

*The Great Barrier Reef Marine Park Authority is implementing the Representative Areas Program to help ensure better protection of the Marine Park's biodiversity. This will involve a review of the existing zoning throughout the Marine Park. This information sheet is part of a package of materials that help explain various technical elements of the Representative Areas Program and the zoning review.*

## Our environmental commitments

The two most relevant Commonwealth Acts for the Great Barrier Reef Marine Park and the Great Barrier Reef World Heritage Area respectively are:

### **The Great Barrier Reef Marine Park Act 1975**

The object of this Commonwealth Act is to make provision for and in relation to the establishment, control, care and development of a marine park in the Great Barrier Reef Region. In preparing a zoning plan, s. 32(7) of the Act requires that regard shall be given to the following:

- a) The conservation of the Great Barrier Reef;
- b) The regulation of the use of the Marine Park so as to protect the Great Barrier Reef while allowing reasonable use;
- c) The regulation of activities that exploit the resources of the Region so as to minimise the effect of those activities on the Great Barrier Reef;
- d) The reservation of some areas of the Great Barrier Reef for its appreciation and enjoyment by the public; and
- e) The preservation of some areas of the Great Barrier Reef in its natural state undisturbed by man except for the purposes of scientific research.

### **The Environment Protection and Biodiversity Conservation Act 1999**

The objects of this Commonwealth Act include:

- a) to provide for the protection of the environment, especially those aspects that are matters of national environmental significance<sup>7</sup>; and
- b) to promote ecologically sustainable development through the conservation and ecologically sustainable use of natural resources; and
- c) to promote the conservation of biodiversity; and ....

## National commitments

The Representative Areas Program will contribute towards a number of national commitments, including:

- Australia's Oceans Policy (1998) which advocates implementation of a representative areas network;
- National Strategy for Conservation of Australia's Biological Diversity (1996);
- Australian and New Zealand Environment and Conservation Council's 'Strategic Plan of Action for establishing the national representative system of marine protected areas' (1999);
- Intergovernmental Agreement on the Environment (1992); and
- National Strategy for Ecologically Sustainable Development (1992).

The Representative Areas Program will also contribute to several strategies and objectives within the *25-Year Strategic Plan for the Great Barrier Reef World Heritage Area (1994)*, which was signed by about 60 stakeholder representatives.

<sup>7</sup> Matters of 'national environmental significance' include World Heritage properties; Ramsar wetlands; nationally threatened animal and plant species and ecological communities; internationally protected migratory species; and Commonwealth marine areas.

## International commitments

A number of conventions signed by Australia, including those listed below, refer to the need to protect biodiversity:

- Convention on Biological Diversity (CBD 1992);
- World Heritage Convention (1975);
- Convention on International Trade in Endangered Species of Wild Fauna and Flora (CITES 1973);
- Convention on the Conservation of Nature in the South Pacific (APIA 1976);
- Convention on Conservation of Migratory Species of Wild Animals (1979); and
- Convention on the Law of the Sea (1982)

GBRMPA's Representative Areas Program will help Australia further fulfil its international commitments for the protection of biodiversity.

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There is also widespread political support for the Representative Areas Program:

### **The Coalition Government's commitment:**

'During the next parliament, a Coalition government will ... progress the representative areas process, ensuring that all habitat types in the Great Barrier Reef are adequately protected;.....' (*'A Better Environment'*, Coalition Platform, October 2001)

### **Other political parties:**

'Labor will ....support continuation of the Representative Areas program to ensure all habitats types are adequately protected... ' (Labor election platform, October 2001)

'Democrats... (support) the expansion of highly protected areas to cover at least 50% of the Marine Park ....' (Democrats election platform, October 2001)

### **Queensland Government:**

'The State Government will support the Great Barrier Reef Marine Park representative areas program to increase protection of biodiversity by increasing the number of habitats included in the no-take zones. It will develop and implement a strategy to protect marine biodiversity and threatened species generally including extending protection under the Nature Conservation Act.' (*'Valuing the environment'*; State Budget 2001-02).

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