



AUSTRALIAN HIGH COMMISSION
BANDAR SERI BEGAWAN

MEDIA RELEASE

Australia and Brunei work together towards marine conservation awareness

24 November 2025, Bandar Seri Begawan – A workshop titled “Marine Protected Areas – The Australian Experience” was held on Monday, co-hosted by the Ministry of Primary Resources and Tourism through the Department of Fisheries and the Department of Climate Change, Energy, the Environment, and Water from the Australian Government.

The workshop aimed to strengthen the regional cooperation and knowledge exchange between the Australian Government and Brunei Darussalam with regards to the conservation and protection of the marine ecosystem. Participants discussed policy approaches, best practices, and innovative strategies for managing Marine Protected Areas (MPA) to safeguard biodiversity and ensure sustainable use of marine resources.

The event brought together government officials, academics, and civil society organisations, underscoring the shared commitment to protect the marine ecosystems in the face of climate change and increasing human activity in the marine sector.

During his opening remarks, David van der Zwaag, Deputy High Commissioner to Brunei Darussalam, emphasized the importance of regional collaboration. “Healthy oceans are vital for our shared prosperity and security. By working together across borders, we can ensure that marine protected areas are not just lines on a map, but living, thriving ecosystems that support communities and biodiversity. Australia is proud to partner with Brunei in advancing marine conservation efforts that benefit the entire region.”

During her presentation, Ms. Desimawati Haji Metali, Head of Capture Fisheries Industry and Marine Ecosystem Division, Department of Fisheries, delivered an overview of Marine Protected Areas (MPAs) in Brunei Darussalam, including the history of their establishment and key initiatives undertaken by the Department of Fisheries in support of MPA development. These initiatives include the deployment of artificial reefs to rehabilitate damaged coral habitats, create new habitats for fisheries resources, and establish additional breeding and feeding grounds for juvenile fish. The Department has also implemented coral monitoring programmes, including the Coral C.A.R.E Programme and the utilisation of ReefCloud, which applies AI-based coral monitoring and analysis supported by the Australian Institute of Marine Science (AIMS), Australia. Overall, the presentation underscored the national importance of Brunei Darussalam’s Marine Protected Areas (MPAs) and the country’s ongoing conservation efforts, emphasising that “Brunei’s Marine Protected Areas are central to our national commitment to safeguarding marine biodiversity and ensuring the resilience of our coastal communities. By protecting these critical habitats, we not only sustain fisheries and reinforce food security, but also demonstrate our responsibility to uphold Brunei’s natural heritage as part of a healthier, more sustainable future for generations to come.”

Australia boasts one of the world's largest networks of marine protected areas, encompassing 44 marine parks that span 4.6 million square kilometres – nearly 1 per cent of the planet's surface. Building on this foundation, the recent workshop underscored opportunities for future collaboration between Australia and Brunei, including joint research initiatives, capacity-building programs, and community engagement efforts aimed at raising awareness of the critical role marine protected areas play in sustaining fisheries and mitigating climate impacts.

Pictures:

DSC01199 – Group photo with Department of Fisheries, Ministry of Primary Resources and Tourism and the Department of Climate Change, Energy, the Environment, and Water from the Australian Government

DSC01185 – His Excellency, Michael Hoy, Australian High Commissioner in Brunei Darussalam during closing remarks

DSC01164 – Ms. Desimawati Haji Metali, Head of Capture Fisheries Industry and Marine Ecosystem Division, Department of Fisheries during her presentation

DSC01147 – Ms Bianca Priest, Director of Marine Planning Section in Parks Australia during her presentation

DSC01146 – Ms Suzi Heaton Head of the International Environment Branch in the Department of Climate Change, Energy, the Environment, and Water from the Australian Government

DSC01126 – Mr David van der Zwaag, Australian Deputy High Commissioner in Brunei Darussalam during the opening remarks

DSC01131 – Workshop photo

For media enquiries, please contact:

Amanina Shofry, Public Diplomacy & Political Engagement Officer

2229435 (Ext 219) / 8905753

amanina.shofry@dfat.gov.au