

# Introduction

## 1.1 Background

This report was initiated under the Commonwealth Coastal Policy, the aim of which is 'to promote ecologically sustainable use of Australia's coastal zone'.

The Policy recognises that integrated strategic coastal planning is a critical tool for achieving sustainable use of Australia's coastal zone. It also recognises the need for all spheres of government, industry and the community to work in partnership to develop a vision for the sustainable use of the coastal zone, and then work together to develop a strategic plan to implement that vision.

This study was funded by the Commonwealth under that policy, with in-kind support from the Queensland Government and coastal local governments in Queensland. It is a preliminary study to identify potential impacts of local government activity on the coastline through current planning regimes and service provision. One of the key expected outputs was the identification of projects that would address impacts on the Great Barrier Reef from coastal urban development, and which were therefore suitable for further funding. These projects were generally expected to involve more than one local government area and involve partnership approaches between different spheres of government, industry and the community.

The project has been managed by the Great Barrier Reef Marine Park Authority in association with the Townsville City Council.

## 1.2 Study Area

The boundary of the Great Barrier Reef World Heritage Area is shown in figure 1.1. It covers an area of 351 400 km<sup>2</sup>. Its western edge coincides with Queensland's coast at low water. Although this coastline is approximately 3400 km in length, the maximum extent of the World Heritage Area is 1955 km between its north-west and south-east extremities.

Twenty-one Queensland local governments about the boundary of the World Heritage Area. These local government areas are listed in table 1.1 and their boundaries are shown in figure 1.2.

## 1.3 Terms of Reference

The terms of reference as specified in the project contract were:

- (i) Purpose of the Study:  
To study the potential impacts on the social, natural, cultural and world heritage values of the Great Barrier Reef World Heritage Area associated with development in the adjacent coastal areas.
- (ii) Focus of the Study:  
The study is to focus upon the impacts associated with urban development, in particular those arising from tourist activity, industrial development, and services associated with the fishing industry, and impacts from increasing residential development and thus with activities resulting from increased population such as recreational boating and fishing activity adjacent to, and within, the World Heritage Area. Impacts can relate to three tiers, those associated with regional planning, assessment of specific coastal developments and urban development in general.
- (iii) Outputs of the Study:  
Outputs of the preliminary study will be the identification of projects suitable for funding under various programs, and working with identified Aboriginal communities, local government authorities and the State and Commonwealth agencies in the adjacent coastal areas of the Great Barrier Reef to identify:
  - (a) and summarise the known potential impacts associated with coastal development in the immediate adjacent coastal areas on the Great Barrier Reef World Heritage Area;
  - (b) the potential management needs of the World Heritage Area arising from the impacts associated with urban development, focusing on the associated implications for adjacent coastal development;

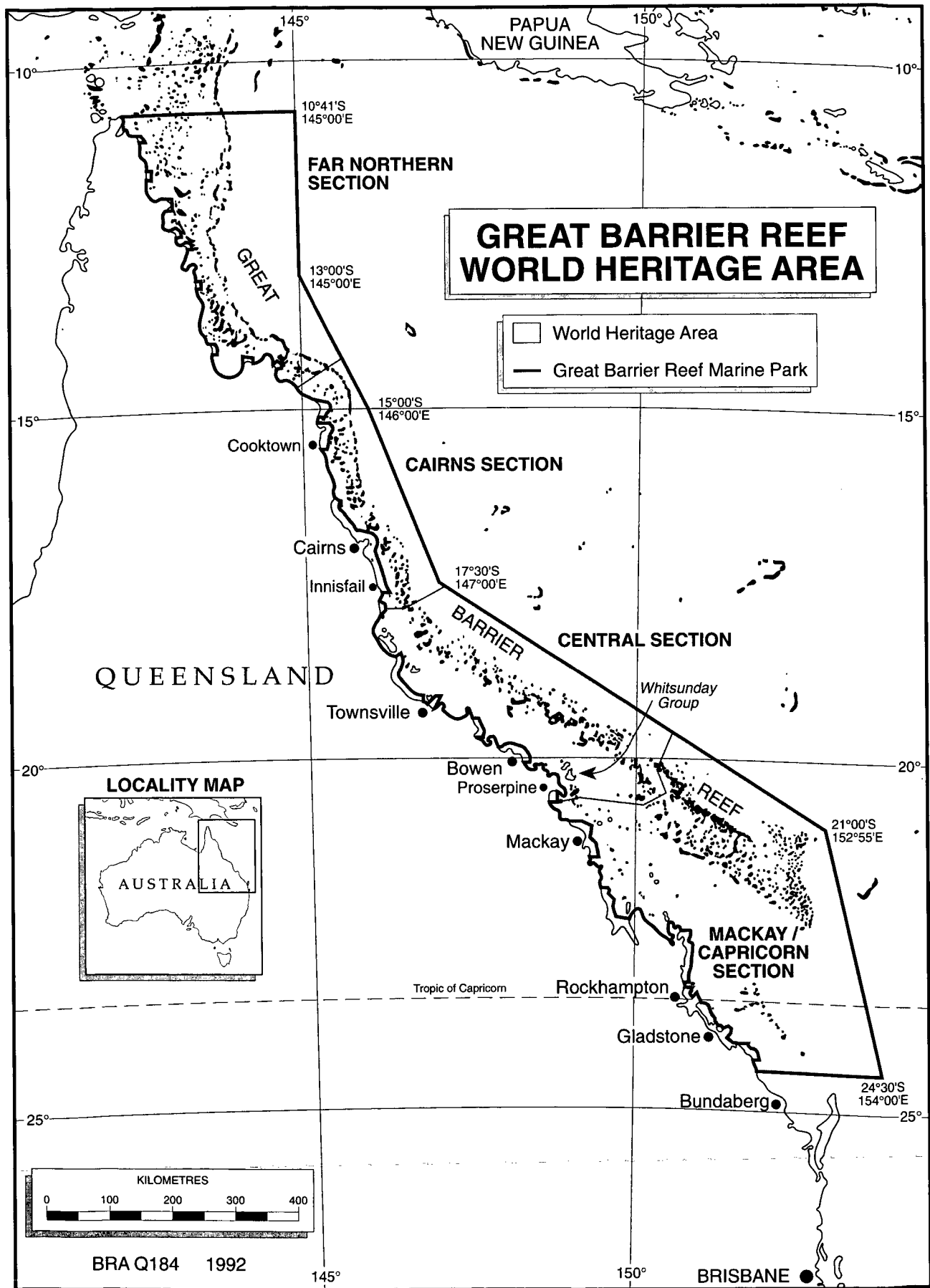


Figure 1.1 Great Barrier Reef World Heritage Area

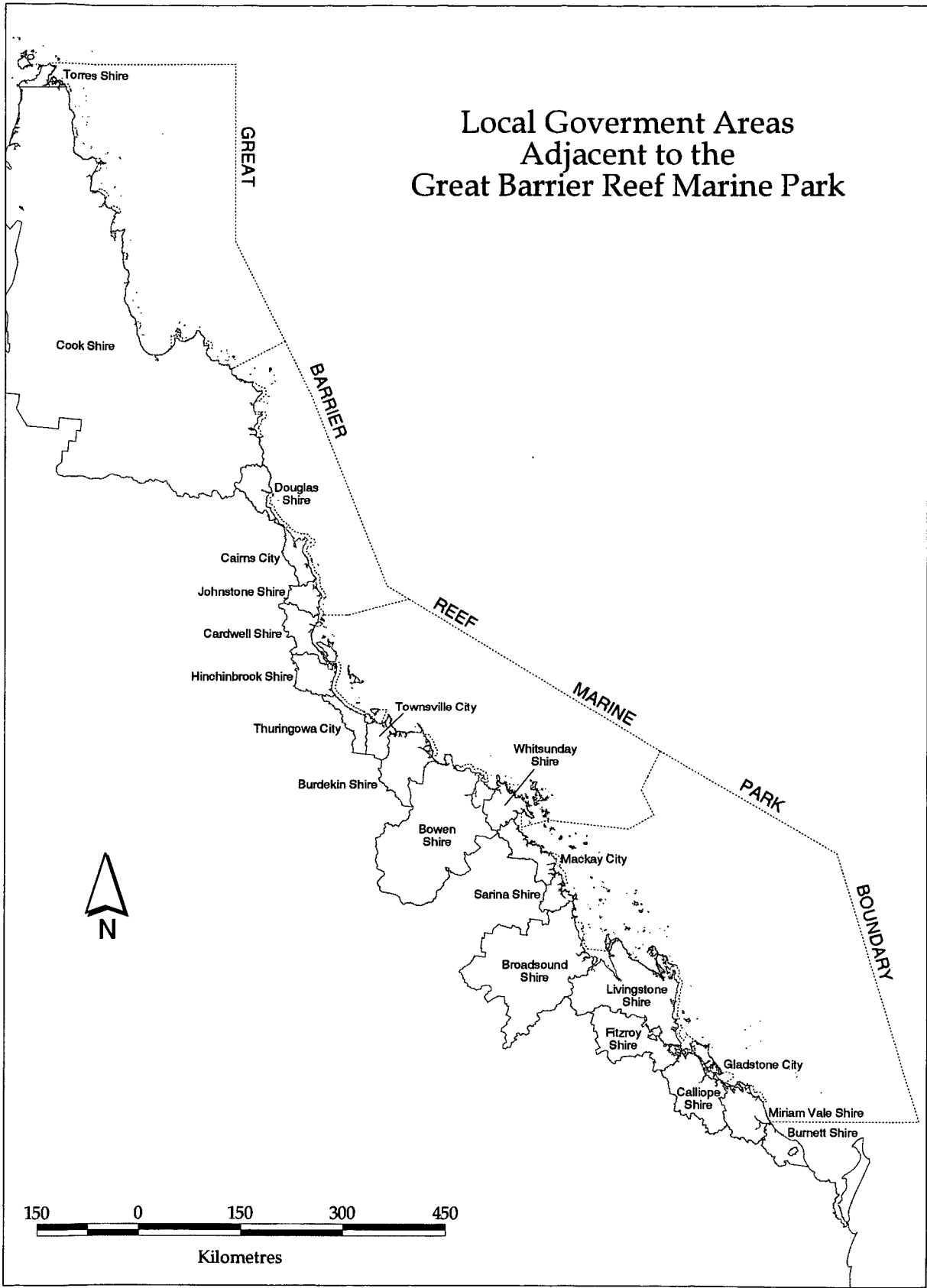


Figure 1.2 Local Government Areas

Table 1.1 Local Governments abutting the World Heritage Area

Local Government Assn of Qld District	Local Government (1995)	Resident population	Approx. length of coastline (km)
Northern District	Torres	8 640	120
	Cook	7 630	900
	Douglas	8 880	114
	Cairns	107 460	129
	Johnstone	19 230	62
	Cardwell	8 850	84
	Hinchinbrook	15 390	69
	Thuringowa	44 420	53
	Townsville	89 730	83
	Burdekin	19 250	132
	Bowen	13 420	156
	Whitsunday	12 840	219
	Mackay	70 470	177
	Sarina	9 020	114
Central District	Broadsound	8 290	155
	Livingstone	22 210	587
	Fitzroy	10 050	20
	Gladstone	26 960	20
	Calliope	12 620	96
	Miriam Vale	3 530	193
	Burnett	19 870	93
<b>TOTAL</b>		<b>538 760</b>	<b>3 576</b>

- (c) Commonwealth, State and local government activities (legislation, policy and management practices) that exist to meet identified needs and the agencies responsible for the identified activities;
- (d) the manner in which the activities of the different agencies relate to each other and the gaps and overlaps that exist and undertake an audit of these to determine associated management issues;
- (e) specific funding proposals that could be developed by one or more levels of government to develop a range of actions that should be undertaken in order to minimise identified impacts.

Given the breadth of the terms of reference and the limited resources available for this project, the Steering Committee provided directions to the consultant concerning the range of issues to be addressed and the emphasis that was to be given to the various outputs.

Firstly, the Steering Committee directed that the study was to focus on planning and management interactions arising from:

- residential development, including rural residential development,
- tourist activity, including the construction and operation of accommodation and boating facilities and associated day-trip activities, and industrial development,
- ports and harbours, including services associated with the fishing industry, and
- activities such as recreational boating and fishing associated with increased population in coastal areas.

The project is therefore not concerned with the impacts of agriculture, pastoral activities, aquaculture or mining.

Secondly, the Steering Committee directed that the primary focus of the investigations was to be directed towards output (e), that is, the identification of specific future projects and funding proposals that are practical and workable.

It is important that this project be seen in the broader context of:

- implementing the National Strategy for Ecologically Sustainable Development,
- fulfilling commitments made by Australia as a signatory to the United Nations' Agenda 21 and the United Nations' Environment and Development Declaration,
- meeting Australia's obligations under the World Heritage Convention, and
- the Commonwealth Government's marine and coastal activities.

The output from this study should not just be seen as a collection of individual projects that would benefit from financial assistance. More importantly, they should be seen as a 'package' of projects that would collectively involve coastal communities and all three spheres of government in helping to meet Australia's commitments in the areas of ecologically sustainable development and World Heritage Area management.

This preliminary study includes relevant material from local, State and Commonwealth government agencies with responsibilities within the World Heritage Area and adjacent coastal areas. Although local governments and relevant regional offices of the State agencies concerned have been visited, the study is largely a desk top analysis of the material available.

The project has been directed by a Steering Committee consisting of the following representatives:

- Great Barrier Reef Marine Park Authority – Prue Keen, Dominique Benzaken and Karen Robinson
- North Queensland Local Government Association – Councillor Ann Bunnell (Chair)
- Central Queensland Local Government Association – Councillor Michael Prior
- Townsville City Council – Deborah Szekely (until October 1996), Karen Robinson (until March 1997) and Greg Bruce (after October 1996)
- Queensland Department of Environment – David Briggs

- Queensland Department of Primary Industries – Ed Donohue and Lyn McTaggart
- Queensland Department of Local Government and Planning – Peter Lindwall
- Commonwealth Department of Housing and Regional Development – Alex Appleman (until September 1996)
- Reef Tourism 2005 – Ed Green (observer).

The report draws upon and documents work undertaken between June 1996 and March 1997.

## 1.4 Sources of Information

The main sources of information used in the preparation of this report have been:

- published reports and papers relevant to coastal urban development and the value of the Great Barrier Reef World Heritage Area,
- local government planning schemes and policies,
- discussions with representatives from government agencies and other interest groups (see section 1.5),
- file information held by government agencies, and
- the consultants' knowledge of coastal planning issues in Queensland.

The report includes selected bibliography of references used in its preparation.

## 1.5 Consultation

During the preparation of this report discussions have been held with:

- officers from coastal local governments adjacent to the Great Barrier Reef World Heritage Area,
- representatives from State and Commonwealth government agencies,
- representatives from some Port Authorities, and
- representatives from other stakeholder groups including commercial and recreational fishermen, local coastal communities, traditional owners, the tourist industry and conservation groups.

Details of individuals who have been consulted are contained in appendix 1.