

SUSTAINABLE OCEANS AND COASTS NATIONAL STRATEGY

Key Opportunities

- **A robust blue economy**
 - That uses sustainable techniques to ensure long-lasting prosperity for many generations to come
- **Resilient coastal communities**
 - Encompassing both people-centred communities and ecosystems that are equipped for changes and damaging events;
- **Sustained cultural heritage**
 - Especially Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander heritage, that connects people and their health and wellbeing to the land, coasts, and oceans

The Sustainable Oceans and Coasts National Strategy provides a comprehensive decadal plan including **seven holistic recommendations and an implementation plan, to achieve sustainable Australian oceans and coasts by 2030**. These recommendations outline how Australia can maintain positive economic, social, cultural and environmental outcomes in a just and sustainable manner by **utilising the blue economy, respecting cultural values, and building resilience in coastal spaces**. This strategy was developed in collaboration with experts in the field, relevant stakeholders and First Nations Peoples through extensive consultation within each state and territory. This was combined with current research via a literature review, analysis and synthesis to produce this strategy.

Key Barriers to Sustainable Oceans and Coasts

From the literature reviewed, 311 threats to Australian oceans and coasts were identified with **human-induced climate change being the most severe threat to ocean and coastal ecosystems, infrastructure and businesses**. The key threats were categorised into the following groups:

- **Threats from use and extraction**
 - Impacts from utilitarian uses of marine environments, including essential industries, urban development, recreation, fishing, agriculture, and shipping.
- **Broader environmental and human induced threats**
 - Human activities exacerbate threats from climate change including increasing temperatures (ocean and atmospheric), ocean acidification, changes in ocean currents, risk of mass coral bleaching and changes to the range of species and reproductive success. Threats to coastal regions include sea level rise, extreme weather events, inundation, and erosion which have environmental and urban impacts.
- **Policy and socio-political threats**
 - Politicisation of environmental issues, disconnect between researchers and civil society, and prioritisation of profit over broader social and environmental wellbeing, have formed gaps between intended conservation outcomes and resulting actions.

RECOMMENDATIONS

The in-depth recommendations and implementation plan can be found in the [Full Report](#).

1

EMPOWER INDIGENOUS LEADERSHIP

Elevate First Peoples' knowledge and practices into ocean and coastal management

Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Peoples have been sustainably caring for Land and Sea Country for tens of thousands of years. Greater recognition and championing of First Nations Peoples rights, knowledges and practices are important for the just, sustainable and effective management of these spaces.

- Establish an alumnus of First Nations Peoples leading in sustainable oceans and coasts work.
- Achieve a more holistic approach that improves wellbeing, sustainable livelihoods, and ecosystem outcomes.
- First Nations Peoples Knowledges, rights and perspectives are upheld, respecting free, prior, and informed consent.

2

BUILD RESILIENT COMMUNITIES

Restore, protect, and sustainably utilise ocean and coastal ecosystems to enable resilient coastal communities

85% of Australians live within 50 kilometres of the coastline and the increasing risk from climate change makes it imperative to build resilient coastal communities, ecosystems and infrastructure to ensure the continued use and appreciation of these spaces for future generations.

- Invest in practical, scalable adaptation options, provision of new industries and mechanisms against maladaptation.
- Management arrangements address cumulative effects; responses and offsets are ecologically feasible.
- Increase mobilisation of resources to fund sustainable use and conservation.

3

DECARBONISE THE BLUE ECONOMY

Actively decarbonise the blue economy while sustainably fostering energy security

Decarbonising the 'Blue Economy' using emerging technologies and nature-based solutions, is a vital part of creating long-term solutions for a sustainable, thriving Australian economy.

- Support new markets and economies while increasing innovation within Australia's economy.
- Recognise the role of supply chains in signalling market innovation opportunities.
- Improve energy security.
- Increase capacity building and job creation in CDR and related areas.

4

COLLABORATIVE GOVERNANCE

Adopt an integrated and ecosystem-based management approach to ocean and coastal planning coordinated across all levels of government

Ecosystems, organisms, and threats do not conform to jurisdictional boundaries, therefore a shared, integrated approach across local, state, and federal governments is necessary to deliver sustainable outcomes for Australian oceans and coasts.

- Responsibilities across three tiers of government are clear and accounted for.
- Reduce wastage in planning and development processes.
- Deliver international commitments.
- Enhance knowledge sharing and social capital via learning exchange.

5

MAKE INFORMED DECISIONS

Use best available data and science to support decision making in ocean and coastal management and planning

Best available research and data being accessible to all stakeholders ensures decision-making processes are consistent, accurately informed and increases trust in science and relevant institutions.

- Increase trust in data and science with open access platforms and strengthen evidence-based decision-making
- Train a workforce for new transdisciplinary and cross-sectoral careers.
- Create shared information platforms that support faster innovation and effective information delivery.
- Reduce data duplication, unintended consequences, opportunity costs, and cumulative effects.

6

SUPPORT STEWARDSHIP

Support grassroots initiatives that increase community trust and promote local stewardship of oceans and coasts

Australian grassroot and community groups are often overlooked and underfunded but play a vital role in building trust, maintaining a sense of community, and acting as stewards for their local oceans and coasts.

- Coordinate activities that support the UN Decade of Ocean Science for Sustainability.
- Increase connectivity, information exchange, and collaboration between grassroots organisations.
- Support genuine participatory processes, community stewardship and ocean literacy.

7

PRIORITISE DIVERSE VALUES

Foster champions and incorporate cultural values into ocean and coastal policies and plans

Australia as a nation holds deep cultural values associated with oceans and coasts, however these diverse values are often underrepresented in planning and cost-benefit analyses and policy-making.

- Grow a cohort of diverse champions across jurisdictions and enhance ocean and coastal leadership from all Australians.
- The value of oceans and coasts to Australians is explicit, highlighting the importance of intergenerational equity and First Peoples' knowledge and perspectives.

BELMONT **FORUM** **Opportunities for Australia in the Belmont Forum**

Established in 2009, the Belmont Forum is a partnership of funding organisations, international science councils, and regional consortia committed to the advancement of transdisciplinary science. **The Belmont Forum is one of the globe's largest and most influential research networks, membership of which is a tremendous opportunity for Australia.** As the member for Australia, **Future Earth Australia (FEA) is the vehicle through which Australian Government Departments, agencies and scientists can access and be awarded funding for projects from the Belmont Forum.** In showing leadership and commitment to the Collaborative Research Action (CRA) for Oceans Research held in June 2025, Australia can:

- Amplify our distinguished track record in marine, coastal and oceans research
- Better link that research to applied outcomes for our region
- Contribute to implementation of our draft Sustainable Oceans Plan priorities and enablers and Nature Positive Plan commitments
- Demonstrate leadership for Oceania on issues of regional significance

Our Blue Ribbon

The term the 'blue ribbon' illustrates that Australian land and seas are complex interconnected and interacting environments that do not exist in isolation. Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Peoples of Australia have recognised these dynamic relationships between humans, more-than-humans, land and ocean for thousands of years. Threats to the 'blue ribbon' are extensive and continue to worsen, highlighting the need for adaptive measures that promote the resilience of ocean communities and ecosystems.

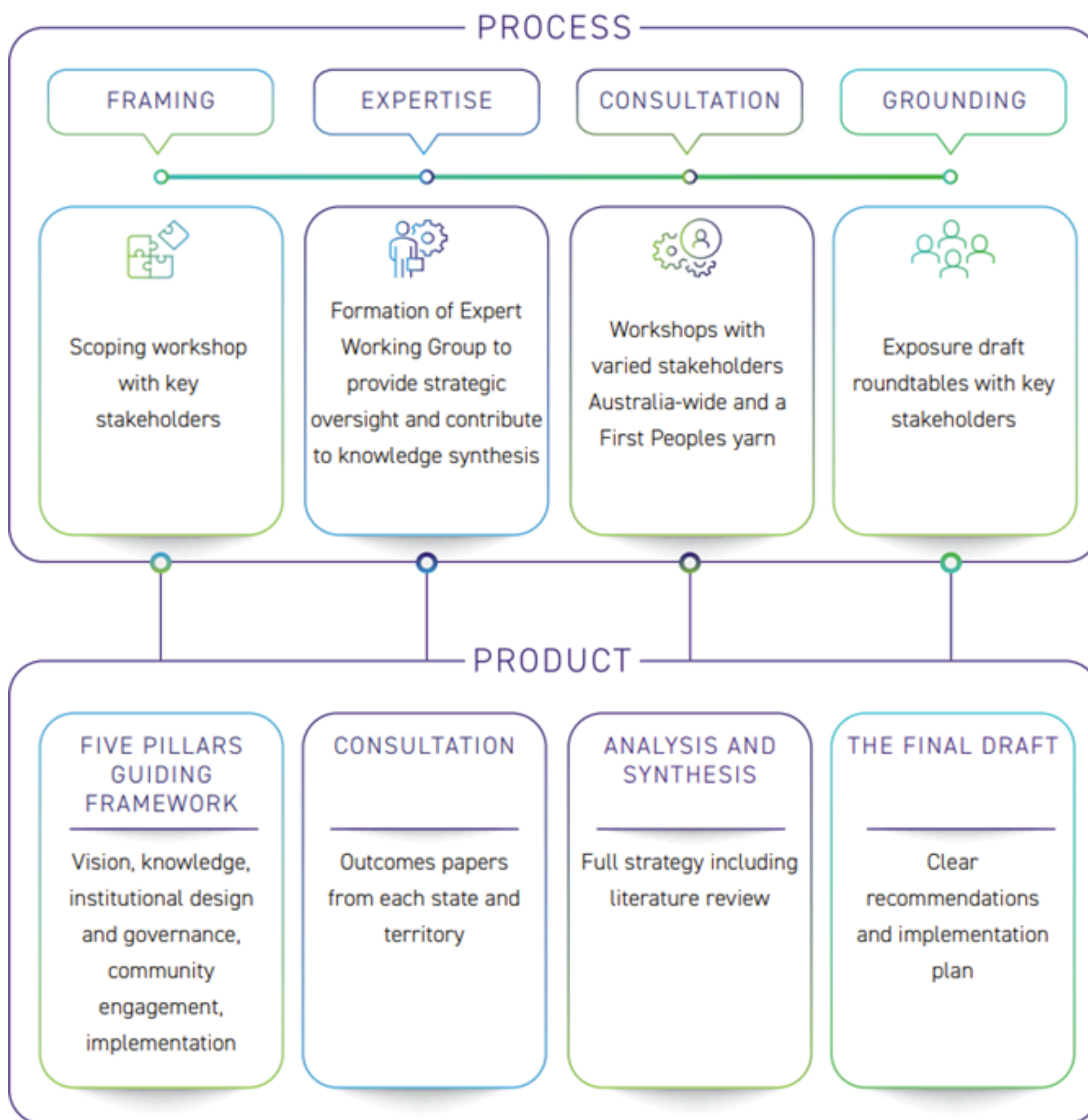
Values of Oceans and Coasts

Environmental **Cultural** **Social**

Intrinsic **Indigenous** **Recreational**

Economic (direct and indirect)

Well-being **Spiritual** **National identity**



About the National Strategy

The National Strategy is the product of extensive consultation held across every state and territory, with over 261 contributors and an expert working group of 31 prominent researchers across government, academia, and industry. Consultations adopted the 5 pillars approach to consultation of Vision, Knowledge, Institutional Design and Governance, Community Engagement and Implementation.

“The most difficult challenge will not be the development of sustainable practices, it will be their implementation. This will require the prioritisation of a common wellbeing and the deep acknowledgement through all levels of society, industry, and government, that healthy people rely on healthy Country. Our future depends on the creation of just, agile, and highly integrated governance for our rapidly changing oceans and coasts.”

~ Professor Emma Johnston AO FTSE FRSN Dean of Science University of New South Wales, Co-Chief Author of the Australian Government’s State of the Environment Report 2021

References, Acknowledgements and Further Reading

- [Download the full report](#): Future Earth Australia (2021). Sustainable oceans and coasts national strategy 2021-2030. Australian Academy of Science, Canberra, Australia
- A special thank you to the contribution of our [Oceans and Coasts Expert Working Group members](#)
- Also read Future Earth Australia's [National Strategy for Just Adaptation 2022](#) and [Sustainable Cities and Regions: 2024 Update National Strategy](#).

United Nations Sustainable Development Goals Addressed by this Strategy:

