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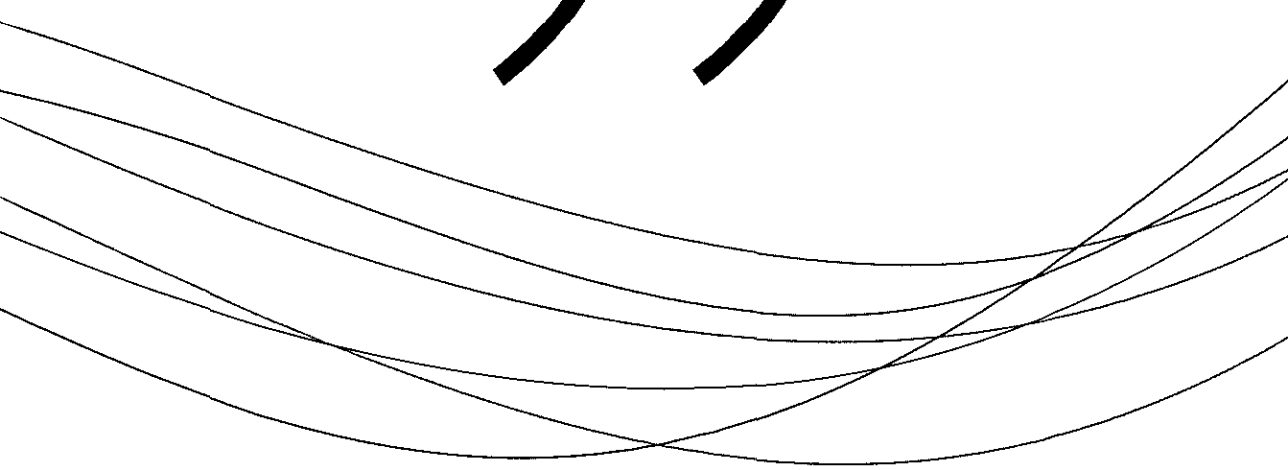

GREAT BARRIER REEF
MARINE PARK AUTHORITY

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GREAT BARRIER REEF
MARINE PARK AUTHORITY

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Great Barrier Reef Marine Park Authority
PO Box 1379
Townsville QLD 4810

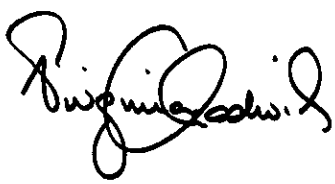
30 September 1999

Senator the Hon Robert Hill
Minister for the Environment and Heritage
Parliament House
Canberra ACT 2600

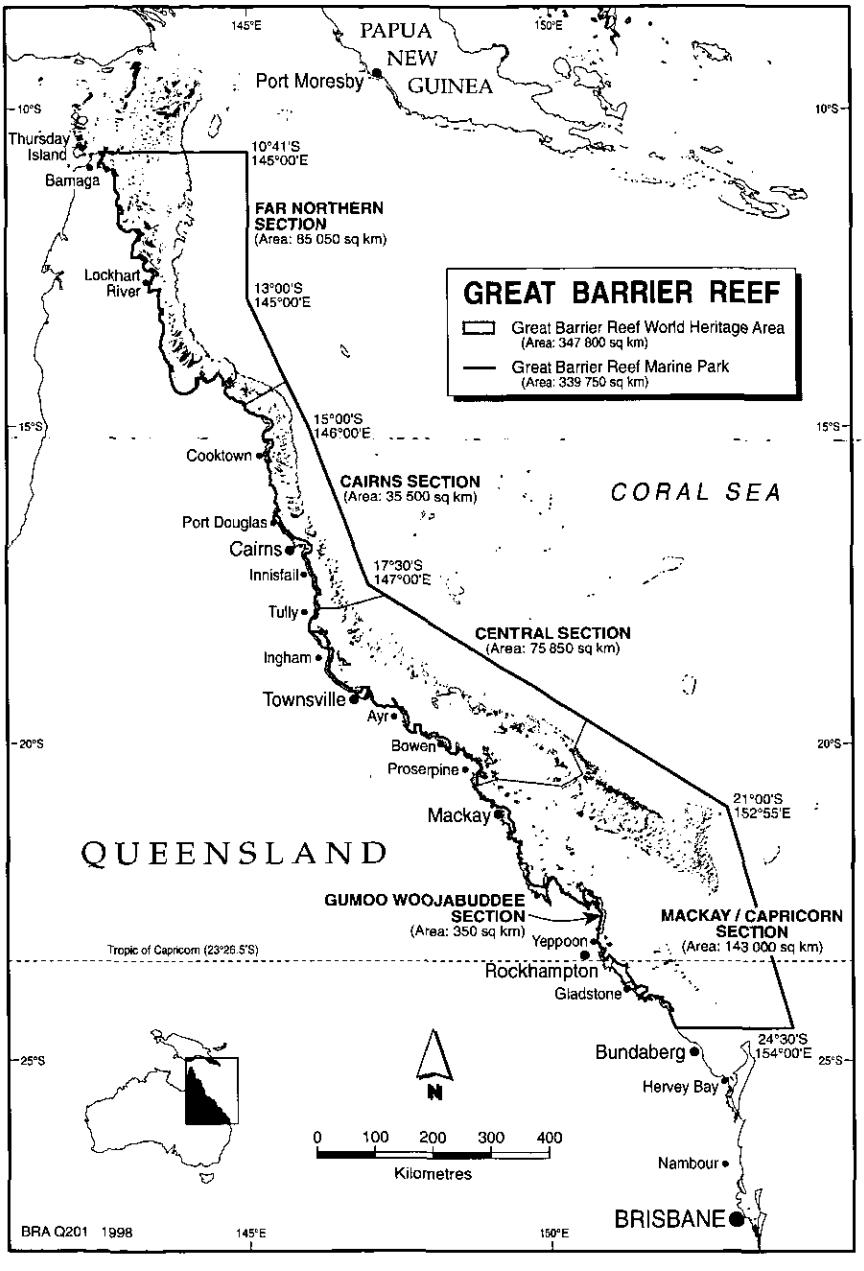
Dear Minister

In accordance with section 9 of the *Commonwealth Authorities and Companies Act 1997*, I submit the Annual Report of the Great Barrier Reef Marine Park Authority for the year ended 30 June 1999.

Yours sincerely



The Hon Virginia Chadwick
Chair



The Great Barrier Reef World Heritage Area extends from the top of Cape York to just north of Fraser Island, and from the low water mark on the Queensland coast to beyond the edge of the continental shelf. The World Heritage Area is 347 800 square kilometres in area and includes the Great Barrier Reef Marine Park (97.7% of the World Heritage Area), Queensland waters not in the Great Barrier Reef Marine Park (1.7%), and Queensland-owned islands (0.6%). It is important to note that not all of the World Heritage Area is in the Great Barrier Reef Marine Park. In some places the coastal boundary of the Great Barrier Reef Marine Park is five nautical miles from the low water mark on the mainland.

As specified in the *Great Barrier Reef Marine Park Act 1975*, the Authority is responsible for the care and development of the Great Barrier Reef Marine Park. The Authority also acts as the lead Commonwealth agency for Great Barrier Reef World Heritage Property issues.

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Report from the Executive

The Great Barrier Reef Marine Park Authority's primary responsibility of managing the Great Barrier Reef and related ecosystems addresses a very large and complex environment. The Authority's day-to-day tasks are multi-jurisdictional, multi-sectoral, multi-agency and involve a variety of stakeholders. The stakeholders range from the local communities on the Queensland coast to the broader Australian community and, through the World Heritage status of The Great Barrier Reef, to the international community.

The area under management is larger than the combined areas of Victoria and Tasmania or, internationally, is roughly equal to Italy or all of Malaysia.

Within this vast area the Authority must address direct uses such as tourism, fishing and recreation which depend upon the health or productivity of the ecosystem. With Queensland state and local government and the communities of the adjacent coast, it must also address ways to minimise or eliminate the impacts of land and water use that can affect the ecological communities of the Reef region.

The first 20-year phase of the Authority's existence was concerned largely with the design, establishment and initial implementation of the multiple-use management at an ecosystem scale. As this phase reached its conclusion, the Authority addressed the need to focus more clearly on the critical management issues facing the Reef.

This Annual Report covers the first year of a new organisational structure based on a matrix design. This provides for delivery of a range of services — Program Delivery, Planning and Environmental Assessment, Indigenous Cultural Liaison, Information Support, Research Management, GIS, Data Analysis, Education and Communications, Corporate Support, Legal and Management — to address ongoing responsibilities, and critical issues of Fisheries, Tourism and Recreation, Coastal Development and Water Quality, Conservation, Biodiversity and Heritage.

The new structure is working well. The energy and enthusiasm of the Senior Management Team has developed a collective approach to the outcomes, the issues and the programs of the organisation as a whole, and of the work units within the Authority. A three-year rolling work program is in place reflecting the priorities of the Authority, determining its day-to-day operations and linking resources with outcomes. The process of executive team building and strategic

planning was advanced considerably by residential workshop retreats at the Australian Institute of Marine Science at Cape Ferguson.

A feature of the new corporate management approach has been reviewing the focus of education and communication programs conducted by the Authority. In particular, this has led to a change of focus and linkage with the Great Barrier Reef Aquarium. This involves moving from a more separate trading entity with an education program relating primarily to Aquarium visitation to a more broadly-based key educational asset addressing the context and issues of management of the Great Barrier Reef. This is being addressed through displays and activities in the Aquarium and more widely through travelling displays and web-based materials reaching the communities of coastal Queensland and beyond. A new exhibit strategy addressing the critical issues and rebranding through the new identity 'Reef HQ' reflects the closer program linkages.

The publication of the *State of the Great Barrier Reef World Heritage Area* report in November 1998 was the first of a planned five-yearly cycle of systematic reporting. The development of the report identified many areas where further work is required but indicates that the Great Barrier Reef World Heritage Area compares very favourably in the context of other world heritage areas and coral reef systems. A summary is provided in this report.

1998/99 has been a year of transition for the Authority and its staff. Mr Tom Tolhurst resigned on 8 October 1998 and was subsequently replaced by Dr Glyn Davis. Dr Ian McPhail resigned as Chairperson and Chief Executive Officer on 12 April 1999. For the remainder of the financial year Mr John Tanzer acted as Chairperson. On 1 July 1999 the appointment of the Hon Virginia Chadwick as Chair and Chief Executive was announced by The Minister, Senator the Hon Robert Hill. The year saw a significant turnover of permanent staff with 29 people joining the organisation and 28 people leaving, with a total of 119 permanent staff at the end of the year.

The Executive Team appreciates the hard work and support of the expert and dedicated staff that characterise the Authority. This dedication has enabled us to end the year with a good foundation for ongoing focus on policies and action to address priority matters relating to the management of the Great Barrier Reef Marine Park and the Great Barrier Reef World Heritage Area. Also appreciated are the efforts of many in industry and the community who contribute to the wellbeing and enjoyment of the Marine Park.

The State of the Great Barrier Reef
World Heritage Area 1998

The *State of the Great Barrier Reef World Heritage Area 1998* report is the first ever synthesis of information on the state of the environment, human pressures on the environment and management responses to those pressures for the whole World Heritage Area. It represents an important step forward in our understanding of how humans affect the natural environment and what we can do to minimise these effects. It provides a guide for future management strategies to ensure the continuing health of the Great Barrier Reef World Heritage Area.

The distribution and abundance of most major environmental attributes in the Great Barrier Reef World Heritage Area are fairly well known, although comprehensive species distributions are lacking for many plants and animals.

The State of the Reef Report showed significant areas of uncertainty regarding basic distribution and abundance for many groups of organisms including macroalgae, soft corals, inter-reefal and lagoonal benthos, sea snakes and inshore dolphins. The state of major environmental attributes is summarised in table 1.

A small proportion of the environmental attributes have dedicated monitoring programs that are providing increasingly valuable trend data. Together with information on patterns of human activities and impacts, these long-term records allow us to determine whether any action is needed to manage human impacts. Because virtually all environmental attributes vary naturally over time, long time series are required before clear indications of the sustainability of human impact can be demonstrated. Without such time series it is not possible to say with certainty if most environmental attributes are in a satisfactory or unsatisfactory condition.

Despite this uncertainty, the lack of any major declines and uncontrolled human pressures permits a cautiously optimistic conclusion for environmental attributes such as corals, reef fishes, seagrasses, mangroves and island plants. On the other hand, whilst there are no major adverse trends evident for water quality, macroalgae and seabirds, lack of good trend data or the presence of substantial ongoing pressures mean that the outlook is less certain, and that continued vigilance and management action are needed. However, ongoing monitoring and careful management of potential impacts will be required to ensure the continued health of the World Heritage Area.

The report also shows that there are some categories for which the trends are not encouraging and management action is required. These categories include dugongs south of Cooktown, at least three species of marine turtles, and lagoonal benthos in particularly heavily trawled areas. Appropriate management action has been identified in each of these cases, and in most cases implementation has commenced.

The crown-of-thorns starfish presents a dilemma to managers. While a third outbreak is currently developing in the Townsville to Cooktown region, the need for widespread management action is uncertain due to ongoing uncertainty regarding the role of human impacts as causal agents.

Coral bleaching in the summer of 1997/98 had a substantial impact on inshore reefs — mainly in the Central and Northern sections of the Great Barrier Reef Marine Park. Coral bleaching is a response to environmental stress and the major stress is elevated summer water temperature. The surface water temperatures of the Western Pacific in 1997/98 were the highest recorded and over 88 per cent of inshore reefs exhibited some coral bleaching with 25 per cent of all inshore reefs having more than half of their corals affected. Coral mortality, however, was highly variable and patchy with the inshore fringing reefs between Townsville and Cairns suffering the highest level of mortality. Overall, the majority of the Great Barrier Reef recovered well from the bleaching event. The Authority is collaborating with the Australian Institute of Marine Science and the United States National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration in research to achieve a better understanding of the ecological implications of more frequent high summer water temperatures predicted by the International Panel on Climate Change.

Issues of potential human impact on the Great Barrier Reef World Heritage Area have been identified, and management programs have been established by the Great Barrier Reef Marine Park Authority or other government agencies to ameliorate these impacts.

Future initiatives

Before the production of the next report in 2003, the Great Barrier Reef Marine Park Authority will develop the concept of 'environmental status and performance indicators' for the Great Barrier Reef World Heritage Area. The indicators will include environmental parameters and measures of human use developed specifically to provide information to help improve management. The prime function of these indicators will be to allow informed judgement of the success or otherwise of management strategies in minimising the impacts of human pressures on the state of the environment. Unsuccessful management strategies can then be improved and successful ones can be identified and repeated.

Table 1. Summary of major environmental attributes on the Great Barrier Reef

ATTRIBUTE/STATE	PRESSURE	RESPONSE
Water Quality		
• status fairly well known • limited trend data but no obvious adverse trends	• adjacent land use and associated nutrient and sediment run-off during flood events • loss of freshwater wetlands	• direct inputs of pollutants prohibited or strictly regulated • collaborative arrangements with State Government agencies being developed to reduce indirect inputs through run-off • comprehensive research and monitoring programs in place
Mangroves		
• status well known • some medium-term trend data available • no obvious adverse trends	• principal pressure is clearing for coastal development	• mangroves protected by legislation from damage and removal • further work on cumulative impacts needed
Island Plants		
• status fairly well known • no information on trends	• historical impacts from plant introductions and grazing, some ongoing	• plants on most islands protected from direct damage or removal • ongoing monitoring needed
Seagrasses		
• status fairly well known • some information on trends • no obvious adverse trends	• some potential pressures from coastal run-off and trawling, but few major impacts documented	• trawling prohibited by Marine Park zoning plans in nearly half of mapped seagrass area • trawling prohibited in additional areas by coastal strip closures • offshore beds less protected but impacts not documented
Macroalgae		
• status poorly known • no information on trends • anecdotal reports of increased abundance due to human impacts	• potential impacts on nearshore algae from increased nutrients in run-off	• status information being collected • management needs uncertain • trend monitoring needed
Corals		
• status fairly well known • no evidence of any major declines directly attributed to human impacts • some recent disturbances from crown-of-thorns starfish and bleaching	• potential pressure on inshore corals from increased sediments and nutrients in run-off, but no major impacts documented	• comprehensive research and monitoring programs in place • most major direct pressures regulated or prohibited
Crown-of-thorns Starfish		
• status fairly well known • current outbreak in northern Great Barrier Reef • cause of outbreaks uncertain	• role of human activities in causing outbreaks is uncertain	• comprehensive research and Starfish monitoring programs in place • control measure developed for significant sites • need for further action not clear given uncertainty over causal factors

ATTRIBUTE/STATE	PRESSURE	RESPONSE
Fishes		
• status of commercial species and common reef fishes fairly well known • no evidence of any major declines caused by human activities	• commercial, recreational and indigenous fishers • heavy fishing pressure in some areas	• comprehensive research and monitoring programs in place • variety of management measures to restrict and regulate fishing effort
Birds		
• status fairly well known • trends known for some sites where some species have declined	• human disturbance from visitation • habitat loss and deterioration	• some sensitive nesting sites closed to visitors • research and monitoring programs in place at some sites • more information needed on status for many areas • need for further action uncertain due to lack of trend data
Marine Turtles		
• status well known for two species • significant decline for one species, indications of decline for two others and no indication of decline for a fourth • no information on status of two other species, but both rarely seen	• bycatch in trawl and shark nets • hunting, both locally and overseas • predation of eggs and young by feral animals • habitat removal and disturbance	• important nesting sites protected • efforts under way to reduce bycatch in trawls • need for international agreement to protect turtles • ongoing monitoring
Sea Snakes		
• status information needed	• bycatch in trawl nets	• management requirements uncertain • processing of sea snake skins no longer allowed
Dugongs		
• status and trends fairly well known • decline in southern Great Barrier Reef population	• bycatch in mesh and shark nets • boat strike • indigenous hunting	• Dugong Protection Areas established • voluntary cessation of traditional hunting by most indigenous communities south of Cooktown • traditional hunting south of Cooktown no longer permitted • comprehensive research and monitoring programs in place
Whales and Dolphins		
• status and trends for humpback whale fairly well known • no information on other whales or dolphins, but inshore species possibly in decline	• whale watching of baleen whales, particularly humpback and dwarf minke • inshore dolphins caught as bycatch in mesh nets	• whale-watching guidelines developed • monitoring and protection measures for inshore dolphins needed
Inter-reefal and Lagoonal Benthos		
• status poorly known • likely substantial impacts in areas of high intensity trawling	• trawling • nearshore communities potentially affected by increased sediments and nutrients in run-off	• some progress towards understanding responses and recovery • trawling prohibited by Marine Park zoning plans in over half of inter-reefal area and about 10% of lagoonal area • management plans being developed which aim to reduce fishing effort

This summary was correct at the time of publication of the *State of the Great Barrier Reef World Heritage Area 1998* report, November 1998.

The Great Barrier Reef Marine Park Authority

The Great Barrier Reef Marine Park Authority is the principal adviser to the Commonwealth Government on the care and development of the Great Barrier Reef Marine Park.

Enabling Legislation

The Authority is established under the *Great Barrier Reef Marine Park Act 1975* as a Commonwealth statutory authority. Specific functions of the Authority are defined in sections 7 and 7A of the Act. Section 7 includes a requirement that the Authority perform its functions '...in accordance with any general directions given by the Minister not inconsistent with this Act'. No such directions were given to the Authority during or since the end of the financial year. There are no directions continuing from previous financial years.

Regulations under the Act are the:

- Great Barrier Reef Marine Park Regulations, and
- Great Barrier Reef Marine Park (Prohibition of Drilling for Petroleum) Regulations.

The Authority is also subject to the *Commonwealth Authorities and Companies Act 1997*. Section 28 of that Act requires members of the Authority to ensure that policies of the Commonwealth Government notified to them in writing by the Minister are carried out in relation to the Authority. No such notifications were issued to members during or since the end of the financial year. There are no such notifications continuing from previous financial years.

At appendix A is a list of other legislation that relates to the operation of the Great Barrier Reef Marine Park Act and of the Authority and its staff.

The Minister

During 1998/99 and for the period up to the date of this report, Senator the Hon Robert Hill held portfolio responsibility for the Authority as Minister for the Environment for the period to 18 October 1998 and subsequently as Minister for the Environment and Heritage.

Goal and Aims

The Authority's goal is to provide for the protection, wise use, understanding and enjoyment of the Great Barrier Reef in perpetuity through the care and development of the Great Barrier Reef Marine Park.

The Authority's goal is inclusive, encompassing a wide range of opportunities. However, implicit in the goal is the primary obligation to ensure conservation of the Great Barrier Reef. All other activities are dependent on this over-riding responsibility.

The Authority's aims are subordinate to the primary goal and must be read in conjunction with it and with each other.

- To protect the natural qualities of the Great Barrier Reef, while providing for reasonable use of the Reef region.
- To involve the community meaningfully in the care and development of the Marine Park.
- To achieve competence and fairness in the care and development of the Marine Park through the conduct of research, and the deliberate acquisition, use and dissemination of relevant information from research and other sources.
- To provide for economic development consistent with meeting the goal and other aims of the Authority.
- To achieve integrated management of the Great Barrier Reef through active leadership and through constantly seeking improvements in coordinated management.
- To achieve management of the Marine Park primarily through the community's commitment to the protection of the Great Barrier Reef and its understanding and acceptance of the provisions of zoning, regulations and management practices.
- To provide recognition of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander traditional affiliations and rights in management of the Marine Park.
- To minimise costs of caring for and developing the Marine Park consistent with meeting the goal and other aims of the Authority.
- To minimise regulation of, and interference in, human activities, consistent with meeting the goal and other aims of the Authority.
- To achieve its goal and other aims by employing people of high calibre, assisting them to reach their full potential, providing a rewarding, useful and caring work environment, and encouraging them to pursue relevant training and development opportunities.

- To make the Authority's expertise available nationally and internationally.

- To adapt actively the Marine Park and the operations of the Authority to changing circumstances.

Membership of the Authority

The Great Barrier Reef Marine Park Authority consists of a full-time Chairperson and three part-time members. One of the part-time members is nominated by the Queensland Government. The Act provides for one of the part-time members to be appointed to represent the interests of Aboriginal communities adjacent to the Great Barrier Reef Marine Park.

The members of the Authority during the financial year were:
- Dr Ian McPhail (full-time Chairperson and Chief Executive Officer) until 12 April 1999;
- Mr John Lyons (part-time member);
- Mrs Evelyn Scott (part-time member);
- Mr Tom Tolhurst (part-time member until 8 October 1998); and
- Dr Glyn Davis (acting part-time member) for three 12-week periods commencing 16 November 1998, 16 February 1999 and 11 May 1999.

Mr John Tanzer acted as Chairperson during periods of absence by Dr Ian McPhail from 14 July to 1 August 1998, 8 December to 17 December 1998, and, following Dr McPhail's resignation, from12 April 1998.

Mr Richard Kenchington acted as Chairperson during periods of absence by Dr Ian McPhail from 11 to 17 October 1998, 29 November to 3 December 1998, 26 February to 9 March 1999, and by Mr John Tanzer from 15 June to 30 June 1999.

Dr McPhail, Mr Kenchington and Mr Tanzer served as executive directors; the other members served as non-executive directors.

Qualifications of GBRMPA Members

Dr Ian McPhail
member until 12 April 1999

Dr Ian McPhail has been Director-General, Department of Environment and Planning, South Australia (1986–1991); Executive Director, Commonwealth Environment Protection Agency; Director-General of Education, Portfolio Coordinator, Education, Employment and Training (1992–1993); Chief Executive Officer, Department of Education, Employment and Training (1993); Chief Executive officer, Department of Education and Children's Services, South Australia; and was Chief Executive Officer of the Great Barrier Reef Marine Park Authority until April 1999. He holds a Bachelor of Arts (University of New Zealand), Bachelor of Letters (University of New England) and a Doctor of Philosophy (University of New England).

Mr John Lyons
part-time member

Mr John Lyons is an accountant practising in Townsville and is Chairman of the Great Barrier Reef Advisory Board and of the Museum of Tropical Queensland Management Board. He was Former Chairman of the Cape York North Queensland Enterprise Zone Corporation (1988–1990) and of the Bi-Centennial Reef Wonderland Fund (1986–1987). He holds a Bachelor of Economics, James Cook University of North Queensland and is a Fellow of the Australian Society of Certified Practicing Accountants, the Taxation Institute of Australia, and the Institute of Company Directors in Australia.

Mrs Evelyn Scott
part-time member

Mrs Evelyn Scott is the current Chairperson of the Council for Aboriginal Reconciliation and President of the National Aboriginal and Islander Skills Development Association Inc. She is the former Chairperson for the Cairns and District Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islanders Corporation for Women (1994–1996). Mrs Scott is the recipient of the Queen's Silver Jubilee Medal for community services for the advancement of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islanders (1977).

Mr Tom Tolhurst
part-time member until 8 October 1998

Throughout his term on the GBRMPA, Mr Tolhurst was Director-General of the Queensland Department of Environment. He is also the former Deputy Under Secretary of the Department of Health (1988–1990) and a former Member of the GBRMPA Audit Committee. Mr Tolhurst holds a Bachelor of Commerce, Bachelor of Economics and a Bachelor of Laws and is a Fellow of both the Australian Society of Certified Practising Accountants and the Institute of Corporate Managers, Secretaries and Administrators and is a Member of the Royal Australian Institute of Public Administration.

***Dr Glyn Davis** acting*
part-time member for three 12-week periods

Dr Davis is Director-General, Queensland Department of the Premier and Cabinet, and Executive Director and Director-General of the Office of the Cabinet. He is also Professor in Politics and Public Policy and an Australian Research Council Fellow at Griffith University, Brisbane. He holds a first Class Honours degree in Political Science from University of New South Wales and a Doctorate from Australian National University.

Mr John Tanzer
Acting Chairperson

Mr John Tanzer is the former Executive Chair, Queensland Fisheries Management Authority and former Advisor to both State and Federal Government Ministers on agriculture and natural resource management policy. He is currently Executive Director of the Great Barrier Reef Marine Park Authority. Mr Tanzer holds a Bachelor of Economics.

Mr Richard Kenchington
Acting Chairperson

Mr Richard Kenchington has worked for GBRMPA since 1977 in a number of Director and Executive Officer positions and is currently Executive Director. He was Secretary of the Resource Assessment Common Coastal Zone Inquiry (1990–1993) and Coordinator of the International Coral Reef Initiative (1997–1999). He holds a Master of Science (Marine Biology) from the University of Wales and a Bachelor of Science from London University.

During 1998/99, the Authority held four meetings.

Meeting	Date	Location
MPA 172	18/9/98	Brisbane
MPA 173	10/12/98	Brisbane
MPA 174	19/3/99	Mackay
MPA 175	5/6/99	Brisbane

Commonwealth Authorities and Companies Act 1997

The *Commonwealth Authorities and Companies Act 1997*, which came into effect on 1 January 1998, provides reporting, accountability and other regulations for Commonwealth authorities including the Great Barrier Reef Marine Park Authority. The Authority is neither a Government Business Enterprise nor a Statutory Marketing Authority, which are special classes of Commonwealth authority recognised in the Act. Under the Act, the Authority, its directors (members) and officers (as defined by the Act) have specific obligations.

The Act requires directors to disclose any material personal interests. Such disclosures have been made at the earliest opportunity. The Act requires directors to prepare annual reports and budget estimates. It also provides for the Finance Minister to require interim reports. No such requirements have been put to the Authority.

The Act requires directors to notify the responsible Minister of defined significant events. There has been no cause for directors to make such a notification. However, the Chairperson, on the directors' behalf, has informed the Minister regularly of the operations of the Authority and has provided to the Minister reports, documents and information relating to those operations as required by the Minister. The Finance Minister has made no request of directors for reports, documents or information.

The Minister for Finance and Administration agreed that, until 30 September 1998, the Commonwealth will indemnify 'officers' in respect of legal costs as applies generally to Commonwealth officials, but only where legal costs are not covered by commercial insurance or indemnities already provided by the 'authority'. The Authority had not taken action to indemnify its officers or to take out indemnity insurance for its officers for the period up to 30 September 1998.

From July 1998 the Authority was included in the new Commonwealth Insurable Risk Managed Fund known as Comcover. The Authority applied for Directors and Officers Liability Insurance cover through Comcover from 1 October 1998 to the extent allowed under the Commonwealth Authorities and Companies Act. The cover was for the Chair and Members of the Authority and members of the Senior Management Team of the Authority. The policy prohibits disclosure of the nature and limits of liability and the amount of member contribution.

The directors have not received written notification from the Minister as to any new general policies of the Commonwealth that are to apply to the Authority.

Audit Committee of the Authority

Section 32 of the Commonwealth Authorities and Companies Act requires the directors of the Authority to establish and maintain an audit committee. The Authority established such a committee in September 1997. The following persons were members as at 30 June 1999:

Mr Matt Pope, chairperson – a practising Townsville barrister,
Mr Barry Sheedy, member – an accountant practising in Townsville,
Mr John Tanzer, member – an Executive Director on the Authority's staff.

During 1998/99, the Audit Committee held five meetings.

Meeting	Date	Location
AC 4	4/8/98	Townsville
AC 5	9/9/98	Townsville
AC 6	30/11/98	Townsville
AC 7	28-29/1/99	Townsville
AC 8	18-19/5/99	Townsville

Functions of the Committee are set out in appendix B.

Business activities of the audit committee concerned:

- the Internal Audit Plan;
- contractual management;
- implementation of the reorganisation and development of the Great Barrier Reef Marine Park Strategic Work Program;
- relationship with CRC Reef Research Centre;
- day-to-day management issues;
- accounting and audit procedure; and
- the Australian National Audit Office Efficiency Audit 'Commonwealth Management of the Great Barrier Reef Marine Park'.

State of Affairs of the Authority

The increase in the Environmental Management Charge (see page 47) and its effect on the Authority's budget was the only significant change in the Authority's state of affairs or principal activities. Since June 1998, there have been no other developments that have significantly affected or may significantly affect:

- the Authority's operations in future financial years;
- the results of those operations in future years; or
- the Authority's state of affairs in future financial years.

Offices of the Authority

The Authority has its principal office in Townsville and a small office in Canberra. The location of the two offices enables the Authority to have its technical and management resources close to the Reef and also to carry out necessary liaison functions in Canberra.

Staff of the Authority (including the Townsville office, the staff of the Great Barrier Reef Aquarium at Townsville and the Canberra office) numbered 138 (135.56 full-time equivalent) at 30 June 1999.

Operational centres for day-to-day management of the Marine Park (carried out by the Queensland Department of Environment and Heritage) are at Cairns, Townsville and Rockhampton. Also, there are bases at Port Douglas, Dungeness, Airlie Beach, Rosslyn Bay and Gladstone.

Review and Restructure

Following several external reviews and an extensive internal assessment, a decision was made in late 1997 to move to a new issues-based staffing structure to be effective from 1 July 1998. The purpose of the restructure was to provide a tighter focus for the organisation by concentrating on the major critical issues to be addressed and further, to ensure clear internal reporting lines and accountability.

The new organisation structure is matrix based. Operations are overseen by a senior management team consisting of the directors of each of the four Critical Issue Groups to address the priority policy areas, the directors of each of the three service groups, and the executive.

The Critical Issue Groups are:

- Tourism and Recreation
- Conservation, Biodiversity and World Heritage
- Fisheries
- Water Quality and Coastal Development

and the service groups are:

- Information Support
- Corporate Services
- Program Delivery (including Indigenous Cultural Liaison)
- Day-to-day Management Coordination.

This structure is now in line with the requirements of accrual budgeting and programming and assists the development and implementation of an outcome/output basis for programming and reporting.

Each of the Critical Issue Groups incorporates advisory groups involving key stakeholders in the Park to enhance responsiveness and an improved client focus.

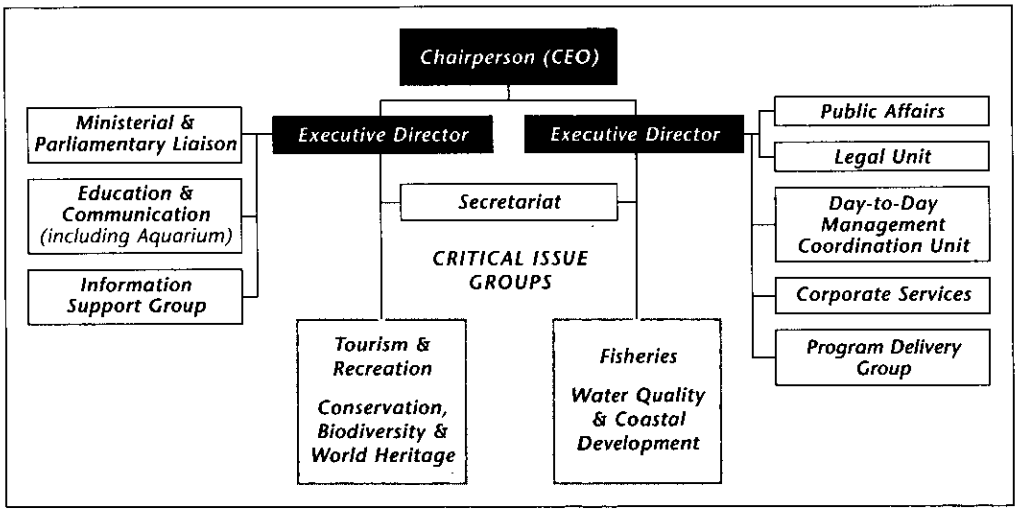

Figure 1. *Operational structure as at 30 June 1999*

Service Charter

A draft GBRMPA Service Charter was produced and distributed for public comment. All comments have been received and the final Charter: Great Barrier Reef Marine Park Authority — Charter of Public Service within a Culturally-Diverse Society will be published early in 1999/2000.

Executive Group

The executive group of the Authority assists and advises the Chairperson in carrying out the functions of the Authority and provides a forum for discussing and coordinating programs, recommending priorities and direction, and reviewing program performance. A major consequence of the Authority's restructure has been the redesign of the group, now known as the Senior Management Team, which comprises the Chairperson, the Executive Directors and the Directors.

The Authority has designated its two Executive Directors as secretaries to the Authority, one being based in Townsville and the other in Canberra. The staff of the Executive and Secretariat (now functioning as separate units) provide executive support for the Chairperson and the Executive Directors and secretariats for the Authority, its Audit Committee, the executive group and the Great Barrier Reef Consultative Committee. The Executive and Secretariat staff facilitate communication between other staff and these committees.

Subsidiaries

The Authority is a joint-venture partner in the CRC: Reef Research Centre and in INTROMARC. It has no subsidiaries. However, certain functions are carried out in conjunction with other Queensland and Commonwealth organisations including the Queensland Environment Protection Agency which has, through its Queensland Parks and Wildlife Service, the responsibility for day-to-day management of the Great Barrier Reef Marine Park subject to the Authority. Certain powers of the Authority have been delegated to positions in other organisations. All Australian Federal Police are inspectors for the Marine Park.

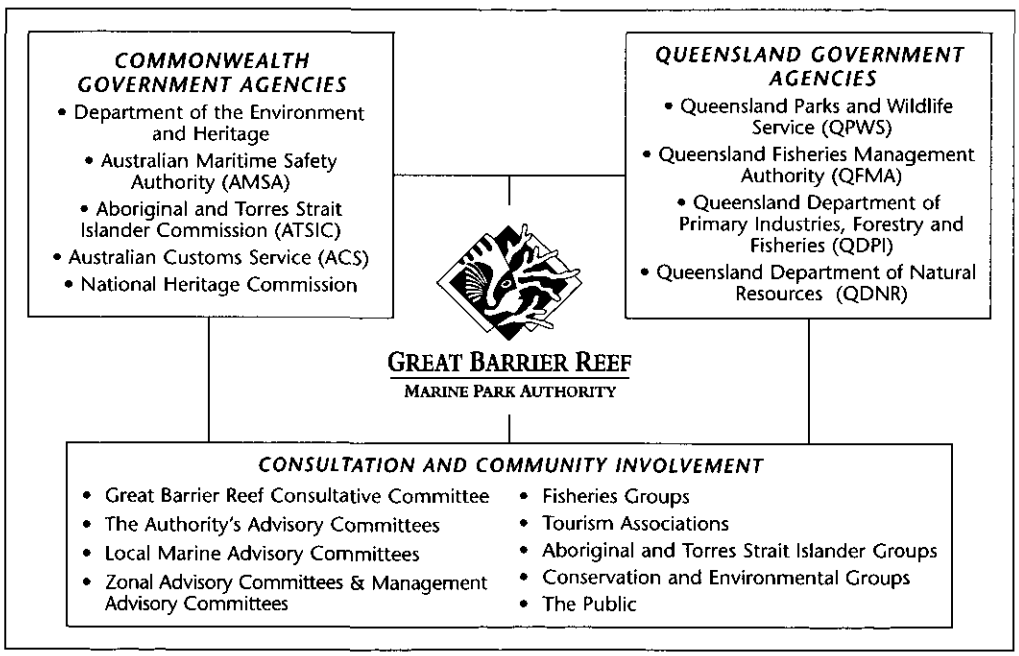

Figure 2. External Relationships

Great Barrier Reef Ministerial Council

The Great Barrier Reef Ministerial Council was established in 1979 to coordinate policy on the Reef between the Commonwealth and Queensland Governments at Ministerial level. The Council comprises four Ministers, two from each Government. Senator the Hon Robert Hill, Minister for the Environment and Heritage, is convenor of the Council.

At the commencement of 1998/99, the other members of the Council were the Hon John Moore, Minister for Industry, Science and Tourism; the Queensland Environment Minister, the Hon Brian Littleproud; and the Queensland Tourism Minister, the Hon Bruce Davidson. The Hon Trevor Perrett, Queensland Minister for Primary Industries, Fisheries and Forestry had also participated in discussions relating to his responsibilities for fisheries management.

During the year both the Commonwealth and Queensland established new governments. The Council now comprises:

- The Hon Senator Hill, Minister for the Environment and Heritage
- The Hon Jackie Kelly, Minister for Sport and Tourism;
- The Hon Rod Welford, Queensland Minister for Environment and Heritage; and
- The Hon Bob Gibbs, Queensland Minister for Tourism, Sport and Racing.

The Hon Henry Palaszczuk, Queensland Minister for Primary Industries, also participated in discussions relating to his responsibilities.

The Ministerial Council met once in 1998/99 on 17 May 1999. The meeting considered issues relating to dugong conservation, the management of ecologically sustainable fisheries in the Great Barrier Reef Marine Park, and the expansion of the Marine Park by including a number of areas previously excluded from the Marine Park.

Great Barrier Reef Consultative Committee

The Great Barrier Reef Consultative Committee, established by the Great Barrier Reef Marine Park Act, is an independent advisory body for both the Minister and the Authority. Functions, membership and business activities of the Consultative Committee are set out in appendix C.

The Consultative Committee met three times during 1998/99.

Meeting	Date	Location
CC 58	13-14/8/98	Townsville
CC 59	12/11/98	Brisbane
CC 60	30-31/3/99	Gladstone

Advisory Committees of the Authority

In September 1998, the Authority decided to establish an Environmental Research Ethics Advisory Committee which met once during 1998/99 on 17 February 1999 in Townsville. It also took steps to establish a Reef Advisory Committee for each of its four critical issues. This process was continuing at the end of the financial year. Functions, membership and business activities of the Committees are set out in appendix D.

Report of Operations

Executive Operations

The executive group of the Authority assists and advises the Chairperson in carrying out the functions of the Authority and provides a forum for discussing and coordinating programs, recommending priorities and direction, and reviewing program performance.

EXECUTIVE

Strategic Direction

Broad Outcome

To provide strategic planning, resource allocation and accountable management of the Authority, its operations and external relationships in pursuit of the control, care and development of the Great Barrier Reef Marine Park.

Strategic Objectives

1. Provide a clear vision and strategic targets which are understood by all staff and stakeholders.
2. Ensure compliance with externally imposed obligations.
3. To have the Authority recognised as a national and international leader in marine and coastal environment management.
4. To respond flexibly to the needs of the community and Government.

Performance Analysis

This was the first year of implementation of a Matrix Management Structure working to an accruals-based system and program of reporting. The development, prioritisation and integration of the work program were achieved through the Senior Management Team comprising the executive and directors.

The broad outcome, objectives and work program for each group form the basis of the subsequent sections of this Annual Report. The structure of the Senior Management Team, with the focus on the four critical issue groups and the definition of service provision groups, has provided a clearer focus on linkages

and obligations in relation to the major critical issues and overarching considerations facing the Great Barrier Reef Marine Park.

The Audit Committee of the Authority continues to provide a clear and objective focus on compliance with obligations relating to the organisation as a whole and to the accountability of the executive.

The Authority continues to be recognised nationally and internationally in relation to marine environment, natural resource and coral reef management. During the period 1997 to 1999 the Authority provided the Secretariat and Global Coordination functions for the International Coral Reef Initiative. The highlight of the Australian tenure of the Initiative was the convening of the International Tropical Marine Environment Management Symposium in Townsville in November 1998. This Symposium brought together managers, scientists and stakeholders from all of the Coral Reef Regions of the world who met to consider the management of coral reefs and related ecosystems. The focus of the Symposium was to report on the condition of these environments and the issues facing management, to identify the lessons learned from recent management experience and, through this, to identify priorities for the management of tropical marine ecosystems. At the conclusion of the Symposium, the Secretariat and Global Coordination functions were passed on to the Government of France for a two-year period.

At the seventh meeting of the United Nations Commission on Sustainable Development, the Authority made an invited presentation on the management of The Great Barrier Reef Marine Park as an example of multiple-use sustainable management of coral reef areas. This encompassed the sustainable use of natural resources for activities including fishing and tourism.

In recent years the Regional Marine Resource Advisory Committees (RMRACs) have been a major vehicle for the Authority's communications with the community. During the year the RMRAC Program was reviewed with a view to determining how the committees might focus more clearly on issues relevant to the performance and functions of the Authority, and to develop a more effective means of providing feedback to the Authority.

SECRETARIAT

Strategic Direction

Broad Outcome
To provide effective, professional support to the Authority, Great Barrier Reef Consultative Committee, Audit Committee and Reef Advisory Committees.

Strategic Objectives
1. Provide for regular meetings of GBRMPA, Audit Committee, GBRCC and other committees at which effective deliberation and decision-making can take place.
2. Report on business of meetings and disseminate information.
3. Carry out statutory and corporate obligations in regard to members of MPA, Audit Committee, GBRCC and others.
4. Administration of the general business of the GBRCC.
5. Management of secretariat operations.
6. Provision of advice.

Performance Analysis

The main initiative for the secretariat this year has been structuring and streamlining operations to accommodate complex meeting timetables that will ensue once the Reef Advisory Committees are fully functional. To reflect this, two new staff were appointed in 1999; one to a new position.

All regular meetings were supported and coordinated to plan.

LEGAL SERVICES

The Legal Services Unit provides and coordinates the provision of legal advice and services to the Authority, and assists with policy development. In addition, the Unit provides legal assistance to officers of the Queensland Parks and Wildlife Service and Queensland Boating and Fisheries Patrol relating to day-to-day management issues such as permit and enforcement matters. In general, the scope of the legal advice provided is very broad, covering such diverse areas as contracts, intellectual property, administrative law, international law, and native title.

The Unit is responsible for managing the preparation and amendment of legislation, and liaising with external service providers, including the Attorney-General's Department. The Unit coordinates all litigation in which the Authority is involved together with all Freedom of Information (FOI) requests. In addition, in-house training and training for our day-to-day management agencies is provided.

Strategic Direction

Broad Outcome

To provide effective legislation, commercial legal operations, and litigation support.

Strategic Objectives

1. Ensure timely and accurate legal advice is delivered to the Authority.
2. Ensure the Authority's interests in matters of litigation are adequately and competently represented.
3. Ensure the viability of the Authority's legislative program.
4. Ensure that proper commercial legal support is provided.
5. Ensure that legal systems are provided for the Authority's corporate governance.
6. Ensure that the Legal Services Unit efficiently manages itself and develops its staff.

Performance Analysis

Significant achievements for the 1998/99 financial year include:

- the conduct of both internal and external legal awareness training;
- provision of legal support for the Authority's involvement in appeals to the Administrative Appeals Tribunal and the Federal Court;
- effective legal support for branch operations and achievement of corporate objectives; and
- provision of comment in relation to a range of legislative matters including the development of the *Environmental Protection and Biodiversity Conservation Act 1994.*

Awareness

One of the objectives of the Legal Services Unit is to reduce the risk to the Authority of legal liability by the provision of timely, efficient and effective legal advice and training of Authority staff. Knowledge of Authority staff and the agencies responsible for the Authority's day-to-day management of the Marine Park with respect to potential legal pitfalls, has been improved by conducting identified and requested legal awareness training.

Budget

The Legal Unit has been affected by the steadily increasing demands on the budget available for the provision of external legal advice and services, and the employment of sufficient numbers of staff to ensure that legal assistance is consistently provided in an efficient and timely manner. The extended legislative responsibilities of the Authority, its increased involvement in litigation, the rising demands for internal legal advice, and the regular receipt of FOI requests has added to this pressure and has necessitated the ongoing requirement for a third staff member. The Authority's responsibilities under the notification provisions of the Native Title Act, which came into effect in late September 1998, have placed a further unanticipated and significant burden on the unit's resources.

Training

The staff of the Unit conducted extensive training on subjects such as enforcement, Marine Park legislation, boundary issues, and Native Title implications for the Marine Park. Better legal training of Marine Park inspectors will improve job performance and day-to-day management of the Marine Park through increased knowledge of enforcement techniques and legislation. Internal staff training facilitated the achievement of work programs in accordance with good administrative practice.

Litigation and Referrals

There were no decisions by the Administrative Appeals Tribunal (AAT) or comments by the Commonwealth Ombudsman relating to any permit decisions of the Authority in 1998/99. Two permit decisions were appealed to the AAT, and both are yet to be dealt with. The Authority was also involved in three actions in the Federal Court of Australia. Whilst all of these actions are still to be finally decided, the Authority has been successful in almost all interlocutory proceedings.

MINISTERIAL AND PARLIAMENTARY LIAISON

Strategic Direction

Broad Outcome

To ensure effective liaison and productive relationships with ministers, portfolio members and government agencies, and to provide effective, professional support to the Great Barrier Reef Ministerial Council.

Strategic Objectives

1. Facilitate coherent Commonwealth and State Government policies on matters impacting on the Great Barrier Reef.
2. To facilitate the delivery of Authority policies that concur with Government priorities and objectives.

Performance Analysis

During the year the Ministerial and Parliamentary Liaison Section coordinated the preparation of 193 ministerial briefing notes and submissions and 360 items of ministerial correspondence. The issues dealt with covered the full spectrum of Authority programs, projects and activities during the year. These included major roles in the development, formulation or coordination of Authority inputs to environmental impact assessments, policy development and coordination of input to the Senate Inquiry into the Hinchinbrook Channel on behalf of Environment Australia.

The Section also prepared briefing documents for Senate hearings in February, May and June and provided the secretariat for the meeting of the Great Barrier Reef Ministerial Council which was held in Brisbane on 17 May. The Section is the central point for all coordination requests from Environment Australia and Canberra-based Commonwealth Departments.

On 1 March, the office moved premises to the John Gorton Building to be co-located with Environment Australia.

MEDIA AND PUBLIC AFFAIRS

Strategic Direction

Broad Outcome
To provide effective and timely advice to the executive on all media matters pertaining to the Authority.

Strategic Objectives
1. To further develop a media and public relations program to ensure wide public recognition, understanding and support of the Authority, its programs and relationships with other organisations.
2. To continue development of communication vehicles that will embrace modern and effective tools for public communication.
3. To develop and implement staff communication training programs.

Performance Analysis

Media interest and subsequent support for the Authority during its restructure has been one of the positive outcomes of the media and public relations strategy.

Programs implemented during 1998/99 contributed to stabilising and enhancing the public recognition, understanding and continuing awareness of the changes embraced by the Authority in its management of the Marine Park.

Continued development of modern communication vehicles such as the Great Barrier Reef CD ROM and the publication 'Reef Management News' has proved to be effective and positive, fostering greater public understanding of the work of the Authority and the current future challenges for the organisation.

Ongoing development and implementation of communication strategies and advice to staff has resulted in a greater appreciation by staff of the advantages of incorporating public relations and media programs in management initiatives.

Key Issues

for the Great Barrier Reef Marine Park and World Heritage Area

In developing the Vision, Principles for Management and Corporate Values of the Authority, and with guidance from the 25-year Strategic Plan, a series of issues was identified as being crucial for the wellbeing of the Marine Park and World Heritage Area and for the management of its use.

These key issues are:

- Tourism and recreation
- Fisheries
- Water quality
- Coastal development and ports
- Shipping
- Conservation
- World Heritage status
- Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander relationships.

These are all reflected in the Authority's restructure towards issues-based management and are monitored and managed by the four Critical Issue Management Groups:

- Tourism and Recreation
- Fisheries
- Water Quality and Coastal Development
- Conservation, Biodiversity and World Heritage

Each of these Critical Issue Groups operates under a strategic work program with clear outcomes, objectives and strategies devised for each Group.

Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander relationships are considered to be of overarching significance with a bearing on all other issues and provision of services by the Authority. For this reason, the Indigenous Cultural Liaison Unit has been established and located within the Program Delivery service section.

TOURISM AND RECREATION

Tourism is the principal commercial use of the Marine Park, each year bringing over 1.5 million visitors to the area. Over 80 per cent of this tourism use is centred within the Cairns and Whitsundays areas. Management of tourism and recreation in these high-use areas of the Marine Park has focused on the development of new strategies to effectively manage cumulative impacts of use, and to minimise displacement effects on other users.

Strategic Direction

Broad Outcomes

To achieve minimal impact of tourism on the Marine Park and on users

To achieve understanding and appreciation of the natural, cultural and other values of the Great Barrier Reef World Heritage Area.

Strategic Objectives

1. Build a partnership with the marine tourism industry to protect and present the Great Barrier Reef Marine Park and to meet World Heritage Area obligations to world's best standard.
2. Develop a strategic and integrated framework for managing marine tourism use within the GBRMP including industry capacity and the allocation of resources.
3. Minimise the individual and cumulative impacts of tourism and recreation on the Great Barrier Reef whilst maintaining diversity of opportunities for users and minimising displacement of other users.

The Tourism and Recreation Critical Issue Group was established to develop and implement the Authority's new approach to managing tourism; an approach based on strategic policy and planning, direct management, self-regulation by the industry and active partnerships.

In response to increased demand for access to the Great Barrier Reef Marine Park for the purposes of tourism and recreation, the Authority is developing a more strategic, reef-wide framework for managing tourism impacts throughout the Marine Park which takes into account the cumulative impacts of tourism use.

Introduction of Plans of Management for the Cairns Area and the Whitsundays (in addition to the existing Zoning Plans) and simplified standard permits and policies such as those for cruise ships and 'superyachts' using the Marine Park all contribute to this strategic framework.

Integral to these policies and plans are tourism industry training and accreditation programs and the encouragement of self-regulation by the industry.

Crucial to the success of this management approach is the strengthening of working relationships with the marine tourism industry.

Performance Analysis

Management Planning

During 1998/99 the Tourism and Recreation Group was heavily involved in the implementation of the Cairns Area and the Whitsundays Plans of Management. Participation in the joint GBRMPA/Queensland Parks and Wildlife Service (QPWS) Implementation Working Group contributed to the coordination of both Commonwealth and State implementation.

Funds were made available to QPWS to support a consultancy to advise on a suitable integrated booking system for those tourism operators who are required to book to access planning areas and some sensitive locations.

Moorings Management and Allocation

This year the Authority has undertaken a consultancy and negotiated with stakeholders regarding the potential impacts of a range of moorings management approaches on the Authority, QPWS and stakeholders. The information has been crucial in developing a strategic approach to tourism management in the Great Barrier Reef Marine Park and was necessary in the short term to complement the mooring strategy in the Cairns Area Plan of Management. A related process has been developed for the allocation of the remaining moorings that were identified under the Cairns Plan.

Analysis of reef-wide issues is important for the long-term management of the Great Barrier Reef. The issue of access allocation will be considered in the context of the recent moorings management research.

Standard Permits

The Authority has worked with QPWS throughout the year towards the implementation of the Standard Permit System. At a workshop in July 1998, the Authority and representatives from the Association of Marine Park Tourism Operators agreed to the structure of this system. Four major tourism operation permits have now been defined — Tour Operation, Cruise Operation, Hire Operation and Craftless Operation. The conditions covering these types of operations have been incorporated into booklets that are attachments to permits issued and are an interim step towards a transparent standardisation of the permits system. The booklets are expected to result in a significant efficiency gain in the processing of routine applications.

The Authority and QPWS are beginning the process of placing the standard permits into legislation. The legislation will negate the need for a booklet of conditions and allow for the development of an interpretive manual for reef operators.

Reef-wide Policy

Cruise Ships and Superyachts

In response to an anticipated increase in the number of cruise ships and superyachts wishing to access the Marine Park in the lead up to the new millennium and the Sydney Olympics, policy relating to access of such vessels has

been well developed. This policy streamlines the permitting and booking systems for these large vessels and identifies additional anchorages for cruise ships, particularly within the Whitsundays.

A technical working group comprising representatives of the Authority, QPWS, Australian Marine Safety Authority, Queensland Transport, Royal Australian Navy Hydrographers, Reef Pilots and representatives of the cruise ship industry has been established to advise on anchorage sites throughout the reef. Based on discussions at a workshop in February 1999, and advice from the technical assessment group, the Authority proposed amendments to the Cairns Area and Whitsundays Plans of Management to better address cruise shipping issues in these areas.

The Authority will continue to work closely with QPWS, maritime safety authorities and stakeholders on the issue of cruise shipping—in the first instance to finalise the reef-wide policy and complete a risk analysis of the proposed Hamilton Cove cruise ship anchorage in the Whitsundays.

A superyacht steering committee, comprising representatives from the Authority, Queensland Transport, QPWS and stakeholders, is developing an interpretive guide for superyachts cruising the Great Barrier Reef Marine Park. The guide will include information on superyacht access, recreational opportunities and rules and regulations relating to operating in the Marine Park.

Reef-Wide Standard Mooring Buoys

Moorings have been used as a management tool in the Marine Park for many years to minimise impacts from anchoring damage. Regulations to provide a reef-wide standardised mooring buoyage system across the Great Barrier Reef Region are in the final stage of development. Standardising mooring buoys will assist in recognition and management of moorings.

Roving Operations

Management planning during the last few years has focused on the high-use and sensitive areas of the Marine Park. This focus has raised requirements for reef-wide regulations for the Roving Operator sector of the Marine Tourism Industry which offers tourist experiences throughout most Sections of the Marine Park.

Recognition of this niche market has identified a need for innovative management approaches for this sector.

Training and Education

Administration of the Great Barrier Reef Tourism Staff Certificate Course, introduced in 1996, has been maintained with the majority of trainers based in the Port Douglas, Cairns and Whitsundays areas. A number of the large operations and members of the dive industry have now incorporated the course into their training programs. A growing interest in the course by secondary school teachers has seen an expansion in the number of school students in years 11 and 12 who have completed the course.

In response to a course review in 1998, the Great Barrier Reef Manual has been updated and reformatted and a Trainer Guide prepared for distribution to trainers.

A program for the accreditation of bareboat (self-sail) operations in the Whitsundays, based on the adoption of operating standards proposed by the industry, has been established with significant industry involvement. A key component is the requirement for bareboat operations to employ appropriately qualified staff. To achieve this, a training course for bareboat staff has been developed jointly by the industry and the Authority, with input from Queensland Transport. The course has been delivered through the Barrier Reef Institute of TAFE (Whitsunday Campus). Since February 1999 over 120 bareboat staff have successfully completed the course and are eligible to apply for registration by the Authority as a bareboat briefer or radio operator. The Authority will review this accreditation program, in consultation with the broader tourism industry, with the view of using this as a model that may be applied in the future to other industry groups.

Consultation and Liaison with Stakeholders

Ensuring an effective partnership approach to management has required consultation and liaison on a wide range of Marine Park Management issues including methods of removing latent capacity, Plans of Management issues, management and allocation of moorings, standardised mooring buoyage, roving operation requirements, permit tenure, site planning, and accreditation programs.

This liaison has resulted in meetings with over 200 individual operators, the 11 individual regional industry associations and the regional and reef-wide peak Association of Marine Park Tourism Operators.

Industry Involvement

A Tourism and Recreation Reef Advisory Committee is being established to provide expert advice to the Authority on policy development relevant to the Tourism and Recreation Group's objectives.

The Cairns Marine Industry Group has been particularly successful in bringing together tourism, recreation and other users of the Reef to provide a forum to resolve issues of conflicting access to specific offshore sites in the Cairns Area.

The Whitsunday bareboat industry has been closely involved with the Authority in developing a process for adoption, monitoring and enforcement of agreed industry standards. Enforcement will be managed through a complaints process in which an elected Industry Standards Committee will play a key referral role linking the industry and the statutory bodies—the Authority, QPWS and Queensland Transport.

FISHERIES

Fishing is an important industry for the Queensland and Australian economies and relies on wise management of both the fisheries resources and the ecosystems on which these resources depend. The Authority recognises that fishing has significant ecological effects that can impact on World Heritage and nature conservation values. In conjunction with the Queensland Government fisheries management agencies, research organisations, commercial and recreational fishers, Indigenous and other community groups, the Authority seeks to ensure that all fishing activities in the Marine Park are ecologically sustainable.

Strategic Direction

Broad Outcome

To achieve sustainable fisheries that do not compromise the values of the Great Barrier Reef Marine Park and the Great Barrier Reef World Heritage Area.

Specific Objectives

1. Develop strategic policy for fisheries in the Great Barrier Reef Marine Park which:
   - clearly states GBRMPA's position on fisheries;
   - enables GBRMPA to audit the ecological sustainability of fishing in the Marine Park in accordance with ESD principles;
   - protects rare, threatened and endangered species and communities together with their critical habitats;
   - incorporates a comprehensive system of protected areas which are free from fishing use and are representative of the habitats within the GBRMP; and
   - is equitable across the community, meeting the traditional, social and cultural needs of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples and maintains a socially acceptable balance of access for all users of the GBRMP.
2. Achieve integration of fisheries and ecosystem management.
3. Develop an effective information base on the ecological and socio-economic impacts of fishing so that sound decisions on resource sustainability and access are made.
4. Develop fishing regulations that are both understood and accepted by Marine Park users and the community, and that are complied with.

Performance Analysis

GBRMPA's Position on Fisheries

The Authority has made its position on the need for whole-of-ecosystem fisheries management clear to the Queensland fisheries managers and stakeholder groups and is working with them to achieve outcomes that are demonstrably ecologically sustainable. To assist this process the Fisheries Critical Issue Group brings together staff with an extensive range of fisheries management expertise. The Group has members on Queensland's fisheries and aquaculture management and regional advisory committees and contributes to fisheries research and management through involvement in conferences, workshops and other internal and external working groups.

Ecologically Sustainable Fishing

Trawl Fishery

The CSIRO report of the five-year study on the effects of prawn trawling in the Far Northern Section of the Marine Park[1] evaluated, for the first time, the environmental impact of prawn trawling in the Marine Park. The report quantified the extent of damage to seabed communities and discussed the implications of recovery times. It also identified evidence of illegal trawling and confirmed earlier findings of the high level of discarded bycatch caused by prawn trawling operations.

In light of this report, the Authority has made clear to the Queensland Fisheries Management Authority (QFMA) that new management arrangements being developed for the trawl fishery must achieve ecologically sustainable fishing within the Marine Park. Critical factors that need to be addressed include the total level of fishing effort, protection of areas from trawling, mandatory use of turtle excluders and other bycatch reduction devices and agreement on species that trawlers may retain. In June 1999 GBRMPA contracted an expert independent review of the draft management plan for the trawl fishery to assess its ability to achieve the objective of ecologically sustainable fishing in accordance with world heritage values.

GBRMPA is continuing to work with the Queensland Government, the fishing industry and other stakeholders to develop an appropriate management plan for the trawl fishery. However the Minister has made it clear that harvesting of prawns and other fisheries must be demonstrably and ecologically sustainable in the Great Barrier Reef World Heritage Area.

Line Fishery

Phase two of research into the effects of line fishing on the Great Barrier Reef began in March 1999 with further measurement of the impact on fish stocks from opening previously closed reefs to fishing. The project also involves analysis of fish biology and life cycles, fishery socio-economics, and the development of sustainability indicators for target species, bycatch and the ecosystem. The study will provide Marine Park and fisheries managers with an evaluation of current and potential management strategies to ensure sustainable fishing. In the meantime the Authority has participated with Queensland fisheries managers and stakeholder groups in developing new measures to protect stocks in the reef line and deep-water rocky reef fisheries. These plans will be implemented in 1999/2000 following further community consultation and input.

Other Fisheries

In 1998/99 GBRMPA contributed to the development of QFMA public discussion papers for the review of fisheries management arrangements for marine aquarium fish, coral, sea cucumber, trochus, tropical rock lobster and inshore netting of finfish including whiting, barramundi, grunter, salmon, mangrove jack and mackerel. The Authority also responded to discussion papers on blue swimmer crabs and mud crabs. New management arrangements to ensure the ecological sustainability of these fisheries are expected to be finalised by the end of 2000. The Authority has also contributed to a draft management plan for the spanner crab fishery.

[1] Poiner, I.R. et. al. *Effects of Trawling in the Far Northern Section of the Great Barrier Reef : 1991 to 1996.* CSIRO Division of Marine Research Cleveland. Final report to GBRMPA June 1998.