

AIRCRAFT OPERATORS (RECREATIONAL AND COMMERCIAL)

The Great Barrier Reef Marine Park Authority (GBRMPA) released the Hinchinbrook Plan of Management 2004 (the Plan) on 15 April 2004. The Plan is designed to protect the outstanding natural values of the Hinchinbrook region and to provide for the long-term sustainable use of this world famous area.

The Plan applies only to Commonwealth waters, which do not include the Hinchinbrook Channel. The Queensland Parks and Wildlife Service is currently finalising a complementary management plan that will cover waters within the State Marine Park such as the Hinchinbrook Channel and intertidal waters.

This Information Sheet provides an overview of the concepts and strategies contained in the Plan relating to aircraft operators and should be read in conjunction with the HINCHINBROOK MAPS Information Sheet. You are encouraged to familiarise yourself with the relevant aspects of the Plan that relate to your activities or style of operation. This may be done by referring to the Plan or one of the specific Information Sheets listed below:

- GENERAL TOUR OPERATORS
- CRUISE SHIP OPERATORS
- BOUTIQUE CRUISE OPERATORS
- BAREBOAT AND HIRE OPERATORS
- PASSENGER TRANSPORT AND SUPPORT SERVICE OPERATORS
- GUIDED TOUR OPERATORS (vessels less than 6 metres)
- MOTORISED WATER SPORTS
- HINCHINBROOK MAPS

Protecting the wildlife and visitor experience

Special management provisions have been developed as aircraft can often create a lot of noise and may disturb animals and intrude on other users.

The Hinchinbrook Planning Area is internationally renowned for its marine wildlife and Islands. It is also renowned for offering a relatively untouched, nature-based experience. To protect the wildlife and to preserve this quiet experience, the Plan put in place a number of strategies addressing the location and flying heights for aircraft.

Safety first!

The aircraft strategies contained in the Plan are not intended to prevent a pilot from operating an aircraft in any manner for the interests of safety, nor is it intended to supersede any aircraft safety legislation.

Aircraft Strategies

To protect the unique fauna and visual amenity of the area the following restrictions have been imposed.

All aircraft must not:

- land, taxi or take off in the Hinchinbrook Island Dugong Protection Area (refer to map below) or within 500 metres from island coastlines; or
- operate below 1500 feet (above ground or water) when within 1000 metres of a significant bird site (refer to Table 1) during the restriction period.



TABLE 1: SIGNIFICANT BIRD SITES AND RESTRICTION PERIODS

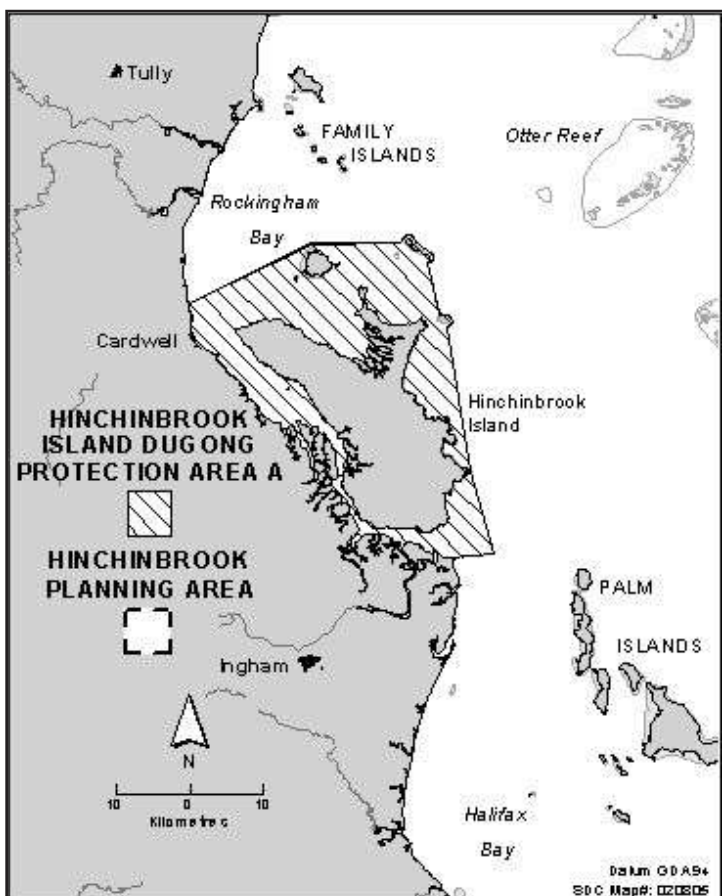
| Sites that have an all year restriction period | Sites that have a restriction period from 1 October to 31 March (inclusive) |
|--|---|
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • North Island (Brook Islands); • Middle Island (Brook Islands); and • Tween Island (Brook Islands). | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • South Island (Brook Islands); • Mound (Purtaboi) Island; • Battleship Rock (Pee Rahm Ah) Island; • Eva Island; and • Woln-Garin Island. |

In addition to the above, aircraft operated for tourism purposes must not:

- fly below 1500 feet (above ground or water) when over a Location (Locations include the Hinchinbrook Channel, Missionary Bay, Shepherd Bay and 500 metres from island coastlines), except when landing or taking off at any regular aerodrome; or
- fly below 1500 feet (above ground or water) when within 1000 metres of the east coast of Hinchinbrook Island, south of Cape Sandwich.

The GBRMPA would ideally like to see all aircraft remain above 1500 feet when flying over the Hinchinbrook Planning Area and request that all pilots remain at this height when flying over the Hinchinbrook Planning Area.

To complement the Plan, Air Services Australia has issued the following 'Fly Neighbourly Advice'. This advice is available in En Route Supplement Australia (published November 2002).



**Hinchinbrook Planning Area
Pilots are requested to:**

- a) Avoid flying below 1500FT within the Hinchinbrook Planning Area
- b) Avoid landing within the Hinchinbrook Island Dugong Protection Area
- c) Avoid landing within 500m of any island

Additional tourism strategies for aircraft operators

The Plan supports those tourism operators who have made a commitment to the Hinchinbrook Area. These operators meet community needs and present the outstanding values of the Hinchinbrook Area. Those operators have also made an investment that relies on the Area being managed in an ecologically sustainable way.

The Plan acknowledges historical use and therefore some existing aircraft tour operators may be eligible for exemptions to some provisions of the Plan. In September 2004, the GBRMPA in conjunction with the QPWS will commence an eligibility determination process to identify those operators who have a history of operating in the Area.

If you have a permit that allows more than 50 days access to the Hinchinbrook Planning Area, you should continue operating in accordance with your permit until you are invited to apply for exemptions and a decision is made on your application. Operators who meet these requirements will be classed as Open Tour Operators.

If you have a permit that allows entry into the Hinchinbrook Planning Area for a maximum of 50 days per year, you are classed as a Limited Tour Operator. Your permit is designed to allow you to visit the Hinchinbrook Planning Area from time to time, but it is not intended to provide for the establishment of a permanent tourism operation based in the Area. From now on, you must make a booking before accessing the Hinchinbrook Planning Area. No more than two Aircraft Limited Tour Operations will be allowed to book to the Planning Area per day.

To book, please call the "Hinchinbrook Bookings Hotline" on **0427 374979**.

Aircraft operators who are limited to 50 days per year may still transit the Hinchinbrook Planning Area an unlimited amount of times.

Transiting means to travel by the most direct and reasonable route without deviating or stopping.

Further Information

The Plan and Information Sheets can be downloaded free from the GBRMPA web site at www.gbrmpa.gov.au. Alternatively, you may obtain a copy of the Plan (\$10 charge will apply) or any Information Sheet (no charge) by contacting the GBRMPA or the Rainforest and Reef Information Centre in Cardwell (07 4066 8601).

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Australian Government
Great Barrier Reef
Marine Park Authority

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