

Foreword

The Great Barrier Reef World Heritage Area is the largest in the world and one of just a few World Heritage areas which meets all four natural World Heritage criteria. It was inscribed on the World Heritage List in 1981. Although originally seen as a prize or badge of honour, World Heritage Status is now increasingly being seen as an international obligation to maintain an area of world importance in a condition which will enable future generations to appreciate its unique features. An important component of our responsibilities under the World Heritage Convention is to report at intervals on the status of the World Heritage Areas under our stewardship. Consequently, the Great Barrier Reef Marine Park Authority, in conjunction with other institutions with interests in research and management of the Great Barrier Reef, have undertaken to produce the first State of the Great Barrier Reef World Heritage Area Report in 1997. These workshop proceedings, which summarise our current technical knowledge on a wide range of topics, form a core part of this process of status reporting.

I would like to thank all of the authors of the papers in these proceedings for taking the time to summarise their knowledge and understanding of their specific areas and commend them on the quality of the final product. This document, together with the related summaries and reports associated with the State of the Reef program will, I am sure, be considered a valuable source of information on the status of the Great Barrier Reef and a guide to where we should be going in the future in order to ensure the Great Barrier Reef World Heritage Area keeps its status as the premier natural World Heritage Area.



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