

FOREWORD

The Great Barrier Reef is valuable to Australia as an economic and recreational resource and is of global ecological significance. This has been recognised with the inscription of the Great Barrier Reef on the World Heritage List and its declaration as a Marine Park under the *Great Barrier Reef Marine Park Act 1975*.

The intensity of shipping within the Great Barrier Reef presents a very real threat to the Reef from oil spills. In response to this threat, the Great Barrier Reef Marine Park Authority and the Commonwealth Department of Transport and Communications have developed REEFPLAN, the marine pollution contingency plan for the Great Barrier Reef Region. As of 1 January 1991, the role of the Department of Transport and Communications under REEFPLAN has been taken over by the Australian Maritime Safety Authority.

Under REEFPLAN, the Great Barrier Reef Marine Park Authority holds the position of Scientific Support Coordinator. The role of Scientific Support Coordinator gives the Authority responsibility for coordinating scientific and environmental support and advice in the event of an oil spill.

As part of its role as Scientific Support Coordinator, the Great Barrier Reef Marine Park Authority organises workshops to share and exchange information with other oil spill response groups, in order to develop and maintain up-to-date oil spill response options for the Great Barrier Reef Region. One such option is bioremediation. There is a lack of relevant information and research into the use of bioremediation in Australia in general and in the Great Barrier Reef Region in particular. The Authority therefore initiated a workshop to address this issue. The workshop was held on 25 February 1991 and was the first in Queensland. It is hoped that more will be held in Australia in the future.