

Marine Estate Management Authority Annual Report 2023–2024



December 2024



Published by NSW Department of Primary Industries and Regional Development

Title: Annual Report 2023–2024

First published December 2024

ISSN: 2981-9547 (Online)

PUB24/914

[More information](#)

Marine Estate Management Authority

www.marine.nsw.gov.au

Acknowledgments

The Authority acknowledges Ministers, government agencies, organisations and individual whose support, collaboration and input has made our work possible. Key contributors include:

1. Marine Estate Expert Knowledge Panel
2. Officers from the following agencies in preparing this report:
 - Department of Climate Change, Energy, the Environment and Water
 - Department of Planning Housing and Infrastructure
 - Department of Primary Industries and Regional Development
 - Transport for NSW.

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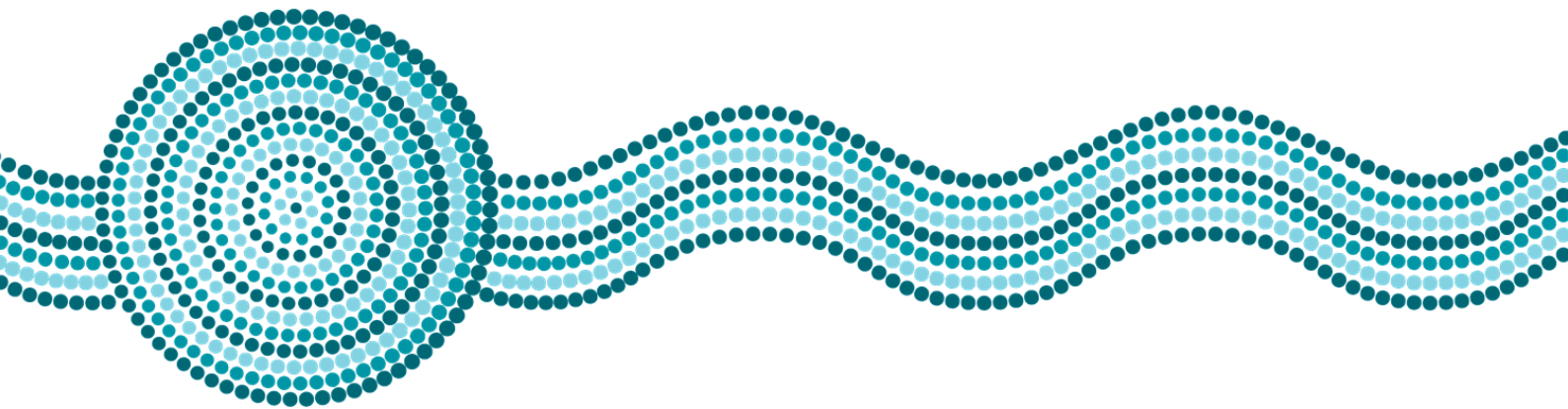
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Acknowledgement of Country

The Marine Estate Management Authority (Authority) acknowledges the Traditional Owners and Custodians of the land on which we live and work and pays respect to Elders past, present and emerging.

Aboriginal people hold deep cultural and spiritual connections to the sea. They have cared for Sea Country for thousands of years, passing on their knowledge and tradition to each new generation. The Authority seeks to work collaboratively with Aboriginal people to maintain their social, cultural, economic and spiritual connections to the marine estate, now and into the future.



Artwork: Marina Riley ©

Message from the Chair



The 2023–24 year has been a year of progress for the Marine Estate Management Authority. Our marine estate programs have continued to deliver outcomes for the community of NSW. We have adapted to deliver our work alongside the recovery efforts after the floods of 2022 on the North Coast of NSW.

Our role is to facilitate collaboration across NSW government agencies and with our many partners to manage the NSW marine estate as one continuous system. Our programs are reducing key threats and improving the health of estuarine, coastal and offshore environments to all our benefit.

This year, \$30 million was allocated to the implementation of the Marine Estate Management Strategy (the Strategy). The program of works spans many government agencies and partners to implement nearly 100 projects throughout NSW.

We continued the development of a new approach to managing the NSW mainland marine park network and considered stakeholder submissions as part of that process. The draft Mainland Marine Park Network Management Plan 2024–34 will set out a simpler and more consistent approach to managing the network of marine parks along the coast of mainland NSW.

Work on environmentally friendly moorings progressed with the publication of a literature review and the commencement of in-water trials at Port Stephens, Sydney Harbour and Jervis Bay. The trials are testing the performance of different environmentally friendly mooring designs and measuring their impact on the sea floor.

The NSW Coastal Design Guidelines were published. These guidelines provide best-practice advice to support the preparation of planning proposals, place strategies and local planning controls. They also aim to shape good urban design outcomes in coastal settlements. Supporting materials include case studies and worked examples to demonstrate how the guidelines can be applied in practice.

We have implemented new governance arrangements to improve the management of diffuse source water pollution by clarifying NSW Government roles and responsibilities and establishing a Diffuse Source Water Pollution Oversight Committee.

Our preparation to manage the impacts of climate change on the marine estate continues to take shape as we develop climate change risk assessments and a climate resilience and adaptation toolkit for marine protected areas. A statewide marine heatwave response plan is now complete. This work will ensure that the likely future effects of climate change are better understood, anticipated and planned for.

The Marine Integrated Monitoring Program (the Monitoring Program) continued to develop the systems that will provide transparent reporting on what is happening ‘out on the water’ as the Strategy progresses. A review to assess new and emerging threats has been a focus during the year as well as a mid-term evaluation of the Strategy. The evaluation found that the Strategy remains highly relevant, and our governance has enabled better collaboration and project delivery. The evaluation showed we are making progress on gathering evidence to support the achievement of our outcomes. There are also recommendations, which the Authority will implement, that will improve how we operate.

A highlight for the year was the publication of key social and economic information that provides further understanding of what the marine estate means to the people of NSW. Surveys of residents, visitors, youth and our Aboriginal communities demonstrated the continuing importance of the marine estate and detailed the issues that communities are interested in. The findings help shape the scope and direction of the program. The surveys are completed periodically so we can see changes in people's views over time.

The value of the marine estate to the economy of NSW has been reported this year. The marine estate contributed \$16.2 billion in value added to the NSW economy, which is 2.5% of the state's gross domestic product. This supports 103,800 jobs. Tourism is the largest industry at \$6.1 billion, most of which is generated in regional areas. Importantly, 63% of the income is dependent on a healthy marine estate, highlighting the importance of the ongoing work on the Strategy.

We and our partners also released the following significant publications:

- Recreational Fishing Stakeholder Survey
- Economic Contribution and Market Insights Report
- NSW Marine Estate Community Wellbeing Report
- Connections to Sea Country Aboriginal People of Coastal NSW Survey Report
- Domestic Waterfront Structure Strategies
- Audit of Commercial Dredging and Extraction on Coastal Crown Land Summary Report
- NSW Coastal Design Guidelines
- Coastal Crown Lands Guidelines
- Literature Review of Environmentally Friendly Moorings

Detailed progress on the delivery of the Strategy for the year is reported separately in the accompanying report to this document, the [Marine Estate Management Strategy Implementation Annual Report 2023–24](#).

I thank the members of the Authority, the Marine Estate Expert Knowledge Panel, the agencies, other partners and the community for your diligent work and I look forward to another productive year ahead.

Russell Reichelt Chair, Marine Estate Management Authority

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Key deliverables

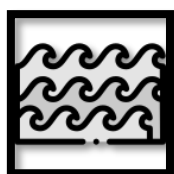
CREATING CHANGE



Marine Estate Management Strategy

\$30 million allocated to support the continued delivery of the Strategy in 2023–24 through nearly 100 projects

The Strategy addresses priority threats to the environmental assets and the social, cultural and economic benefits derived from the NSW marine estate



Marine Protected Area planning and management

Work continued to progress marine park management planning and improved management of aquatic reserves



Marine Integrated Monitoring Program

Work continues as we develop report cards, fill key knowledge gaps, and review new information to identify emerging threats to the marine estate



Mid-term evaluation

The mid-term evaluation of the Strategy was completed. The Strategy remains highly relevant, and we have made progress towards outcomes. Recommendations from the evaluation will be implemented to make further improvements



Community Wellbeing and Connections to Sea Country reports

Improving our understanding of the values, benefits and threats that people see while experiencing the marine estate



Economic contributions and market insights

Understanding the economic value across industries that interact and depend on the marine estate

Figure 1. Key deliverables in 2023–24 for the NSW marine estate

Introduction

This report provides an annual summary of key marine estate programs that are being delivered by the Marine Estate Management Authority (the Authority).

The vision is to deliver ‘a healthy coast and sea, managed for the greatest wellbeing of the community, now and into the future’

Who we are

The **Authority** advises the NSW Government on the management of the marine estate in accordance with the objects of the *Marine Estate Management Act 2014*. Key functions include conducting threat and risk assessments, developing management strategies, promoting collaboration and coordination between public authorities, and fostering consultation with the community to manage the marine estate.

The Authority is in its 11th year of operation and has overseen coordinated management of the NSW marine estate since 2013.

Our role is to ensure that policies and programs address priority issues in the NSW marine estate, are well-coordinated, efficient, evidence-based, and result in positive outcomes.

The Authority is supported by the independent **Marine Estate Expert Knowledge Panel** (Knowledge Panel). The Knowledge Panel provides independent expert advice to the Authority on request. Matters can include environmental, social, cultural and economic considerations and supports evidence-based decision-making.

The Authority brings together senior executives of the 4 NSW Government agencies with key marine estate responsibilities to provide advice to the Government on strategic, evidence-based management of the marine estate. Its functions are overseen by an independent Chair.

The 4 **Authority agencies** are:

- Department of Primary Industries and Regional Development
- Department of Planning, Housing and Infrastructure
- Department of Climate Change, Energy, the Environment and Water
- Transport for NSW.

Machinery of government changes following the 2023 NSW Government election saw several departments change their name in 2024.

Improved linkages between NSW Government agencies and the NSW Coastal Council are intended to lead to better outcomes for the community, industry and the environment. Interagency collaboration is central to supporting the Authority and the Knowledge Panel in their oversight of marine estate management.

Our principles

1. Effective community engagement to identify and prioritise benefits and threats
2. Identification of priority actions will be based on threat and risk assessment
3. Values will be assigned to enable trade-off decisions between alternative uses of the marine estate
4. Best available information will be used in trade-off decisions, but judgement will still be required
5. The wellbeing of future generations will be considered
6. Existing access arrangements will be respected
7. The precautionary principle will be applied
8. Efficient and cost-effective management to achieve community outcomes
9. Management decisions will be transparent and adjust in response to new information
10. Management performance will be measured, monitored and reported and information pursued to fill critical knowledge gaps

NSW marine estate at a glance

The NSW marine estate is one of our greatest natural assets. It is integral to our coastal-based lifestyle and economy.








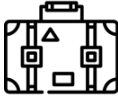



| OUR MARINE ESTATE | | |
|---|---|--|
|  | 6.3 million people live along NSW coastline | 85% of the state's population lives within 50 kilometres of the marine estate. People choose to live, work and recreate near the coast because of the benefits the marine estate provides, and this is seen in the high prices of coastal real estate. |
|  | 11 coastal Aboriginal nations | Sea Country is vital to Aboriginal cultural wellbeing in NSW. The marine estate supports spiritual and cultural connection to Country. It also supports sustenance via locally caught seafood. |
|  | 6 marine parks | Marine parks help conserve marine biodiversity, while providing for activities such as diving, boating, fishing and tourism. Marine parks cover a third of the NSW marine estate (about 345,000 hectares). |
|  | 17 artificial reefs | Artificial reefs enhance fishing opportunities for recreational fishers by creating more habitat for fish and other marine organisms. There are 11 offshore reefs and 6 estuarine reefs, with plans for 2 more. |
|  | 12 aquatic reserves | Aquatic reserves conserve marine biodiversity and are places to enjoy a range of marine activities such as scuba diving, snorkelling, swimming and education. These reserves cover around 2,000 hectares of the NSW marine estate. |
|  | 1,750 km coastline 826 beaches 185 estuaries | The state's beaches and coastal waterways are the focus of international, national and regional tourism. They support coastal events, accommodation, restaurants, retail and recreational opportunities. |
|  | 1 million hectares of estuary and ocean | The NSW marine estate incorporates estuaries and coastal foreshores, and extends seaward out to 3 nautical miles from the Queensland to the Victorian border. |
|  | \$6 billion tourism | More than \$6 billion annual income is generated by tourism. It supports more than 38,000 jobs in NSW. |
|  | 1.8 million recreational boating | 1.8 million people go recreational boating in the NSW marine estate each year. There are about 235,000 registered vessels in NSW. Most of the 550,000 people who hold a boat or personal watercraft driving licence use it for coastal boating. |
|  | 1 million licensed recreational fishers | There are 1 million licensed recreational fishers in NSW, generating an economic benefit of \$757 million each year and revenue to the state of about \$16 million a year from recreational fishing licence sales. Most recreational fishing activity is in the marine estate. |
|  | \$98 million wild-caught commercial fisheries | NSW is famous as a safe source of locally caught seafood. The estimated total value of wild-caught commercial fisheries in NSW is \$98 million annually, supporting around 674 jobs. Marine and estuarine aquaculture is worth around \$43 million annually and supports more than 290 jobs in regional NSW. |

Figure 2. The marine estate at a glance



Figure 3. Map of the NSW marine estate

Our achievements in 2023–24

The NSW Government has invested a total of \$165 million in the Strategy since it started 6 years ago. The funding has been critical to maintain the momentum of projects, continue partnerships, provide regional jobs, and help with the recovery of flood-affected regions. A mid-term evaluation of the Strategy was completed and found that the Strategy was still highly relevant.

Marine Estate Management Strategy implementation

The 10-year Strategy is the first whole-of-government approach to providing an overarching framework for coordinated management of the marine estate.

More than \$30 million was allocated in 2023–24 to support ongoing projects. These projects build on the investment of \$135 million already committed by the NSW Government for the first 5 years of the Strategy's implementation. The work supported management of coastal areas, community engagement, economic valuation of the marine estate, and the maintenance and protection of key environmental assets found in our marine estate.

Good governance and collaboration underpin the implementation of the Strategy. The collaboration by staff from across the Authority's affiliated agencies has expanded to other partner agencies, industry and key stakeholder groups. In total, 7 memorandums of understanding underpin the delivery of the Strategy.

The Strategy establishes a coordinated, holistic, quadruple bottom-line approach to the management of the NSW marine estate.

The Strategy addresses the priority threats to the social, cultural, economic and environmental benefits informed by a comprehensive, evidence-based statewide Threat and Risk Assessment (statewide TARA). It includes nearly 100 projects across 9 interlinked management initiatives that aim to reduce priority threats by:

1. improving water quality and reducing litter
2. enhancing coastal habitats
3. planning for climate change
4. protecting Aboriginal cultural values of the marine estate
5. reducing impacts on threatened and protected species
6. delivering sustainable fishing
7. enabling safe and sustainable boating
8. enhancing social, cultural and economic benefits
9. delivering effective governance.

The Strategy ensures continued access and enjoyment to a healthy marine estate for the community who rely on it for work, recreation, health and wellbeing.

Work continued on building our understanding of the social and economic aspects of the marine estate. Through the Marine Estate Community Wellbeing surveys, we were able to seek the views of more than 2,100 coastal residents, 850 coastal youths aged 14 to 17, and 1,100 coastal visitors in a bid to better understand how they use the coast and its importance to their quality of life.

The surveys found almost two-thirds of the coastal residents surveyed visit their local coastal area at least weekly, and 43% visited daily. In addition, 69% of coastal residents said the coast was ‘important’ to ‘very important’ to their emotional and mental health. It was encouraging that 88% of coastal residents and visitors surveyed were confident that the NSW Government is on track to deliver on the marine estate vision.

The marine estate contributed \$16.2 billion in value added to the NSW economy, which is 2.5% of the NSW gross domestic product. This supports 103,800 jobs. Tourism is the largest industry at \$6.1 billion, and most of the contribution comes from regional areas. An important finding was that 63% of the income is dependent on a healthy marine estate, highlighting the importance of the ongoing work on the Strategy.

Mid-term evaluation

This year saw the mid-term evaluation of the Strategy. The findings were that the Strategy remains highly relevant. It also found that:

- the governance framework has enabled collaboration, improved processes and supported delivery efficiencies
- there is evidence of progress towards achieving outcomes
- large improvements to baseline data collection have been made.

The evaluation recommended improvements that will be implemented in 2024 and 2025.

Strategy progress and implementation reports

Three triannual reports provide a snapshot of progress on the nearly 100 projects that are part of the Strategy. As the Strategy implementation program matures, reporting is shifting to be more outcomes focused (Figure 3).

This annual report and the 3 triannual snapshot reports complement the annual Strategy Implementation Annual Report 2023–2024.

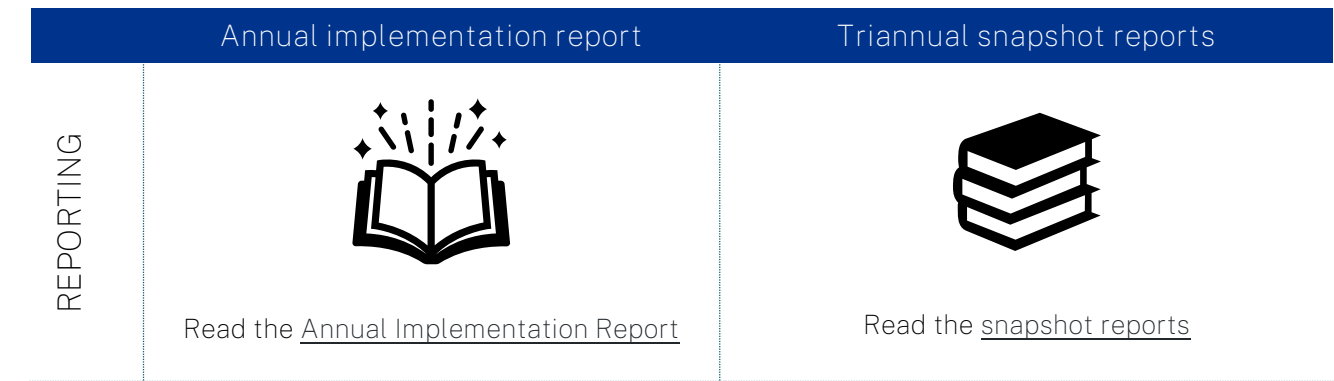


Figure 3. Implementation reporting for the NSW marine estate

Marine protected area planning and management

The draft Mainland Marine Park Network Management Plan provides a 10-year road map for marine park management. It sets out a simpler and more consistent approach to managing the network of 5 mainland marine parks along the coast of NSW, while also taking into account their unique local issues and needs.

The Authority continued to address stakeholder submissions and provided updated advice on the draft Plan to the NSW Government.

Foundational projects to improve the management of marine parks started, including:

- development of governance arrangements to support implementation of the draft Plan once approved
- development of an online version of the draft Plan to make it more accessible to the NSW community
- preparation of climate change risk assessments for each marine park to improve planning, research outcomes and identify mitigation/adaptation options
- initial mapping of stakeholders to support the preparation of a communication, education and engagement plan for marine parks and an updated plan for aquatic reserves.

The Authority also progressed management planning for Lord Howe Island Marine Park. Work included a community survey to identify environmental, economic, social and cultural values and perceived threats to those values:

- [Lord Howe Island Marine Park – Community survey summary of findings](#)
- [Lord Howe Island Marine Park – Community survey full report](#)

Two literature reviews collated existing knowledge of environmental values, and social, cultural and economic values for the marine park:

- [Environmental values of the Lord Howe Island Marine Park](#)
- [Literature review of social, economic and cultural information for Lord Howe Island Marine Park](#)

The community survey and literature reviews will inform the preparation of a management plan for the Lord Howe Island Marine Park. The next step is to incorporate these values and threats into the management planning process in 2023–24.

The Authority considered the approach and draft terms of reference for a 10-year review of management rules (regulations) required by the *Marine Estate Management Act 2014*. This review is scheduled to start in late 2024. It will draw on advice from mainland marine park advisory committees on management rules.

Improved management of aquatic reserves focused on encouraging self-compliance and stewardship of those areas, enhancing marine education opportunities, and encouraging sustainable tourism. For example:

- new interpretive signs and webpages reach tens of thousands of people visiting Cabbage Tree Bay Aquatic Reserve and the local businesses
- a Code of Conduct for Cook Island Aquatic Reserve is being developed with tour operators taking snorkelling and diving trips to the aquatic reserve.

Marine Integrated Monitoring Program

The Monitoring Program continued to guide the monitoring, evaluation and reporting activities of the Strategy. A 5-year review of the statewide TARA in 2022–2023 aimed to:

- review progress in filling key knowledge gaps
- investigate new information since the 2017 assessment
- identify new and emerging threats that management may need to respond to for the remaining years of the Strategy
- inform a 5-year health check of the Strategy.

Early planning began for the 10-year TARA. This next TARA will be a full assessment that will indicate changes to risk levels over 10 years of Strategy implementation and will be used for future Strategy planning. An initial workshop was held to identify key operational issues to be addressed. More workshops will be held in 2025, and working groups will be formed.

The Monitoring Program coordinated outcome monitoring data for the mid-term evaluation of the Strategy. The next steps for the Monitoring Program are to:

- address the recommendations from the mid-term evaluation and TARA review as part of the 5-year health check of the Strategy
- commence the planning and delivery of the Strategy health check, including an internal health check delivery plan
- develop the workstreams for the health check report: *Outcomes Culture Governance and Monitoring and Evaluation*

The internal Monitoring Program Data Portal testing phase was completed – the portal is now ready to be made live. It will support data collection and management, refine monitoring plans, increase engagement and training opportunities, and facilitate outcomes reporting. These activities have been identified as critical to the health check of the Strategy.

The Monitoring Program communications plan continued to be implemented to raise awareness of the Monitoring Program and its key functions. Flyers outlining the Monitoring Program's purposes and role in program evaluation were released, tailored for both internal and external audiences. More communication, training and engagement material is being developed to address critical needs identified in the health check of the Strategy.

The Environmental Condition Framework was released on the Authority's website. It provides a comprehensive summary of selected monitoring projects and approaches to evaluate, monitor and report on the condition and trends of environmental assets in the NSW marine estate. The Environmental Technical Working Group prepared the Framework with contributions from the Knowledge Panel.

The Monitoring Program Steering Committee and Environmental Technical Working Group continued to meet regularly.

Fast facts

The NSW marine estate is integral to the state's coastal-based lifestyle and economy.

LIFESTYLE & ECONOMY








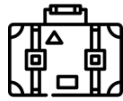
| | | |
|---|---|---|
|  | 331 vessel visits to NSW ports | NSW is the largest cruise vessel destination in Australia, at an estimated industry value of \$2.5 billion for the NSW economy, supporting 9000 jobs. |
|  | 1 million recreational fishers | <p>There are one million recreational fishers in NSW generating an economic benefit of \$757 million annually and revenue to NSW of approximately \$16 million a year from recreational fishing licence sales.</p> <p>The industry also creates the equivalent of around 6,300 full-time jobs.</p> |
|  | 1.8 million recreational boaters | <p>Each year, more than 1.8 million people head out on the water on boats and other watercraft to enjoy the sun, catch a few fish, or to spend time with family and friends. About 55% of boating trips are for recreational fishing.</p> <p>There are about 235,000 registered recreational vessels and more than 550,000 boat and personal watercraft licences.</p> |
|  | 5.3 million people in the Greater Sydney region | About 5.3 million people live in the 12,368 km ² that makes up the Greater Sydney region. This works out to be about 428 people per square kilometre. |
|  | 6.3 million live along the coast | 85% of the NSW population lives along the NSW coastline. |
|  | \$65 million aquaculture \$141 million wild-caught commercial fisheries | <p>NSW is well known as a safe source of locally caught seafood. Millions of dollars are generated each year via international and national tourism focused on seafood consumption from fish bought at the Sydney Fish Markets, regional fisheries cooperatives and retail outlets.</p> <p>The estimated value at the first point of sale of wild-caught commercial fisheries and aquaculture in NSW is nearly \$206 million annually, supporting around 980 full-time jobs across NSW.</p> |
|  | \$16.2 billion value added | The health of the marine estate underpins a \$16.2 billion contribution to the economy, providing up to 103,000 jobs. |
|  | \$4.2 billion tourism | More than \$4.2 billion value added is generated by tourism, supporting more than 38,000 jobs in NSW. |

Figure 4. Fast facts on the NSW marine estate

Schedule of works

The Authority's schedule of works identifies priority areas of work as part of the strategic, holistic, evidence-based approach to managing the NSW marine estate: the marine waters, coast and estuaries, including marine parks and aquatic reserves.

In forming advice for the Ministers responsible for the marine estate, the Authority has direct access to independent expertise through the Knowledge Panel. The Knowledge Panel provides advice about economic, social and ecological sciences, as well as Sea Country management. Together, the Authority and the Knowledge Panel support the NSW Government in focusing its programs on priority issues. It oversees implementation of appropriate, innovative, cost-effective management responses to the biggest threats and risks to the NSW marine estate, and monitors progress on achievement of outcomes.

The schedule is updated as the marine estate reform program progresses and is publicly available on the marine estate website at www.marine.nsw.gov.au. Tables 1 and 2 list works in progress and completed works.

Table 1. Schedule of works in progress for the NSW marine estate

| Indicative completion | Priority programs | Status |
|-----------------------|---|---|
| 2024 | Network Management Plan (NMP) for 5 mainland marine parks | In progress |
| 2025 | Development of management rules to implement the final NMP | In progress |
| 2023 | Threat and Risk Assessment for Lord Howe Island Marine Park | In progress – scoping |
| 2024 | Statewide Threat and Risk Assessment: 5-year review | Completed awaiting publication |
| 2024 | Preparation of a management plan for Lord Howe Island Marine Park | Pending finalisation of NMP and Threat and Risk Assessment for Lord Howe Island marine estate |
| 2024 | Marine Estate Management Strategy implementation: 5-year health check | Completed – awaiting publication |
| 2025 | Statutory review of management rules for marine parks | Not commenced – due to commence in 2024–2025 |
| 2025 | Development of management rules to implement the final management plan for Lord Howe Island Marine Park | Pending finalisation of management plan for Lord Howe Island Marine Park |
| 2027 | Statewide TARA review | Not commenced |
| 2028 | Marine Estate Management Strategy (2018–2028) evaluation | Not commenced |

Table 2. Schedule of completed works for the NSW marine estate

| Completed projects | Status |
|--|---|
| Marine Integrated Monitoring Program – finalise framework documents to guide monitoring and fill knowledge gaps (Community Wellbeing Framework and Environmental Condition Framework) | Published 2024 |
| <u>NSW marine estate economic contribution and market insights report</u> | Published July 2024 |
| <u>Community wellbeing</u> and <u>Sea Country</u> surveys – Wave 1 | Published June 2024 |
| Marine Estate Management Strategy <u>Implementation Plan 2022–2024</u> | Published 2022 |
| Marine Estate Management Strategy <u>Implementation Plan 2020–2021</u> | Published March 2021 |
| <i>Marine Estate Management Act 2014</i> , <u>5-year statutory review</u> | Completed 2020 (tabled in Parliament 17 December) |
| Marine Integrated Monitoring Program <u>Evaluation Framework</u> | Published December 2019 |
| Marine Estate Management Strategy <u>Implementation Plan 2018–2020</u> | Published October 2019 |
| <u>Hawkesbury Shelf marine bioregion assessment</u> to explore mechanisms to enhance conservation of marine biodiversity in the Hawkesbury Shelf marine bioregion (Newcastle–Sydney–Wollongong) | Discussion paper released August–September 2018 |
| <u>Marine Estate Management Strategy</u> (2018–2028) | Published 16 Aug 2018 |
| <i>Marine Estate Management (Management Rules) Regulation 1999</i> amended to implement final decision regarding <u>10 ocean beach and headland sanctuary zones</u> sites in 4 marine parks in relation to shore-based recreational line fishing | Gazetted June 2018 |
| <u>Guidelines for assessing management options for the NSW marine estate</u> | Published October 2017 |
| <u>NSW Marine Protected Areas Policy Statement</u> | Published October 2017 |
| <u>Marine Estate Management Regulation</u> | Remade September 2017 |
| <u>Statewide Threat and Risk Assessment</u> | Published October 2017 |
| Marine Estate Expert Knowledge Panel evaluation of processes and role in NSW marine estate management | Published 2016 in <u>MEMA's annual report</u> |
| <u>Threat and Risk Assessment Framework</u> | Published June 2015 |
| <i>Marine Estate Management Act 2014</i> | Commenced December 2014 |
| Social research, through a <u>statewide survey</u> to capture NSW community views on the marine estate | Published July 2014 |
| The <u>Authority's vision and principles</u> determined, to guide management of the marine estate | Published November 2013 |
| Moratorium provisions in <i>Marine Parks Act 1997</i> amended to allow for <u>changes to zoning</u> including alteration of sanctuary zones | Passed Parliament August 2013 |

Engagement and communications

Maximising our connection and strengthening our collaboration and networks with communities, stakeholders and people

Being open and transparent is important to the Authority and the Knowledge Panel. All key marine estate documents and information, including summary meeting minutes, are published on the marine estate website at www.marine.nsw.gov.au.

The Marine Estate Community and Stakeholder Engagement Strategy details the approach the Authority and the Knowledge Panel take towards stakeholder engagement, Aboriginal and community participation and communication activities.

Our approach

The engagement strategy outlines 7 overarching principles for engagement and recognises that consultation comprises a number of steps with a range of different engagement techniques.



Figure 5. Seven overarching principles

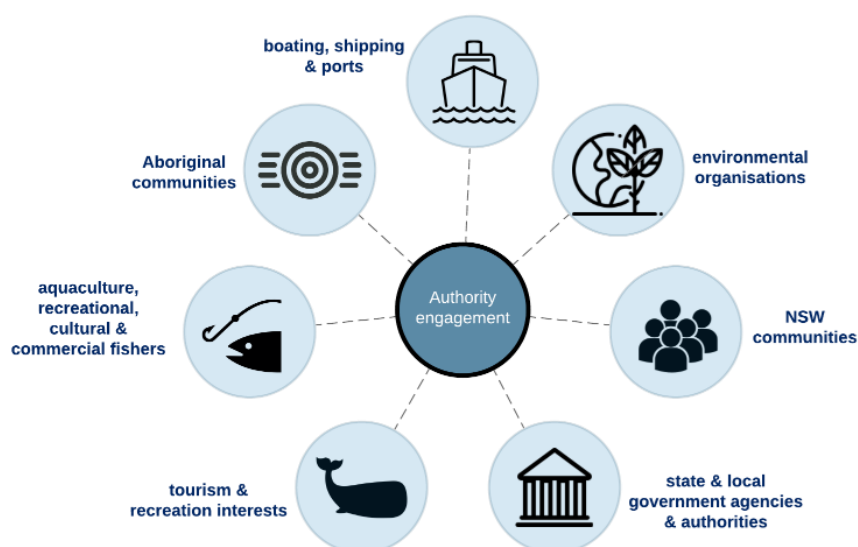


Figure 6. Key engagement groups

Social media

The marine estate Instagram following has grown during the year. The account has increased its following by 18.3%.



Figure 7. Marine estate social media followers

Website

Website traffic has increased by 260% over the year. In April 2024, we completed the Website Navigation and Optimisation Project to improve the marine estate website. We organised content into categories for different audiences and enhanced site navigation. This has made it easier to communicate marine estate information and boosted site traffic.

Since the refreshed website launched in April, we have seen the total number of users increase by 140%, homepage views increase by 94.4%, and project page views increase by 309%.

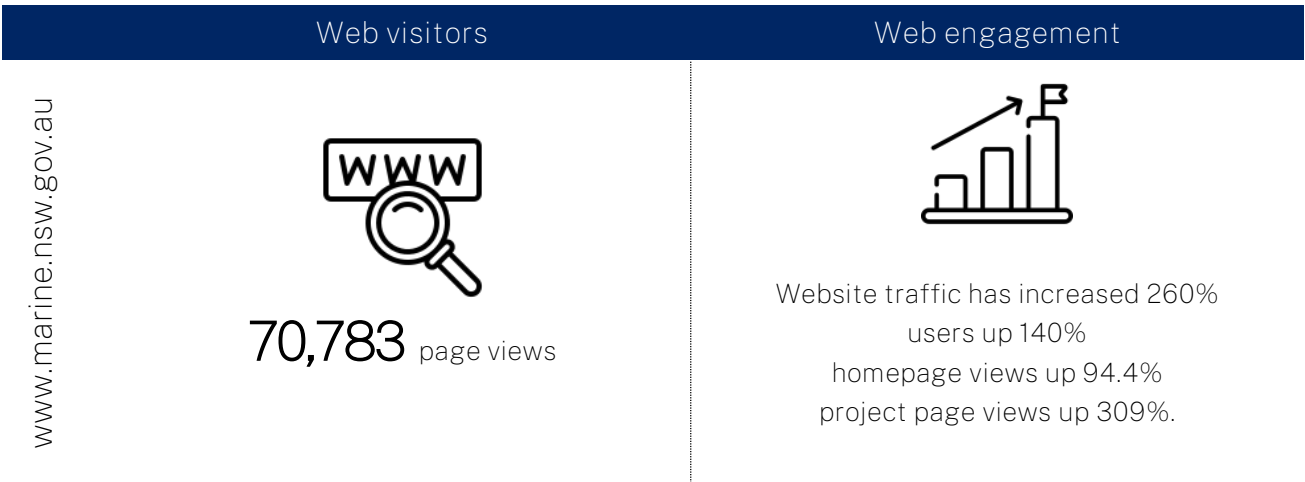


Figure 8. Marine estate website visitors to [www.marine.nsw.gov.au](#)

Newsletter

Community and stakeholders can subscribe to the Authority’s online newsletter to receive news about marine estate projects. They can also email the Authority directly. More information is available on the marine estate website [www.marine.nsw.gov.au/connect-with-us](#).

The regular newsletter has increased in popularity. The number of subscribers has risen by 15.3% over the year. Eleven editions were published in 2023–24.

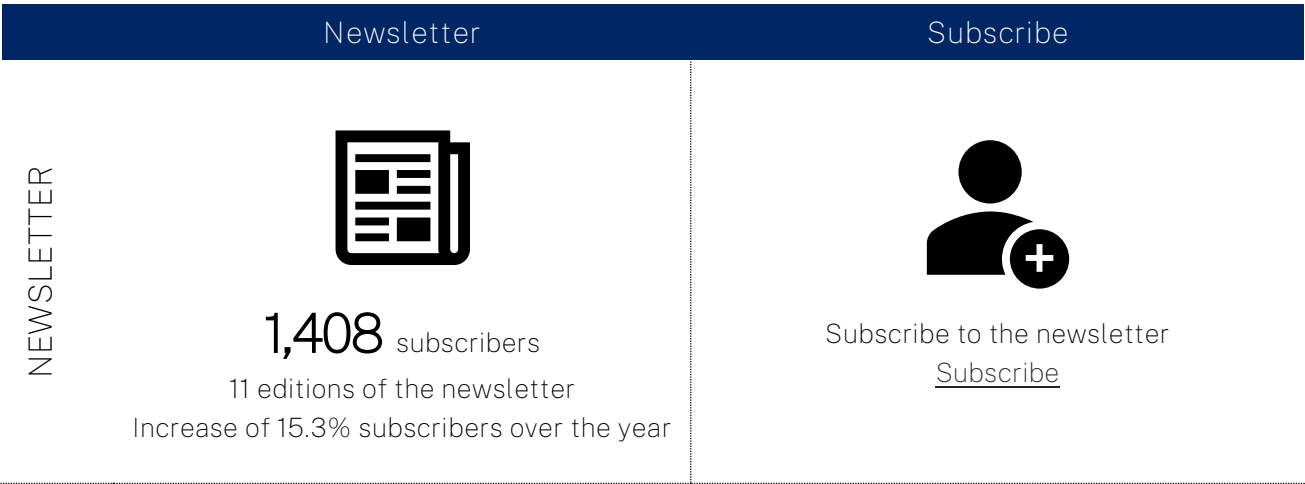


Figure 9. Marine estate newsletter subscribers

Have your say

Community and stakeholders can engage directly with NSW Government on issues that matter or contact us directly by emailing contact.us@marine.nsw.gov.au

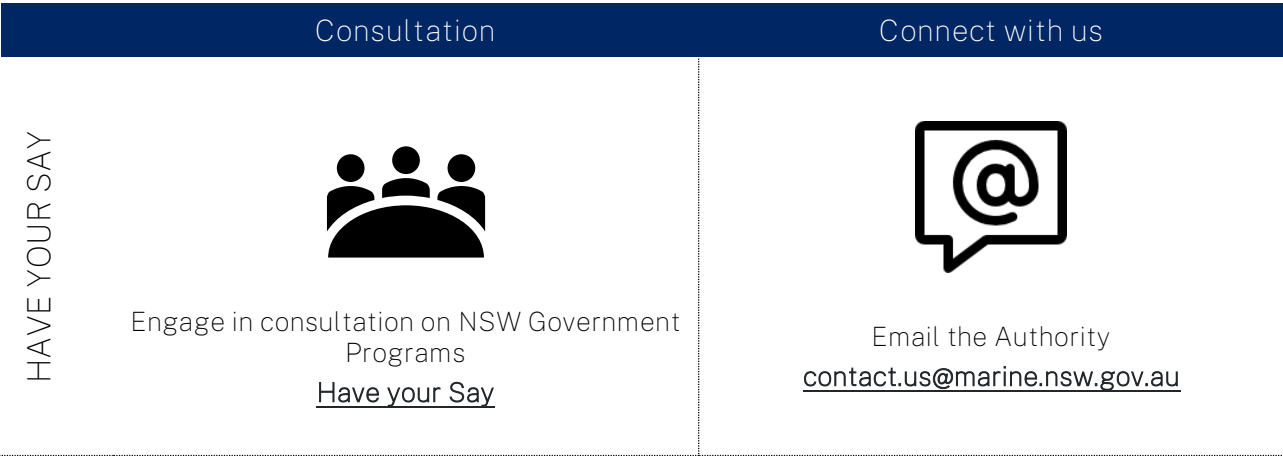


Figure 10. Marine estate consultation

Stakeholder engagement

Authority agencies have engaged extensively with stakeholders and the community on marine estate projects during the year, including targeted, multifaceted engagement for many projects. This year, the focus has been on improving engagement with local government through a series of webinars and strengthening links with the NSW Coastal Council.

For a full list of communications and engagement with stakeholders, see the [Marine Estate Management Strategy Annual Implementation Report for 2023–2024](#).

Authority advice

Authority advice can be found on the marine estate website under [Authority minutes and advice](#).

Governance

The Authority provides advice to the Ministers jointly responsible for the marine estate. Departmental responsibilities have been updated during the year following the NSW State Government election in 2023. The organisational structure represents the status at 30 June 2024.

The Authority brings together the heads of government agencies with key marine responsibilities to provide advice to the NSW Government on strategic, evidence-based management of the marine estate.

The Authority is supported by the independent Knowledge Panel, which provides independent expert advice spanning ecological, economic and social sciences, an Agency Steering Committee of senior executives, and the Monitoring Program Steering Committee, who receive technical support from project specific interagency working groups.

The marine estate governance structure fosters interagency collaboration. It ensures management is coordinated, transparent and takes account of the diverse range of agency interests and responsibilities. Improved linkages between NSW Government agencies and the NSW Coastal Council is intended to lead to better outcomes for the community, industry and the environment by ensuring integrated management that focuses on addressing priority threats and opportunities to achieve the vision for the marine estate.

Organisational structure

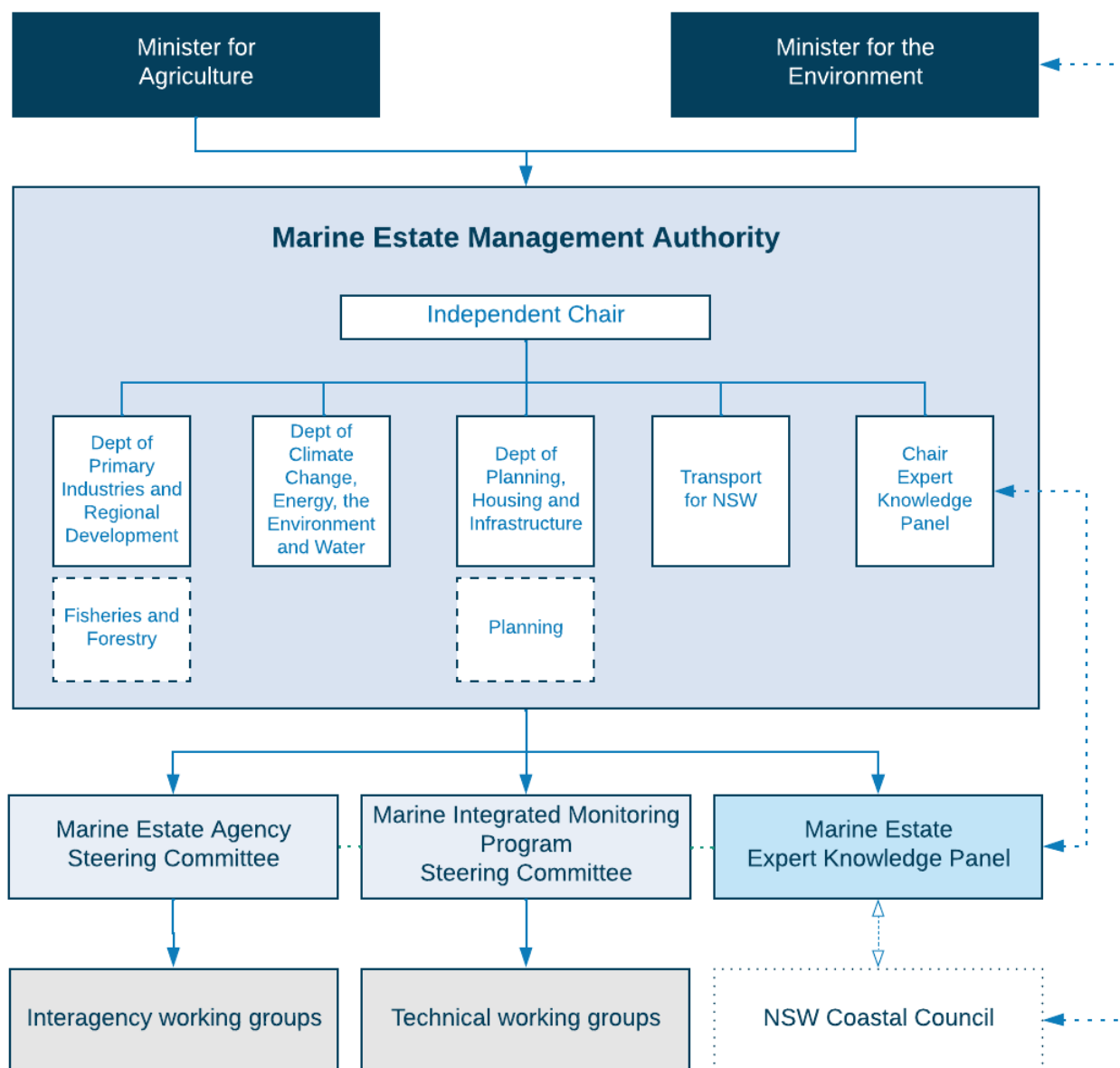


Figure 11. Marine estate organisational structure

Ministers for the marine estate

NSW Ministers jointly responsible for the NSW marine estate matters are as follows.



| Ministers for the marine estate | |
|--|---|
|  <p>Minister for Agriculture the Hon. Tara Moriarty MLC</p> |  <p>Minister for the Environment the Hon. Penny Sharpe MLC</p> |

Figure 12. Joint Ministers for the NSW marine estate

Marine Estate Management Authority

The Authority is an advisory body established under section 7 of the Marine Estate Management Act 2014 (the Act), which commenced on 19 December 2014.

Statutory functions of the Authority under the Act are to:

- advise the relevant Ministers on management of the marine estate in line with the principles of ecologically sustainable management
- undertake assessments of threats and risks to the marine estate
- prepare a draft Marine Estate Management Strategy for submission to Ministers and advise Ministers of its implementation by public authorities
- promote collaboration and coordination between public authorities in the management of the marine estate
- foster consultation with the community in management of the marine estate.

The Authority and Knowledge Panel do not have any statutory decision-making powers or direct regulatory functions.

Schedule 1 of the Act sets out the constitution and procedures of the Authority.

The Authority and Knowledge Panel operate in accordance with Schedule 1 of the Act, the Department of Premier and Cabinet's Guidelines for NSW Boards and Committees, and the Authority's Protocol Manual. The Protocol Manual covers the operations of both the Authority and the Knowledge Panel.

Funding

The Authority has no annual budget allocation. All costs associated with the establishment and ongoing operations of the Authority and the Knowledge Panel are funded by the Department of Primary Industries and Regional Development and other agencies by agreement.

Membership and staffing

The Authority does not employ staff but drives reforms by drawing on existing resources of agencies. The Department of Primary Industries and Regional Development provides support to the Authority and the Knowledge Panel, including administrative support. Authority membership is listed in Table 3.

Table 3. The Authority membership for 2023–24

| Member photo | Member details | Term of appointment |
|---|--|----------------------------|
|  | Dr Russell Reichelt, AO FTSE FIMarEST [UK] Chair, Marine Estate Management Authority | 15/09/23 To 14/09/27 |
|  | Anthea Tinney, PSM, B (Econ), MAICD Chair, Marine Estate Expert Knowledge Panel | 10/10/22 to 09/10/26 |
| Ex-officio member | Secretary, Department of Primary Industries and Regional Development (delegated to deputy member, Deputy Secretary, Department of Primary Industries and Regional Development) | ongoing |
| Ex-officio member | Deputy Secretary, Biodiversity, Conservation and Science, Department of Climate Change, Energy, the Environment and Water | ongoing |
| Ex-officio member | Deputy Secretary, State Policies and Strategic Advice, Department of Planning, Housing and Infrastructure | ongoing |
| Ex-officio member | Secretary, Transport for NSW (delegated to Chief Centres for Road Safety & Maritime Safety) | ongoing |

Meetings and attendance

Four Authority meetings were held during reporting period. A quorum was achieved at all meetings. Meeting summaries are available on the [marine estate website](#).

Table 4. Authority meeting attendance for 2023–24

| Member | Attendance / Meetings held |
|---|----------------------------|
| Authority Chair | 4/4 |
| Knowledge Panel Chair | 4/4 |
| Department of Primary Industries and Regional Development | 4/4 |
| Department of Climate Change, Energy, the Environment and Water | 4/4 |
| Department of Planning, Housing and Infrastructure | 4/4 |
| Transport for NSW | 4/4 |

Marine Estate Expert Knowledge Panel

The Knowledge Panel is an advisory body established under section 9 of the *Marine Estate Management Act 2014*. The Knowledge Panel is tasked by and reports directly to the Authority. Knowledge Panel effectiveness and performance is monitored by the Authority and is also reported in this annual report.

Membership

The Knowledge Panel comprises a Chair and 5 members, who are appointed for up to 4 years (Table 5).

Table 5. The Knowledge Panel membership for 2023–24

| Member photo | Member details | Term of appointment |
|---|---|---|
|  | Ms Anthea Tinney PSM, B (Econ), MAICD Chair, Marine Estate Expert Knowledge Panel | 10/10/22 to 09/10/26 |
|  | Professor Melissa Nursey-Bray BA hons, MSc, PhD, Grad Dip University Learning and Teaching Social science expert in natural resource management | 10/10/22 to 09/10/26 |
|  | Professor Peter Steinberg BSc (Hons), PhD Biology (Marine Science) Ecological expert in marine biological science | 13/12/21 to 12/12/24 (second term - first term commenced 01/05/17) |
|  | Ms Chels Marshall MMarineSci, MMgt, BSc, AssocDegAppSc Aboriginal expert in Sea Country management | 13/12/21 to 01/09/23 (resigned) |
|  | Ms Sevaly Sen MSc (Econ), LLB (Hons) Economic expert in natural resource management | 13/12/21 to 12/12/24 |
|  | Mr Grahame Byron BASC (Ecology), MSc Ecological expert in natural resource management | 13/12/21 to 12/12/24 |

Meetings and attendance

Four Knowledge Panel meetings were held during the reporting period.

Pre-meetings, additional out-of-session meetings and videoconferences enable the Knowledge Panel to collectively discuss preliminary views about agenda items, negotiate a consolidated position, and identify and discuss strategic and governance issues.

Table 6. Number of meetings attended in 2023–24

| Member | Attendance / meetings invited to attend |
|--|--|
| Ms Anthea Tinney (Chair) | 4/4 |
| Professor Melissa Nursey-Bray | 4/4 |
| Professor Peter Steinberg | 4/4 |
| Ms Chels Marshall (resigned 1/9/23) | 0/1 |
| Ms Sevaly Sen | 4/4 |
| Mr Grahame Byron | 4/4 |
| Dr Russell Reichelt (Authority observer) | 3/4 |

Abbreviations and acronyms

| | |
|--------------------|---|
| Authority | Marine Estate Management Authority |
| DPIRD | Department of Primary Industries and Regional Development |
| Knowledge Panel | Marine Estate Expert Knowledge Panel |
| Monitoring Program | Marine Integrated Monitoring Program |
| NMP | Network Management Plan |
| NSW | New South Wales |
| Strategy | Marine Estate Management Strategy |
| TARA | Threat and risk assessment |

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