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Minister for the Environment and Energy
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JOINT MEDIA RELEASE

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PARTNERING WITH TRADITIONAL OWNERS TO HELP THE REEF

The Coalition Government is boosting resources to support increased Traditional Owner involvement in implementing the Reef 2050 Plan with almost \$1 million for a consortium of Indigenous and research organisations that will work directly with Traditional Owners to better understand and reflect their aspirations for the Great Barrier Reef and deliver on existing commitments.

There are currently 23 actions in the Reef 2050 Plan which relate to Traditional Owners, including applying traditional knowledge, identifying biocultural resources and developing management plans for their conservation and use, protecting Indigenous heritage values and increasing the number of partnerships.

“We recognise the connection that Traditional Owners have to their land and sea country in the Great Barrier Reef region and how they have used their cultural and ecological knowledge to care for the Reef for thousands of years,” Minister Frydenberg said.

“In this International Year of the Reef, I’m pleased that we are strengthening our partnership with the Traditional Owners of the Reef.”

The Reef and Rainforest Research Centre will lead the highly qualified and experienced consortium, comprised of the North Australian Indigenous Land and Sea Management Alliance, Cape York Institute, Commonwealth Scientific and Industrial Research Organisation, the Australian Institute of Marine Science and James Cook University.

Already, through formal Traditional Use of Marine Resources Agreements, Traditional Owners are delivering action to support the Reef 2050 Plan. For example, the Yuku Baja Muliku Traditional Owners have partnered with James Cook University and BWG Environmental to work together on the health of the Annan River mussels, a traditional food source. Other activities under these agreements include seagrass monitoring, turtle tagging and water quality monitoring.

“Partnerships with Traditional Owners are vital for delivering the Reef 2050 Plan, the framework designed to improve the health and resilience of the Reef and support the communities that depend on it,” Minister Frydenberg said.

“Together with the Queensland Government, we are investing more than \$2 billion over a decade through the Reef 2050 Plan.”

Minister for Indigenous Affairs, Nigel Scullion, welcomed this significant investment to support the involvement of Traditional Owners in the management of the Great Barrier Reef.

“The Yuku Baja Muliku Rangers, funded primarily through the Indigenous Advancement Strategy, are a key partner in managing their traditional lands and waters and are of course making such a fantastic contribution to their community through this work,” Minister Scullion said.

Guided by broad Traditional Owner engagement, the consortium will also develop an approach to scale up Traditional Owner participation in Reef 2050 monitoring, evaluation and reporting activities and provide advice to better inform the Plan’s adaptive management approach.

The investment is in line with the Reef 2050 Investment Framework which recognises Traditional Owner actions under the Plan as one of the six priority areas for future investment.

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