

FOREWORD

This report is a significant contribution to scientific literature about the movement and migration of dugongs within the Great Barrier Reef. Its results add to information derived from aerial surveys and sighting records gathered over many years. It also provides valuable information on how dugongs use, and move between, different habitats in the Hinchinbrook Region. The report also provides information on use of the Region by species such as dolphins, turtles and manta rays, and on patterns of vessel use.

The Great Barrier Reef Marine Park Authority (GBRMPA) supports many of the Report's recommendations. All of the recommendations will be considered and included where practicable in management plans for the Hinchinbrook Region that are now being prepared. These plans are being developed in an integrated manner by Commonwealth and Queensland Government agencies in consultation with stakeholders such as those represented in the Hinchinbrook Local Management Advisory Committee (LMAC).

Following are the Authority's comments on the Report's recommendations.

Recommendation	GBRMPA comment
<p>1. Develop an education and awareness program to:</p> <p>(i) foster an appreciation by boaters of the significance of the Hinchinbrook Dugong Protection Area (DPA), and the threats posed to dugongs by boats;</p> <p>(ii) encourage boaters to travel slowly and cautiously in shallow areas, or areas known to support seagrass or dugongs; to use marked channels where possible; and to comply with boating regulations.</p>	<p>1. Supported and implemented. The Authority has published brochures on the Hinchinbrook DPA and updated DPA publications to include voluntary transit lanes for boaters to use in the Hinchinbrook region. The Authority has also produced leaflets and stickers for boaters to encourage them to slow down in DPAs and to raise their awareness of dugong conservation. Dugong information kits have been published and a website dealing with dugong issues has been added to the GBRMPA corporate site. Dugong awareness and DPA signage have been installed at boat ramps. In Hinchinbrook, this signage directs boaters to use voluntary transit lanes. The Authority is currently working with the Hinchinbrook LMAC to prepare a detailed brochure for the Hinchinbrook area specifically on dugong and other conservation issues.</p>
<p>2. Establish five Boating Management Areas (BMAs) within the Hinchinbrook Dugong Protection Area for the regulation of boating activity.</p>	<p>2. Not supported in the recommended form, however some aspects are supported and are being implemented. The recommended BMAs are complex, difficult to understand and vessel use of them would be difficult to monitor. The proposed BMA arrangements may also raise significant safety issues. However management agencies have established voluntary vessel transit lanes and promoted their use. The placement of these lanes generally follows the boundaries separating each of the BMAs proposed in this report to minimise risks to dugongs. Where the lanes differ from the boundaries in the report, it is usually for human and boating safety reasons. Similarly, the voluntary speed limits in the transit lanes generally conform to those recommended in the report.</p> <p>The boating management arrangements now implemented in the Region are based upon the results and concepts of this report, and have been developed in consultation with a broad range of stakeholders. The success of the voluntary transit lanes in channeling vessel use will be monitored and altered if required.</p> <p>The Great Barrier Reef Ministerial Council has asked the</p>

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<p>3. Install channel markers in the northern end of Hinchinbrook Channel to encourage boaters to use a single corridor down the channel.</p> <p>4. Require boat-based commercial dugong watching to operate under a permit system.</p> <p>5. Operators of commercial passenger craft should be required, as a condition of their permit, to report suspected boat strikes to Queensland Environmental Protection Agency and GBRMPA. Passengers should also be actively encouraged to report suspected strikes.</p> <p>6. The boat traffic management plan should be reviewed at set intervals.</p> <p><u>Additional recommendation:</u> In the executive summary and conclusions, the author recommends that the Hinchinbrook DPA 'A' be extended south to encompass the existing DPA 'B' zone off Lucinda, and that the Cleveland Bay DPA 'A' be extended to encompass the Bowling Green Bay DPA 'B' zone.</p>	<p>Queensland Parks and Wildlife Service (QPWS) to cease the issuing of permits for speed ski races and boat races or associated practices where speeds of 40 knots will be exceeded. The Ministerial Council has also asked the Qld Government to restrict boat speeds to 40 knots, including boat races, in the Hinchinbrook region.</p> <p>As Hinchinbrook Channel is in Queensland State waters, management arrangements for cruise ships are being developed by the State Government in consultation with the Authority.</p> <p>3. Supported and implemented. In conjunction with the Queensland Department of Transport, navigational aids and channel markers identifying the transit lanes have been installed in the Hinchinbrook Channel and Missionary Bay to encourage boaters to use the lanes.</p> <p>4. In mid-2000 the Authority granted a permit for commercial dugong watching in the Hinchinbrook Region of the Great Barrier Reef Marine Park. The Authority has decided to use the currently permitted activity as a pilot scheme and to seek a report on the activities of the permittee prior to consideration of any further permit applications.</p> <p>5. Supported for specific dugong watching permits. For operators issued with dugong watching permits, it is proposed that mandatory reporting of boat strikes be a condition of the permit. For general commercial boaters, the intent of the recommendation will be achieved through the general public awareness program.</p> <p>6. Supported. Management agencies will be seeking a report from the monitoring program assessing boater compliance with voluntary transit lanes after two years of operation.</p> <p><u>Additional recommendation:</u> Noted but not supported at present. The success or otherwise of Dugong Protection Areas (DPAs) are periodically assessed by the Great Barrier Reef Ministerial Council.</p>



Hon Virginia Chadwick
Chair