Findings and Recommendations

6.1 Introduction

The purpose of this chapter is to put forward a range of specific funding proposals that would materially help in reducing and managing the impacts of coastal urban development on the Great Barrier Reef World Heritage Area. It does this by:

- identifying priority issue areas that have emerged from this investigation, and
- recommending specific projects that are aimed at addressing these priority areas.

In the recommendation of specific projects, the consultants have been mindful of:

- the need to identify projects that will have application across more than one local government area,
- the desirability of projects that are interdisciplinary in nature and/or cross traditional jurisdictional boundaries,
- the need for projects to provide tangible outcomes that will be of practical benefit, particularly to local governments, and
- the desirability of projects that build upon areas of local enthusiasm and interest and/or value-add to work already done.

The consultants have also attempted to identify projects that are consistent with the goals and objectives of Commonwealth environment policies.

6.2 Priority Issues

The following 12 issue areas have emerged as being of high priority:

- Greater awareness and integration of coastal values in the preparation and review of planning schemes.
- A greater emphasis on urban catchment management.
- Delivery of ESD principles at the local level via town planning schemes and development control processes.
- Improved information for local government on values, issues, policies and legislation.
- Improved procedures and mechanisms for the systematic and objective monitoring and assessment of the impacts of coastal urban development.
- Improved management of coastal State lands.
- The availability of specialised coastal planning and management expertise and training for local government
- Improved networking and communication between Commonwealth government, State government, local government, industry and community groups involved in issues of coastal planning and management.
- Mechanisms for the involvement of traditional owners.
- Development of best practice guidelines for use by local government and the development industry.
- Upgrading of levels of wastewater treatment.
- A review of issues associated with small boat harbours.

Specific projects which are recommended within each of these issue areas are listed in table 6.1. In identifying specific projects, preference has been given to projects for which there is already local enthusiasm and interest and where there is the capacity to build upon, and add value to, work which is already under way. There is also an emphasis on projects which provide information to and raise awareness amongst coastal local governments. Most importantly, all the projects are practical, workable and aimed at achieving improved outcomes across jurisdictional boundaries.

It should be noted that several other important issues were raised during the course of this project. However, they have not been included as 'priority issues' in this report because they are already receiving considerable attention under existing programs. Such issues include:

- acid sulphate soils,
- matters relating to the storage of hazardous substances which are being addressed under the Environmental Protection Act,
- the impacts of boat moorings,
- the environmental management of ports, and
- Environmental Management Systems in general.