



Australian Government

Great Barrier Reef  
Marine Park Authority

## Interesting facts

Fact Sheet No.1  
December 2005



### Did you know?

#### The Great Barrier Reef Marine Park:

- Is the largest coral reef system in the world
- Covers 344 000km<sup>2</sup> in area
- Is approximately 2300 kilometres in length
- Extends from the northern tip of Queensland south to just north of Bundaberg
- Is between 60 kilometres and 250 kilometres in width
- Has an average depth of water of 35 metres in the Great Barrier Reef lagoon
- Is one of the largest marine protected areas in the world (about 344 000km<sup>2</sup>)

- Includes the air above and the earth beneath the sea
- Was created in 1975 under legislation called the *Great Barrier Reef Marine Park Act 1975*.

#### This unique and diverse marine ecosystem comprises about:

- 2900 reefs
- 600 continental islands
- 300 coral cays.

Only six percent of the Great Barrier Reef Marine Park consists of coral reefs. The rest is made up of seagrass, mangroves, sand, algal and sponge gardens, inter-reefal communities and other habitats.

#### It is home to approximately:

- 1500 species of fish
- 360 species of hard coral
- One third of the world's soft corals
- 5000 - 8000 species of molluscs (eg. shells)
- 400 - 500 species of marine algae

- 600 species of echinoderm (eg. starfish, sea urchins)
- 17 species of sea snakes
- 22 species of seabirds and 32 species of shorebirds that live and breed on the islands
- 13 000 dugong (Australia's entire dugong population is about 90 000)
- 6 species of marine turtles, all listed as threatened
- 30 species of cetaceans (whales and dolphins).

### World Heritage Area on our doorstep

#### The Great Barrier Reef World Heritage Area:

- Is the largest World Heritage Area in the world
- Was inscribed on the World Heritage List on 26 October 1981
- Is 348 000km<sup>2</sup> in size. Over 99 percent of the World Heritage Area falls within the boundaries of the Great Barrier Reef Marine Park.



our great barrier reef  
let's keep it great



## Managing the Marine Park

### The Great Barrier Reef Marine Park Authority:

- Was established in 1976 under the *Great Barrier Reef Marine Park Act 1975* as a Commonwealth statutory authority
- Is the lead agency for Great Barrier Reef World Heritage Area issues
- Is the principal adviser to the Commonwealth Government on the care and development of the Great Barrier Reef Marine Park.

**The Great Barrier Reef Marine Park Authority is committed to ensuring all people can continue to enjoy this natural wonder of the world for future generations.**

The Great Barrier Reef Marine Park 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.*

To meet this goal, the Great Barrier Reef Marine Park Authority has identified four critical issues:

- Conservation, Heritage and Indigenous Partnerships
- Tourism and Recreation

- Water Quality and Coastal Development
- Fisheries.

These issues are managed by individual groups set up by the Great Barrier Reef Marine Park Authority.

### Protecting the Great Barrier Reef Marine Park:

One of the tools for protecting marine plants and animals, as well as managing the activities that occur in the Marine Park, is zoning. Zoning separates activities that may conflict with each other, such as commercial fishing and tourism.

On 1 July 2004, a new Zoning Plan came into effect for the Great Barrier Reef Marine Park. While protection across the entire Marine Park was improved, the highly protected zones (Green and Pink Zones) increased from 4.5 percent of the Marine Park to over 33 percent of the Marine Park.

More information about zoning can be found in '*An introduction to using our Great Barrier Reef Marine Park*' booklet or on the Great Barrier Reef Marine Park Authority's website.

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## For Further Information

### Visit the Great Barrier Reef Marine Park Authority's websites:

[www.gbrmpa.gov.au](http://www.gbrmpa.gov.au)  
[www.reefed.edu.au](http://www.reefed.edu.au)  
[www.reefhq.com.au](http://www.reefhq.com.au)

### Visit or write to us:

2-68 Flinders Street  
PO Box 1379 Townsville Qld 4810  
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Phone (07) 4750 0700  
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**Send an email:** [info@gbrmpa.gov.au](mailto:info@gbrmpa.gov.au)

### Web links

For more interesting information about the Great Barrier Reef visit:

Australian Institute of Marine Science: [www.aims.gov.au](http://www.aims.gov.au)

CRC Reef Research Centre: [www.reef.crc.org.au](http://www.reef.crc.org.au)

Department of the Environment and Heritage: [www.deh.gov.au](http://www.deh.gov.au)

Queensland Environmental Protection Agency: [www.epa.qld.gov.au](http://www.epa.qld.gov.au)