NAILSMA
NORTH AUSTRALIAN INDIGENOUS LAND AND SEA MANAGEMENT ALLIANCE

Expression of Interest Guidelines

Traditional Owner-Led Reef Water Quality Advisory Group



Contents

1. About NAILSMA 1
2. About the Traditional Owner-Led Reef Water Quality Improvement Program 1
3. About this Expression of Interest 2
4. Eligibility and Assessment Criteria 3
5. How EOIs will be assessed 4
6. How to apply 4
7. Further Information 4

1. About NAILSMA

The North Australian Indigenous Land and Sea Management Alliance (NAILSMA) is an Indigenous organisation working across northern Australia and beyond. For more than 25 years, NAILSMA has worked alongside Traditional Owners, Indigenous ranger groups and Indigenous organisations to strengthen land and sea management on Country.

2. About the Traditional Owner-Led Reef Water Quality Improvement Program

The Traditional Owner-Led Reef Water Quality Improvement Program is a Department of Climate Change, Energy the Environment and Water (DCCEEW) funded program to improve water quality in the Great Barrier Reef (GBR), led by Traditional Owners in the GBR and its catchments. The Program's goal is to support and further develop the knowledge, skills and custodianship of Traditional Owners in managing and improving water quality within the Great Barrier Reef World Heritage Area and its catchment areas. The Program will deliver on-ground outcomes while building capacity of Traditional Owners and their partners to heal Country and protect the Reef from poor water quality. The program seeks to deliver a range of benefits for Traditional Owners, including building capability and capacity in governance, project management, monitoring, evaluation and reporting.

Two-phases of Program Delivery

The Program will be delivered in two phases. During **Phase One** a Traditional Owner–Led Reef Water Quality Advisory Group (this EOI) and Traditional Owner–Led Reef Water Quality Technical Working Group (future EOI) will be established to advise on the design of Phase Two of the Program, and to deliver related support services (see below for further details on Phase One). **Phase Two** (delivery to be determined) will be delivered under a separate process. It will involve an expected grant program to be designed based on advice, principles, and recommendations from Phase One.

Expected Program Timeline



Phase One Delivery

Phase One will deliver the following activities and outcomes, as led and guided by Traditional Owner Advisory and Technical Working Groups:

- establish and support a Traditional Owner–Led Reef Water Quality Advisory Group (this EOI) to provide strategic advice and input into design of Phase Two of the Program. The Advisory group will be stood down following the provision of advice on the design of Phase Two;
- establish and support a Traditional Owner–Led Reef Water Quality Working Group (future EOI) to provide cultural integrity, oversight, strategic advice and input into the design of the remaining Phase One activities;
- provide grant application guidance;
- develop and deliver capacity building initiatives for Traditional Owners to engage collaboratively in Program activities and lead Reef water quality improvement initiatives;
- design and implement an Indigenous-led monitoring and evaluation framework for the Program; and
- support opportunities for collaboration and information sharing of Traditional Owner aspirations and progress on improving water quality, including through face-to-face and online forums focused on Traditional Owner priorities and water quality improvements.

Phase One is expected to run from September 2026 – June 2030. Successful and unsuccessful applicants to the Advisory Group will be eligible to apply for the Technical Working Group in accordance with criteria for this governance opportunity.

3. About this Expression of Interest

The purpose of this expression of interest (EOI) is to identify suitably qualified Traditional Owners to form the Traditional Owner-Led Reef Water Quality Advisory Group, through an open and transparent process. The role of the Advisory Group will be to provide strategic advice to inform the design and implementation of Phase Two of the Traditional Owner-Led Water Quality Improvement Program (an expected grant program). Advisory Group members will be expected to contribute their lived experiences, diverse skillsets, professional expertise and passion for healthy water to design an investment program that will deliver benefits to Traditional Owners of the Reef and catchment areas, and their Country. Advice from the Advisory Group on the design of Phase Two of the Traditional Owner-Led Reef Water Quality Improvement Program will be submitted in a report to DCCEEW which may be made publicly available.

Multiple criteria will inform the assessment process and member selection, with the aim that the Advisory Group includes a range of perspectives from the Reef and Catchment regions; professional expertise and interest in GBR water quality; geographic range [catchment/sea Country/northern/central/southern]; age diversity [Elders/emerging leaders] and gender balance. The Advisory Group is not a representative structure; members will not represent their individual Traditional Owner group(s).

The role of the Advisory Group members includes:

- providing advice into the design of the Phase Two investment into Traditional Owner-Led Reef Water Quality Improvement Program (expected to be a grant program);
- productive and constructive participation and leadership in meetings and workshops to share and ground-truth ideas and concepts relevant for the design of Phase Two, informed by members' knowledge of the aspirations and directions of Great Barrier Reef and Catchment Traditional Owners;
- providing advice and support to NAILSMA to ensure the presentation of advice from the Advisory Group is clear, accurate and easily interpreted by DCCEEW and Phase Two delivery partners.

Key information about the commitment

- The term of engagement is expected to be December 2026 to March 2027.
- Members must be able to commit a minimum of 5 working days to the role within this period. This time will include:
    - Preparation for and attendance at meetings (minimum of one face to face workshop and up to three online meetings)
    - Review of documents, including the report to be submitted to DCCEEW and Phase Two delivery partners, which may be made public.
- Advisory Group members will be remunerated for their contributions to meetings, plus reasonable expenses to attend meetings (including flights, accommodation and meals for in-person meetings).

Potential applicants should read this EOI Guideline and the Advisory Group Terms of Reference in their entirety before deciding whether to submit an EOI.

Key Dates

Call for Expressions of Interest open	Wednesday 21 October, 2026
Call for Expressions of Interest close	5PM (AEST) Friday 20 November, 2026
Successful applicants engaged	27 November, 2026

4. Eligibility and Assessment Criteria

To be eligible to submit an EOI, applicants need to meet the following requirements:

1. Identify as a Traditional Owner of the Great Barrier Reef and/or its catchment areas (see Appendix A for a map and list of catchments in the Terms of Reference).
2. Be available to work a minimum of 5 days during the period of December 2026 to March 2027.
3. Be able to travel to meetings and/or workshops.
4. Have knowledge, experience or interest in Great Barrier Reef water quality and water quality improvement activities.
5. Ability to work collaboratively and respecting differing points of view to achieve shared outcomes.
6. Have strong on-ground relationships within your community and among other Reef and catchment Traditional Owners and delivery partners.

5. How EOIs will be assessed

EOIs will be assessed by an assessment panel through the following stages:

Stage 1 – Eligibility Assessment

Each EOI will be screened to check that the applicant is eligible to apply. Applications that do not meet the eligibility criteria (eligibility criteria 1-3 above) will not progress to stage two.

Stage 2 – Capability Assessment

Eligible applications will be assessed based on the information provided in the EOI Form and C.V. (assessment criteria 4-6 above). Incomplete applications will not be included in the assessment.

Stage 3 – Balancing of Membership

The assessment panel will decide on the final composition of the Advisory Group by balancing a mix of relevant experiences, geographic range [catchment/sea Country/northern/central/southern], age range [Elders/emerging leaders] and gender from eligible applicants who most strongly meet the criteria.

Stage 4 – Notification of applicants

Applicants will be informed in writing whether their application was successful or not. Individual feedback will not be provided to applicants whose Expression of Interest is not successful. We thank all applicants for their interest and the time taken to apply.

6. How to apply

Step 1

Complete the attached EOI form (no longer than three pages) outlining:

- Your interest in the position, relevant knowledge, experience and interest in Great Barrier Reef water quality and how they would contribute to the goals of the Program.
- Your experiences working collaboratively and respecting differing points of view to achieve shared outcomes.
- A description of your relationships, both within your community and amongst other Reef and Catchment Traditional Owners and their delivery partners.
- Your availability to commit to the minimum time requirement of 5 working days from December 2026 to March 2027.
- Please outline your Traditional Owner connection to the Great Barrier Reef and/or its catchment areas. A letter of support from your Traditional Owner organisation or an Elder or community member with appropriate cultural authority will be highly regarded.

Step 2

Include a resume or C.V. with two referees, one must be an Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander person whom NAILSMA may contact.

Step 3

Email your EOI documents to healthywater@nailsma.org.au by **5:00pm, Friday 20 November 2026.**

7. Further Information

For further information applicants may contact NAILSMA via email: healthywater@nailsma.org.au