



THE HON JOSH FRYDENBERG MP
Minister for the Environment and Energy

MEDIA RELEASE

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NEW VESSEL BOOSTS GREAT BARRIER REEF PROTECTION

A new state-of-the-art high-speed compliance patrol vessel will join efforts to protect the Great Barrier Reef.

The \$735,000 custom-built *Reef Sentinel* will employ night detection technology to continue to target illegal activity in protected marine areas off Townsville and the Whitsundays.

The 11.5-metre *Reef Sentinel* is funded by the Australian and Queensland Governments' joint Field Management Program – the frontline marine and island national park managers of the Great Barrier Reef.

The new vessel is stationed on Magnetic Island, off the coast of Townsville, and will be used by the Great Barrier Reef Marine Park Authority and Queensland Parks and Wildlife Service.

Identified as a key component of Reef recovery and resilience, compliance is a major focus of the Field Management Program, with recreational fishing offences increasing at a time when the Reef is already under pressure.

This addition to the fleet enables on-water patrols to better protect the Reef. A recent two-week Reef-wide compliance blitz detected 78 recreational fishing offences and most were in the Townsville–Whitsunday region.

The *Reef Sentinel* can cover larger distances quickly to rapidly respond to offshore Marine Park incidents and has basic overnight accommodation for longer surveillance operations.

The vessel's 'over-the-horizon' radar capabilities will help to address the increasing threat of illegal recreational fishing by locating and tracking small-to-medium-sized vessels poaching from no-take zones at night.

Poaching in marine protected areas is treated as a serious offence and can have significant ecological impacts and threaten Reef resilience, particularly at a time when recovery is crucial.

The *Reef Sentinel* joins existing high-speed compliance vessels *Jakarra* and *Karamea* in the fleet, which are based in Cairns and Gladstone respectively, and complement the diverse range of vessels in the Field Management Program, including the 24-metre *Reef Ranger*.

The program covers a 348,000 square kilometre area – an area bigger than Italy – that stretches approximately 2,300 kilometres and contains about 1,050 islands.

Reef Sentinel will also be involved in other Reef protection activities like surveying reefs and islands, delivering conservation actions, responding to incidents and maintaining visitor facilities.

Ends

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