

The Great Barrier Reef Marine Park Authority

REPRESENTATIVE AREAS PROGRAM



MASSIVE CONSULTATION UNDERTAKEN

The Great Barrier Reef Marine Park Authority (GBRMPA) released the Draft Zoning Plan (DZP) for the Great Barrier Reef Marine Park (Marine Park) for public comment from 2 June - 4 August 2003. The DZP was developed using the best available information from scientists, government agencies, local communities, industry and other organisations, together with information from the 10,190 submissions received during the first community consultation phase.

The second formal phase of community participation was one of the largest examples of public involvement in any environmental issue in Australia's history:

- Over 10 000 packages of information, more than 50 000 submission forms, and over 76 000 draft zoning maps were distributed throughout Australia;
- Staff from the GBRMPA attended over 350 meetings with thousands of people including local communities, conservation groups, commercial and recreational fishing organisations, Traditional Owners, tourism operators, local councils and state and federal politicians;
- There were over 35 000 'hits' on the GBRMPA website from across Australia and the world; and
- RAP media coverage included:
 - More than 60 radio and TV news spots;
 - More than 450 newspaper items; and
 - 88 newspaper advertisements.

Community Information Program

Information sessions were held in coastal communities from Cape York to Bundaberg and were an integral part of the second formal phase of community consultation. GBRMPA staff were able to help people with submissions and to share information. The sessions were well-attended and provided community members with an opportunity to find out more about the RAP and the DZP.

Record number of submissions

There is no doubt that the people of Australia hold the Great Barrier Reef close to their hearts. The GBRMPA received over 21 300 submissions on the DZP, more than double the submissions received during the first formal stage of community consultation in 2002.

Origin of Submissions

Submissions on the RAP came from all over Australia and overseas. The table below shows a break down of where the record number of submissions originated.

| ORIGIN | NUMBER OF SUBMISSIONS |
|--|-----------------------|
| Queensland | 16 050 |
| New South Wales/ACT | 1 371 |
| Victoria | 683 |
| Western Australia | 324 |
| South Australia | 185 |
| Tasmania | 66 |
| Northern Territory | 33 |
| Overseas | 170 |
| Other - did not complete address details or email. | 2 418 |
| TOTAL | 21 300 |

Many submissions contained detailed information about changes to the DZP that individuals and/or organisations would like to see, as well as support for many of the proposed Green Zones. In many instances communities worked together to develop workable alternatives to those proposed in the DZP.

The GBRMPA has now assessed all the submissions and has used the information to revise the DZP, taking into account the many different priorities of stakeholders. No one stakeholder should assume that their views alone, or those of any other group or individual, will be totally reflected in the final Zoning Plan.

Submission analysis

A team of 18 officers from the GBRMPA were involved in the comprehensive analysis of the 21,300 public submissions in a three-stage process.

During the first stage, contact details from each submission were recorded in a database, a unique identifying number assigned, and an acknowledgement card sent to the person or organisation that made the submission.

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In the second stage, all submissions were individually scanned and loaded into the submissions database. This was an enormous task, as over 18,000 hard copy submissions were received, many with maps attached.

The third stage was the most comprehensive: all the submissions were read and analysed. Submissions were sorted into the database according to the issues or zones to which they referred, enabling officers to search the database for specific issues, user groups or particular zones. Individual scanned submissions and /or all other submissions with similar views could then be viewed quickly.

Regulatory Impact Statement

Officers from the Bureau of Resource Sciences and the Bureau of Tourism Research have undertaken socio-economic assessments in conjunction with the GBRMPA to quantify the range of benefits and costs of the revised Zoning Plan, for all affected parties. These socio-economic assessments will form the basis of a Regulatory Impact Statement (RIS) that the GBRMPA is required to prepare and submit to Parliament.

SCIENTISTS SUPPORT RAP

A group of 15 leading marine scientists have recently thrown their weight behind RAP. They have agreed that a network of Green Zones throughout the Marine Park will provide 'insurance' that helps maintain the resilience of the GBR. That is, Green Zones are likely to help the GBR to recover after disturbance and restore or maintain local populations of many plants and animals, including fish. For more information go to: <http://www.barrierreef.org/whatsnew/scicom.cfm>

GREEN ZONES CRUCIAL FOR A HEALTHY AND PRODUCTIVE GBR

An international scientific team, including scientists from James Cook University, recently published the cover article in the prestigious *Science*¹ magazine. The article states there are no pristine coral reefs left worldwide, and what remains is highly vulnerable to bleaching due to global climate change. The GBR is not immune to the pressures affecting coral reefs worldwide. The Science article stresses 'no-take' areas (Green Zones) must be vastly expanded to support reef resilience and to provide a safe place for the breeding of the fish and other creatures that are crucial to coral reef ecosystems.

A healthy GBR is worth billions!

An independent study into the value of the GBR has confirmed that the Australian icon is the most valuable coral reef in the world. The study, published in *Ambio*² in August 2003 showed that there are very high benefits associated with protecting healthy intact coral reef systems.

¹ Hughes, TP, Baird, AH, Bellwood, DR, Card, M, Connolly, SR, Folke, C, Grosberg, O, Hoegh-Gulberg, O, Jackson, JBC, Kleypas, J, Lough, JM, Marshall, P, Nystrom, M, Palumbi, SR, Pandolfi, JM, Rosen, B, Roughgarden, J (2003) Climate Change, Human Impacts and the Resilience of Coral Reefs. *Science* Vol 301, August 2003.

² Carr, L, and Mendelsohn (2003) Valuing Coral Reef: A Travel Cost Analysis of the Great Barrier Reef. *Ambio*. Vol 32 No 5 August 2003.

WHERE TO FROM HERE?

The revised Zoning Plan for the Marine Park and the RIS are due to be presented to the Marine Park Authority Board and to the Federal Minister for the Environment and Heritage, Dr David Kemp, by the end of the year.

Once Minister Kemp has tabled the revised Zoning Plan and RIS in the Federal Parliament, they become public documents. They will be available on the GBRMPA website, after they are tabled by the Minister, but will still be subject to Parliamentary approval. If neither House of Parliament, during 15 sitting days, passes a disallowance motion about the plan, the Minister will determine a date for the Zoning Plan to come into effect, together with the Regulations that give effect to the Zoning Plan.

FOR MORE RAP INFORMATION

To find out more information about the rezoning process, visit www.gbrmpa.gov.au and follow the links to the RAP website or contact the GBRMPA on freecall 1800 990 177 or email: info@gbrmpa.gov.au