

Great Barrier Reef Education Experience Program

Guidelines

April 2025



Queensland
Government

Prepared by: Tourism Division,
Department of the Environment, Tourism
Science and Innovation.

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*Cover artwork by Navada Currie,
Mununjali and Kabi Kabi woman at Gilimbaa.*

April 2025

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Overview

The Great Barrier Reef Education Experience Program (the Program) provides a subsidy of up to \$150 per student directly to Queensland primary and secondary schools to offset travel costs for school excursions to undertake a reef experience with a registered commercial reef tourism operator within the Great Barrier Reef Marine Park and World Heritage boundaries.

Great Barrier Reef Marine Park and World Heritage boundaries



The Great Barrier Reef extends from the top of Cape York in north-east Australia to just north of Bundaberg.

The Great Barrier Reef was declared a World Heritage Area in 1981 because of its 'outstanding universal value'.

Objectives

The Program aims to generate increased interest from Queensland primary and secondary schools to visit the Great Barrier Reef region through the delivery of place-based learning activities which meet Australian and Queensland curriculum and support opportunities for students to participate in reef-related curriculum activities.

The Program is designed to:

- enable more students to experience the Great Barrier Reef through participation in school excursions across the region
- facilitate more place-based learning activities in the Great Barrier Reef that are tailored to support student learning in line with the Australian and Queensland curriculum
- support opportunities for students to participate in reef restoration and conservation activities
- develop greater connections to reef systems and allow for more awareness and understanding of natural habitats and pressures facing the Great Barrier Reef
- provide opportunities for commercial reef tourism operators in the Great Barrier Reef region to refresh and develop educational products and experiences
- stimulate new, sustainable market opportunities and subsequent tourism visitation into the Great Barrier Reef region, supporting economic growth and encouraging repeat visitation.

Timeframe

Queensland primary and secondary schools can apply for the subsidy for eligible school excursions to be completed by 5pm AEST 31 December 2025 or earlier if all available funding has been allocated.


Eligibility

Queensland schools

The Program is available upon application to all Queensland primary and secondary schools, including schools of distance education, where students are participating in an eligible curriculum-related experience as part of their excursion. Schools must apply on behalf of their enrolled students participating in the excursion. Subsidy payments will not be provided to an individual student or their family and can only be passed on as savings on the cost of the excursion.

Reef experiences

To claim the subsidy, a school's excursion itinerary must include at least one curriculum-related reef experience, facilitated through a commercial reef tourism operator registered with the program and delivered within the Great Barrier Reef World Heritage Area boundaries.



Eligible reef education activities will need to align with Australian and Queensland curriculum and may include:

- on-water experiences (e.g. glass bottom boat, whale watching, outer reef pontoon activities, canoeing or sea kayaking, tall ship or maxi yacht sailing adventures)
- in-water experiences (e.g. snorkelling, semi-submersible activities, scuba and helmet diving)
- Great Barrier Reef on-island experiences (e.g. camping, visiting a turtle rehabilitation centre or research station, doing a nature discovery walk)
- Great Barrier Reef cultural experiences (e.g. Indigenous Sea Rangers and reef education tours, cultural tour, reef education on Great Barrier Reef Sea Country).

The subsidy cannot be claimed solely on expenditure for air travel, accommodation, fuel for schools or privately owned boats, meals and/or mainland reef experiences (e.g. visiting an aquarium or wildlife rehabilitation centre).

Planning curriculum activities

Collaborative planning of curriculum activities is strongly encouraged. Teachers and adult supervisors involved in the activity should use the Curriculum Activity Risk Assessment ([CARA Planner \(DOC, 423KB\)](#)) during the planning phase of an experience. This planner provides support in identifying hazards, assessing the risks, determining an inherent risk level, deciding on control measures and documenting the risk assessment for the experience.

To assist schools to conduct and prepare risk assessments, [CARA guidelines](#) are available for a wide range of activities that may be part of delivering the curriculum in Prep to Year 12.


These guidelines are developed to align with policies, regulations and guidelines of Queensland and Australian Governments, and the standards and processes of peak bodies within Australia.

Commercial reef tourism operators

Queensland schools (or their travel intermediary) are responsible for the selection of a commercial reef tourism operator for inclusion in the itinerary which meets the school's educational, accessibility and safety requirements.

Commercial reef tourism operators must satisfy the following requirements:

- [blue card](#) for all staff that will be engaging with students
- capacity to facilitate an eligible reef experience that aligns to Australian and Queensland School curriculum
- have a Great Barrier Reef Marine Park Authority [permit](#) with permission to conduct a tourist program within the Great Barrier Reef World Heritage Area boundaries
- capacity to provide the risk assessment documentation and safety advice required by schools for the activities being undertaken
- be recognised by the Great Barrier Reef Marine Park Authority as [High Standard Tourism Operator](#) and/or be recognised by Tourism and Events Queensland as offering a Best of Queensland experience or be a marine research provider.



Commercial reef tourism operators currently endorsed to participate in the program can continue to be part of the Program.

Commercial reef tourism operators are welcome to submit an Expression of Interest form at any time over the period of the Program to the Department of the Environment, Tourism, Science and Innovation at tourism@dtis.qld.gov.au confirming that they meet the above requirements. These operators will be listed on the Program website and schools will be required to demonstrate that their excursion itinerary includes one of the listed commercial reef operators.

Travel intermediaries


Eligible schools can engage a travel agent, edu-travel company, transport provider or booking agency to assist with the development of their school excursion itinerary.

Applications for the subsidy can only be submitted by the school undertaking the excursion and travel intermediaries are not permitted to apply on behalf of the school.

Application process

Applications open in April 2025 and schools can apply [here](#).

Queensland schools will need to submit their application at least four weeks prior to the planned departure date of their school excursion. All applications will be processed in order of receipt and schools are encouraged to submit applications as early as possible.



School decides on excursion itinerary which must include an eligible reef experience.

At least four weeks prior to planned travel, school submits an online application form together with a copy of the itinerary.

Application is assessed (please allow 10 business days) and school is advised of outcome and next steps.

If application is successful and includes an overnight stay, 50% of the subsidy will be paid to the school upon receipt of tax invoice.

School excursion undertaken.

Post excursion

Within six weeks of conclusion of excursion, school completes a post-trip survey and acknowledges the program in the school newsletter (reference that subsidy was provided by the Department of the Environment, Tourism, Science and Innovation under the Great Barrier Reef Education Experience Program).

School is paid the balance of funding upon receipt of a tax invoice.

Subsidy payments and rates

Payments

Applications for the subsidy can only be submitted by Queensland schools and will not be accepted from individual students, parents or travel intermediaries.

The subsidy will be paid directly to schools after their planned experience or itinerary has been assessed as meeting the eligibility criteria for funding. No subsidy payment will be made for any travel or Great Barrier Reef education activities that are undertaken prior to approval of a school's itinerary.

The subsidy is calculated on a per student basis. Accompanying teachers and adults are not included when calculating the subsidy. A student is only eligible for the subsidy once and the school is responsible for ensuring that each student for whom the funding is claimed has not, to the best of the school's knowledge, received the subsidy previously.

For overnight itineraries, 50 per cent of the subsidy will be paid upon approval of the school's application and the remaining 50 per cent will be paid upon receipt of the completed survey after the excursion.

For day trips, the subsidy will be paid upon completion of the approved day trip, noting that approval must be obtained before the day trip is undertaken.

Schools are to acknowledge the subsidy has been provided by the Department of the Environment, Tourism, Science and Innovation in a school newsletter upon return from the excursion.

Rates

The subsidy is not intended to cover all costs of the planned activities or itinerary. Funds are allocated to schools on a per student basis, at rates corresponding to the round-trip distance travelled from the school as per the subsidy table below:

Day trip	
Distance not applicable	Subsidy value
Flat rate	\$40

Overnight itinerary	
Total distance travelled (round trip) – sliding scale	Subsidy value
Level 1 – up to 499 km	\$55
Level 2 – 500km to 999 km	\$85
Level 3 – 1,000 km to 1,499 km	\$115
Level 4 – 1,500 km plus	\$150

Good and Services Tax (GST)

The subsidy amounts referenced in this guideline are GST exclusive. Where a school is registered for GST:

- the subsidy received will consist of the agreed subsidy plus GST
- the school will be required to provide a tax invoice that shows its Australian Business Number (ABN), the agreed subsidy and the relevant GST amount.

Where a school is not registered for GST:

- the subsidy received will consist of the agreed subsidy and no GST
- the school will be required to provide a tax invoice or receipt that shows its ABN and the agreed subsidy amount. As no GST has been received/paid this tax invoice/receipt will not include GST.

Cancellations

Commercial reef tourism operators reserve the right, at any time to cancel any curriculum-related activities. Activities can be cancelled or have scheduled changes (with or without notice) for a variety of reasons, including, but not limited to, bad weather conditions, sea conditions and operational or technical disruptions.

Commercial reef tourism operators may place a school's booking on hold for another time, reschedule the trip at the time of cancellation or provide a full refund. However, it is the school's responsibility to review and adhere to the cancellation policy of the engaged operator.

For day trips, regardless of the situation, the subsidy is only payable after the eligible curriculum-related experience has been undertaken and a copy of the paid tax invoice or receipt has been submitted for reimbursement.

For an overnight excursion where the first payment of the subsidy has been made and travel has been undertaken, but the eligible reef related experience could not proceed due to, but not limited to, bad weather conditions, sea conditions or operational disruptions, the second part of the subsidy is still payable. The payment will only be made where evidence (e.g. cancellation advice, refund documentation) is provided to demonstrate that the experience could not be undertaken at another suitable time during the excursion.

Where an entire overnight excursion itinerary has been cancelled (and not rescheduled) and the school has received the first payment of the subsidy, this amount will need to be refunded within five working days.

Privacy and indemnity

Privacy statement

The Queensland Government collects and collates information from the application form to evaluate applications for the Program. Only authorised departmental officers and approved subsidy assessors have access to this information for the purpose of assessing the application for funding. Applicants should note that broad details of successful applications, agreed outcomes, progress and the level of subsidy provided may be published by the Queensland Government. Some information may be used to promote the Program. Personal information regarding an applicant and other person's will not be disclosed to any other third party without their consent, unless authorised or required by law or for the purposes of the *Information Privacy Act 2009*. For audit purposes, the Queensland Government is required to retain the applications and other supplied support material. The provisions of the *Right to Information Act 2009* and *Information Privacy Act 2009* apply to documents in the possession of the Queensland Government.

Indemnity disclaimer

The Department of the Environment, Tourism, Science and Innovation (the Department) is not liable for any loss or damage, including personal injury, that may be sustained by a student or other person, while participating in the subsidised experience or in the Program. The Department makes no statement, representation or warranty as to the suitability or safety of any subsidised experience, or to the suitability or safety of any reef experience providers in connection with the Program. The Department expressly disclaims all liability, to the extent permitted by law, for any loss, damage or other consequence whatsoever, where direct or indirect, which may arise from the student's or other person's participation in the subsidised experience or from the Program.

The terms and conditions of your chosen commercial reef tourism operator or any other provider engaged during the excursion, including any cancellation policies and fees, apply to your booking. The Department is not party to your booking agreement with the commercial reef operator or any other operator or provider engaged during the excursion and assumes no liability under the agreement.

Contact us

Email: QldEducationExperiences@thebusygroup.com.au

Website: QldEducationExperiences.org.au

Phone: 1300 175 614

Definitions

CARA	An acronym for Curriculum Activity Risk Assessment which set the minimum safety standards for a variety of common curriculum activities.
Curriculum activity	Any activity conducted with students to support the delivery of the Australian and Queensland curriculum from Prep to Year 12.
Excursion	A well-planned curriculum-related activity that is conducted outside of the school grounds that aims to maximise students' learning experiences.
High Standard Tourism Operator	The Program is run by the Great Barrier Reef Marine Park Authority to recognise tourism operators who operate in an ecologically sustainable manner, delivering high quality reef experiences. Operators are independently certified by environmental certification schemes, Ecotourism Australia and Earth Check, as part of the requirements to be a part of the High Standard Tourism Operator Program.
Best of Queensland Experience	<p>Best of Queensland Experiences are those who exceed consumer expectations, bring the Queensland story to life and consistently deliver an exceptional customer experience.</p> <p>The Program is based on an independent set of criteria that incorporates online customer reviews, responds to consumer expectations and reflects industry best practice. Experiences are assessed annually.</p> <p>The Program is led by Tourism and Events Queensland and has been developed in partnership with the state's Regional Tourism Organisations, the Queensland Tourism Industry Council and the Department of the Environment, Tourism, Science and Innovation.</p>

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