

Technical Information Sheet #12

>> Representative Areas Program background and history

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The Great Barrier Reef Marine Park Authority is implementing the Representative Areas Program to help ensure better protection of the Marine Park's biodiversity. This will involve a review of the existing zoning throughout the Marine Park. This information sheet is part of a package of materials that help explain various technical elements of the Representative Areas Program and the zoning review.

Our environmental commitments

The two most relevant Commonwealth Acts for the Great Barrier Reef Marine Park and the Great Barrier Reef World Heritage Area respectively are:

The Great Barrier Reef Marine Park Act 1975

The object of this Commonwealth Act is to make provision for and in relation to the establishment, control, care and development of a marine park in the Great Barrier Reef Region. In preparing a zoning plan, s. 32(7) of the Act requires that regard shall be given to the following:

- a) The conservation of the Great Barrier Reef;
- b) The regulation of the use of the Marine Park so as to protect the Great Barrier Reef while allowing reasonable use;
- c) The regulation of activities that exploit the resources of the Region so as to minimise the effect of those activities on the Great Barrier Reef;
- d) The reservation of some areas of the Great Barrier Reef for its appreciation and enjoyment by the public; and
- e) The preservation of some areas of the Great Barrier Reef in its natural state undisturbed by man except for the purposes of scientific research.

The Environment Protection and Biodiversity Conservation Act 1999

The objects of this Commonwealth Act include:

- a) to provide for the protection of the environment, especially those aspects that are matters of national environmental significance⁷; and
- b) to promote ecologically sustainable development through the conservation and ecologically sustainable use of natural resources; and
- c) to promote the conservation of biodiversity; and

National commitments

The Representative Areas Program will contribute towards a number of national commitments, including:

- Australia's Oceans Policy (1998) which advocates implementation of a representative areas network;
- National Strategy for Conservation of Australia's Biological Diversity (1996);
- Australian and New Zealand Environment and Conservation Council's 'Strategic Plan of Action for establishing the national representative system of marine protected areas' (1999);
- Intergovernmental Agreement on the Environment (1992); and
- National Strategy for Ecologically Sustainable Development (1992).

The Representative Areas Program will also contribute to several strategies and objectives within the *25-Year Strategic Plan for the Great Barrier Reef World Heritage Area* (1994), which was signed by about 60 stakeholder representatives.

⁷ Matters of 'national environmental significance' include World Heritage properties; Ramsar wetlands; nationally threatened animal and plant species and ecological communities; internationally protected migratory species; and Commonwealth marine areas.

International commitments

A number of conventions signed by Australia, including those listed below, refer to the need to protect biodiversity:

- Convention on Biological Diversity (CBD 1992);
- World Heritage Convention (1975);
- Convention on International Trade in Endangered Species of Wild Fauna and Flora (CITES 1973);
- Convention on the Conservation of Nature in the South Pacific (APIA 1976);
- Convention on Conservation of Migratory Species of Wild Animals (1979); and
- Convention on the Law of the Sea (1982)

GBRMPA's Representative Areas Program will help Australia further fulfil its international commitments for the protection of biodiversity.

There is also widespread political support for the Representative Areas Program:

The Coalition Government's commitment:

'During the next parliament, a Coalition government will ... progress the representative areas process, ensuring that all habitat types in the Great Barrier Reef are adequately protected;.....' (*'A Better Environment'*, Coalition Platform, October 2001)

Other political parties:

'Labor willsupport continuation of the Representative Areas program to ensure all habitats types are adequately protected...' (Labor election platform, October 2001)

'Democrats... (support) the expansion of highly protected areas to cover at least 50% of the Marine Park' (Democrats election platform, October 2001)

Queensland Government:

'The State Government will support the Great Barrier Reef Marine Park representative areas program to increase protection of biodiversity by increasing the number of habitats included in the no-take zones. It will develop and implement a strategy to protect marine biodiversity and threatened species generally including extending protection under the Nature Conservation Act.' (*'Valuing the environment'*; State Budget 2001-02).

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