

1.0 INTRODUCTION

1.1 BACKGROUND

The Capricornia Section of the Great Barrier Reef Marine Park contains the waters, reefs and shoals of the Capricorn and Bunker Groups of islands offshore from the coastal centres of Yeppoon, Rockhampton and Gladstone (see Figure 1). The Section covers more than one million hectares and includes some of the most heavily used areas of the Great Barrier Reef.

The Zoning Plan and regulations for the Capricornia Section of the Great Barrier Reef Marine Park came into effect on the 1st July 1981. It was the first Zoning Plan prepared by the Great Barrier Reef Marine Park Authority and marked the end of an intense period of research, planning and public participation.

Since that time the emphasis in the Capricornia Section has been on the implementation of the Zoning Plan and on the establishment of day-to-day management programmes through the joint efforts of the Authority and the Maritime Estate Branch of Queensland National Parks and Wildlife Service.

At present, day-to-day management is undertaken by the Queensland National Parks and Wildlife Service working within guidelines and in accordance with policies set by the Authority. A permanent management presence has been established within the Section and in adjacent mainland centres. The responsibilities of the Capricornia Section management team include surveillance, enforcement of the Zoning Plan and regulations, education, extension, issuing of permits, provision of visitor facilities, research and monitoring.

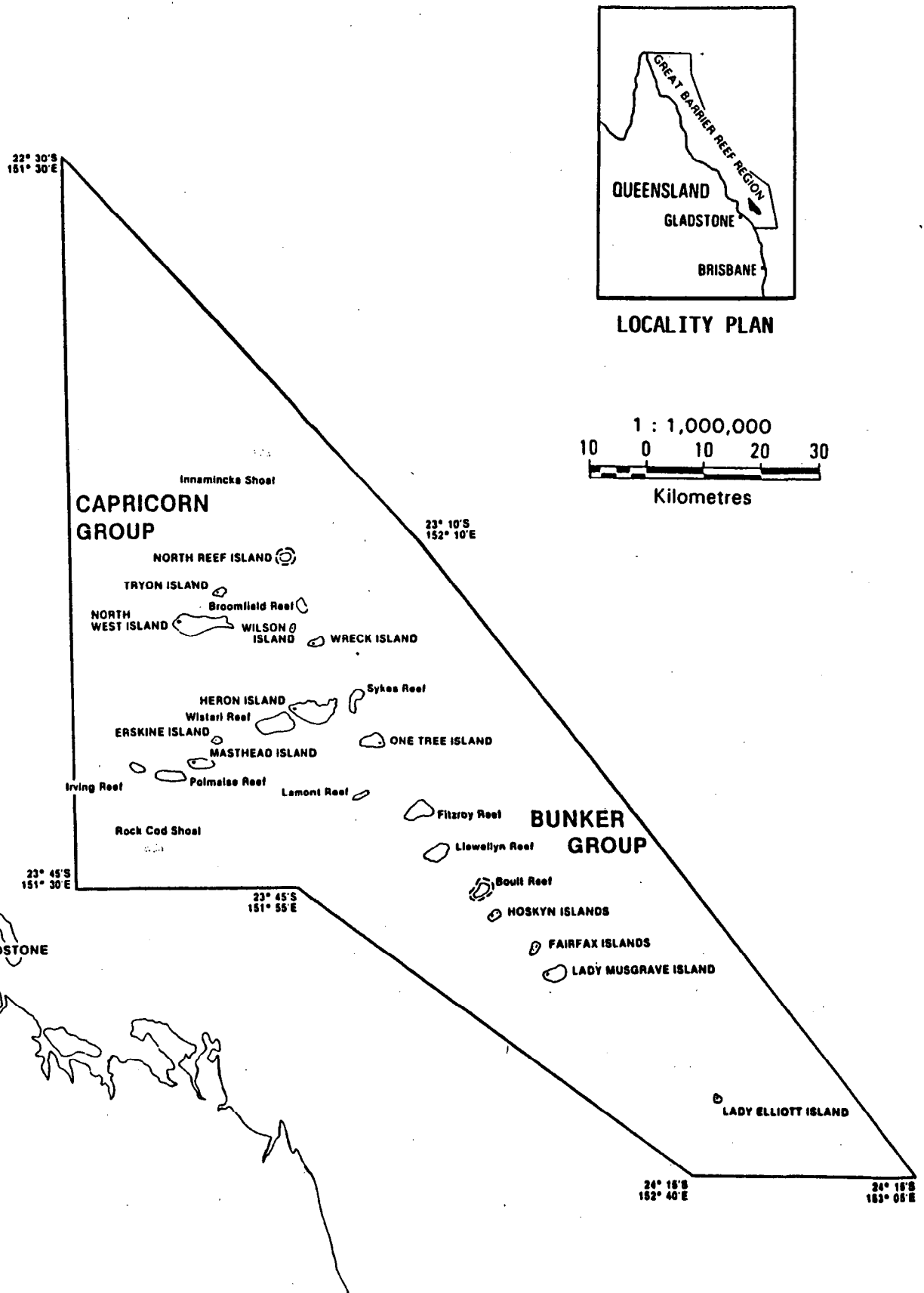


FIGURE 1: THE CAPRICORNIA SECTION OF THE GREAT BARRIER REEF MARINE PARK

As part of its on-going responsibilities, the Authority is aware of the need to monitor the performance of Zoning Plans and management programmes within the various Sections of the Great Barrier Reef Marine Park. The Capricornia Section User Survey is the Authority's first attempt at a scientific and systematic user-based evaluation of a Zoning Plan and day-to-day management. The Capricornia Section was selected for this pilot project because the Zoning Plan has been in effect longer than any others and is due for its first statutory review during 1986.

1.2 TARGET POPULATIONS

Under the terms of reference for the investigation, it was required that information be collected from each of the following thirteen user groups within the Capricornia Section:

- . Commercial fishermen,
- . Private motor-boat owners,
- . Island resort managers,
- . Charter boat operators,
- . Permit holders,
- . Island residents,
- . Heron Island Resort visitors,
- . Lady Elliot Island Resort visitors,
- . Charter boat passengers,
- . Day-visitors to Lady Musgrave Island,
- . Island campers,
- . Research Station directors, and
- . User clubs and organizations.

Definitions of the User Groups examined in this survey are provided in Appendix I.

It represents the most ambitious survey programme undertaken in any Section of the Marine Park and includes some major user groups who have never previously been studied in any detail. At the time of undertaking the surveys, the only user group of any significance not included in the survey was cruising yachtsmen. These users are the subject of a separate survey programme being undertaken by the Queensland National Parks and Wildlife Service.

1.3 SURVEY OBJECTIVES

The objectives of the Capricornia Section User Survey were:

- to ascertain users' awareness of the Zoning Plan, regulations and day-to-day management arrangements,
- to determine the impacts of the Zoning Plan, regulations and day-to-day management as perceived by users of the Capricornia Section,
- to measure users' attitudes towards the current Zoning Plan, regulations and day-to-day management, and
- to measure users' preferences for new and/or different management prescriptions.

These objectives were prepared by the consultants in consultation with officers of the Authority and the Queensland National Parks and Wildlife Service.

1.4 STUDY OUTPUTS

The output from the project consists of:

- thirteen separate technical reports containing the detailed results of individual surveys administered to each of the user groups, and
- a summary report that brings together the major findings from all the surveys.

This report is the summary report. It contains an overview of all the survey results in a form that is suitable for interpretation by the lay reader. The full technical details of the survey methodologies and findings are contained in the individual technical reports.