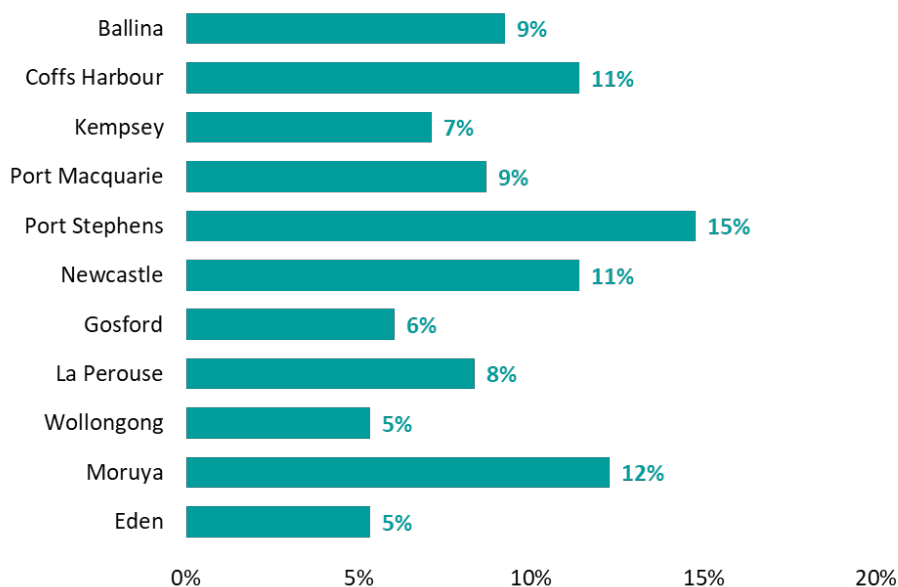
HQ2. Gender

### 3.1.3 Location

Figure 31 shows the area of residency of the sample at a statewide level.

15% of the sample reside in Port Stephens, 12% reside in Moruya, and 11% reside in Coffs Harbour, with the same proportion residing in Newcastle. Less than one in 10 resided in Ballina (9%), Port Macquarie (9%), La Perouse (8%), Kempsey (7%), Gosford (6%), Wollongong (5%) and Eden (5%).

Figure 31. Location at a statewide level



Base: n = 562 Aboriginal Coastal Residents

HQ1. Location of survey.

## 3.2 Appendix B: Questionnaire

### Introduction for participants

Aboriginal nations of the east coast of NSW are the Traditional Owners and custodians of the land, waters and sea. Aboriginal people of NSW have sustainably cared for Sea Country for thousands of years. Sea Country and all its plants and animals were cared for as a connected system and threaded into the cultures and everyday living of Aboriginal people. This relationship is handed down to the younger generations to ensure custodian responsibility to Sea Country continues.

The state agencies involved in managing the marine estate will work with Aboriginal people to protect Aboriginal cultural values of Sea Country. A Sea Country (marine estate) survey will be conducted at 11 locations along the NSW coast to improve understanding of Aboriginal people's cultural connections to Sea Country and impacts to these connections. Talking to many people about this and listening to their concerns and suggestions will help us better manage Sea Country.

The communities participating in this project will receive a copy of the final report. Communities may request a copy of the de-identified community data, but only if there are more than 30 completed interviews. The survey is confidential. All personal information will be removed to protect identity of participants.

This project will provide casual employment of up to 22 Local Aboriginal Researchers across the 11 locations.

## SECTION A: SCREENER AND PROFILING QUESTIONS

INTERVIEWER NOTE: RECORD LOCATION AND GENDER WITHOUT ASKING

**HQ1** Record location of survey

Ballina	01
Coffs Harbour	02
Kempsey	03
Port Macquarie	04
Port Stephens	05
Newcastle	06
Thirlmere	07
La Perouse	08
Gosford	09
Moruya	10
Eden	11

**HQ2** Record gender

Male	01
Female	02
Other [ASSIGN TO GENDER QUOTA AT RANDOM]	97
Prefer not to say [ASSIGN TO GENDER QUOTA AT RANDOM]	98

-----[NEW SCREEN]-----

ASK ALL

**SQ1** In which of the following age groups do you fall under?

{SINGLE RESPONSE}

NON-MANDATORY

17 years or under [TERMINATE]	01
18-24 years	02
25-29 years	03
30-39 years	04
40-49 years	05
50-59 years	06
60+ years	07
Prefer not to say	99

ASK ALL

**SQ2** And what is the postcode where you live?  
*HIGH (CONTEXTUAL). INDICATOR 23. DIMENSION 1*

NON-MANDATORY

					99
Prefer not to say					99

-----[NEW SCREEN]-----

**SECTION B: RELATIONSHIP WITH SEA COUNTRY**

ASK ALL

**Q1** How often do you participate in cultural activities or traditions in your local Sea Country area?

For example, to maintain personal / family / community cultural connections, collect Sea Country plants and animals, visit cultural sites.

{SINGLE RESPONSE}

NON-MANDATORY

Daily	01
Fortnightly	02
Weekly	03
Monthly	04
3-6 times per year	05
1-2 times per year	06
Less often	07
Never, please specify	98
Prefer not to say	99

-----[NEW SCREEN]-----

**INTERVIEWER NOTE: READ OUT INTRODUCTION**

**INTRO TEXT**

In the following questions, you will be asked about different aspects of Sea Country and what the positive and negative effects are for you to maintain your personal wellbeing and connections to culture:

For the purpose of this survey, please consider **Sea Country** to include the:

- ocean
- estuaries
- coastline (i.e. beaches, dunes and headlands)
- coastal wetlands (i.e. saltmarsh, mangroves and seagrass)
- coastal lakes and lagoons connected to the ocean
- islands
- coastal bushland.

-----[NEW SCREEN]-----

**ASK ALL**

**Q2** Which, if any, of the following cultural activities have you done on Sea Country in the past 12 months?

**INTERVIEWER NOTE: IF LAST 12 MONTHS IMPACTED BY COVID, ASK FOR ACTIVITIES OVER A TYPICAL 12-MONTH PERIOD.**

{MULTIPLE RESPONSE}

**RANDOMISE**

**NON-MANDATORY**

Hook and line fishing	01
Hand gathering of food from shorelines (i.e. rock platforms, beaches, mangroves)	02
Trapping (e.g. for fish, crabs, lobsters)	03
Diving to catch food (e.g. lobsters, muttonfish, fish)	04
Recreation (e.g. swimming, walking, surfing, snorkelling, boating)	05
Bush tucker gathering from coastal lands (e.g. sand dunes, bushland)	06
Collecting Sea Country resources for other purposes (e.g. making art, medicine and tools such as boomerangs, spears and nets)	07
Camping / Staying and being on Sea Country	08
Caring for Sea Country	09
Other Sea Country activities, please specify <b>NOTE TO INTERVIEWER: DO NOT RECORD CULTURAL ACTIVITIES HERE. MOVE TO NEXT QUESTION</b>	96
None of these <b>[EXCLUSIVE]</b>	98
Prefer not to say	99

-----[NEW SCREEN]-----

**ASK ALL**

**Q3** Which, if any, of the following cultural activities/traditions have you participated in over the past 12 months?

Activities should be about Sea Country, held on Sea Country sites, or use Sea Country resources.

**INTERVIEWER NOTE: IF LAST 12 MONTHS IMPACTED BY COVID, ASK FOR ACTIVITIES OVER A TYPICAL 12-MONTH PERIOD.**

{MULTIPLE RESPONSE}

RANDOMISE

NON-MANDATORY

Passed on, or received cultural knowledge (e.g. use of plants, animals, stories, responsibilities to care for Sea Country)	01
Used coastal plants to understand the movements and behaviour of marine wildlife (e.g. mullet run, movement / birthing of whales)	02
Cultural ceremonies about Sea Country	03
Cultural celebrations (e.g. NAIDOC week activities)	04
Funerals / sorry business	05
Sharing Sea Country resources within community	06
Performed Aboriginal music, or dance, related to Sea Country	07
Made Aboriginal tools and equipment from Sea Country materials (e.g. weaved baskets, boomerangs, etc.)	08
Made art about Sea Country	09
Other Aboriginal cultural activities, please specify	96
None of these [EXCLUSIVE]	98
Prefer to not say	99

-----[NEW SCREEN]-----



ASK ALL

**Q4** Do you have a cultural connection or relationship with particular Sea Country fish or animals?

**INTERVIEWER NOTE: RECORD ABORIGINAL LANGUAGE NAME AND TRANSLATION AND STORY/SIGNIFICANCE IF OFFERED BY RESPONDENT**

{OPEN RESPONSE}

NON-MANDATORY

I don't know	95
I don't feel comfortable sharing my cultural knowledge	97
Not applicable to me as I don't come from a nation with Sea Country connections	98
Prefer not to say	99

-----[NEW SCREEN]-----

ASK ALL

**Q5** Do you have a cultural connection or relationship with particular areas of Sea Country?

*Note to interviewer: record Aboriginal language name and translation and story/significance if offered by respondent*

{OPEN RESPONSE}

NON-MANDATORY

I don't know	95
I don't feel comfortable sharing my cultural knowledge	97
Not applicable to me as I don't come from a nation with Sea Country connections	98
Prefer not to say	99

-----[NEW SCREEN]-----

ASK ALL

**Q6** How important is Sea Country in contributing to your quality of life?

Please give your answer on a scale from '0' to '10' where '0' means 'not important at all' and '10' means 'very important'.

{SINGLE RESPONSE}

NON-MANDATORY

0 – Not important at all	00
1	01
2	02
3	03
4	04
5 – Neither important nor unimportant	05
6	06
7	07
8	08
9	09
10 – Very important	10
Don't know	98
Prefer not to say	99

-----[NEW SCREEN]-----

ASK ALL

**Q7** Please explain how Sea Country contributes to your quality of life.

{OPEN RESPONSE}

NON-MANDATORY

Prefer not to say	99

-----[NEW SCREEN]-----

ASK ALL

**Q8** How important is Sea Country in contributing to the **following parts of your life?**

{SINGLE RESPONSE PER ROW}

RANDOMISE ROWS

NON-MANDATORY

	Response	0 Not important at all	1	2	3	4	5 Neither important nor unimportant	6	7	8	9	10 Very important	Don't know	Prefer not to say
01	Physical health	00	01	02	03	04	05	06	07	08	09	10	98	99
02	Emotional and mental health	00	01	02	03	04	05	06	07	08	09	10	98	99
03	Spirituality	00	01	02	03	04	05	06	07	08	09	10	98	99
04	Spending time/socialising with family and community	00	01	02	03	04	05	06	07	08	09	10	98	99
04	Nutritional needs (e.g., eating seafood gathered by community)	00	01	02	03	04	05	06	07	08	09	10	98	99
05	Cultural identity	00	01	02	03	04	05	06	07	08	09	10	98	99
06	Cost of living (e.g. catching seafood instead of buying it) <b>NOTE TO INTERVIEWER: DOES NOT INCLUDE EMPLOYMENT</b>	00	01	02	03	04	05	06	07	08	09	10	98	99

-----[NEW SCREEN]-----

ASK ALL

**Q9** How much do you agree with the following statements?

{SINGLE RESPONSE PER ROW}

RANDOMISE ROWS

NON-MANDATORY

	Response	0 Strongly disagree	1	2	3	4	5 Neither agree nor disagree	6	7	8	9	10 Strongly agree	Don't know	Prefer not to say
01	I have cultural responsibilities to care for Sea Country	00	01	02	03	04	05	06	07	08	09	10	98	99
02	The health of Sea Country is critical to protect Aboriginal cultures and traditions	00	01	02	03	04	05	06	07	08	09	10	98	99
03	Non-Aboriginal people appreciate the importance of Sea Country to Aboriginal cultures	00	01	02	03	04	05	06	07	08	09	10	98	99

-----[NEW SCREEN]-----

ASK ALL

**Q10** How would you rate the current health of Sea Country in your local area?

Please think about aspects such as the cleanliness of beaches, water quality, and coastal habitats, flora and wildlife.

{SINGLE RESPONSE}

NON-MANDATORY

Very good	01
Good	02
Neither good nor poor	03
Poor	04
Very poor	05
Don't know	98
Prefer not to say	99

ASK ALL

**Q11** Please explain why you think the health of your local Sea Country is <INSERT RESPONSE TEXT SELECTED AT Q10>.

{OPEN RESPONSE}

NON-MANDATORY

Prefer not to say	99

-----[NEW SCREEN]-----

ASK ALL

**Q12** How concerned are you about the following?

{SINGLE RESPONSE PER ROW}

RANDOMISE ROWS

NON-MANDATORY

	Response	Extremely concerned	Moderately concerned	Somewhat concerned	Slightly concerned	Not at all concerned	Don't know	Prefer not to say
01	Global environmental problems (e.g. climate change, de-forestation, loss of biodiversity, pollution)	05	04	03	02	01	98	99
02	Environmental problems in NSW that impact the way you value and use Sea Country (e.g. climate change, pollution, habitat loss)	05	04	03	02	01	98	99

-----[NEW SCREEN]-----

ASK ALL

**Q13** What does caring for Sea Country mean to you?

{OPEN RESPONSE}

NON-MANDATORY

Prefer not to say	99

-----[NEW SCREEN]-----

ASK ALL

**Q14** How much of an impact do you think the following aspects **currently** have on **your cultural connections** to Sea Country in your local area? When answering, please think about whether you have **personally** been impacted over the past 12 months

NOTE TO INTERVIEWER: 'NO IMPACT' MEANS YOU 'NEVER NOTICED IT', 'SEVERE IMPACT' MEANS 'IT ALWAYS AFFECTS YOUR EXPERIENCE TO THE POINT THAT YOU HAD TO STOP DOING THE ACTIVITY'.

{SINGLE RESPONSE PER ROW}

RANDOMISE ROWS

NON-MANDATORY

	Response	0 No impact	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10 Severe impact	Don't know	Prefer not to say
01	Climate change, including sea level rise, storm surges, heat waves etc.	00	01	02	03	04	05	06	07	08	09	10	98	99
02	Loss of natural habitats (e.g. coastal bushland, wetlands)	00	01	02	03	04	05	06	07	08	09	10	98	99
03	Damage to habitats, including breeding grounds and riverbanks (e.g. due to development, 4WD's, fishing methods)	00	01	02	03	04	05	06	07	08	09	10	98	99
04	Reduced amount of seafood to catch and eat (e.g. due to extraction, loss of habitat, pollution)	00	01	02	03	04	05	06	07	08	09	10	98	99
05	Seafood contamination (e.g. pipis, oysters)	00	01	02	03	04	05	06	07	08	09	10	98	99
06	Decline in totemic or culturally significant wildlife (e.g. fish, shorebirds, turtles)	00	01	02	03	04	05	06	07	08	09	10	98	99
07	Poor water quality (e.g. sewage, stormwater and farmland runoff)	00	01	02	03	04	05	06	07	08	09	10	98	99
08	Illegal activities (i.e. other people not following government rules) (e.g. vandalism of sites, illegal fishing, misuse of cultural fishing rights)	00	01	02	03	04	05	06	07	08	09	10	98	99
09	Lack of access to culturally significant sites due to management (e.g. no-fishing zones, private development or land ownership) <span style="color: green;">NOTE TO INTERVIEWER: EXCLUDING RESTRICTIONS DUE TO COVID-19</span>	00	01	02	03	04	05	06	07	08	09	10	98	99
10	Limited access to Sea Country resources due to rules and restrictions (e.g. bag limits, protection of species, need for a boat licence)	00	01	02	03	04	05	06	07	08	09	10	98	99
11	Overcrowding	00	01	02	03	04	05	06	07	08	09	10	98	99
96	Other (please specify on next screen)	00	01	02	03	04	05	06	07	08	09	10	98	99

-----[NEW SCREEN]-----

ASK THOSE WHO INDICATED SOME LEVEL OF IMPACT, Q14 = 05-10

**Q15** Please describe in more detail how the following aspects you selected have impacted your cultural connection.

[SHOW STATEMENTS WHERE RESPONDENT INDICATED SOME LEVEL OF IMPACT, Q14 = 05-10]

{OPEN RESPONSE}

NON-MANDATORY

Prefer not to say	99

-----[NEW SCREEN]-----

ASK ALL

**Q16** Thinking about Sea Country in your local area, how satisfied are you with each of the following aspects?

Please give your answer on a scale from '0' to '10' when '0' means you are 'not satisfied at all' and '10' means you are 'very satisfied'.

{SINGLE RESPONSE PER ROW}

RANDOMISE ROWS

NON-MANDATORY



	Response	0 Not satisfied at all	1	2	3	4	5 Neither satisfied nor dissatisfied	6	7	8	9	10 Very satisfied	Don't know	Prefer not to say
01	Current rules allow me to easily undertake cultural activities and traditions (e.g. rules around cultural fishing, boating, foreshore access and use)	00	01	02	03	04	05	06	07	08	09	10	98	99
02	Current rules around Sea Country recognise Aboriginal cultural rights (e.g. rules around cultural fishing, boating, foreshore access and use)	00	01	02	03	04	05	06	07	08	09	10	98	99
03	Culturally significant sites found on land will be preserved for future generations	00	01	02	03	04	05	06	07	08	09	10	98	99
04	Culturally significant sites that are now underwater will be preserved for future generations	00	01	02	03	04	05	06	07	08	09	10	98	99

-----[NEW SCREEN]-----

ASK THOSE WHO INDICATED SOME LEVEL OF DISSATISFACTION, Q16 = 00-04

**Q17** Please describe in more detail how the following aspects you selected have impacted your cultural connection  
 [SHOW STATEMENTS WHERE RESPONDENT INDICATED SOME LEVEL OF DISSATISFACTION, Q16 = 00-14]

{OPEN RESPONSE} {AATSIS QUESTION}  
 NON MANDATORY

Prefer not to say	99

-----[NEW SCREEN]-----

## SECTION C: ATTITUDES AND EXPERIENCE WITH GOVERNMENT AGENCIES

ASK ALL

**Q18** Thinking about the way Sea Country in your local area is managed, how satisfied are you with each of the following aspects?

Please think about the state agencies including their interactions with the public and the way decisions are made and communicated.

{SINGLE RESPONSE PER ROW}

RANDOMISE ROWS

NON-MANDATORY

	Response	0 Not satisfied at all	1	2	3	4	5 Neither satisfied nor dissatisfied	6	7	8	9	10 Very satisfied	Don't know	Prefer not to say
01	There are opportunities for the Aboriginal community to have their say	00	01	02	03	04	05	06	07	08	09	10	98	99
02	Information about how and why decisions are made is easy to find	00	01	02	03	04	05	06	07	08	09	10	98	99
03	Information about how and why decisions are made is easy to understand	00	01	02	03	04	05	06	07	08	09	10	98	99
04	Rules around Sea Country management (e.g. cultural fishing, boating, foreshore access and use) are easy to find	00	01	02	03	04	05	06	07	08	09	10	98	99
05	Rules around Sea Country management (e.g. cultural fishing, boating, foreshore access and use) are easy to understand	00	01	02	03	04	05	06	07	08	09	10	98	99

-----[NEW SCREEN]-----

ASK ALL

**Q19** Have you previously been consulted by government to talk about the management of Sea Country?

{SINGLE RESPONSE}

NON-MANDATORY

Yes	01
No	02
Don't know / Not sure	98
Prefer not to say	99

-----[NEW SCREEN]-----

ASK THOSE WHO HAVE BEEN CONSULTED BY GVT, Q19 = 01

**Q20** Thinking about when you have been consulted by government to talk about the management of Sea Country, how satisfied are you with each of the following aspects?

{SINGLE RESPONSE PER ROW}

RANDOMISE ROWS

NON-MANDATORY

	Response	0 Not satisfied at all	1	2	3	4	5 Neither satisfied nor dissatisfied	6	7	8	9	10 Very satisfied	Don't know	Prefer not to say
01	Aboriginal cultures are understood by government staff who engage with your community	00	01	02	03	04	05	06	07	08	09	10	98	99
02	People with cultural authority are being consulted <b>INTERVIEWER NOTE: APPROPRIATE PEOPLE FOR THE PARTICULAR ISSUE</b>	00	01	02	03	04	05	06	07	08	09	10	98	99
03	Traditional Owners are actively involved in government decision making	00	01	02	03	04	05	06	07	08	09	10	98	99
04	Cultural knowledge is used in decision-making	00	01	02	03	04	05	06	07	08	09	10	98	99
05	Rights as Traditional Owners are adequately recognised in current management	00	01	02	03	04	05	06	07	08	09	10	98	99
06	Government have acted on issues raised by your community	00	01	02	03	04	05	06	07	08	09	10	98	99

[NEW SCREEN]

ASK ALL

**Q21** How much do you agree with the following statements?

**NOTE TO INTERVIEWER: OPPORTUNITIES AVAILABLE NOW OR HAVE HEARD OF COMING UP IN NEAR FUTURE.**

{SINGLE RESPONSE PER ROW}

RANDOMISE ROWS

NON-MANDATORY

	Response	0 Strongly disagree	1	2	3	4	5 Neither agree nor disagree	6	7	8	9	10 Strongly agree	Don't know	Prefer not to say
01	There are opportunities for joint management of Sea Country	00	01	02	03	04	05	06	07	08	09	10	98	99
02	There are opportunities for Aboriginal people to outright manage Sea Country	00	01	02	03	04	05	06	07	08	09	10	98	99
03	There are opportunities for developing Aboriginal commercial fishing and aquaculture interests	00	01	02	03	04	05	06	07	08	09	10	98	99
04	There are opportunities for employment or business ownership related to Sea Country (e.g. eco-tourism, management, boat charters)	00	01	02	03	04	05	06	07	08	09	10	98	99
05	There are opportunities for training and education on Sea Country e.g. boat licence, ranger, marine wildlife responses and rescues	00	01	02	03	04	05	06	07	08	09	10	98	99

[NEW SCREEN]

ASK ALL

**Q22** Do you currently receive income from work that relates to Sea Country?

{SINGLE RESPONSE}

NON-MANDATORY

Yes	01
No	02
Prefer not to say	99

-----[NEW SCREEN]-----

ASK THOSE RECEIVING INCOME FROM SEA COUNTRY RELATED WORK, Q22 = 01

**Q23** What kind of work do you do?

{MULTIPLE RESPONSE}

RANDOMISE

NON-MANDATORY

Commercial fishing	01
Seafood processing	02
Aquaculture	03
Commercial boating	04
Cultural tourism	05
Eco-tourism	06
NOTE TO INTERVIEWER: ENSURE RESPONDENT IS CLEAR THIS IS REFERRING TO ECOTOURISM (I.E. EXPERIENCE NATURE WITHOUT DAMAGING NATURAL HABITATS) AND NOT CULTURAL TOURISM (I.E., DISCOVER, EXPERIENCE CULTURAL ATTRACTIONS)	
Sea Country management or research (e.g. for government, universities, other organisation)	07
Sea Country education (e.g. teacher, community engagement)	08
Arts and crafts made from Sea Country resources or inspired by Sea Country	09
Other, please specify	96
Prefer not to say	99

-----[NEW SCREEN]-----

ASK THOSE RECEIVING INCOME FROM SEA COUNTRY RELATED WORK, Q22 = 01

**Q24** What is your employment situation?

{SINGLE RESPONSE}

NON MANDATORY

Employed full time (i.e. ≥35 hours per week)	01
Employed part time (i.e. ≤35 hours per week)	02
Casual (i.e. irregular hours, no guarantee of hours, no paid sick or annual leave)	03
Prefer not to say	99

-----[NEW SCREEN]-----

## SECTION D: PROGRAM INVOLVEMENT

Now we have a couple of questions to help us analyse the results.

ASK ALL

**Q25** Have you been involved in any of the following government led programs since 2018?

{MULTIPLE RESPONSE}

RANDOMISE

NON-MANDATORY

Sea Country education and awareness	01
Sea Country training (e.g. ranger, boating/boat licence training, bird monitoring)	02
Applications to government for fishing permits (including marine park permits)	03
Caring for Sea Country (e.g. clean ups, replanting native flora, bird monitoring, etc.)	04
Marine wildlife responses and rescues (e.g. whale stranding, turtle and dolphin events)	05
Other, please specify	96
None of these [EXCLUSIVE] [ANCHOR]	98
Prefer not to say [EXCLUSIVE] [ANCHOR]	99

-----[NEW SCREEN]-----

ASK ALL

**Q26** Would you like to be involved in any of these programs?

{MULTIPLE RESPONSE}

RANDOMISE

NON-MANDATORY

Sea Country education and awareness	01
Sea Country training (e.g. ranger, boating/boat licence training, bird monitoring)	02
Applications to government for fishing permits (including marine park permits)	03
Caring for Sea Country (e.g. clean ups, replanting native flora, bird monitoring, etc.)	04
Marine wildlife responses and rescues (e.g. whale stranding, turtle and dolphin events)	05
None of these	98
Prefer not to say	99

-----[NEW SCREEN]-----

ASK ALL

**Q27** Thinking more broadly about your life in general, how satisfied are you with **your life as a whole**?

{SINGLE RESPONSE}

NON-MANDATORY

0 – Not satisfied at all	00
1	01
2	02
3	03
4	04
5 – Neither satisfied nor dissatisfied	05
6	06
7	07
8	08
9	09
10 – Very satisfied	10
Don't know	98
Prefer not to say	99

### 3.3 Appendix C: Participant information sheet

#### Participant Information Sheet Sea Country (Marine Estate) community wellbeing

##### **THIS IS FOR YOU TO KEEP**

#### 1. Who we are

Ipsos Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Research Unit (ATSIRU) is part of Ipsos which is a global company with offices around Australia and the world. Ipsos is the 3<sup>rd</sup> largest global research company in the world.

#### 2. What we are doing

The NSW Department of Primary Industries have asked Ipsos ATSIRU to conduct research about the wellbeing of the Sea Country (Marine Estate) with the local community living on the coast of NSW. We would like to:

- Identify the key benefits of Sea Country (the Marine Estate) to Aboriginal communities in NSW including social, cultural and economic benefits;
- Measure any potential risks or threats to community benefits and environmental health;
- Establish any impacts to Aboriginal cultural values practices;
- Recognise the perception of impacts of environmental health and
- To improve cultural use of Sea Country and environmental outcomes

Talking to many people about this and listening to their suggestions will help the Government better plan and manage Sea Country (the Marine Estate). If you would like a support person during your interview just let the Researcher know that you want this person with you. The interview will take up to half an hour.

#### 3. Permission to do this research

If you decide you want to talk to us and then change your mind – that's OK, you don't have to talk to us. If you don't like what we ask you don't have to answer. If you decide you want to take part, you will be asked to sign a Consent Form (along with anyone else you want to be involved in the interview). By signing the consent form you are telling us that you:

- Understand what you have read, or have had it read to you by someone you trust and agree to take part;
- You will keep this Information Sheet and a copy of your consent form, so you can ask us questions later if you want to.

##### **THIS RESEARCH IS VOLUNTARY**

**IT IS UP TO YOU IF YOU WANT TO SAY YES. YOU CAN SAY NO IF YOU WANT TO.**

**YOU CAN STOP AT ANY TIME IF YOU DON'T LIKE THE QUESTIONS.**

#### 4. Keeping interviews private

Your name will only appear on the consent form if you wish to complete a survey. The consent form will not be attached to your story at any time.

**ALL INTERVIEWS ARE CONFIDENTIAL. ONLY TELL US WHAT YOU FEEL COMFORTABLE TELLING US.**

**IF YOU WOULD LIKE A TRUSTED PERSON TO SIT WITH YOU DURING YOUR INTERVIEW THIS IS OK AS LONG AS THEY ARE HAPPY TO SIGN A CONSENT FORM ALSO.**



## 5. What we have done so far:

We approached your community and 11 other communities across the East Coast of NSW speaking to the Elders, Service Providers and community people to make sure it is OK to do this research in each of the communities. We call this process community consent.

We submitted an Ethics Application to the Australian Institute of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Studies (AIATSIS) Ethics Committee to seek Ethical approval for the study. Ethical Clearance has been received, we are visiting 11 NSW communities along the NSW East Coast and aim to employ 2 local researchers in each area to assist us to interview as many people as possible who wish to participate in this research. We will collect as much information as possible to build a story on how your community and others feel about the wellbeing of local community living on the coast of NSW.

We understand that your community is unique and may have different results and suggestions than the other communities involved in this research.

## 6. Results of Study

Ipsos and Ipsos ATSIRU will write up all the information that is gathered from the interviews into a report. There will be no names in this report, we will write it so that it talks about everybody that shared their stories not just you. What we learn from this research will be shared with the NSW Department of Primary Industries and the things we learn from the research might be used by the Community representatives and the NSW Department of Primary Industries to make changes in the future.

We cannot guarantee or promise that participants will receive any benefits from this research, however each person whom completes an interview will receive a \$25 incentive card.

## 7. Advice and Information

If you have any questions regarding this study, please contact: **Sharon Barnes on 0429 770 597**

If you would like to make a complaint about the research, you can complain to:

- Dr Lisa Strelein, Director of Research, AIATSIS, 51 Lawson Crescent, Acton ACT 2601, (p) 02 6246 1155, (e) [lisa.strelein@aiatsis.gov.au](mailto:lisa.strelein@aiatsis.gov.au)
- Mr Kevin Williams, Chair of the AIATSIS Research Ethics Committee, by calling 02 6261 4251 or writing to the AIATSIS Research Ethics Committee, AIATSIS, 51 Lawson Crescent, Acton ACT 2601. This is an independent Committee whose members do not work for AIATSIS.
- If I think there has been a breach of my privacy I can write to the Office of the Australian Information Commissioner, GPO Box 5218 Sydney NSW 2001 or call 1300 363 992.

### THE IPSOS ATSIRU PROJECT TEAM:



### 3.4 Appendix D: Participant consent form

## **CONSENT FORM** **Sea Country (Marine Estate) Community Wellbeing** **This Means You Can Say No**

<input type="checkbox"/> I agree to tell my story about Sea Country (the Marine Estate) in our community.	
<input type="checkbox"/> I understand that Ipsos is collecting stories about Sea Country (the Marine Estate) for the Department of Primary Industries in my community to: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Identify the key benefits of Sea Country (the Marine Estate) to the NSW community including social, cultural and economic benefits;</li> <li>• Measure any potential risks or threats to the community benefits and the environmental health;</li> <li>• Establish any impacts on the Aboriginal cultural values practices;</li> <li>• Recognise the perception of impacts of environmental health and any potential opportunities.</li> </ul>	
<input type="checkbox"/> I understand that <b>it is my choice</b> to participate; I know that <b>I do not have to do this</b> and that <b>I can choose</b> what questions I will answer. This means: <b>YOU CAN SAY NO OR STOP AT ANY TIME.</b>	
<input type="checkbox"/> I understand that my story will remain private (confidential) and that my answers will remain between me and the researcher. I understand that some of my words may be used in reports but my name or identifying information will not be published. This means: <b>WHAT YOU SAY WILL NOT HAVE YOUR NAME NEXT TO IT AND NO ONE OTHER THAN THE RESEARCHERS WILL KNOW IT WAS YOU WHO SAID IT.</b>	
<b>OPTIONAL:</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li><input type="checkbox"/> Yes, I agree to my story being recorded on a voice recorder.</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> No, I do not want to be recorded on a voice recorder.</li> </ul> This means – <b>YOU CAN SAY NO TO VOICE RECORDING BUT STILL DO THE SURVEY.</b>	
My Signature:	Witness Signature:
Full Name:	Witness Full Name:
Date:	Date:

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