

Annual Report 2020



A year of defending our oceans



Our Mission

We are the guardians and voice for marine life. We connect people, science and action to protect Australia’s extraordinary oceans.

Board of Directors

- | | | |
|------------------------------|---------------------------|-----------------|
| Jason Hincks, President | Dr Jill StJohn, Treasurer | Brian Donaldson |
| Mary-Ann Pattison, Secretary | Jo Cain | Dr Selina Ward |

Acknowledgement of Country

The Australian Marine Conservation Society acknowledges the traditional custodians of this land and sea country, and pay our respects to their Elders past, present and emerging. We acknowledge that this land and sea always was and always will be Aboriginal land and sea.

CEO Report

2020, what a year. Australia’s worst bushfire season in history, followed by devastating floods, a global pandemic and the Great Barrier Reef endured its third mass coral bleaching event in five years. Calling it a difficult year is a huge understatement.

However, despite the significant challenges, we continued our work to protect coasts, oceans and the marine life that lives there. I’m proud to say, we had some incredible wins.

With the indefatigable support from the public, we took action on key campaigns to protect the Great Barrier Reef, ban polluting single-use plastics, create new marine sanctuaries and continue our existing work on the Sustainable Seafood Guide and Good Fish restaurant program to help protect threatened species from damaging fishing.

Working in alliances such as Keep Top End Coasts Healthy and Protect Ningaloo, we ensured near-pristine habitats were protected from growing threats including industrial development, mining, dams, cotton farming and mangrove clearing. Our work resulted in the creation of the new Limmen Bight Marine Park, and we stopped a massive oil and gas pipeline fabrication facility and towing operation in the fragile and highly biodiverse Exmouth Gulf, Ningaloo.

Commercial fishing is the most immediate threat to many of Australia’s endangered and protected marine wildlife, such as seabirds, dolphins and turtles. 2020 saw a variety of improvements in commercial fishing, thanks to the efforts of our supporters. Queensland fisheries reforms were passed that will stamp out live shark-finning in the Reef, and we stopped Australia’s orange roughy fishery being greenwashed as ‘sustainable’.

Since its launch in 2013, our GoodFish sustainable seafood initiative for chefs has

grown enormously, with 95 restaurants now signed up to provide their guests with delicious and sustainable seafood.

In 2020, a once-in-a-decade review of the law intended to protect Australia’s lands and ocean found that Australia’s environment laws are failing to save endangered species. Our nature laws underpin much of AMCS’ work to protect the marine environment. They need to be strengthened; not only to stop the decline of Australia’s natural heritage, but also to support the recovery of wildlife and habitats. Resisting the weakening of our already inadequate environmental laws was a big part of our work throughout 2020.

Despite the mounting pressures on our oceans from pollution, overfishing and global warming, the achievements we made during one of the most difficult years in living memory gives me enormous hope. Australians care deeply for our ocean heritage and the support we received during 2020 is testament to that. When lockdowns were lifted, supporters took to the streets demanding more action on climate change and against damaging fossil fuel developments. More volunteers joined the cause and tens of thousands of people, inspired by our campaigns, took action and made their views on ocean protection known to decision makers.

I would like to personally thank all of our supporters who have volunteered, donated, encouraged and cared enough to stand up for Australia’s marine life.

The achievements we’ve made during an incredibly tough year shows that together we can and will protect our blue planet.

Darren Kindleysides
CEO, Australian Marine Conservation Society



2020: AMCS in action

The NT secured its second marine park at Limmen Bight and extended the ban on seabed mining in the Limmen Bight Marine Park.

We won the fight to stop Subsea 7's oil and gas pipeline plant at Exmouth Gulf, WA, protecting habitat for a rich diversity of life, including corals, seagrass meadows, dugongs and birdlife.

We stamped out illegal live shark finning in the Great Barrier Reef.

We stopped proposals for oil and gas exploration near Ningaloo, protecting our whales.

Please take a moment to watch a video celebrating 12 of our biggest achievements from 2020.
www.amcs.org.au/2020wins



Together, thousands of ocean lovers rose up to demand action for our Reef.

We protected reef water quality laws to give our Great Barrier Reef a fighting chance against pollution.

We encouraged thousands of Aussies to avoid eating endangered species by pledging to #GiveFlakeABreak.

We helped secure clean, renewable energy investments across Australia.

We helped ban dangerous single-use plastics in SA, with WA, QLD and the ACT confirming they'll ban single-use plastics too.

We fought and stopped the certification of the destructive orange roughy fishery as sustainable.

Safeguarding Marine Life and Sanctuaries

Australia's ocean territory covers an area bigger than our land. Our oceans are the third-largest and most diverse on the planet.

Just off our shores we have the largest single reef – the Great Barrier Reef – and the largest seagrass meadow – Shark Bay, Western Australia – in the world. We also have the third-largest area of mangroves and more than half of the world's mangrove and seagrass species.

Marine sanctuaries provide the highest level of protection for wildlife and habitats; therefore, it was astounding that in 2018 the Australian government went against the science and made the biggest cut to marine sanctuary protections ever seen in the world. Whilst some States attempted similar reversals of marine protections in 2020, others have stepped up to build protection.

Throughout 2020 we continued to fight to restore our historic network of marine sanctuaries. AMCS supports the global vision for "30 by 30" – 30 percent of all oceans to be safeguarded through a network of highly protected areas by 2030, so we can all enjoy them for generations to come.

2020 achievements:

- More than 95 percent of formal submissions called for the South Australian government to stop attempted marine sanctuary rollbacks, thanks to excellent media coverage and thousands of supporters taking action.
- Thousands of people took action online and in local events to stop sanctuary rollbacks in Batemans Marine Park. Media attention came from across the country, significantly hindering the NSW government's plans to remove marine sanctuaries across the whole state.
- The creation of the new Limmen Bight Marine Park, the second marine park in Northern Territory waters.
- The Northern Territory government announced a ban on seabed mining, protecting our NT coasts and safeguarding local fishing, lifestyle and regional economies.
- The Australian government championed the East Antarctic Marine Park proposal, and agreed to co-sponsor another proposed marine park for Antarctica (Weddell Sea) following immense support from AMCS ocean lovers.
- Working with scientists and land and sea managers, we ensured best-practice marine conservation projects around Australia were considered as part of a COVID-19 economic stimulus package. The government's subsequent announcement of a \$61 million package included marine restoration projects.

3350

PEOPLE SENT SUBMISSIONS
TO THE NSW GOVERNMENT
DEMANDING THEY RESTORE THE
BATEMAN'S BAY SANCTUARIES

ENCOMPASSING

42%

OF AUSTRALIA'S MANGROVES,
THE NORTHERN TERRITORY
IS IN A UNIQUE POSITION TO
DRAW DOWN AND SEQUESTER
CARBON POLLUTION

OUR OCEANS PROVIDE
REFUGE FOR A DIVERSITY
OF SPECIES INCLUDING:

6 OF 7



KNOWN SPECIES OF
MARINE TURTLES

45 OF 78



OF THE WORLD'S WHALE
AND DOLPHIN SPECIES

4000

FISH SPECIES, 20%
OF THE GLOBAL TOTAL

Protect Ningaloo

Exmouth Gulf – Ningaloo's Nursery – is where dugongs feed and humpback whales nurse their calves. It's also a playground for humans, supporting the famed ecotourism hub of Exmouth. This is where you can see dolphins, manta rays, giant whale sharks and leaping whales. But a number of companies want to open the Gulf to industry. Proposals that would never be contemplated at the Reef are now being actively promoted for Exmouth Gulf.

In the early 2000s, AMCS protected one of the world's last healthy coral reefs from a massive marina resort as part of the Save Ningaloo Reef alliance – securing Ningaloo as a World Heritage area. We joined forces with our Patron Tim Winton and the Protect Ningaloo alliance to protect Ningaloo and Exmouth Gulf from industrialisation once again.

NINGALOO REEF IS AUSTRALIA'S ONLY FRINGING CORAL REEF AND IS

300 

KILOMETRES LONG

2020 achievements:

- In August 2020, the WA government paused the environmental impact assessment for global oil and gas services company Subsea 7 to build a large pipeline fabrication facility and towing operation in Exmouth Gulf. Instead, it instructed the Environment Protection Authority (EPA) to determine the cumulative impacts of current and proposed activities and developments in the Gulf.
- In December 2020, Subsea 7 withdrew its proposed project after the campaign mobilised tens of thousands of people in opposition.
- Also in August 2020, the Federal government scrapped a proposal to open vast areas of the marine environment to the oil and gas industry off the Ningaloo World Heritage area (as well as Shark Bay and the Abrolhos Islands). The decision came after a media campaign and enormous public opposition to the proposal.

IT IS HOME TO MORE THAN

500 

SPECIES AND FEATURES EXTENSIVE LIFE-GIVING MANGROVES. THIS IS WHERE YOU CAN SEE DOLPHINS, MANTA RAYS, ENDANGERED TURTLES AND LEAPING WHALES.

30,000 

PEOPLE SIGNED A LETTER OPPOSING FURTHER OIL AND GAS ENCROACHMENT IN THE NINGALOO-EXMOUTH GULF AREA.



Fight For Our Reef

Our beautiful Great Barrier Reef is one of the world's most biologically diverse ecosystems, but its future is threatened by climate change. Our Reef is still in the process of recovering from its third mass bleaching event in five years, driven by global heating. On top of that, its beautiful corals and wildlife are threatened by water pollution and harmful fishing practices.

Protecting the Great Barrier Reef, one of the most special places on Earth, has been a defining campaign for AMCS throughout our history. We've been at the vanguard of saving our Reef, shaping the laws, zoning and World Heritage protection for the largest living ecosystem on Earth since 1965.

In December 2020, in its third World Heritage Outlook Report, the International Union for Conservation of Nature (IUCN) downgraded our Reef's outlook to a critical red rating because its World Heritage values are severely threatened and deteriorating due to climate change. But, despite considerable challenges, we secured important wins for our Reef during 2020.

2020 achievements:

- ✳️ The Queensland government upheld critical laws to clean up water pollution on the Great Barrier Reef.
- ✳️ The federal environment minister rejected a 2000-hectare land clearing proposal in the Great Barrier Reef catchment, protecting the World Heritage Area and threatened species like dugongs, hammerhead sharks, sawfish and turtles.
- ✳️ The dangerous transfer of materials between ships at sea is now forbidden in the waters of our precious Reef ecosystem.
- ✳️ Financial institutions cut ties with Adani's Abbot Point Coal Terminal, forcing the Adani Group to repay millions of dollars in debt, thanks to the pressure of our work with the Stop Adani movement.
- ✳️ The movement grew, with our biggest ever advertising campaign calling for Climate Leadership Now! (thanks to a grant by oOh!media), Cairns volunteers and tourism industry voices demanding climate action in the media and grassroots campaigns in the lead-up to the Queensland election.
- ✳️ The Queensland government committed to a Climate Action Plan of net zero emissions by 2050 in Queensland and investments in a Reef credits scheme for farmers, Renewable Energy Zones, more publicly owned solar, wind and storage and to reform Queensland's fisheries.



STRONGER REGULATIONS AND ENFORCEMENT OF POLLUTION LAWS WILL STOP THE HARMFUL SEDIMENT AND CHEMICAL RUNOFF FROM FARMS REACHING OUR GREAT BARRIER REEF.

DID YOU KNOW COMMERCIAL FISHING IS PERMITTED WITHIN THE GREAT BARRIER REEF MARINE PARK? DAILY UP TO

144km

OF GILLNETS CAN BE SET ON THE REEF – ALMOST THE DISTANCE BETWEEN BRISBANE AND NOOSA.

Plastic Free Seas

Our turtles, whales and seabirds are paying the price of our throw-away lifestyle. Entangled in plastic or mistaking it for food, millions of seabirds and more than 100,000 marine animals are dying from internal injuries, suffocation or starvation each year.

Studies suggest more than half of all seabirds and turtles currently have plastic in their stomachs.


Plastic pollution is one of the fastest growing crises in our oceans, and the pandemic sharply accelerated it.

New analysis indicates up to 14 million tonnes is lurking in the depths – 30 times more than the plastic than what we see floating in massive islands of trash upon the surface.

If we don't stop the flow of plastic at the source, there will be more plastic than fish in the sea by 2050.

But there is hope. In the last 12 months, thanks to years of campaigning in partnership with ocean lovers and allied organisations, four out of eight Australian states and territories have committed to ban single-use plastics.

ONLY
18%
OF
PLASTIC IS RECYCLED
IN AUSTRALIA



2020 achievements:

- SA passed historic new laws, becoming the first Australian jurisdiction to ban plastics such as single-use straws, cutlery and drink stirrers.
- WA made ambitious commitments to outlaw plastic plates, cutlery, stirrers, straws, thick plastic bags, polystyrene food containers and helium balloon releases by 2023.
- NSW completed public consultations on banning single-use plastics.
- To assist with the plastic free transition, we produced a Plastic Free Business Guide to help businesses eliminate the top 10 worst plastics for ocean wildlife.
- In partnership with local councils across Australia, we delivered 34 online and face-to-face film screenings of the social impact documentary BLUE the Film, inspiring local communities to take action on plastics.

 **94%** OF
20,000
PUBLIC SUBMISSIONS TO QUEENSLAND
CONSULTATIONS SUPPORTED BANNING
SINGLE-USE PLASTICS

103

CALLS WERE MADE TO
SENATORS IN SUPPORT
OF STRONGER WASTE &
RECYCLING LAWS

7,458

SUPPORTERS EMAILED STATE
AND TERRITORY ENVIRONMENT
MINISTERS CALLING FOR BANS
ON SINGLE-USE PLASTICS

Protecting Threatened Species

Australians love our dolphins, seals, whales and sea turtles, but many species are under threat.

Our warm northern oceans are some of the last remaining healthy tropical seas in the world. And an incredible 80 percent of the marine species found in our cool southern oceans occur nowhere else on Earth.

In 2020, a once-in-a-decade review of the law intended to protect Australia's lands and oceans found that Australia's environment laws are failing to save endangered species. If we lose those only found in our waters, they will be lost from the world forever.

Despite the damning review, the government responded by trying to offload environmental decision making to the states and territories, many of which have even weaker laws and environmental safeguards. This would worsen the outlook for our special places, such as Ningaloo and the Great Barrier Reef, and endangered wildlife.

AMCS is a member of the Places You Love Alliance, an alliance of environmental organisations working to improve laws for nature. Our nature laws underpin a lot of AMCS' work to protect the marine environment, and need to be strengthened, not only to stop the decline of Australia's natural heritage, but also to support the recovery of wildlife and habitats. In 2020, we helped resist the proposed weakening of our already inadequate environmental laws.

2020 achievements:

- ✎ In response to a snap Senate inquiry, more than 7,000 AMCS supporters sent in submissions within just 24 hours – opposing the Government's plan to weaken Australia's environmental law by off-loading responsibility to the States and Territories.
- ✎ The Bill to 'streamline' environmental approvals did not pass the Senate and so it was not written into law.
- ✎ We met with the independent reviewer of the Act and highlighted areas of significance for AMCS, and provided detailed submissions and case studies of where the Act is failing our oceans.

IT IS ESTIMATED ONLY

800

SPEARTOOTH SHARKS REMAIN IN QLD. FOUND ONLY IN A FEW SPOTS ACROSS NORTHERN AUSTRALIA, WE KNOW VERY LITTLE ABOUT THESE BEAUTIFUL SHARKS

ALBATROSS ARE KNOWN TO LIVE UP TO

50 YRS 

IN THE WILD. THEY ARE THE WORLD'S MOST THREATENED GROUP OF SEABIRDS DUE TO CAPTURE IN FISHING GEAR, PLASTIC POLLUTION AND WARMING OCEANS.

Advocating for Sharks and Rays

We are lucky to have some of the most varied and rarest species of rays and sharks on our blue planet. These magnificent animals are critical to the health of our ocean by keeping food webs in check, but their populations are increasingly at risk. The biggest threat is commercial fishing, with many sharks and rays targeted or caught unintentionally as bycatch.

Endangered sharks are being driven closer to extinction thanks to loopholes in Australian environmental law – up to an estimated 50,000 (200 tonne) endangered scalloped hammerheads can be legally harvested from Australian waters each year, including thousands from the Great Barrier Reef.

The strategy of using shark nets for beach safety has remained largely unchanged since the 1960s - they are outdated and ineffective. Shark nets catch and kill dolphins, turtles, whales, rays and endangered sharks with no improvement in bather protection.

Despite the unprecedented challenges of 2020, thanks to our supporters and our collective efforts, we achieved major wins for sharks across Australia.

2020 achievements:

- Queensland introduced a “Fins Naturally Attached” rule to close the loophole that allowed illegal live-shark finning in the Great Barrier Reef.
- Queensland trialled drones for the first time as a safer shark protection measure after our Nets Out Now action. NSW also plans to install more drones and non-lethal shark surveillance tools. These safer, science-backed measures are a step away from ineffective and deadly shark nets.
- Envoy: Shark Cull was released across Australian cinemas. This powerful documentary features exclusive footage from our work exposing the truth about shark culling in Australia.
- Prevented further damage of the only known habitat for the endangered Maugean skate by stopping a rise (from 9,500t) in the production of farmed salmon in Macquarie Harbour, Tasmania until 2022. Increases in fish farming are associated with further declines in oxygen in the water, impacting the survival of the Maugean skate.
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HALF OF THE MORE THAN
320

SHARK AND RAY SPECIES
IN AUSTRALIA ARE FOUND
NOWHERE ELSE IN THE WORLD.



GLOBAL FISHERIES KILL AT LEAST

63M

SHARKS EACH YEAR,
RESULTING IN A 71 PERCENT
DECLINE IN THE WORLD'S
OCEANIC SHARKS AND RAYS IN
THE LAST 50 YEARS.

CRITICALLY ENDANGERED

**SCALLOPED
HAMMERHEAD**



SHARKS ARE STILL
LEGALLY KILLED IN THE
GREAT BARRIER REEF FOR
THEIR FINS AND MEAT.

Responsible Fisheries

Australia's oceans are some of the most biodiverse on Earth. They're home to more than 50,000 different marine species – sea turtles, rays, dolphins, whales, dugongs, crocodiles, sea lions, crabs, jellyfish, sea dragons, and fish of all colours, sizes and shapes, plus thousands of species that are still being catalogued. Many of these creatures are only found in our waters.

Our ocean habitats and animals are fragile, diverse and often unique to the planet. What we do to them here matters at a global scale.

Commercial fishing is the most immediate threat to the continued existence of many of Australia's endangered and protected marine wildlife, such as seabirds, dolphins and turtles. In many cases, fishing has been the major driver of declines in populations of threatened species through the accidental capture of wildlife in fishing gear.

With multiple fisheries managed by different jurisdictions in Australia, there is a huge variance in the management quality, and therefore the impact, of commercial fisheries on our oceans. Some states have improved considerably, but other states allow woeful mismanagement of our oceans. For example, Queensland currently permits industrial-sized (over a kilometre long) fishing nets, known as gillnets, in our World Heritage Great Barrier Reef, resulting in the drowning deaths of threatened dolphins, dugongs and turtles.

But 2020 did see a variety of improvements in commercial fishing, thanks to the efforts of our supporters.

2020 achievements:

- Queensland fisheries reforms passed in 2020 will stamp out live shark-finning in the Reef and improve sustainability. Huge net and trawl fisheries that fish in the Great Barrier Reef will be broken down into smaller regions to better control fishing and prevent overfishing.
- The Queensland government has developed a strategy to protect endangered wildlife in the Reef, including sawfish, dugongs and dolphins. The aim of the strategy is to limit the death of wildlife caught inadvertently in the Reef.
- The Federal government suspended the ability of a major Queensland fishery to export shark fins and black jewfish swim bladders due to environmental concerns.
- We worked with fishers in Victoria's Corner Inlet to introduce management measures and support careful stewardship in order to reduce fishing pressure and environmental impact in the area.
- We lifted the environmental bar we set for our GoodFish seafood guide. Our updated environmental standards we use to assess seafood now reflect and demand international best practice in fishery, fish farming and conservation management.
- We stopped Australia's orange roughy fishery being greenwashed as 'sustainable'. This is arguably Australia's most damaging fishery, responsible for decade to centuries-lasting destruction of deep sea coral reefs. Late last year, we lodged a formal case against the fishery receiving the Marine Stewardship Council's (MSC) certification 'blue tick' of sustainability. We took them to legal adjudicators and our supporters made more than 10,000 submissions opposing the certification.

OUR SUPPORTERS SENT OVER

10,500

SUBMISSIONS TO THE
QUEENSLAND GOVERNMENT
URGING THEM TO IMPROVE
FISHING ON THE REEF.

GoodFish for Good Choices

GoodFish: Australia's Sustainable Seafood Guide is designed for Australians who love their seafood and also their oceans. It is a key component in our advocacy with government and industry to drive improvements in our wild and farmed fisheries around Australia.

Our aim is to reduce the impacts of seafood production on our seas by empowering people to make sustainable seafood choices. We do this by providing advice to the community in the GoodFish Sustainable Seafood Guide, Australia's only comprehensive independent guide to sustainable seafood, and by working with leading chefs around the country to drive demand for sustainable choices.

Our community of 95 GoodFish chefs and restaurants have signed up to stop serving seafood that is red-listed in the Guide, instead serving seafood from the green and amber lists. This is shifting the seafood supply chain landscape in Australia.

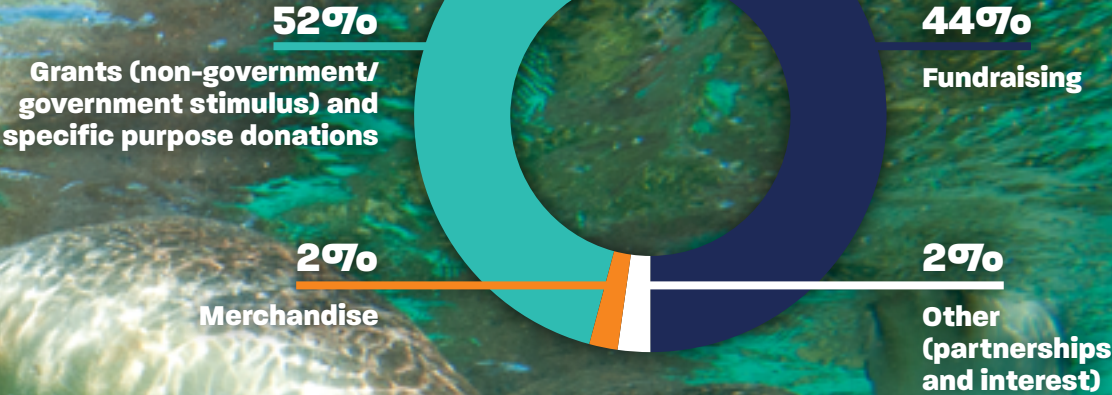
The 2020 COVID-19 pandemic severely impacted the food and hospitality sectors. With limited opportunity to meet with supporters in person, our focus shifted to building significant online influence and despite all the challenges, the community continued to support GoodFish.

2020 achievements:

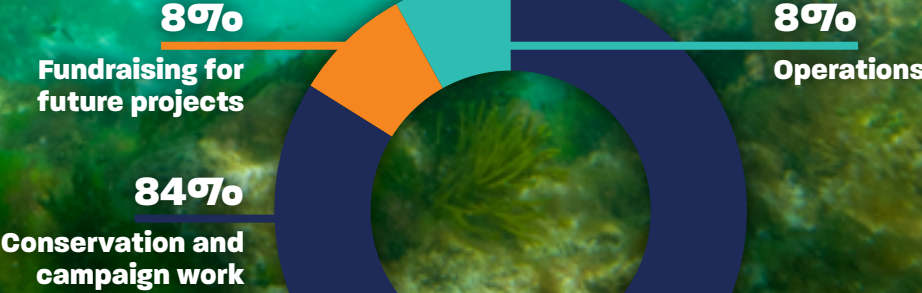
- 95 food businesses across Australia are committed to not selling seafood on our red-list.
- We secured our first retail chain supporter, providing only green-list seafood to their customers.
- GoodFish Seafood ratings were integrated into online platforms that sell directly to the public, which means GoodFish is reaching new and different audiences.
- Our online seafood guide users increased to more than 7000 per month.
- While many of our key audiences were in and out of lockdowns, GoodFish support continued to grow across Facebook and Instagram.

2020 Financial Report

INCOME: \$4.87M



EXPENDITURE: \$4.83M



Our full audited financial accounts can be found at www.marineconservation.org.au/annual-reports-audited-accounts



Thank you

Thank you to the thousands of generous individuals, businesses and philanthropic trusts who supported us in 2020.

Your generosity has made a huge difference to our work to protect our ocean wildlife. Sincere thanks to all of our donors, from our philanthropic donors to our Sea Guardians who stand by us month to month. Thank you to our AMCS members, Business Supporters, and members of our Ocean Legacy Circle. We are deeply inspired by the generosity of ocean loving Australians, and supporters from across the sea who invest in our work. None of our achievements are possible without you.

AMCS relies heavily on the extensive and enduring support from a volunteer network of ocean loving Australians around the country. Our talented, tireless volunteers give critical support through campaigning, holding information stalls, raising funds, and helping out in our offices. Last but not least, thanks to our pro bono photographers who lend their exquisite underwater works in support of marine conservation.

