

2021 Annual Report

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.

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Jason Hincks, President

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Paying Respect

AMCS acknowledges and pays respect to Australia’s First Nations people as the Traditional Owners and custodians of this country. We recognise that sovereignty over land and sea countries was never ceded. AMCS acknowledges Traditional Owners hold deep and complex knowledge of land and sea country and have cared for and actively stewarded this country for millenia.

AMCS aspires to be a positive actor for reconciliation, and we acknowledge we can do better. We consider building, nurturing and continuing relationships with Traditional Owners as part of our core business.



COVER: Maori Humphead Wrasse © Tyrone Canning. THIS PAGE: Australian Sea Lion © Angus Morron

CEO Report



We began 2021 with a sense of optimism, a belief that we were returning to a version of normality, but unfortunately, 2021 was another very challenging year for all of us, and also for our planet.

Whilst our oceans face more threats today than at any time in history, we remain optimistic that it is not too late. There is still time to reverse the declines we are witnessing. Australia’s oceans remain the richest on the planet and their health lies in our hands, in our actions and in our decisions.

With more than half a century of fighting for our oceans behind us, the Australian Marine Conservation Society is well positioned to make sure we meet our global responsibility.

This is why it is so important to recognise the significant progress we have made in the past year and continue to foster a culture of optimism and strong orientation towards action.

From progress towards ridding our oceans of toxic plastic to defending water pollution laws on the Reef, in this Annual Report we are immensely proud to present our top achievements for our ocean during 2021.

These and other protections we have won for our marine life have only been possible with the help of our members, supporters, donors, partners and volunteers. These incredible ocean warriors have fought harder than ever this year, in the face of their own challenges during this tough time.

From the bottom of our deep blue hearts, all of us at AMCS thank you for your commitment and support during 2021 and we look forward to building on these achievements in 2022.

Darren Kindleysides
CEO, Australian Marine Conservation Society

2021: AMCS in action

Seabed mining was officially banned everywhere in the NT.

We defended attempts to wind back water pollution laws on the Reef and ensured the World Heritage Committee stepped up scrutiny of Australia's failure to protect the Great Barrier Reef.

We saved 20,000 sharks from being fished in QLD waters each year, through securing vital changes to the management of QLD's East Coast Inshore Fishery, which includes the Reef.

With the powerful backing of our community, the QLD government listened and rejected Clive Palmer's Central QLD Coal Mine.

There were significant new commitments of funding for marine conservation and the transition to renewables in federal and state governments budgets.

Please take a moment to watch a video celebrating 12 of our biggest achievements from 2021.



This year saw more than half of Australia's states put a single-use plastics ban in place. Additionally, Australia committed its support to a global plastic treaty.

We achieved new marine protection commitments in the Christmas and Cocos (Keeling) Islands.

The Western Australian government committed to advance a series of important conservation measures for Exmouth Gulf as the result of our Protect Ningaloo campaign.

We successfully challenged the Marine Stewardship Council's attempt to certify the unsustainable orange roughy fishery.

Safeguarding Marine Life and Sanctuaries

2021 achievements

Christmas Island and Cocos (Keeling) Islands

The Australian government announced two globally significant marine parks around Christmas Island and the Cocos (Keeling) Islands in the Indian Ocean. Working with the Save Our Marine Life Alliance, we made sure the government got >30,000 submissions of support for these marine parks to be co-designed with local island communities and include highly protected sanctuaries areas covering around 739,000 square kilometres – bigger than Victoria, Tasmania and the ACT combined!

Antarctic

We joined the global campaign to 'Call On CCAMLR' (Commission for the Conservation of Antarctic Marine Living Resources) leaders to increase protection of Antarctica's spectacular marine life. The EU and 17 Antarctic treaty nations, including Australia, agreed to work together to establish three new Marine Protected Areas (MPAs) in the Southern Ocean. With only a few nations left to get over the line, we hope to see increased protection soon.

WA

The WA government committed to a new marine park on WA's south coast, to protect the state's waters between Bremmer and the SA border. If agreed, this will protect a significant part of Australia's Great Southern Reef, which wraps around our coast from Kalbarri in WA to northern NSW, and is home to abundant marine life like giant kelp forests, Australian sea lions and leafy sea dragons. It would also bring a boost to sustainable fishing, tourism, and the lifestyles and livelihoods of south coast communities.

30x30

The Australian government joined the Global Ocean Alliance, a group of nations calling for a global target to protect 30% of the world's oceans as MPAs or other effective area-based conservation measures by 2030.

Seismic Testing and Oil and Gas

A Senate Inquiry into seismic blasting, initiated after tens of thousands of Australians raised the alarm on this harmful practice, released its report in June 2021. The report included 19 recommendations for change and reform, including and most importantly, to keep seismic blasting away from marine parks and critical habitat for marine life.

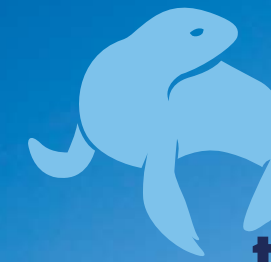
We joined the Say No to Scarborough Gas Alliance in opposition to Woodside's Scarborough gas project at Burrup Peninsula, in WA, which will accelerate climate change, threaten endangered marine life and habitat, including the Montebello Marine Park, and contribute to the destruction of Aboriginal rock art.

Kimberley, WA

Working with the Kimberley Like Nowhere Else Alliance, we collected over 17,000 submissions in support of the Buccaneer Archipelago Marine Park in WA's iconic Kimberley region and more than 43,000 submissions calling for the protection of the mighty Fitzroy River!

Protect Ningaloo


Responding to strong, mainstream community concern, and scientific advice, the WA government announced a series of important conservation measures to protect Exmouth Gulf, Ningaloo. This will include protecting key areas proposed for industrialisation, plans for a new marine park to be co-managed with Traditional Owners and a Taskforce to advance conservation and coordination.



The EU and 17 Antarctic treaty nations, including Australia, agreed to work together to establish three new marine protected areas in the Southern Ocean.



Gentoo Penguin



The Queensland government rejected Clive Palmer's proposed Central Queensland Coal mine, just 10km from the Reef, based on "unacceptable risks" to the Reef.

Fight For Our Reef

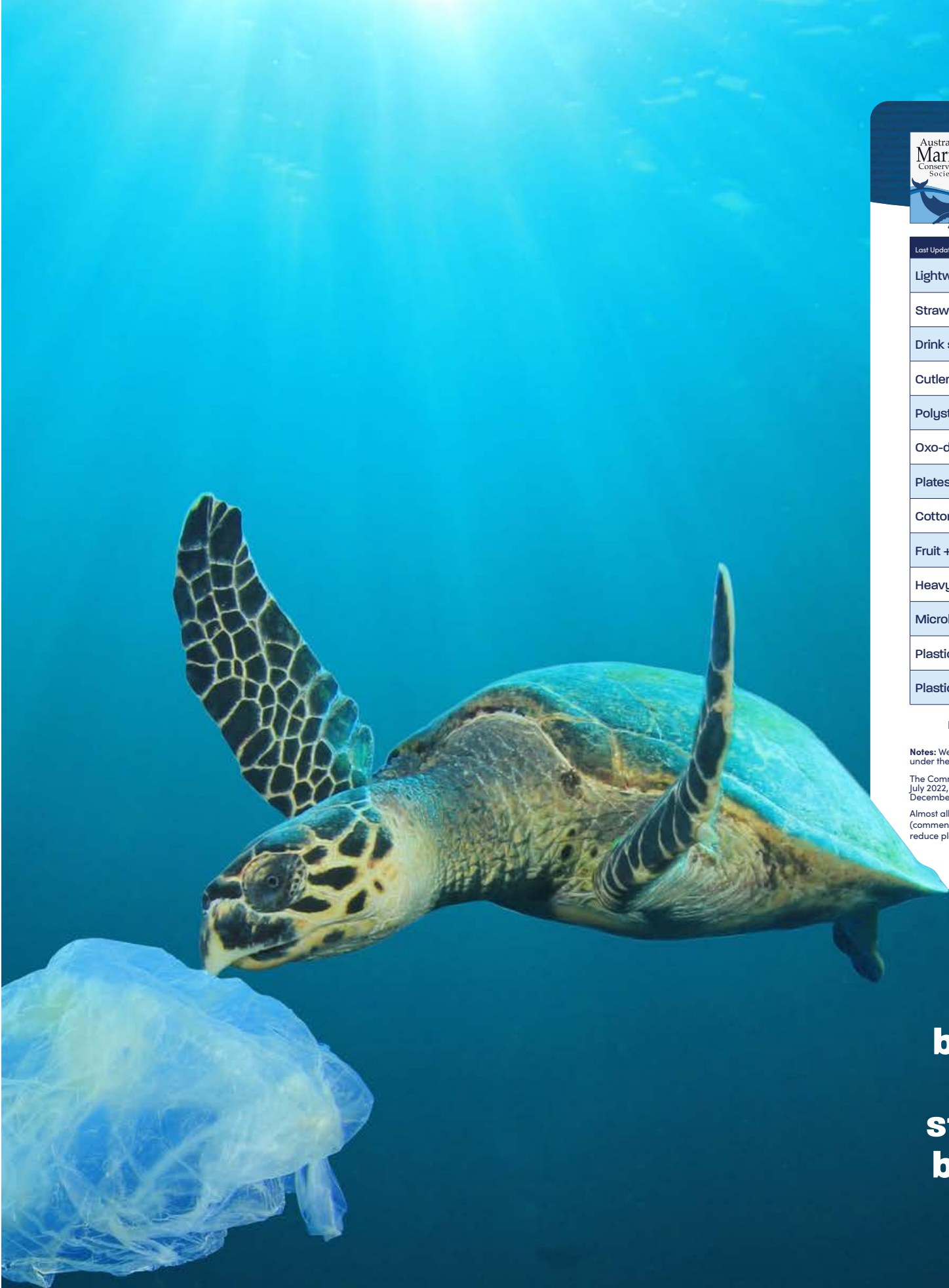
2021 achievements

- The Queensland government rejected Clive Palmer's proposed Central Queensland Coal mine, just 10km from the Reef, based on "unacceptable risks" to the Reef.
- Over 12,000 AMCS supporters wrote to the Queensland government urging improvements to the Protected Species Management Strategy for the Queensland gillnet fishery.
- Our advocacy secured the implementation of the most significant reef fisheries reforms for decades, including:
 - Sustainable catch limits were set for key target species like barramundi and mud crabs.
 - Large complex fisheries like the Queensland trawl fishery were broken up into smaller regions for more flexible and responsive management.
 - Transparent harvest strategies that outline how fisheries management will change due to fluctuating fishery performance were introduced for major fisheries.
 - The federal government announced \$26m to fund independent data validation and cameras on boats in the high risk Queensland gillnet and trawl fisheries – an urgent requirement to provide an accurate picture of just how many protected species, like dugongs and turtles, are being caught.
- We secured commitments to immediate improvements to the Queensland Coral Fishery including precautionary harvest limits, a new ecological risk assessment and improved data on species composition. This is needed as the fishery has seen rapid growth of coral harvest, despite the mass bleaching events of recent years.
- We advocated for stronger vegetation clearing laws after a report, released by the Queensland government in December 2021, showed that over 200,000 hectares of vegetation in the Reef catchment was destroyed.
- We fought hard to ensure the water pollution laws that govern pollution and sediment loads flowing into the Reef were not weakened or overturned.
- We ran a huge public campaign that mobilised Reef communities and global icons to call for stronger protection of the Reef in the lead up to the World Heritage Committee meeting. World Heritage Committee delivered a strong decision and called for a Reactive Monitoring Mission to visit the Reef to assess the Australian government's management of this global treasure.
- Our advocacy secured \$271 million by the Queensland government to cut water pollution in the Great Barrier Reef.

Plastic Free Seas

2021 achievements

- After years of hard work by AMCS, our supporters and our allies, our fight against ocean plastic pollution reached a tipping point. Thanks to our efforts, bans on single-use plastics were enacted across half of Australia’s states and territories in 2021.
- South Australia becomes the first state to ban single-use plastics, banning plastic straws, cutlery and drink stirrers (commenced 1 March 2021).
- The ACT bans single-use plastic cutlery, drink stirrers and expanded polystyrene food/beverage containers (commenced 1 July 2021).
- Queensland bans single-use plastic straws, cutlery, drink stirrers, plates, bowls, and expanded polystyrene food/beverage containers (commenced 1 September 2021).
- Western Australia bans single-use plastic straws, cutlery, drink stirrers, plates, bowls, expanded polystyrene food/beverage containers, plastic cups/lids and heavyweight plastic shopping bags (commenced 1 January 2022).
- The Australian government commits to phase out loose fill and moulded polystyrene packaging by July 2022, as well as expanded polystyrene foodware, oxo-degradable plastics, and PVC packaging labels by December 2022.
- The Australian government commits to work with industry to introduce microfibre filters on all washing machines by 2030.



Australian State / Territory Commitments

Ban on Single-Use Plastics

Last Updated: 10 March 2021	ACT	NSW	NT	QLD	SA	TAS	VIC	WA
Lightweight plastic bags	✓	✓ TBC	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
Straws	✓ 2022			✓ 2021	✓		✓ 2023	✓ 2023
Drink stirrers	✓ 2021			✓ 2021	✓		✓ 2023	✓ 2023
Cutlery	✓ 2021			✓ 2021	✓		✓ 2023	✓ 2023
Polystyrene food + drink containers	✓ 2021			✓ 2021	✓ 2022		✓ 2023	✓ 2023
Oxo-degradable plastics	✓ 2022			✓ 2021	✓ 2022		✓ 2023	✓ 2026
Plates + bowls				✓ 2021			✓ 2023	✓ 2023
Cotton bud sticks							✓ 2023	
Fruit + veggie bags	✓ 2022							✓ 2026
Heavyweight plastic bags								✓ 2023
Microbeads								✓ 2026
Plastic-lined coffee cups								
Plastic takeaway containers								

KEY: ✓ = Banned ✓ = Ban starts within 2 years ✓ = Over 2 years away

Notes: Western Australia will also be moving to ban helium balloon releases as well as polystyrene packaging under their plastics plan.
The Commonwealth Government has committed to phase out loose fill and moulded polystyrene packaging by July 2022, as well as expanded polystyrene foodware, oxo-degradable plastics, and PVC packaging labels by December 2022.
Almost all states and territories have introduced Container Deposit Schemes - with the exception of Tasmania (commencing 2022) and Victoria (commencing 2023). Container Deposit Schemes have been shown to significantly reduce plastic bottle littering.

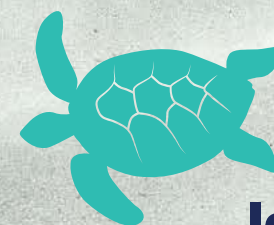
marineconservation.org.au

Half of Australia’s states and territories now have bans on single-use plastics. See which plastics each state has committed to ban, by when, in this report card.

Protecting Threatened Species

2021 Achievements

- AMCS submitted a nomination to the federal government to list blue warehou (a once commercially valuable species) as critically endangered under our national environment law. The species continues to be fished and sold under the 'Conservation Dependent' category of the Act that allows fishing to continue, but there has been no recorded recovery of the species.
- The federal government released their Threatened Species Action Plan 2021-26. This action plan identified 100 priority species, including a small number of marine animals, including the Australian sea lion, green turtle, freshwater sawfish, red handfish and grey nurse shark. Some of these priority species were awarded funding for recovery actions, including red handfish.
- The Liberal-National Coalition government tried to pass legislation that would weaken national environment laws by setting in law weak environmental standards. As part of the Places You Love alliance of conservation organisations, we were successful in ensuring the legislation was blocked in the Senate.



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Advocating for Sharks and Rays

2021 Achievements

- Up to 20,000 sharks are now saved each year from fishing in Queensland, including from within the Great Barrier Reef. In September 2021, as part of fishing reforms, the Queensland government reduced the number of sharks allowed to be caught and sold by 100 tons, down from 500t to 400t – a 20% drop.
- In August 2021, the Western Australia government committed to the ‘fins on’ rule (Fins Naturally Attached; FNA) by the end of 2022 in their temperate shark fishery, closing a loophole that allows illegal finning. For the first time, FNA will be in every state in Australia.
- The Queensland government released its pathway to modernising beach safety and reducing the risk of shark bites by keeping with community attitudes of today. In 2021, use of drones was continued at popular Gold Coast and Sunshine Coast beaches, trials of ‘catch-alert’ (SMART) drumlines commenced as a means to replace lethal drumlines in the Great Barrier Reef Marine Park, as did scientific investigations into a range of personal shark deterrents.
- In September 2021, NSW extended its drone program by 16 beaches as part of its shark bite mitigation strategy. Drones now fly at a total of 50 beaches across NSW.
- In partnership with the Northern Land Council’s Malak Malak Rangers and Charles Darwin University we rescued 17 critically endangered largetooth sawfish from a drying up billabong.



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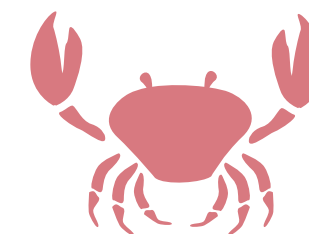
2021 Achievements

- Operation Overhaul – over 30,000 supporters championed reforms to improve the environmental performance of major Australian fisheries and we secured commitments from states and the federal government to implement the following by the end of 2024:
 - Have independent monitoring (e.g. on-board cameras, and human observers);
 - Have a ‘fins on’ rule for sharks caught in Western Australia;
 - Report all species thrown back (i.e. discarded);
 - Improve measures to halt the decline and support recovery of threatened animals.
- We secured commitments requiring recovery of overfished species in NSW-managed trawl fisheries.
- We supported sustainable Victorian commercial fishers to implement more environmentally careful regulations through their government management.
- We successfully challenged the Marine Stewardship Council’s (MSC) attempt to certify the unsustainable orange roughy fishery – only the 2nd such result from over 40 objections to MSC certifications internationally.
- We saved 20,000 sharks from being fished in Queensland waters each year, through securing vital changes to the management of QLD’s East Coast fishery.
- Our supporters helped secure some improvements to the Protected Species Management Strategy for the Queensland gillnet fishery which commenced in September 2021.

Tropical Snapper © Mark Cross

2021 Achievements

- We expanded our film series to highlight sustainable seafood choices and new initiatives.
- Low-impact oyster producer, John Blankenstein, featured with us in a webinar to answer questions about the way he farms in balance with his love for natural places.
- The GoodFish program continues to increase its presence in the Australian foodservice industry with 105 restaurants and food businesses supporting nationally and a 94% retention rate.
- Our sustainable seafood films have been viewed 124k times, while our Facebook audience grew to over 10,000 while we now have over 6000 followers on Instagram.
- GoodFish was represented 291 times in national media and radio outlets across the year presenting considerable growth in presence to the Australian public.



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Fundraising Program 2021

World Oceans Day

In our inaugural 2021 World Oceans Matched Giving Day we set ourselves a goal of raising \$300,000. An amazing 33 generous donors with gifts ranging from \$400 to \$100,000 pooled together a \$250,000 matched giving pot to inspire other ocean lovers to give on World Oceans Day.

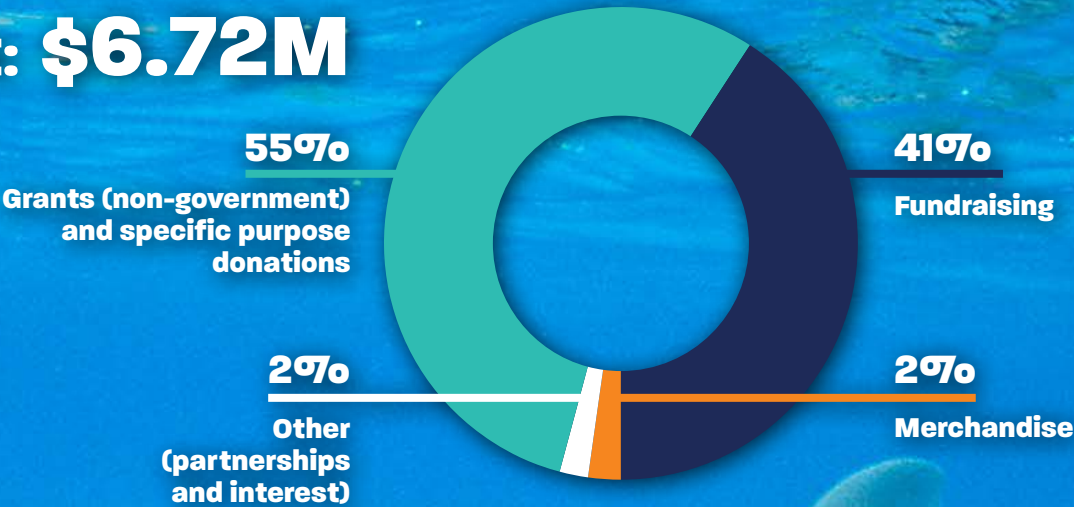
In a 24 hour giving blitz, 1,329 donors contributed \$163,245 online in 24 hours – AMCS’ largest 24 hours of giving in our history. Combined with 501 donors who pre-gifted ahead of the day in 2021 in anticipation of the matched giving event, **an amazing \$530,000 was raised.**

This fantastic outcome didn’t just allow us to extend the reach and impact of our existing campaigns, it also meant we were able to make a range of significant new ocean conservation projects a reality in 2021.

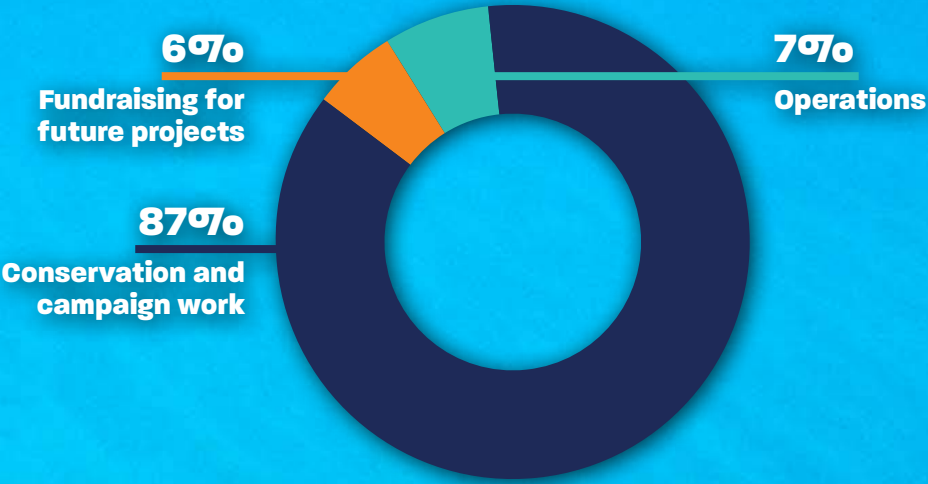
- **Sawfish Mission:** We supported the Malak Malak rangers and scientists in the Northern Territory in rescuing 17 critically endangered largetooth sawfish pups.
- **Whale Research:** We supported research into the impacts of industrial noise from a development during the breeding season within a nursery area for endangered southern right whales.
- **Defending Threatened Wildlife:** We helped block government bills that would weaken our nature laws. We supported research to protect threatened species, including Australian sea lions, and sawfish from getting caught in fishing gear.
- **Defending Charities:** We were able to prevent changes in laws that would have restricted the ability of charities to advocate for their causes.
- **Campaigns Director:** We appointed our first Campaigns Director, to ramp up and amplify the work of our Campaigns Teams, building even more high level relationships and partnerships across the movement and with decision makers and stakeholders.

2021 Financial Report

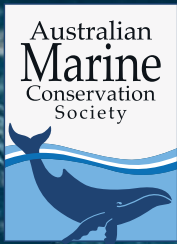
INCOME: \$6.72M



EXPENDITURE: \$6.51M



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 2021.

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.

amcs.org.au