



Australian Government

STATE PARTY REPORT
ON THE STATE OF CONSERVATION
OF THE
GREAT BARRIER REEF WORLD HERITAGE AREA
(AUSTRALIA)

PROPERTY ID N154

IN RESPONSE TO
THE WORLD HERITAGE COMMITTEE DECISION
WHC 36 COM 7B.8

FOR SUBMISSION BY
1 FEBRUARY 2013

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- Queensland Government Department of the Premier and Cabinet
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- Queensland Government Department of Transport and Main Roads

Key acronyms

AIMS	Australian Institute of Marine Science
ANHAT	Australian Natural Heritage Assessment Tool
ANSDB	Australian National Shipwreck Database
AMSA	Australian Maritime Safety Authority
CITES	Convention on International Trade in Endangered Species
CSIRO	Commonwealth Scientific and Industrial Research Organisation
DAFF	Department of Agriculture, Fisheries and Forestry
DSEWPaC	Department of Sustainability, Environment, Water, Population and Communities
EIS	Environmental Impact Statement
EPBC Act	<i>Environment Protection and Biodiversity Conservation Act 1999</i>
FRDC	Fisheries Research and Development Corporation
GBR	Great Barrier Reef
GBRMP Act	<i>Great Barrier Reef Marine Park Act 1975</i>
GBRMPA	Great Barrier Reef Marine Park Authority
GBRWHA	Great Barrier Reef World Heritage Area
ICRI	International Coral Reef Initiative
ILUA	Indigenous Land Use Agreement
MARPOL	International Convention for the Prevention of Pollution from Ships
IMO	International Maritime Organisation
IUCN	International Union for Conservation of Nature
LNG	Liquefied Natural Gas
Marine parks	The (Commonwealth) Great Barrier Reef Marine Park and the (Queensland) Great Barrier Reef Coast Marine Park are managed in a complementary way and collectively termed 'marine parks'
NERP	National Environmental Research Program
NESMP	North-East Shipping Management Plan
NPS	National Ports Strategy
OUV	Outstanding Universal Value
QPWS	Queensland Parks and Wildlife Service
SoOUV	Statement of Outstanding Universal Value
State Party	Australian Government
TUMRA	Traditional use of marine resources agreements
Queensland	The state of Queensland

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Executive Summary

The State Party welcomes this opportunity to provide a progress report to the World Heritage Committee. The Australian and Queensland governments have initiated a number of projects and activities to ensure that Australia responds in full to the Committee's requests made in 2012. Significant components of work are in progress and will be completed in accordance with the Committee's requested timeframe for response.

The Great Barrier Reef (GBR) is the largest coral reef ecosystem on earth. It is one of the best known and most comprehensively managed marine areas in the world, and an iconic natural site much-loved by Australians. The GBR and its adjoining catchments play a critical role in supporting a range of industries including tourism, agriculture, fishing, mining and shipping. At the same time, the management and protection of the GBR continues to be an ongoing priority for the Australian and Queensland governments which both have direct legislative responsibilities within the Great Barrier Reef World Heritage Area (GBRWHA).

As outlined in the previous State Party Report (2012), management of the GBWRHA is complex and requires consideration of reasonable human use balanced with the need to maintain the area's natural and cultural integrity. A variety of management strategies protect the GBWRHA including a comprehensive multiple-use zoning system that provides protection for the range of biodiversity, while allowing a variety of other sustainable uses to occur. This is implemented through the *Great Barrier Reef Marine Park Zoning Plan 2003* which is matched by complementary Queensland legislation in the adjoining State waters.

Complementary to the State Party's direct efforts to protect the GBR, it should be noted that the Australian Government has recently announced a new Coral Sea Commonwealth Marine Reserve, which covers 989 842 square kilometres and abuts the entire eastern edge of the GBWRHA. Combined, the Coral Sea marine reserve and the GBWRHA form one of the largest marine protected areas in the world, covering 1.3 million square kilometres. The declaration of a Coral Sea marine reserve offers substantial additional protection for the integrity of the GBWRHA.

Like all coral reefs around the world, over time the GBR experiences natural fluctuations in its health. The GBR is generally resilient to natural disturbance, such as from typical storm events, but only if its normal life-support systems are intact and functioning. Corals are adapted to live in a narrow temperature range and in relatively clear, low nutrient waters. Many of the factors that impact on the GBR occur naturally, including weather events such as storms and cyclones; coral bleaching; run-off of fresh water from land to sea following heavy rainfall; and predators, such as the crown-of-thorns starfish. Given sufficient time, coral reefs have shown they will recover from such natural disturbances.

A key challenge facing the GBR is that climate change and other pressures are likely to amplify these natural fluctuations, although the magnitude of these effects is subject to considerable uncertainty. Climate change is predicted to increase the intensity and frequency of extreme weather events, such as cyclones and storms. Extreme weather events can cause very severe

damage and reduce the time available for the reef to recover. Absorption by the oceans of carbon dioxide from the atmosphere is leading to ocean acidification, which is also likely to have a significant impact on the long-term health of the property.

Additional human-induced pressures on the GBR, including land-clearing, fertiliser use and other changes in adjoining catchments, have resulted in increased run-off carrying higher levels of nutrients and sediments. Chemicals that have entered the GBR over previous decades also continue to have an impact. There is strong evidence that nutrient-rich flood waters arising from the extreme weather events of 2009 to 2011 have created conditions that result in increased numbers of the crown-of-thorns starfish, which preys on coral.

Recent research published by the Australian Institute of Marine Science observed a 50 per cent reduction in hard coral cover across the GBR since 1985. This loss was attributed to the impacts of damage from cyclones and storms, coral predation by crown-of-thorns starfish and coral bleaching.¹ However, past experience shows that the reef has the capacity to recover if the right conditions are in place.

In response to these challenges, over the last several years, the State Party has introduced a number of important initiatives and has invested considerable resources to address these pressures and improve the reef's resilience, including:

- implementing the Great Barrier Reef Water Quality Protection Plan which is delivering ongoing improvements in catchment management which have reduced the impacts of run-off on the GBR
- undertaking research and management activities to combat crown-of-thorns starfish, including more than \$3.13 million for direct control measures, and \$400 000 for research to improve understanding of water quality issues and to develop innovative responses
- implementing a comprehensive zoning plan for the marine park which protects the biodiversity of the area from the direct impacts of use of the GBR Marine Park's resources
- establishing the new Coral Sea Commonwealth Marine Reserve, which forms an important contiguous marine protected area adjoining the seaward boundary of the GBRWHA
- introducing a carbon price which creates a powerful incentive for all businesses to cut their pollution by investing in clean technology or finding more efficient ways of operating and to promote carbon storage through better land management.

In addition, both the Australian and Queensland governments have committed to continuing efforts to ensure the quality of water entering the reef from adjacent catchments has no detrimental effect on the health and resilience of the GBR.

Chapter one of this State Party Report highlights the substantial progress made in addressing the recommendations of the World Heritage Committee and reactive monitoring mission. Australia is confident that the additional steps being taken will contribute to further improvement, building on the strong record of management of the property and continuing a long legacy of adaptive management and good stewardship.

¹ De'ath et al, 'The 27-year decline of coral cover on the Great Barrier Reef and its causes,' *Proceedings of the National Association of Science of the United States of America*, October 1, 2012.

To maintain the highest management standards into the future, the Australian Government is undertaking a strategic assessment of the GBRWHA and adjacent coastal zone with the Queensland Government and the Great Barrier Reef Marine Park Authority (GBRMPA). This is by far the largest and most comprehensive and complex strategic assessment undertaken in Australia and one of the most significant undertaken world-wide, and will address key issues confronting the GBR, particularly in relation to coastal development.

The Australian Government is committed to ensuring all decisions regarding coastal development in the GBR region will preserve the integrity of the GBRWHA and is working to ensure the Outstanding Universal Value of the GBRWHA is more clearly defined and a central element within protection and management systems for the property. The strategic assessment will identify, plan for and manage existing and emerging risks to ensure that the unique values of the GBR are protected for future generations.

Australia is pleased that the World Heritage Committee's decision of June 2012 reflects the Committee's awareness that management of the GBRWHA is international best practice in many areas. The management and protection of GBR continues to be an ongoing priority for the Australian and Queensland governments, both of whom are committed to adapting and improving management to meet future challenges.

Introduction

Purpose of this report

This State Party Report has been prepared in response to the World Heritage Committee's June 2012 Decision 36 COM 7B.8.

The format stipulated by the World Heritage Centre for preparing a State Party report requires the following:

1. A response from the State Party to the World Heritage Committee's decision, paragraph by paragraph. (This includes responses to all recommendations of the reactive monitoring mission report.)
2. Other current conservation issues identified by the State Party.
3. In conformity with paragraph 172 of the *Operational Guidelines for the Implementation of the World Heritage Convention*, to inform the Committee of any intention 'to undertake or to authorise ... major restorations or new constructions which may affect the Outstanding Universal Value' of the Great Barrier Reef.

This State Party Report (2013) is a progress report that builds on the information provided in the previous State Party Report (2012).

Outline

Chapter 1 outlines the State Party's response to each paragraph of the World Heritage Committee's decision and the recommendations from the reactive monitoring mission report.

Chapter 2 provides an update and summary since the last State Party Report of the current conservation issues and adaptive management initiatives which collectively protect the property.

Chapter 3 identifies proposed developments currently being assessed under Australia's *Environment Protection and Biodiversity Conservation Act 1999* (EPBC Act) for potential impacts on the world heritage values of the GBRWHA, both within and outside the boundary of the property. It also provides links to further documentation.

Chapter 1—Response to the World Heritage Committee’s decision and mission report recommendations

1.1 World Heritage Committee Decision 36 COM 7B.8

Following World Heritage Committee Decision 35 COM 7B.9 in June 2011, Australia invited a joint World Heritage Centre/International Union for Conservation of Nature monitoring mission to the GBRWHA from 6–14 March 2012. The mission visited locations along the Queensland coast and met with Traditional Owners and other key stakeholders including environmental groups, local governments, business and industry representatives in Gladstone, Mackay, Townsville and Cairns.

Based on the report of the reactive monitoring mission and information provided by the State Party in response to the Committee’s previous decision, a draft state of conservation report on the GBRWHA was prepared by the World Heritage Centre with advice from the IUCN for decision at the World Heritage Committee meeting in late June 2012. That draft decision was adopted by the World Heritage Committee without amendment.

In Decision 36 COM 7B.8 of 2012, the Committee made nine recommendations (Appendix 1) and also requested the State Party address the further 15 recommendations in the mission report (Appendix 2).

In this chapter, a response is provided to each of the World Heritage Committee’s decision paragraphs, including to the recommendations of the reactive monitoring mission. Where the Committee’s decision and the mission’s recommendations overlap, the State Party’s response is detailed under the Committee’s decision paragraphs. Where the mission recommendations are not fully encompassed within the decision, more detail is provided in the mission recommendations. Table 1 provides a visual summary of the relationship between the Committee’s decision paragraphs and the mission recommendations.

Table 1: Matrix of Decision Paragraphs against Mission Recommendations

	Decision Paragraphs—from WHC 36COM 7B.8								
	Para 3	Para 4	Para 5	Para 6	Para 7	Para 8	Para 9	Para 11	
Mission Report Recommendations	REC1	✓	✓						
	REC2		✓	✓		✓			
	REC3		✓					✓	
	REC4		✓	✓				✓	
	REC5		✓		✓				
	REC6		✓			✓			✓
	REC7		✓			✓	✓		
	REC8		✓				✓		
	REC9		✓			✓			
	REC10		✓			✓	✓		
	REC11		✓						
	REC12	✓	✓				✓		
	REC13		✓					✓	
	REC14		✓						
	REC15		✓						

1.2 State Party response to World Heritage Committee decision

Paragraph 3: Request to increase financial investment and sustain positive trends beyond 2013

“Welcomes the initial positive results of the Reef Plan and associated measures to address major long-term impacts on the property from poor water quality, and requests the State Party, in collaboration with its partners, to maintain, and increase where necessary financial investment and sustain the positive trend beyond 2013:”

The State Party recognises the crucial importance of water quality to the health of the GBR. The GBR Outlook Report 2009 identified catchment runoff as one of the key threats to the environmental values of the property. A recent report from the Australian Institute of Marine Science (AIMS) on the decline in coral cover on the GBR strengthens the case for continuing efforts to improve water quality. The report found that hard coral cover in shallow-water areas across the GBR has declined by around 50 per cent since 1985, and argued that around 42 per cent of that loss could be attributed to predation on coral by crown-of-thorns starfish. Outbreaks of crown-of-thorns starfish are thought to be closely linked to excess nutrient runoff, particularly in the central and southern GBR.² Continuing to improve water quality will provide the best chance for the reef to recover from the decline in coral cover in the medium term.

The State Party is committed to continuing its collaborative approach to improving water quality, through close cooperation between the Australian and Queensland governments, landholders and local communities. The Reef Water Quality Protection Plan (Reef Plan) is a joint agreement between the Australian and Queensland governments to halt and reverse the decline in water quality entering the GBR from agricultural landholdings in the catchment.³ Reef Plan reaches its next major milestone in 2013 at which time it will be updated. Both governments remain committed to addressing water quality impacts on the GBR and have commenced work on reviewing and updating the Reef Plan.

Continued investment

The Australian Government is supporting the Reef Plan through its Caring for our Country Reef Rescue initiative. Between 2008–2009 and 2012–2013, \$200 million has been invested through Reef Rescue to accelerate the adoption of improved agricultural land management practices to reduce the amount of sediment, nutrient and chemicals entering the GBR lagoon from adjoining catchments.

2 De'ath et al, 'The 27-year decline of coral cover on the Great Barrier Reef and its causes' *Proceedings of the National Association of Science of the United States of America*, October 1, 2012.
<http://www.pnas.org/content/early/2012/09/25/1208909109>

3 <http://www.nrm.gov.au/funding/reef-rescue/index.html>

To date, the Reef Rescue program has provided financial assistance to more than 2900 individual land managers, covering a total project area of 2.2 million hectares, to improve the way they manage their land so as to reduce runoff into the GBR and improve the long-term health of the reef.

The Australian Government has committed to a second phase of Caring for our Country over 2013–14 to 2017–18. It has recognised the success of the collaborative design and delivery of Reef Rescue and has agreed to continue to invest in the Reef Rescue program in the next phase of Caring for our Country.⁴ Details of program arrangements will be announced in 2013 as part of a broader announcement on the second five years of the Caring for our Country natural resource management initiative. Reef Guardians, an adjunct to the Reef Plan, will also be strengthened with renewed funding for the next two years.

The Queensland Government has confirmed its ongoing commitment to the objectives and targets of the Reef Plan and to maintaining the existing \$35 million annual budget allocation for reef water quality initiatives. The Queensland Government is working with agricultural industries in the GBR catchment to further develop and implement an industry-led best management practice approach to deliver the long-term objectives for reef water quality protection. The science, extension and education elements of the Reef Plan are continuing to be a foundation for industry-led systems underpinned by profitability, productivity and strong land stewardship. The Queensland Government has also committed \$2 million to better educate farmers about improved land management practices.

The Australian and Queensland governments are committed to continuing the momentum built over the last decade, since the Reef Plan was first established in 2003.

Updating the Reef Plan in 2013

The Queensland Government, through the Department of the Premier and Cabinet, coordinates implementation and review of the Reef Plan and has already commenced stakeholder consultation for an update of the Reef Plan by June 2013.

Through the Reef Plan Partnership Committee, industry, natural resource management, conservation and community stakeholders are providing input into the future of Reef Plan. The Partnership Committee will provide advice on:

- the scope of the Reef Plan
- future goals and targets, and
- future actions needed to deliver on those goals and targets.

A review of the Paddock to Reef Integrated Monitoring and Modelling Program is underway to evaluate the strengths and weaknesses of the current program to inform and ensure continuous improvement.

⁴ <http://www.environment.gov.au/biodiversity/publications/prospectus/index.html>

Work is also underway on an updated Scientific Consensus Statement on Reef Water Quality, to be released in early 2013, which will inform discussions about the scope and direction of reef water quality improvement initiatives beyond June 2013.⁵

Progress towards the goals and targets of the current Reef Plan will continue to be reported through annual report cards. While progress towards targets has so far been very encouraging, it will take time for these achievements to be translated into improved marine conditions.

Paragraph 4: Mission report recommendations

“Takes note of the findings of the joint World Heritage Centre/IUCN reactive monitoring mission to the property undertaken in March 2012, and also requests the State Party to address the mission recommendations in its future protection and management of the property”

The State Party has noted the recommendations of the reactive monitoring mission and welcomes the advice the mission has provided. Detailed responses to the mission’s recommendations are outlined in section 1.3 of this report.

Paragraph 5: Coastal development

“Notes with great concern the potentially significant impact on the property’s Outstanding Universal Value resulting from the unprecedented scale of coastal development currently being proposed within and affecting the property, and further requests the State Party to not permit any new port development or associated infrastructure outside of the existing and long-established major port areas within or adjoining the property, and to ensure that development is not permitted if it would impact individually or cumulatively on the Outstanding Universal Value of the property”

The World Heritage Committee can be assured that no new port developments or associated port infrastructure have been approved outside existing long-established major port areas since the Committee made this recommendation.

The Australian Government understands and appreciates the concern of the Committee and remains committed to managing the individual and cumulative impacts of any new coastal development on the Outstanding Universal Value of the property.

⁵ The current Scientific Consensus statement is available here: <http://www.reefplan.qld.gov.au/about/assets/scientific-consensus-statement-on-water-quality-in-the-gbr.pdf>

Australia's environmental law, the *Environment Protection and Biodiversity Conservation Act 1999* (EPBC Act), grants legal rights to applicants to have their proposals assessed under this law. The Australian Government must continue to respect these rights. Similarly, applicants continue to have a right to submit proposals under the Queensland Government's planning and development assessment framework. The clear preference of the Australian Government is for all such developments to be considered within the context of the comprehensive strategic assessment, however, proponents who refer an action for individual assessment have a legal right to have their proposal considered.

For proposals that are considered under the EPBC Act, all relevant direct, indirect and cumulative impacts on Outstanding Universal Value of the GBRWHA will be formally and rigorously assessed. In assessing proposals on or near the reef, the DSEWPaC seeks advice from the GBRMPA's highly-regarded technical experts and other external technical experts where required.

Australian law requires that the potential impacts of any proposed action must be avoided wherever possible, and that unavoidable or residual impacts be mitigated and offset. A project will only be approved by the Australian Government environment minister if the residual impacts on protected matters, including Outstanding Universal Value, are determined to be not unacceptable. Further details about EPBC Act assessment processes are provided in response to recommendation seven of the reactive monitoring mission.

The Australian Government is committed to preserving the integrity of the GBRWHA and ensuring that no project is approved that will lead to unacceptable impacts on the Outstanding Universal Value of the property. The Australian Government will work to promote a net improvement to the condition of the Outstanding Universal Value of the GBRWHA. Project approval conditions will reflect best practice standards to minimise any residual environmental impacts.

Protecting Outstanding Universal Value

Since the Committee's decision in June 2012, the Australian Government has made a range of improvements to the way it assesses the potential impacts, including relevant cumulative impacts, of proposed developments on the Outstanding Universal Value of the GBRWHA, including:

- commissioning expert research into aesthetic and geological values of the GBR and gathering historical data in relation to baseline condition of the property at the time of listing
- developing advice for proponents and departmental assessment officers in relation to how impacts to Outstanding Universal Value should be considered in assessment processes under the EPBC Act
- incorporating Outstanding Universal Value explicitly into the terms of reference of the strategic assessments, and
- incorporating Outstanding Universal Value explicitly into the terms of reference of environmental impact assessments and other formal impact assessment documentation for individual proposals.

At the GBR Ministerial Forum on 11 December 2012, relevant state and Australian Government ministers agreed to continue to work together to establish the Outstanding Universal Value of the GBRWHA as a clearly defined and central element within the protection and management system for the GBRWHA, including as part of project-by-project environmental assessment processes.

The Ministerial Forum noted the current approach to identify impacts on Outstanding Universal Value, including the requirement for Outstanding Universal Value to be included in the guidelines for formal assessment documents (such as environmental impact statements) for assessments under the EPBC Act. This will ensure that impacts to Outstanding Universal Value must be explicitly identified in all development proposals.

A measured and cautious approach to coastal development

Since the mission in March 2012, the Queensland Government has announced its withdrawal of support for aspects of proposed expansion plans at the existing Port of Abbot Point, opting instead for a more measured and incremental approach to expansion of the existing port. The Queensland Government has also announced its preferred rail corridor between Abbot Point and the Galilee Basin (extending both north-south and east-west), with the intention of moving towards an integrated rail approach rather than multiple rail alignments.

The need to accommodate future development is being carefully considered as part of the comprehensive strategic assessment under the EPBC Act. The strategic assessment of the GBR coastal zone will not only consider the location and evaluate the impacts of existing development areas, but also areas that may be subject to future development over the next two decades. The strategic assessment will further identify protected areas and priority areas for conservation where development will be restricted or excluded to promote a net benefit to the Outstanding Universal Value of the property.

A North-East Shipping Management Plan (NESMP) is also being developed in coordination with the comprehensive strategic assessment, to assess the effectiveness of the existing safety control measures that apply to shipping activities in the GBR, Coral Sea and Torres Strait regions. The NESMP will identify additional or enhanced measures that may be needed in the future to maintain shipping safety and protect the environment. Further information about the NESMP is provided in the State Party's response to mission recommendation 13.

The State Party is committed to ensuring ports are managed to international best-practice standards, in a properly-planned, effective and sustainable manner to protect the Outstanding Universal Value of the GBR. The independent review of management of Gladstone Harbour will provide further guidance about optimisation of port operations within the World Heritage Area. Industry continues to work closely with the Australian and Queensland governments to examine ways to minimise any risks from commercial operations.

Revised shipping forecasts

Port development is largely driven by development of mining in response to international demand, including for export coal resources in the Bowen, Galilee and Surat Basins and minerals provinces such as Mt Isa. These resources are crucial to the continued health of the Australian economy. Nonetheless, the Australian Government recognises the link between climate change and increased carbon emissions and has committed to a long-term target for carbon pollution reduction of 80 per cent below 2000 levels by 2050.

The Australian Government's approach to addressing other shipping-related impacts is through regulatory approaches.

Estimates of the likely increase in shipping through the GBR over the coming decade have been revised since the 2012 State Party Report was prepared. Recent data from the Australian Government's Bureau of Resources and Energy Economics (BREE) indicates that coal exports from Queensland mines are expected to grow at significantly lower rates than previously published estimates. Those estimates were based on the assumption that all proposed infrastructure development proposals at that time would proceed to full development. Many of those early projections have since been scaled down or withdrawn.⁶ Current estimates indicate the increase is likely to be between 52 and 74 per cent, although this is also considered to be at the upper end of the likely range.

One of the information gaps in past shipping management has been the absence of consistent state-wide forecast of ship numbers calling at GBR ports. This gap has been recently addressed through a report published by the Queensland Government, based on the BREE forecast figures, estimating the maximum number of ship movements through the GBRWHA might increase from current levels of around 3900 up to a possible 6100 per annum by 2022.⁷

A preliminary Abbott Point Cumulative Impact Assessment undertaken by industry proponents also attempted to model future ship movements. That report provided slightly higher projected estimates than those of the Queensland Government but noted that its conclusions were based on an upper-end forecast of projected export figures.⁸

The different roles of the Australian and Queensland governments

Both the Australian and Queensland governments have direct legislative responsibilities in relation to proposed developments within the GBRWHA.

Under Australia's Constitution, regulation of natural resource management and environment protection on land are primarily the responsibility of state governments (in this case Queensland). However, protection for matters of national significance, including world and national heritage properties and their values, is the responsibility of the Australian Government.

While Queensland therefore has primary responsibility for on-ground management of the coastal zone, any proposed developments that are likely to have a significant impact on the Outstanding Universal Value of the GBRWHA are also subject to assessment under the EPBC Act, and require approval of the Australian Government environment minister to proceed.

6 http://www.bree.gov.au/publications/_other.html

7 <http://www.dsdip.qld.gov.au/gbr-strategic-assessment/great-barrier-reef-ports-strategy.html>

8 <http://abbotpointworkinggroup.com.au/download.html>

Australian Government legislative framework

Assessment of development proposals

A precautionary approach is being taken by the Australian Government to ensure that the integrity of the GBRWHA is preserved. The Australian Government will not approve any project that will result in unacceptable environmental impacts on the GBR. Any approvals granted under the EPBC Act will include best practice conditions so as to promote an overall net positive impact for the property.

Under the Australian Government's key environmental legislation, the EPBC Act, proposals that are determined to be likely to have a significant impact on the GBRWHA are required to address all possible impacts on Outstanding Universal Value of the property, including its integrity.⁹

Under section 137 of the EPBC Act, when considering whether or not to approve the taking of an action likely to have significant impact on a world heritage property, and what conditions to attach to such an approval, the minister must not act inconsistently with:

- Australia's obligations under the World Heritage Convention; or
- the Australian World Heritage management principles; or
- a plan that has been prepared for the management of a declared world heritage property under section 316 or as described in section 321.

If, through the assessment process, there are found to be impacts that cannot be avoided or minimised, some form of offset or compensatory measure may be required to promote a net benefit to the protection of the property if the proposal proceeds. If no such offset is possible, a proposal with an unacceptable impact would be refused.

In assessing whether or not any project should be granted approval under national environment law, all relevant information will be taken into account. This will include careful consideration of the potential direct, indirect and cumulative impacts of development proposals to ensure that the Outstanding Universal Value of the GBRWHA and other matters of national environmental significance are protected.

Any approvals will only be made with robust, best-practice conditions to ensure that the integrity of the property is protected, unavoidable impacts are minimised, and all residual impacts are offset to promote a net positive benefit for the protection of matters of national environmental significance including the Outstanding Universal Value and integrity of the GBRWHA.

The draft Cumulative Impact Assessment for the Abbot Point expansion is an example of industry cooperating with this approach. It has been jointly undertaken by a number of proponents in order to assess the cumulative impacts of the proposed developments at the port. The cumulative impact assessment methodology used at Abbot Point is an example of how cumulative impacts can be assessed at a precinct level scale.

⁹ Further information on the assessment of impacts to world heritage values can be found in the EPBC Act Significant Impact Guidelines: <http://www.environment.gov.au/epbc/publications/pubs/nes-guidelines.pdf>

This assessment approach, along with other appropriate methodologies, will be further encouraged as part of ongoing environmental impact assessments both for individual projects and as part of the strategic assessment. Further detail regarding the EPBC Act assessment process is provided in the State Party's response to mission recommendation seven. An update on EPBC Act assessments and decisions is provided in chapter three.

Queensland Government policy and planning framework

Draft Coastal Protection State Planning Regulatory Provisions

Queensland has had specific arrangements in place for coastal management under the Queensland *Coastal Protection and Management Act* since 1995. Since that time, coastal development has continued to be an important management issue for Queensland and management responses have evolved to ensure they adequately address emerging issues. A new Queensland Coastal Plan and incorporating a State Planning Policy was commenced in February 2012.¹⁰ This replaced the State Coastal Management Plan (2001) and associated regional coastal management plans. There were concerns expressed by a range of stakeholders about some aspects of the new Coastal Plan and the State Planning Policy, particularly around the policies for dealing with urban development in coastal hazard areas where sea level rise may have an impact. As a consequence, the Queensland Government agreed to undertake a review to ensure that coastal management policies are workable, while still providing adequate coastal protection.

While the review is underway, the Queensland Government reports that the State Planning Policy introduced in early 2012 has been suspended and the older policies under the State Coastal Management Plan have been effectively reinstated in the interim state planning instrument, by the draft Coastal Protection State Planning Regulatory Provision (SPRP) which came into effect on 8 October 2012.¹¹ Public comment is being sought on the draft SPRP and the draft will operate for 12 months or until earlier repeal.

The Queensland Government has advised that the provisions contained in the draft SPRP still provide protection against inappropriate coastal development, for example by requiring that 'new development within existing urban areas (for example, infill and redevelopment) is preferred and new development should be undertaken so as to avoid or minimise adverse impacts on coastal resources and their values'.

Queensland is more broadly reviewing its planning framework and is consolidating all its State Planning policies into a single streamlined and simplified policy. The new coastal policies emerging from the review of the Coastal Plan shaped as a result of community comment on the draft SPRP and the draft single State Planning Policy will be incorporated into the single policy which is expected to commence in the first half of 2013. It is expected that the future policies will continue to provide protection for key coastal biodiversity values and also ensure appropriate planning arrangements are in place for coastal development.

¹⁰ <http://www.ehp.qld.gov.au/coastalplan/>

¹¹ <http://www.dsdip.qld.gov.au/resources/laws/state-planning-regulatory-provision/draft-coastal-protection-sprp.pdf>

Queensland Government's Great Barrier Reef Ports Strategy

A Great Barrier Reef Ports Strategy consultation document was released by the Queensland Government for public consultation on 1 November 2012.¹² In response to the World Heritage Committee decision, the document indicates the Queensland Government's intention to restrict 'significant port development, within and adjoining the GBRWHA, to within existing port limits for the next ten years'.

The consultation document sets out the vision and principles guiding the Queensland Government's approach to port planning and development in the GBR coastal zone over the next ten years. This approach is defined by the Queensland Government's focus on getting the right balance between economic development and environmental protection. The principles are as follows:

Principle 1: Strategic use of ports to facilitate economic growth.

Principle 2: The right balance between economic development and environmental protection.

Principle 3: Maximise efficiency throughout the port system.

Principle 4: A whole of network approach.

Principle 5: Clarity and transparency in port planning.

In 2012 the Queensland Government demonstrated its commitment to these principles through the following decisions:

- withdrawing support for the proposed multi-cargo facility at Abbot Point, preferring an incremental approach to development, and
- moving to two preferred rail corridors to connect the Galilee Basin to export facilities, rather than multiple rail alignments.

The Queensland Government states that a balance between economic development and environmental protection should be sought through limiting significant port development within and adjacent to the GBRWHA to within existing major port limits over the next 10 years. This does not mean that development will be restricted to the existing footprint of the individual ports, but rather that port development will be restricted to the areas previously identified in the land use plans for each port.

A number of questions are posed throughout the consultation document, encouraging responses from stakeholders and the public about issues such as: the best use of each port; assessment and management of environmental impacts; strategic use of port land; improvements to port planning including master planning; and other opportunities to improve efficiency and limit environmental impacts. The results of this consultation process will inform both the strategic assessment of the GBR coastal zone as well as a state-wide Queensland Ports Strategy.

¹² <http://www.dsip.qld.gov.au/resources/plan/great-barrier-reef-ports-strategy.pdf>

The Queensland Ports Strategy will be developed in 2013 and will apply the principles of the GBR Ports Strategy across the state. The final GBR Ports Strategy will be a key input into the Queensland Government's component of the comprehensive strategic assessment.

Paragraph 6: Strategic assessment

“Requests furthermore the State Party to complete the Strategic Assessment and resulting long-term plan for the sustainable development of the property for consideration by the World Heritage Committee at its 39th session in 2015, and to ensure that the assessment and long-term plan are completed against a number of defined criteria for success, fully address direct, indirect and cumulative impacts on the reef and lead to concrete measures to ensure the overall conservation of the Outstanding Universal Value of the property”

Comprehensive strategic assessment

The State Party is on track to complete the comprehensive strategic assessment of the GBRWHA and adjacent coastal zone as requested by the World Heritage Committee for consideration by the Committee in 2015.

The comprehensive strategic assessment will be an assessment of the effectiveness of planning, management and institutional arrangements to protect matters of national environmental significance including the Outstanding Universal Value of the GBRWHA.

There are two parts to the comprehensive strategic assessment:

- the Queensland Government is leading the coastal component which will analyse legislation, policies and planning frameworks that apply in the coastal zone to ensure development occurs sustainably and that matters of national environmental significance, including the Outstanding Universal Value of the GBRWHA, are protected.
- the GBRMPA is leading the marine component which will ensure effective arrangements are in place to manage and protect the GBR Region, including inter-governmental collaborative arrangements and partnerships with stakeholders. This assessment will include the protection of matters of national environmental significance, including the Outstanding Universal Value of the GBRWHA.

The GBRMPA and the Queensland Government are working closely on aspects where they have joint management responsibilities, for example shipping and island management.

The strategic assessment will enable both Queensland Government and GBRMPA to make changes to their respective planning, management and institutional arrangements (Programs) to better identify, plan for and manage existing and emerging risks, so the unique values of the GBRWHA are protected for future generations.

The comprehensive strategic assessment will look at the existing risks to matters of national environmental significance for the whole GBR including the Outstanding Universal Value of the World Heritage Area and will also consider specific locations and issues in-depth, as a means of examining the effectiveness of the Queensland Government and the GBRMPA Programs in protecting those values at a local or regional scale.

Following a public comment period, the draft Programs and strategic assessment reports will be submitted to the Australian Government environment minister to consider whether to endorse each Program. Endorsement will only occur when the minister is satisfied that the Program and associated strategic assessment reports adequately identify and address impacts on matters of national environmental significance, including the Outstanding Universal Value of the GBRWHA.

Following endorsement of the Program, the minister may approve the taking of an action or class of actions in accordance with the endorsed Program, where the minister is satisfied that these actions or classes of actions will not result in an unacceptable impact on the Outstanding Universal Value of the GBRWHA. This approval is the legal step that allows activities under the Program to proceed without the need for further federal approval of individual proposals or developments. The minister will also identify protected areas and priority areas for conservation where development will be restricted or excluded for the net benefit of the Outstanding Universal Value of the property.

Further information about the GBR comprehensive strategic assessment and EPBC Act strategic assessments in general is available at Appendices 5 and 6.

Progress to date

- Final terms of reference for the comprehensive strategic assessment were developed collaboratively by DSEWPaC with the GBRMPA and the Queensland Government, and were released on 31 August 2012. The terms of reference take into account public comments received and also the World Heritage Committee's decision and advice of the reactive monitoring mission. A copy of the terms of reference for the Queensland Government and the GBRMPA strategic assessments is provided at Appendix 3 and Appendix 4.¹³
- Drafting of the strategic assessment reports is well underway. The Queensland Government and the GBRMPA are working closely on a number of issues for which they share management responsibility and will also be looking at impacts at the marine/coastal interface together. There is a strong spirit of collaboration to ensure a complementary approach to the strategic assessments.
- A GBR Ports Strategy consultation document was released by the Queensland Government on 1 November.
- Queensland is also currently reviewing its offsets policy to ensure that funds derived from the region are used to tackle the most significant issues facing the GBRWHA.

¹³ Queensland coastal zone strategic assessment terms of reference are available at: <http://www.dsdp.qld.gov.au/gbr-strategic-assessment/>. GBRMPA marine component terms of reference are available at: <http://www.gbrmpa.gov.au/outlook-for-the-reef/strategic-assessment/about-the-marine-strategic-assessment>

Stakeholder consultation

- There are two formal (statutory) opportunities for stakeholder input into the strategic assessment—a public comment period on the draft terms of reference (completed) and a public comment period on the draft strategic assessment reports (scheduled for the first half of 2013).
- Stakeholders are also being proactively engaged during preparation of the draft strategic assessments.
- A Stakeholder Reference Group has been established by the Queensland Government for peak representative bodies to provide input, including representatives from conservation groups, the agricultural industry, the resources industry, the fishing industry, the tourism industry, port authorities and the GBRMPA.
- The Great Barrier Reef Ports Strategy was prepared for broad public consultation in late 2012 to inform future actions as improvements to Queensland's Program. The consultation process yielded over 200 submissions across environment groups, community groups, industry, ports, government, peak bodies and individuals. Further consultation opportunities will occur in 2013 on other identified improvements to Queensland's Program, as appropriate.
- The GBRMPA has proactively engaged with key stakeholders through a number of purpose-specific stakeholder workshops. Participants represented a diverse range of interests including Traditional Owners, conservation organisations, commercial fishing, recreational users, marine tourism, ports and shipping, farmers and graziers, local governments, and scientists. A number of other existing committees have also provided input, including:
 - GBRMPA's Reef Advisory Committees (RACs)
 - GBRMPA's Local Marine Advisory Committees (LMACs)
 - the Reef Water Quality Protection Plan Partnership Committee and Independent Science Panel
 - Reef catchment Natural Resource Management bodies, and
 - DSEWPaC's Indigenous Advisory Committee.

Long-term plan for sustainable development

It was agreed at the GBR Ministerial Forum in December 2012 that Australian and Queensland government officials will work together to scope a long term plan for the sustainable development of the GBRWHA informed by the comprehensive strategic assessment, and report back to the GBR Ministerial Forum in March 2013. While the comprehensive strategic assessment involves a detailed consideration of the effectiveness of existing planning and policy frameworks in protecting the Outstanding Universal Value of the property, the long term sustainable development plan will establish clear principles and outcomes to achieve the Australian Government's vision for the long-term future of the GBRWHA. The sustainable development plan will be provided to the meeting of the World Heritage Committee in 2015.

Paragraph 7: Outstanding Universal Value

“Urges the State Party to establish the Outstanding Universal Value of the property as a clearly defined and central element within the protection and management system for the property and to include an explicit assessment of Outstanding Universal Value within future Great Barrier Reef Outlook Reports”

Work is underway by the State Party to articulate and, where appropriate, map the Outstanding Universal Value of the World Heritage Area. This will contribute to the strategic assessment process and ensure that Outstanding Universal Value is a more clearly defined and central element within protection and management systems for the property.

The effectiveness of Queensland and GBRMPA’s current management arrangements to identify and protect Outstanding Universal Value will be considered as part of the strategic assessment. If it is found that improvements are necessary, these will be specified in the strategic assessment reports. Further detail about the comprehensive strategic assessment is provided in the State Party’s response to paragraph six of the World Heritage Committee decision.

Mapping of biodiversity values

The State Party has access to a range of mapping tools that provide information about the biodiversity values of the GBRWHA, including detailed datasets held by GBRMPA and AIMS, DSEWPaC’s Environmental Reporting Tool, and the Queensland Government’s mapping of Areas of Ecological Significance.

In order to supplement the existing information and to provide greater spatial delineation of biodiversity attributes of Outstanding Universal Value, DSEWPaC has also undertaken mapping of important groups of species within the World Heritage Area and adjacent coastal zone using the Australian Natural Heritage Assessment Tool (ANHAT).

ANHAT has been developed by the Australian Government specifically to assist in the identification of areas of high biodiversity value Australia-wide for species richness and endemism in order to highlight important heritage areas for these aspects of biodiversity. ANHAT provides an analysis of point data on species distribution from a range of plant and animal surveys and collections from across Australia and is particularly useful for assessment of terrestrial species. Additional data were acquired and analysed for some marine groups that were identified as being of value but were not yet present in ANHAT.

Key taxa for analysis have been identified, where available, based on the assessment in the report—*The Outstanding Universal Value of the Great Barrier Reef World Heritage Area*.¹⁴ ANHAT mapping of the key taxa for which data is currently available was completed in December 2012. Due to the relative paucity of data for the marine environment, these maps will be treated as a supplementary source of information in consultation with other published and expert advice.

¹⁴ <http://www.environment.gov.au/heritage/places/world/great-barrier-reef/resources.html>

Aesthetic values identification

The State Party is more clearly defining the aesthetic values of the GBRWHA in order to better inform management and protection of the property.

Experts in the development of aesthetic values assessment methodologies and world heritage management undertook work between June and December 2012 to develop and apply a methodology to identify and assess the aesthetic values of the GBRWHA and assess the sensitivity of the values to a range of pressures. The pressures were aligned with those identified in the GBR Outlook Report to assist with reporting on the condition of aesthetic values in future outlook reports.

A report setting out the findings of the project will be completed in January 2013.

Geological values identification

DSEWPaC worked with Geoscience Australia, an Australian Government agency, to more clearly define the geological and geomorphic attributes that contribute to the Outstanding Universal Value of the GBRWHA. The project:

- identified and described the geological and geomorphic attributes that express Outstanding Universal Value
- mapped, where possible, the identified geological and geomorphic attributes, and
- assessed the sensitivity of identified geological and geomorphic attributes to the pressures identified in the GBR Outlook Report.

A report setting out the findings of the project will be completed in January 2013.

Indigenous heritage values identification

The Statement of Outstanding Universal Value (SoOUV) for the GBRWHA includes the following description:

Human interaction with the natural environment is illustrated by strong ongoing links between Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islanders and their sea-country, and includes numerous shell deposits (middens) and fish traps, plus the application of story places and marine totems.

In order to provide greater identification of the biocultural attributes as an intricate component of the biodiversity attributes of Outstanding Universal Value, the GBRMPA has commenced a process of identification and assessment of important Indigenous heritage values within the World Heritage Area. This work considers:

- the recognition that biodiversity of the GBR includes the interlinked diversity of nature and culture, termed 'biocultural diversity'
- the role of Indigenous people in the conservation and ecologically sustainable use of Australia's biodiversity, and
- the use of Indigenous peoples' knowledge of biodiversity with the involvement of, and in co-operation with, the owners of the knowledge.

This work will inform an Indigenous Strategy and contribute to the strategic assessment and the Outlook Report 2014. It is part of a long-term project for the GBRMPA.

Assessing the current condition and trend of Outstanding Universal Value

The GBRMPA has undertaken a preliminary assessment of the current condition and trends for elements that collectively comprise the SoOUV for the entire GBRWHA. This involved breaking down the SoOUV text into smaller 'elements' under each of the four natural criteria and integrity.

Grading statements have then been used to provide a grade for the current condition of each of the individual elements. In addition, information has been provided for each element indicating:

- the overall trend comparing the 2012 situation with a baseline of 1981 (1981 being the date of inscription on the World Heritage List)
- a confidence level regarding the information used to justify the grade, and
- an indication in the level of knowledge today for each element compared to 1981.

The results will be reviewed by the chairs of the Local Marine Advisory Committees and Reef Advisory Committees as well as by individual experts. This approach will be used to inform the GBRMPA strategic assessment, with a draft strategic assessment report expected to be released for public comment in the first half of 2013. This work will also enable the detailed assessment of the condition and trend of all aspects of the Outstanding Universal Value of the property as part of the next GBR Outlook Report, which is due to be completed in 2014.

Further guidance for assessing impacts on Outstanding Universal Value

DSEWPaC has explicitly incorporated Outstanding Universal Value into its business processes for environmental assessments.

Other initiatives to incorporate the Outstanding Universal Value of the property as a clearly defined and central element of the State Party's regulatory and management system include:

- publication of a fact sheet for stakeholders titled *Understanding World Heritage: What Is Outstanding Universal Value?* (released September 2012)¹⁵
- development of a guidance note for proponents of actions that provides initial advice on the consideration of the Outstanding Universal Value of the property in the referral and assessment process of the EPBC Act (to be released early 2013)
- consideration of impacts on Outstanding Universal Value in environmental assessment for each project being assessed for impacts on the world heritage values of the GBRWHA.

Further communications material will be developed as necessary to inform proponents of expectations in relation to proposals that may impact on the Outstanding Universal Value of the GBRWHA.

¹⁵ <http://www.environment.gov.au/heritage/places/world/great-barrier-reef/pubs/outstanding-values-factsheet.pdf>

Paragraph 8: Resources and targets

“Recommends the State Party, in collaboration with its partners, to sustain and increase its efforts and available resources to conserve the property, and to develop and adopt clearly defined and scientifically justified targets for improving its state of conservation and enhancing its resilience, and ensure that plans, policies and development proposals affecting the property demonstrate a positive contribution to the achievement of those targets, and an overall net benefit to the protection of Outstanding Universal Value”

Sustaining resources and efforts

The Australian and Queensland governments have confirmed their ongoing commitment to continue joint field management activities to maintain well-functioning marine and island ecosystems within the GBRWHA, through the delivery of practical on-ground actions. Funding commitments from 2013 will be announced in the coming year.

The Australian and Queensland governments invest significantly in monitoring and protecting the property, and increasing its long-term resilience. For example, the Australian Government has provided the following resources:

- more than \$200 million over the last five years for the operation of GBRMPA as the primary Australian Government agency responsible for planning and management of the GBR Marine Park which covers approximately 99 per cent of the GBRWHA
- this funding includes \$2.13 million for a new initiative to control crown-of-thorns starfish in the GBR Marine Park
- more than \$200 million through the Reef Rescue initiative over the last five years to reduce the discharge of sediments, nutrients and pesticides from agricultural lands to the GBR lagoon. The funding continues to June 2013 and a commitment has been made to continue to invest in the Reef Rescue Program in the next phase of Caring for our Country.
- \$52.7 million in regional base funding to the six reef catchment NRM regional bodies (2008–09 to 2012–13)
- \$12.5 million over four years from 2013 to the Great Barrier Reef Foundation to coordinate research in areas such as reef resilience and climate change
- \$2.8 million for projects to inform the comprehensive strategic assessment and long term sustainable development planning for the GBRWHA and adjacent coastal zone
- \$12.4 million over four years for reef ecosystem research through the National Environmental Research Program (NERP)
- more than \$11.25 million for 14 projects in catchments that flow into the GBR lagoon for activities which restore, manage and better protect biodiversity, and
- \$3.68 million over four years through the NERP’s Tropical Ecosystems Hub for water quality research aimed at better understanding the drivers and impacts of water quality on the biodiversity of the GBR.

The Queensland Government has provided:

- an undertaking to maintain the level of funding applied to the Reef Water Quality initiatives (\$35 million per year)
- \$2 million to improve extension in the reef catchments to better educate farmers about improved land management practices
- over \$8 million a year for joint field management for the Marine Park which includes compliance, management of visitor facilities and education
- over \$21 million a year for fisheries management, and
- an additional \$9 million towards a buy-out of netting licences on the east coast of Queensland which will have profitability benefits for the fishery, as well as conservation benefits.

Targets

In December 2012, the GBR Ministerial Forum agreed that the Australian and Queensland governments will jointly develop an outcomes-based framework to provide a systematic process for continual improvement to the GBRWHA, which will include targets to be monitored, reported and adapted over time.

This framework will initially identify agreed outcomes, targets and activities that contribute to protecting the Outstanding Universal Value of the property and identify gaps and trends where new outcomes and targets may direct future management efforts. Progress on this task will be considered by the next Ministerial Forum in 2013.

The framework will include targets which are already in place for factors that are critical to the state of conservation of the property. For instance, the Reef Water Quality Protection Plan, a joint Australian and Queensland government initiative, establishes clear and measurable targets for monitoring progress in halting and reversing the decline in water quality in the GBR. These include:

- a minimum 50 per cent reduction in nitrogen, phosphorous and pesticide loads at the end of catchments by 2013, and
- a minimum 20 per cent reduction in sediment load at the end of catchments by 2020.

The comprehensive strategic assessment will evaluate how effective relevant planning, management and environmental assessment and decision frameworks are at achieving a net benefit for the protection and condition of matters of national environmental significance, including the Outstanding Universal Value of the GBRWHA. Where existing frameworks are assessed as not meeting this benchmark, the strategic assessment terms of reference provide for recommendations to be made for changes to those frameworks. The strategic assessment will also include the development of 25 year objectives and five year objectives for protection of the property.

Paragraph 9: Independent review of the management arrangements for Gladstone Harbour

“Requests moreover the State Party to undertake an independent review of the management arrangements for Gladstone Harbour, that will result in the optimization of port development and operation in Gladstone Harbour and on Curtis Island, consistent with the highest internationally recognized standards for best practice commensurate with iconic World Heritage status”

The Australian Government environment minister has determined that an independent review be undertaken of management arrangements and recent environmental concerns relating to the Port of Gladstone and Curtis Island. The review will be led by an eminent independent person who will be supported by specialist advisers with relevant scientific and port industry expertise. The review will address the request of the World Heritage Committee and recommendations of the mission and inform future decision making under national and state environmental laws. The review will enable special interest groups, industry representatives and the general community to put their views and concerns forward for consideration. The independent review’s findings and recommendations will be provided to the minister by 30 June 2013.

The focus of the review will be on governance and environmental management arrangements relating to consented developments and current activities; however, it will also consider these matters in relation to the potential optimisation of future port development and operation having regard to international best practice approaches. Building on earlier reviews, this review will seek to ensure that future port development and operations are underpinned by the best available scientific information and protect the Outstanding Universal Value of the world heritage property.

Gladstone Healthy Harbour Partnership

On 4 May 2012, the Queensland Government announced that a partnership agreement would be established to ensure the ongoing monitoring and improvement of Gladstone Harbour and surrounding catchments.

The proposed Gladstone Healthy Harbour Partnership (GHHP) includes representatives from Queensland and Australian government agencies, Gladstone Regional Council, industry, the community and research organisations. The guiding principles of the partnership are open, honest and accountable management, reporting of the health of the Gladstone Harbour and management recommendations and actions based on rigorous science and strong stakeholder engagement to ensure the ongoing and continuous improvement in the health of Gladstone Harbour. The partnership will focus on best practice collaborative monitoring and management of the Harbour. Decisions made by the partnership will be informed by an independent science panel and the community group, the Gladstone Region Environmental Advisory Network. Two GHHP meetings have been held, on 28 August and 23 November 2012, and the partnership will meet again in March 2013.

Following a nationwide expression of interest and extensive selection process, leading Queensland marine scientist Dr Ian Poiner was appointed chair of a new independent science panel to provide advice to the GHHP.

The next steps to progress the Gladstone Healthy Harbour partnership include:

- selecting members of the independent science panel
- working with the Gladstone community to identify what is meant by a healthy harbour
- assessing existing monitoring and research programs to identify duplication, gaps and opportunities for integration, and
- progressing the design of a robust, integrated water quality and aquatic ecosystem health monitoring and reporting program, building on current efforts.

It is intended that the partnership will be responsible for producing a report card on the health of the harbour and identifying what actions are needed to address its findings.

The Australian Government is participating in the Gladstone Healthy Harbour Partnership and anticipates this initiative will provide a useful and complementary means to engage with the Gladstone community and the broader scientific community, in addition to the Australian Government's independent review of Gladstone and into the future.

Fish health

Some of the initial concerns of the World Heritage Committee stemmed from fish health issues observed in Gladstone Harbour following significant rainfall events in the region in December 2010 and January 2011. Since the previous State Party Report, the Queensland Government advises that fish health has improved substantially. Fish sampling conducted in June and July 2012 by Fisheries Queensland (part of the State Department of Agriculture, Fisheries and Forestry) has found fish health in Gladstone waters is continuing to improve.¹⁶ The survey report found fish to be in overall good health within Gladstone, including the harbour and spoil grounds. The most significant finding was evidence of fish healing from previous injuries.

Compliance

Compliance with existing environmental licence conditions in Gladstone Harbour is closely supervised by both the Australian and Queensland governments and immediate action is taken to cease activities that exceed licence condition trigger values. Incident response capability for the area is highly integrated across agencies.

The Queensland Government is working with companies in Gladstone Harbour to continuously improve monitoring and ensure that triggers are based on best available science. For example, new light-based monitoring techniques are currently being trialled to ensure that turbidity thresholds are based on seagrass biological requirements.¹⁷

Prosecution action taken by the Queensland Department of Environment and Heritage Protection against Queensland chemical manufacturer, Orica Australia Pty Ltd resulted in the company being penalised \$432 000 after pleading guilty to charges relating to unauthorised stormwater and effluent water releases from its Yarwun facility near Gladstone. The decision

¹⁶ http://www.daff.qld.gov.au/documents/Fisheries_CommercialFisheries/FQ-gladstone-interim-sampling-report.pdf

¹⁷ http://www.westernbasinportdevelopment.com.au/environmental_reports/section/environmental

was handed down in the Gladstone Magistrate's Court on 1 November 2012. The Court has ordered that \$100 000 of the fine will be allocated for turtle research at Port Curtis, \$90 000 for Conservation Volunteers Australia's Gladstone program and \$60 000 for the GHHP.¹⁸

Paragraph 10: State of conservation report

“Finally requests the State Party to submit to the World Heritage Centre, by 1 February 2013, an updated report on the state of conservation of the property, including on the implementation of actions outlined above and in the mission report, for consideration by the World Heritage Committee at its 37th session in 2013, with a view to consider, in the absence of substantial progress, the possible inscription of the property on the List of World Heritage in Danger”

The State Party is pleased to present this report which highlights substantial progress on the recommendations made by the World Heritage Committee and reactive monitoring mission.

Paragraph 11: Future state of conservation reporting, Great Barrier Reef Outlook and Strategic Environmental Assessment reports

“Decides to also consider a further report from the State Party on the state of conservation of the property, the findings of the second Great Barrier Reef Outlook Report, and the anticipated outcomes of the completed Strategic Environmental Assessment and related long term plan for sustainable development at its 39th session in 2015”

Australia is committed to reporting to the World Heritage Committee in order to meet its international obligations and will provide further information to the Committee in 2015 as requested in this decision.

Australia is confident that the comprehensive strategic assessment and associated outcomes will contribute to a significant improvement in management and continue a long legacy of adaptive management. It is hoped that work in this emerging area can be used as a world-leading example of more strategic approaches to management of world heritage properties, particularly for large-scale and multiple-use properties.

¹⁸ <http://www.ehp.qld.gov.au/gladstone/healthy-harbour/index.html>

1.3 Response to Recommendations from Mission Report

Recommendation 1: Reef Water Quality Protection Plan and associated Reef Rescue measures

“Sustain beyond 2013, and on a long-term basis, the current financial investment in the progressive and highly important Reef Water Quality Protection Plan and associated Reef Rescue measures, and where necessary increase this investment, to address impacts of water quality in the catchments that drain into the Great Barrier Reef, and ensure that these programmes and related planning policies consider water quality impacts from all uses within the catchments”

See the State Party’s response to paragraph three of the World Heritage Committee’s decision in section 1.2 above. This outlines the ongoing support from both the Australian and Queensland governments to accelerate the adoption of improved agricultural land management practices to reduce the amount of sediment, nutrient and chemicals entering the GBR lagoon from adjoining catchments.

Recommendation 2: Development not to impact OUV

“Not permit any new port development or associated infrastructure outside of the existing and long-established major port areas within and adjoining the property. It is essential that development is not permitted if it would impact individually or cumulatively on OUV, including the integrity of the property. This measure should apply both within and in the adjacent areas to the property. This measure should take immediate effect and requires full application until the Strategic Assessment and the resulting long-term plan for the sustainable development of the property has been completed, and has been considered by the World Heritage Committee at its 39th session in 2015”

See the State Party’s response to decision paragraph five of the World Heritage Committee’s decision in section 1.2 above which outlines the measured and cautious approach the Australian and Queensland governments are taking to coastal developments both within and adjoining the property.

Recommendation 3: Independent review of Gladstone Harbour and Curtis Island

“Commission an independent review of all environmental concerns of consented developments in Gladstone Harbour and on Curtis Island, and the implications of the consented developments in Gladstone Harbour and on Curtis Island for Traditional Owners and the local community dependent on the resources of the area. The review should be undertaken by internationally recognized and widely respected scientific experts and conducted in an independent and transparent manner. The review should:

- a. Consider all previous review findings and all information used as a basis for the current approvals for development in Gladstone Harbour and on Curtis Island;***
- b. Address the current and future planning and management of the Port of Gladstone and development of Curtis Island;***
- c. Lead to clear recommendations for the optimization of port development and operation, including supporting activities and infrastructure, and according to the highest internationally recognized standards for best practice;***
- d. Provide lessons learned for the development and operation of other port areas within and adjacent to the property;***
- e. Lead to the implementation of concrete action to address issues identified in the review, as soon as possible and before any other major port development is commenced”***

See the State Party’s response to decision paragraph nine of the World Heritage Committee’s decision in section 1.2 above which outlines an independent review of management arrangements, as well as recent environmental concerns relating to the Port of Gladstone and Curtis Island, due to be provided to the minister by June 2013. The specific recommendations of the reactive monitoring mission will be addressed in that review.

Recommendation 4: Best practice sustainable development

“Ensure that any development, including ports and other types of development, as well as all associated infrastructure and supporting activities are carried out consistent with the highest international standards of best practice, commensurate with status of an iconic World Heritage property, and enabling the State Party to continue to provide global leadership for the conservation and sustainable development of multiple use marine protected areas”

Australia is proud to provide global leadership for the conservation and sustainable use of multiple use marine protected areas, and will continue to uphold the highest standards for the management and protection of the GBRWHA. The Australian Government will ensure that the future development is carried out in such a way that the integrity of the property will be fully protected.

The Australian Government is undertaking a range of innovative work to develop best practice standards and approaches for protecting the GBRWHA. Through the comprehensive strategic assessment the government is aiming to deliver best practice guidance on the following activities in the GBR region:

- port developments and operations
- shipping management, and
- sustainable coastal zone development.

An independent review of Gladstone Harbour and Curtis Island will consider the governance arrangements and environmental performance of consented development and provide advice on improved practices based on expert scientific advice. This independent review will also have regard to the Australian Government’s review of environmental best practice port development, being undertaken as part of the strategic assessment process. These initiatives will help ensure that future planning and development in the Port of Gladstone is based on cutting-edge performance standards for protecting the GBRWHA. The findings of the review will also help inform the government’s consideration of future port developments and operations within the GBR region.

The Australian and Queensland governments are working together to ensure dredging and shipping activities in the Great Barrier Reef, Torres Strait and Coral Sea are managed to the highest standards for protecting the environment and maintaining the safety of ships. The North East Shipping Management Plan will assess the effectiveness of existing management arrangements and identify additional or enhanced measures that may be required in the future in light of expected increased shipping movements and vessel sizes. The Australian Government is also funding research into ship anchorage management to minimise the environmental impacts associated with this activity.

In relation to the mission’s reference to ‘other types of development’, it is important to note that GBRMPA is regarded as a global leader in best-practice management arrangements for other marine management topics such as marine tourism and defence training activities.

Following the GBR Ministerial Forum in December 2012, the Australian and Queensland governments have commenced scoping a long term plan for the sustainable development of the GBRWHA. As a key outcome of the comprehensive strategic assessment, the long term plan for sustainable development will identify planning and management principles to protect and enhance the OUV of the property by building ecosystem resilience in the face of a changing climate and expanding economic development. These principles will provide greater certainty about the types of sustainable development that will be allowed, where they can occur and the environmental protection standards that will apply. A long term plan for sustainable development will be submitted to the meeting of the World Heritage Committee in 2015, as requested by the Committee.

Recommendation 5: Strategic assessment

“Complete the Strategic Assessment and resulting long-term plan for the sustainable development of the property for consideration by the World Heritage Committee at its 39th session in 2015. The assessment and long-term plan should be completed in a coordinated and fully consultative process, against a number of defined criteria for success, and considering the conclusions and recommendations of the mission as set out in this report. Expectations of the Strategic Assessment include that it will lead to:

- 1. A long-term plan with agreed leadership at Federal and State levels, that addresses the entire property and the adjacent areas where activities can affect the OUV of the property, and ensures that any development that is approved results in an overall net benefit for the property;***
- 2. Explicit incorporation of all elements that make up the OUV of the property, and in particular the long-term conservation of the integrity of the property, into the decision making process regarding all development and use that may negatively impact the property, both within the boundaries of the World Heritage area and in areas adjacent to the property;***
- 3. Improved effectiveness of the overall protection, planning and management of the OUV of the property as a whole, and the catchments, and coastal and marine areas that are intimately linked to it, including if necessary legal/statutory reforms to strengthen protection and management;***
- 4. A clear and target-driven framework to support planning and assessment of development proposals to protect OUV, and restore it where necessary, and to ensure resilience of the site, including the consideration of cumulative impacts;***
- 5. A clear analysis and related policies and strategies that will sustain long-term sustainable development, compatible with the protection of OUV, including consideration of the all economic sectors, including sustainable tourism and recreation and commercial fishing, as well as coastal development;***

6. ***Spatial policies that will identify appropriate and limited locations and standards for coastal development, and also identify areas that should not be subject to development, and which will provide greater business certainty regarding development proposals and community confidence and understanding of future development scenarios;***
7. ***Increased public confidence in their ability to engage with and influence policy and development decisions, including independent mechanisms to scrutinize and advise on the assessment of impacts of development;***
8. ***Support for new and enhanced policies and measures to regulate and manage shipping, and provide appropriate emergency planning and response;***
9. ***Appropriate systems to secure that, where development and use is permitted it will lead to net benefits to the property as a whole, including from contributions from developers to mitigate impacts of development;***
10. ***Measures, such as legislative change to enhance compliance, that may increase the results achieved from the funding available for management, and to also increase overall levels of funding where required to provide for effective protection and management”***

The recommendations of the reactive monitoring mission have been addressed in finalising the terms of reference for the comprehensive strategic assessment (included for reference at Appendices 3 and 4). As the strategic assessment progresses, these recommendations will be further considered. The approach to the strategic assessment and the outcomes being sought are broadly consistent with those suggested by the mission.

For further details, see the State Party’s response to paragraph six of the World Heritage Committee decision in section 1.2 above.

Recommendation 6: Reporting on OUV in 2014 Outlook Report

“Include, in the future editions of the Outlook Report for the Great Barrier Reef, and commencing with the version to be published in 2014, a specific assessment on the condition, trends, threats and prospects for the OUV of Great Barrier Reef World Heritage Area. The assessment should be benchmarked at the date of inscription of the property in 1981, and its results should be reported to the World Heritage Committee for consideration at its 39th session in 2015”

As set out in the State Party's response to the Committee's decision paragraph seven in section 1.2 above, the GBRMPA has undertaken a preliminary assessment of the condition and trends of the key elements that collectively comprise the SoOUV of the property.

This assessment of the condition of the Outstanding Universal Value of the GBR will be included in the Outlook Report 2014. It will include an assessment of the current condition and trend of a number of key elements within each criterion for which the GBR is listed and its integrity, benchmarked at 1981, and will be submitted to the World Heritage Committee for consideration at its 39th session in 2015.

The final terms of reference for the strategic assessment also include a requirement to describe world heritage values, including the current condition of Outstanding Universal Value in relation to the state of the GBRWHA at the time of listing.

Recommendation 7: Assessments under the EPBC Act

“Ensure that any determination made for applications under the EPBC Act, considering this is the principal legislation to ensure development does not negatively impact the values and integrity of the property, includes for each application:

a. A thorough assessment, supported by a detailed statement of reasons, and appropriate independent review input, on how the proposal will ensure conservation of each of the components that make up the OUV of the property, and avoid impacts upon it;

The Australian Government environment minister will not approve any proposed development that will have unacceptable impacts on the property's Outstanding Universal Value, including its integrity. Developments will only be approved subject to robust and best-practice conditions that ensure that the integrity of the property is preserved, that any remaining unavoidable impacts are minimised, and any residual impacts are offset in a way that promotes a net benefit overall.

Assessment under the EPBC Act is rigorous and considers, at a minimum, the detailed technical information assembled by the proponent, advice from DSEWPac, and comments made by the public.

For any action that requires approval under the EPBC Act, a comprehensive assessment document, such as an Environmental Impact Statement, is published for public review. The assessment document describes in detail the proposed action and the planned means by which potential impacts will be avoided or mitigated, and for those impacts that cannot be avoided, the means by which residual impacts may be offset.

Proposals that are determined to be likely to have a significant impact on the GBRWHA are required to address all potential impacts on the attributes that contribute to the values for which the GBR has been inscribed on the World Heritage List, including the property's integrity.

Advice is sought both internally and also from the authority responsible for the on-ground management (which in the case of the GBRWHA is GBRMPA). Assessments may also be informed through independent expert review if additional technical expertise is required.

The Australian Government environment minister considers all the information provided before making a decision about whether or not the project should proceed, and if so, whether any specific conditions need to be attached to that approval.

Under section 137 of the EPBC Act, when considering whether or not to approve the taking of an action likely to have significant impact on a world heritage property, and what conditions to attach to such an approval, the minister must not act inconsistently with:

- Australia's obligations under the World Heritage Convention; or
- the Australian world heritage management principles; or
- a plan that has been prepared for the management of a declared world heritage property under section 316 or as described in section 321.

If, through the assessment process, there are found to be impacts that cannot be avoided or minimised, some form of offset or compensatory measure will be required to promote a net benefit to the protection of the GBRWHA if the proposal proceeds. If no such offset is possible, a proposal with an unacceptable impact would be refused.

Statements of reason

Recommendation seven includes a suggestion that a statement of reasons be provided to support all assessments made under the EPBC Act. 'Statement of reasons' has a specific and technical meaning under section 13 of the Commonwealth (Federal) *Administrative Decisions (Judicial Review) Act 1977* (ADJR Act). A statement of reasons is not prepared unless an application is received under the ADJR Act. However, detailed documentation associated with the assessment process is required to be published on DSEWPaC's website, including documentation of decisions made and conditions associated with those decisions, all notices issued, and invitations to comment under the Act.

Further information about the decision-making process under the EPBC Act is provided at Appendix 7.

b. A thorough consideration of the combined, cumulative and possible consequential impacts of development, infrastructure and associated activities on the OUV as material considerations in determining all applications, benchmarked on the date of inscription of the property in 1981;

For proposals that are considered under the EPBC Act, all relevant direct, indirect and cumulative impacts on Outstanding Universal Value of the GBRWHA will be formally assessed. The minister can have regard to the cumulative impacts of other actions if he or she considers them to be 'matters relevant' to a protected matter both when deciding to approve an action

and when determining the conditions to attach to an approval. Australian law requires that the potential impacts of any proposed action must be avoided wherever possible, and that unavoidable or residual impacts be mitigated and offset. A project will only be approved if the residual impacts on protected matters, including Outstanding Universal Value, are determined by the minister to be not unacceptable.

DSEWPaC has reviewed its internal administrative procedures to ensure that all relevant elements of the Outstanding Universal Value of the GBRWHA are considered explicitly in the assessment of individual projects referred under the EPBC Act, to support robust and transparent decision making. Additional work is also being undertaken by the State Party to provide further information about the condition of the property at the date of inscription in 1981, as a benchmark for current and future assessments.

Industry proponents are also increasingly considering the combined, cumulative and possible consequential impacts of development, infrastructure and associated activities on the Outstanding Universal Value of the GBRWHA. A leading example of this is the draft Cumulative Impact Assessment (CIA) for the Port of Abbot Point which has been undertaken voluntarily by industry proponents in close consultation with regulatory bodies.¹⁹

Abbot Point Cumulative Impact Assessment

The preparation of the Abbot Point CIA report has brought together multiple project proponents to assess a range of port-related impacts from a whole of port development perspective; collectively this provides a useful 'building block' towards a more comprehensive assessment of a wider range of cumulative impacts. Issues including threats to Outstanding Universal Value are addressed in the draft CIA report. The assessment has involved:

- working with experts to better understand the world heritage attributes and Outstanding Universal Value relevant to the Abbot Point project
- identifying a conservation objective for world heritage that explicitly states the aim to ensure no loss in Outstanding Universal Value or decline in integrity through the construction and operation of the port
- identifying conservation objectives for the marine environment, the Caley Valley wetland, and key species that aim to protect attributes and ensure ongoing use, and
- assessing potential impacts in a cumulative manner within this context and recommending avoidance, mitigation, management and restoration measures to achieve the conservation objectives.

¹⁹ <http://abbotpointworkinggroup.com.au/download.html>

The assessment considered issues in relation to Outstanding Universal Value, including: integrity—both in a reef-wide and local context, and world heritage obligations—protection, management, presentation, transmission and rehabilitation.

The methodology adopted in the Abbot Point CIA may have applicability elsewhere across the World Heritage property and consideration is being given to how it could be used by other proponents and in other locations.

c. Detailed assessment of alternative options for all aspects of a development proposal, including supporting infrastructure and activities. This assessment should consider in detail the environmental, social and economic costs and benefits and lead to a clear indication of the net benefit of the development to the values and integrity of the property.”

At the referral stage, every proponent proposing to undertake an action is requested to provide a detailed description outlining any feasible alternatives to taking the proposed action (including not taking the action) that were considered but are not proposed. Proponents are also requested to describe any alternatives related to the physical location of the action, time frames within which the action is proposed to be taken and alternative methods for undertaking the action.

Proponents are advised at the time of referral that if the action proposed to be taken is determined to be a controlled action, any alternative locations, time frames or activities that are identified at the time of referral may be subject to environmental assessment and a decision on whether or not to approve the alternative.

Guidelines for formal assessment documents (such as Environmental Impact Statements) often require alternatives to be addressed. For larger, more complex proposals this normally includes not just alternatives to the overall proposal, but also to particular elements of it. For example, the assessment documentation may outline different methods for sourcing power for a development (i.e. sourcing power from an external provider or onsite generation of power). This would enable consideration of which option is the most suitable in terms of environmental and other relevant impacts.

In deciding whether to approve an action, and what conditions to attach to an approval, under section 136 1 (b) of the EPBC Act the Australian Government environment minister must consider, amongst other things, ‘economic and social matters’.

Recommendation 8: Precaution in decision-making regarding development proposals

“Adopt the highest level of precaution in decision-making regarding development proposals with potential to impact the property, and to prevent any approval of major projects that may compromise the outcomes of the Strategic Assessment, until the Strategic Assessment is completed and its resulting plan for the long-term sustainable development for the property has been considered by the World Heritage Committee. During this period, the State Party is requested to ensure no developments are permitted which create individual, cumulative or combined impacts on the OUV of the Great Barrier Reef World Heritage area and its long-term conservation”

See the State Party’s response to decision paragraph five of the World Heritage Committee’s decision in section 1.2 above which outlines the measured and cautious approach the Australian and Queensland governments are taking to coastal developments both within and adjoining the property.

Recommendation 9: Outstanding Universal Value as a central element

“Ensure all components of the OUV of the Great Barrier Reef are a clearly defined and form a central element within the protection and management system for the property as well as the catchments and ecosystems that surround it. The OUV of the property should be a principal reference for all plans and legislation relating to the protection and management of the property as a whole, and in particular for legislation in relation to development within or in areas adjacent to the property. All the elements that constitute the OUV of the property should be included in the framework for future monitoring and reporting on the State of Conservation of the property to the World Heritage Committee”

The State Party has taken innovative steps to describe and benchmark the Outstanding Universal Value of the property, to incorporate it into management systems and make central to environmental impact assessments, and to provide further information about the Outstanding Universal Value of the GBR to the public. This range of work will ensure that the Outstanding Universal Value of the property is more clearly defined and forms a central component of protection and management of the property, as requested by the World Heritage Committee. Specific actions include:

- commissioning expert research into aesthetic and geological values of the GBR and gathering historical data in relation to baseline condition of the property at the time of listing

- developing advice for proponents and departmental assessment officers in relation to how impacts to Outstanding Universal Value should be considered in assessment processes under the EPBC Act
- incorporating Outstanding Universal Value explicitly into the terms of reference of the strategic assessments
- undertaking a preliminary assessment of the current condition and trends for elements that collectively comprise the Statement of Outstanding Universal Value for the entire GBRWHA.

GBRMPA proposes to amend the legislation for the GBR Marine Park such that future GBR Outlook Reports will report on heritage, including Outstanding Universal Value.

These initiatives are described in more detail in response to the Committee's recommendation paragraphs five and seven, and mission recommendation nine.

Recommendation 10: Targets for improving the State of Conservation

“Develop and adopt, at the level of the Ministerial Forum, clearly defined and scientifically justified targets for improving the State of Conservation of the OUV of the Great Barrier Reef World Heritage Area, including for enhanced resilience of the property, and in particular for the conservation, and where necessary restoration, of the inshore areas of the property that are under greatest pressure. All plans, policies and development proposals affecting the property should demonstrate a positive contribution to the achievement of those targets”

See the State Party's response to paragraph eight of the World Heritage Committee's decision in section 1.2 above.

Recommendation 11: Independent review of institutional and legal mechanisms

“Commission an independent review, undertaken by internationally recognized and widely respected scientific experts, of the overall institutional and legal mechanisms that provide coordinated planning, protection and management of the Great Barrier Reef World Heritage Area as a whole. The results of the review should be reported to the Great Barrier Reef Ministerial Forum and provide input to the Strategic Assessment to which the State Party has committed. The review should address enhancement of the implementation of the Great Barrier Reef Intergovernmental Agreement, assessment of the effectiveness of legal protection, institutional and management planning arrangements for the property, and include specific attention to the areas of the property which are not managed by the Great Barrier Reef Marine Park Authority, as well as all adjacent marine, coastal and land areas. This review should be provided for consideration at the 37th session of the World Heritage Committee and subsequently lead to the implementation of concrete measures to address identified weaknesses, under the scrutiny of the Great Barrier Reef Ministerial Forum”

The terms of reference for the strategic assessments provide for an independent review of the respective management effectiveness of the Queensland Government's coastal planning framework and the GBRMPA's management arrangements in protecting matters of national environmental significance including Outstanding Universal Value.

The comprehensive strategic assessment will examine the effectiveness of planning, legislative, management and institutional arrangements to protect matters of national environmental significance including the Outstanding Universal Value of the GBRWHA. The assessments will consider how existing legislation, policies, plans, programs, environmental assessment processes and planning tools contribute to the protection and enhancement of these values. Together, the strategic assessments will consider how these arrangements apply to the GBR region as well as adjacent areas of the Queensland coastal zone.

If the assessment identifies that matters of national environmental significance, including the Outstanding Universal Value of the world heritage property, are not being protected adequately, then recommendations will be made for changes to the Queensland Government's and/or the GBRMPA's planning and management regimes.

If the comprehensive strategic assessment identifies the need for further research or review of these matters, this additional work will be captured through the development of the long term sustainable development plan.

Past reviews of the GBR Marine Park Area and GBRMP Act

In undertaking the strategic assessment, the State Party will also have reference to extensive reviews which have previously been conducted into management of the marine park elements of the GBR, including:

- the 'Whitehouse Report'—*A Review of the Great Barrier Reef Marine Park Authority: Report to the Commonwealth Department of the Environment, Sport and Territories* in 1993
- a review of the GBRMP Act in 1996 which led to a number of changes to the Act
- an Australian National Audit Office review of Commonwealth management of the GBR in 1997, which was subject to a follow-up audit in 2003
- a further review of the GBRMP Act in 2006 (discussed below), and
- an independent review of management effectiveness undertaken to inform the GBRMPA's 2009 Great Barrier Reef Outlook Report.

A further update of the review of management effectiveness will be undertaken to inform the next Outlook Report due in 2014.

The 2006 review of the GBRMP Act considered the regulatory and governance structures required for the continued protection, conservation and sustainable use of the GBR over the ensuing 30 years.²⁰ Key recommendations which were implemented included:

- a statutory requirement for a regular and reliable means of assessing long-term performance in the protection of the Marine Park in an accountable and transparent manner, through the delivery of a peer-reviewed Outlook Report

²⁰ <http://www.environment.gov.au/coasts/gbr/publications/gbr-marine-park-act.html>

- the configuration of the Authority to be consistent with the review of Corporate Governance of Statutory Authorities and Office Holders executive management structure
- an improvement in collaborative arrangements between the Australian and Queensland governments in the management of the GBR by:
 - establishing a comprehensive intergovernmental agreement, and
 - strengthening the Ministerial Council as a forum to provide policy and broad oversight.

GBR Intergovernmental Agreement and Ministerial Forum

The GBR Intergovernmental Agreement was established in 1979 and updated in 2009, building on a solid foundation of over 30 years of the Australian and Queensland governments working together to achieve the best possible outcomes for the GBRWHA. The GBR Intergovernmental Agreement also reaffirmed the role of the GBR Ministerial Forum to provide high level oversight of the management of the GBRWHA. The Ministerial Forum will continue to provide high-level oversight of the management and policy arrangements for the GBRWHA, including of the comprehensive strategic assessment and preparation of a long term sustainable development plan. The Ministerial Forum met in December 2012 to consider key issues and agreed that it would meet on a twice-yearly basis until the conclusion of the comprehensive strategic assessment.

Recommendation 12: Resource allocation

“Ensure increased resources from both State and Federal Governments for the protection and management of the property, in particular to cover growing costs associated with effective responses to key threats and increasing demand for use of both within the property and its adjacent areas that affect it. Resources allocated to the research, monitoring and surveillance of the property should consistently reflect the actual increase of costs associated with such activities”

See details of resource allocation provided above in the State Party’s response to paragraphs three and eight of the World Heritage Committee’s decision in section 1.2 above and in chapter two of this report.

Recommendation 13: Integrated approach to ports and shipping

“Develop a fully integrated approach to the planning, regulation and management of ports and shipping activity affecting the property, including via Shipping Policy for the property, the proposed Ports Strategy of Queensland, and individual Port Plans, that will ensure that ports and shipping activity does not negatively impact the OUV, including the integrity, of the property, and meets the highest international standards in its planning, regulation, assessment and operation”

The State Party is committed to ensuring that ports and shipping activity will be managed so as to preserve the integrity of the GBRWHA. The State Party is taking a number of steps towards establishing a fully integrated and international best-practice approach to the planning, regulation and management of ports and shipping activity, including through the North-East Shipping Management Plan currently under development and the recently agreed National Ports Strategy, both of which are detailed below.

The State Party is pleased that the mission report noted strong evidence of competent and effective leadership in management of shipping, and recognised the active role Australia has taken in pursuing international regulation of shipping activities through the use of international instruments such as the Particularly Sensitive Sea Areas scheme, as outlined below.

Integrated management of shipping in the GBR

The 2012 State Party Report described shipping management arrangements in the GBR. Key aspects of the existing, stringent management regime include:

- compulsory and recommended pilotage in designated areas
- a monitoring, surveillance and mandatory ship reporting system
- a vessel traffic system including mandatory requirements for vessels to carry automatic identification systems
- restrictions of vessel movements to designated shipping areas and defined traffic routes
- an enhanced system of navigational aids and a differential GPS service, and
- the provision of emergency towage capability and incident response assets and services.

The 2012 report also noted the expected increase in shipping activity in the GBR over the next two decades in response to high overseas demand for bulk commodity exports such as coal. More up-to-date figures on projected shipping activity are now available and are outlined in the State Party's response to decision paragraph five above. Updated estimates indicate much lower expected increase than was anticipated in the 2012 report.

North-East Shipping Management Plan

The development of the North-East Shipping Management Plan (NESMP) is an important measure for promoting the long-term best practice management of shipping in the GBRWHA, Torres Strait region and Coral Sea.

Shipping safety measures in the GBR are generally managed through the North-East Shipping Management Group, the members of which are:

- Australian Maritime Safety Authority (AMSA)
- Maritime Safety Queensland (MSQ)
- Great Barrier Reef Marine Park Authority (GBRMPA)
- Australian Government Department of Infrastructure and Transport (DIT)
- Australian Government Department of Sustainability, Environment, Water, Population and Communities (DSEWPaC)
- Australian Government Department of Resources, Energy and Tourism (DRET), and
- Australian Government Department of Agriculture, Fisheries and Forestry (DAFF).

The North-East Shipping Management Group is responsible for developing the North-East Shipping Management Plan (NESMP), and is working closely with industry and other stakeholders to ensure that decisions about the safety of shipping into the future will meet community expectations, including protecting the marine environment and supporting sustainable economic growth.

The NESMP will assess whether the current safety and management measures for the region will be effective in 10–20 years time if shipping activity continues to increase. The NESMP will focus on issues directly related to the safety of shipping, such as navigation, routing, and water-space management. It will also address issues that prevent or mitigate ship-sourced pollution and other environmental impacts, including emergency towage vessels and zoning. Additional or enhanced measures will also be identified that may help in the future to maintain shipping safety and further protect the environment. This assessment will be informed by independent experts engaged by the AMSA.

While it is intended that the NESMP will be a 'living' document and reviewed regularly by the Management Group, the first version of the NESMP will be finalised during the first half of 2013. The NESMP will be a key input to, and complement, the comprehensive strategic assessment of the GBR and will directly consider shipping-related risks to the Outstanding Universal Value of the GBRWHA.

International obligations in regulating shipping

The GBR Marine Park was declared a Particularly Sensitive Sea Area (PSSA) in 1990 by the International Maritime Organisation (IMO). A PSSA is an area that needs special protection because of its significance for recognized ecological, socio-economic or scientific reasons and which may be vulnerable to damage by international maritime activities. When an area is approved as a PSSA, specific measures can be used to control the maritime activities in that area, such as routing measures, and strict application of discharge and equipment requirements for ships.²¹ The designation of the GBR Marine Park as a PSSA has been very important in enabling the State Party to deliver appropriate regulation of shipping for the property.

As a party to almost all of the IMO's international conventions, Australia regulates shipping activities in accordance with treaties such as the UN Convention on the Law of the Sea, the Safety of Life at Sea Convention and the International Convention for the Prevention of Pollution from Ships (MARPOL). The Australian Maritime Safety Authority (AMSA) is responsible for the application and enforcement of MARPOL in areas of Commonwealth jurisdiction (i.e. three nautical miles to the limit of the 200 nautical mile Exclusive Economic Zone).

²¹ <http://www.imo.org/ourwork/environment/pollutionprevention/pssas>

A range of Commonwealth legislation gives effect to the IMO's international conventions to which Australia is a party including:

- *Navigation Act 2012 and Navigation (Consequential Amendments) Act 2012*
- *Marine Safety (Domestic Commercial Vessel) National Law Act 2012 and Marine Safety (Domestic Commercial Vessel) National Law (Consequential Amendments) Act 2012*
- *Protection of the Sea (Prevention of Pollution from Ships) Act 1983*
- *Protection of the Sea (Harmful Anti-fouling Systems) Act 2006*
- *Protection of the Sea (Powers of Intervention) Act 1981*

Integrated management of ports

National Ports Strategy

The Australian Government's approach to future port planning and development is set out in the National Ports Strategy, which was endorsed by the Council of Australian Governments in 2012.²² This approach is one of shared responsibility by governments at all levels and industry for the development of ports that are well planned, productive and sustainable.

Associated with the National Ports Strategy, the Australian Government has also implemented enhanced consultative mechanisms on ports-related issues, by engaging relevant agencies in ongoing discussions with Ports Australia, the association representing ports. The forum provides a vehicle for ports management and environmental issues to be discussed by government and industry, enabling all parties involved to work in partnership to deliver best-practice outcomes. The forum aims to balance the importance of continued development at ports to improve port performance with the need to ensure that high environmental standards are maintained.

A key aspect of the National Ports Strategy is to encourage best practice in long-term integrated master planning for ports precincts and to guide future planning for, and development of, freight and port infrastructure. Master planning provides a strategic framework for port authorities to consider a range of external factors, including environmental considerations, that impact on the current and future function of ports. Master plans for ports may differ according to the individual circumstances and functions of each port; however best practice master planning incorporates long-term (up to 50 year) forecasts for trade (including associated land transport connections), and identifies timeframes for development of port expansion as well as processes for ongoing community consultation.

Environmental management forms a key part of the strategic framework for port operations and therefore will be considered as part of the master planning process.

²² http://www.ntc.gov.au/filemedia/Reports/Nat_Ports_StratCOAGFinal2012.pdf

Best-practice guidelines for port master planning are currently under development. These guidelines will be based on case studies provided by Ports Australia, and on forecasting and indicators expertise provided by the Bureau of Infrastructure, Transport and Regional Economics. This project will involve significant consultation with the ports industry and governments and is expected to be a key input to the GBR comprehensive strategic assessment.

The Queensland Government's Great Barrier Reef Ports Strategy

The Queensland Government is developing a Great Barrier Reef Ports Strategy which will also provide an input to the Queensland comprehensive strategic assessment.²³ Details regarding the Queensland Government's GBR Ports Strategy consultation document have been provided in the State Party's response to the Committee's recommendation paragraph five above. The Queensland Government has stated that it will restrict significant port development, within and adjoining the GBRWHA, to within existing port limits for the next 10 years.

As noted above in response to paragraph six of the World Heritage Committee's decision, the GBR coastal zone strategic assessment will consider the Queensland Government's strategy for port developments in the GBR region.

Recommendation 14: Sharing success stories

"The mission recommends the State Party to strengthen the sharing of its best practices and success stories, in particular those related to the spatial and temporal management for tourism, recreation and fishing, the framework developed for surveillance, compliance and monitoring of the property as well as the community engagement programmes, with other World Heritage sites facing similar management challenges but lacking the capacity to deal with them. Recognising the excellence of many aspects of the management of the property that is derived from over 35 years of experience, this support should enhance the leadership role of the State Party to support World Heritage Sites to be drivers for positive change globally, and in excellence in marine protected area management in particular"

Leadership role

Australia is actively engaged in sharing lessons learnt from management of the GBR to assist managers of other world heritage properties, particularly marine properties facing similar management challenges. The approach currently being finalised by IUCN for preparing 'Conservation Outlook Assessments' for all natural world heritage sites drew upon some of the lessons learnt from the 2009 Outlook Report.

²³ <http://www.dsdip.qld.gov.au/resources/plan/great-barrier-reef-ports-strategy.pdf>

Increased understanding of Outstanding Universal Value

The GBRMPA's approach to breaking down a statement of Outstanding Universal Value to its component elements to assist in better understanding and prioritising management actions has been a key component of two marine world heritage workshops attended by various international site managers within the last twelve months.

GBRMPA's hosting of ICRI

Australia, through the GBRMPA, is hosting the Secretariat of the International Coral Reef Initiative (ICRI) in partnership with the Government of Belize for 2012–2013. This partnership is an occasion for both countries to share experiences and lessons learnt in management of a World Heritage listed reef system. Although ICRI is an informal group whose decisions are not binding on its members, its actions have been pivotal in continuing to highlight the importance of coral reefs and related ecosystems to environmental sustainability, food security and social and cultural wellbeing globally.

Australia's hosting of ICRI provides an excellent opportunity to showcase GBRMPA's role in coral reef management. It is also an opportunity for Australia to support countries whose communities depend on reefs to improve or enhance their coral reef management regimes.

For example, the \$34 000 ICRI grants program, funded by AusAID and administered by the GBRMPA/ICRI Secretariat, is resourcing small communities in four developing countries to actively protect coral reefs, thereby contributing to the protection of coral reefs around the world and supporting people who depend on them. The four projects, all run by local community groups, include fishermen surveys in Egypt, a review of the effects of Community Conserved Areas on coral reefs in Kenya, restoration from the devastation of the 2009 tsunami in Samoa, and crown-of-thorns starfish eradication in Micronesia.²⁴

Another example of GBRMPA's role internationally is the successful delivery of a workshop on Management Effectiveness during ICRI's 27th meeting of its members in Cairns in July 2012. Fifty participants from 20 countries considered how they might assess the effectiveness of protected area management in a way that engages indigenous and local communities, as well as other stakeholders, and how to use the results to adapt and improve management action. Delegates were also able to learn about the GBRMPA's Reef Guardian stewardship program during a field visit which showcased positive environmental actions by local government, fishers, farmers and school students.

ICRI's synergies with AusAid Caribbean Program

The ICRI Secretariat will be working closely with the AusAID funded Australian-Caribbean Collaboration on the Climate Change and Coral Reef program, also led by the GBRMPA, during the remainder of its Australia-Belize hosting period. The program was designed to share Australia's expertise in climate change adaptation and coral reef management to address some of the key challenges identified in the Caribbean.

²⁴ <http://www.icriforum.org/node/981>

International Coral Reef Symposium

The 12th International Coral Reef Symposium (ICRS), sponsored by the Australian and Queensland governments, was held in Cairns Queensland from 9–13 July 2012. The ICRS brought together the world's leading natural scientists, resource managers, conservationists, economists, educators and graduate students to progress coral reef science, management and conservation.

As part of the ICRS, GBRMPA ran a mini-symposium titled *Managing coral reef ecosystems under a changing climate*. The mini-symposium provided a valuable opportunity for managers, scientists and conservation practitioners from around the world to share climate change management knowledge. Presentations covered key themes including management planning to support resilience, climate adaptation case studies, and policy development and communications. Presenters discussed current knowledge, lessons learnt and what opportunities had come to light in their efforts to tackle these complex problems. A range of management and scientific research areas were covered, ranging from emerging initiatives to established programs. While the main purpose of the mini-symposium was to bring together climate change science and reef management experts to present their work under a common theme, the session also provided an opportunity to develop a community of practice among the participants and their networks.

A consensus statement on Climate Change and Coral Reefs highlighted the grave threat that climate change poses globally to all coral reefs and called on governments to act to address both the causes of climate change and to improve local protection of coral reefs worldwide.²⁵

Living with World Heritage in Africa

A senior DSEWPaC representative gave a presentation to the *Living with World Heritage in Africa* conference, which took place from 26–29 September 2012 in South Africa. The conference was organised to celebrate the 40th anniversary of the UNESCO World Heritage Convention, and focused on the theme 'World Heritage and Sustainable Development: the role of local communities.' The presentation provided an overview of Australia's management of its World Heritage properties, and included a detailed case study on management issues in relation to the GBR and Australia's response, including progress to date on the comprehensive strategic assessment.

Asia-Pacific Economic Cooperation Tourism Working Group

Australia, along with Chile and Russia, is currently sponsoring a project on the 'Sustainable Development of Tourism Destinations' which seeks to identify best practice for the adoption of sustainable tourism principles by tourism businesses and destinations, ultimately promoting certification/accreditation systems.

²⁵ <http://www.icrs2012.com/Default.htm>

Final statement

“Finally the mission recalls the obligation of the State Party to report to the World Heritage Centre any new plans and proposals for developments that may impact the OUV of the property, consistent with paragraph 172 of the Operational Guidelines to the World Heritage Convention, and prior to their determination. This has been done regularly by the State Party since the 35th Session of the Committee, and the mission notes that in future, and at least until the World Heritage Committee has considered the completed Strategic Assessment and the resulting long term plan for the sustainable development of the property at its 39th session in 2015, these reports should additionally include an executive summary detailing the outcomes of the assessments mentioned in Recommendation 9 of the mission report and confirming that the proposal will not individually or cumulatively impact on the OUV of the property. The report to the 39th session of the World Heritage Committee should be supported by a further World Heritage Centre/IUCN monitoring mission to the property”

Since commencing reporting in October 2011, the State Party continues to provide regular notification to the World Heritage Centre of proposed developments being assessed for their potential impact on the world heritage values of Australia’s world heritage properties. Since September 2012, the State Party includes in its report the outcomes of assessments. For projects that have been approved, this includes links to detailed documentation outlining strict conditions for approval. The State Party will continue to provide this additional information throughout the duration of the strategic assessment. Further information is found in chapter three of this report.

The State Party is currently improving processes to ensure Outstanding Universal Value is central to the consideration of impacts of proposed projects assessed under the EPBC Act. Please refer to the State Party’s response to recommendations seven, eight and nine for further detail of how the State Party is integrating Outstanding Universal Value into protection and management systems and taking a highly precautionary approach to decision making.

Chapter 2—Other current state of conservation issues identified by the State Party

The 2012 State Party Report summarised management arrangements for the property and highlighted key examples of adaptive management since 1981. Management of the property is continually improving and adapting to new information. A number of improvements have been made during the last twelve months in addition to those outlined in chapter one of this report. Updates on key management issues and responses are set out below.

Climate change

Coral reefs globally are highly vulnerable to the impacts of future climate change, including coral bleaching and other effects of increased temperature, and ocean acidification.

- Under the **Great Barrier Reef Climate Change Action Plan 2007–2012**, the management agencies responsible for the GBR have contributed significantly to the development of international best practice for managing climate change issues as they relate to coral reefs.²⁶ Key achievements are highlighted in the review publication *Climate Change Adaptation: Outcomes from the Great Barrier Reef Climate Change Action Plan 2007–2012*.²⁷
- The new **Great Barrier Reef Climate Change Adaptation Strategy and Action Plan 2012–2017** was released on 6 December 2012.²⁸ The plan outlines the vision for ongoing efforts to help the GBR, its industries and communities adjust to a changing climate. Through it the Australian Government is committing to a program of activity that will improve the outlook for the GBR.
- The Australian Government is building a **Clean Energy Future** through a comprehensive plan to cut pollution, introduce a carbon price, invest billions of dollars in renewable energy, transform the energy sector away from high polluting sources such as brown coal, and store millions of tonnes of carbon in the land through better land management.²⁹
- The **Carbon Farming Initiative** (CFI) is a carbon offsets scheme that provides new economic opportunities for farmers, forest growers and land managers while also helping the environment by reducing carbon pollution.³⁰ Farmers and land managers can generate credits that can then be sold to other businesses wanting to offset their own carbon pollution. The CFI is a carbon offsets scheme that is part of Australia's carbon market.

26 http://www.gbrmpa.gov.au/__data/assets/pdf_file/0020/4493/climate-change-action-plan-2007-2012.pdf

27 <http://elibrary.gbrmpa.gov.au/jspui/handle/11017/1139>

28 <http://hdl.handle.net/11017/198>

29 <http://www.cleanenergyfuture.gov.au/>

30 <http://www.climatechange.gov.au/cfi/>

- **ReefTemp Next Generation** is a system based on new high-resolution satellite sea surface temperature products developed at the Bureau of Meteorology and is due for operational release in December 2012.³¹ It is being developed in the Centre for Australian Weather and Climate Research under eReefs.³² Sea surface temperature monitoring provides tools to understand and better manage the complex interactions leading to coral bleaching. When bleaching conditions occur, these tools can be used to trigger bleaching response plans and support appropriate management decisions.
- Work on one of Australia's largest roof-mounted solar power projects commenced at **Reef HQ Aquarium** during 2011–12. When complete, it is expected to result in a 260 tonne reduction in carbon dioxide emissions per year. The solar array will offset the aquarium's overall energy requirements by 25–30 per cent. Reef HQ Aquarium's primary business principle is to demonstrate the GBRMPA's commitment to adopting environmentally-friendly practices, minimising its environmental impacts and encouraging others to reduce their ecological and climate footprints.

Crown-of-thorns starfish

There is strong evidence that poor water quality resulting from floods and extreme weather events in the summers of 2009 to 2011 have created conditions which have resulted in crown-of-thorns starfish numbers increasing at some locations in the GBR. Crown-of-thorns starfish outbreaks are a matter of serious concern for the overall health of the GBR and its capacity to recover from disturbances, particularly given the cumulative impacts of declining water quality and climate change. To support the resilience and diversity of the GBR, short and long-term strategies that target the immediate crown-of-thorns starfish problem and the underlying causes are underway.³³

- The Australian Government has invested **\$2.13 million to control crown-of-thorns starfish** in high value tourism sites. The starfish are killed by injecting sodium bisulphate, a swimming pool chemical that is lethal to the starfish but doesn't have other unintended environmental impacts. The program was announced in June 2012 and has focussed on the tourism hotspots of Cairns/ Port Douglas and the Whitsundays.
- The GBRMPA, the Australian Institute of Marine Science and James Cook University are investigating the feasibility of intervention options for the outbreaks. The Australian Government has invested **\$400 000 from the National Environmental Research Program in research to improve understanding the role of water quality in initiating outbreaks**. As part of this research, pilot studies for new methods of control are also being undertaken. Currently, the most promising technique is one in which divers make a single injection of a protein mixture into each starfish, causing a fatal reaction within 24 hours. If it proves safe to use in the marine environment, this technique would be much faster and more efficient than the current technique which involves administering multiple injections to each starfish.

31 http://www.cmar.csiro.au/remotesensing/reeftemp/web/ReefTemp_Research.htm

32 http://www.bom.gov.au/environment/eReefs_Infosheet.pdf

33 <http://www.gbrmpa.gov.au/about-the-reef/animals/crown-of-thorns-starfish>

- The Queensland Government is investing **\$1 million to control crown-of-thorns starfish** through the skilling queensland program. This program provides a range of activities including job preparation, work placement and accredited training to assist local long-term unemployed jobseekers. Work placement participants assist in a small scale control of the crown-of-thorns starfish infestation on selected and popular coral reefs.

Water quality

Approximately 90 per cent of the nutrient, sediment and pesticide pollutants entering the GBRWHA come from non-point sources arising from agricultural land-use activities in adjoining catchments.

- For details regarding the **Reef Plan**, see the State Party's response to decision paragraph three, Chapter 1.
- A comprehensive assessment of the **coastal ecosystems**, which play such a fundamental role in buffering the water quality impacting on the GBR, has been undertaken and was released on 25 October 2012 in a report titled '*Informing the Outlook for Great Barrier Reef Coastal Ecosystems*'.³⁴ The report defines coastal ecosystems based on their ecological functions and how these support the health and resilience of the Great Barrier Reef.
- The **eReefs information system** will provide tools to quantify, analyse, forecast and visualise changes in a range of water quality parameters.³⁵ eReefs is a collaboration between the Great Barrier Reef Foundation, Bureau of Meteorology, CSIRO, Australian Institute of Marine Science, and Queensland Government. Products and services will be released over the coming four years that will significantly increase the access to water quality information for reef managers. In 2013, the Marine Water Quality Dashboard will be delivered through the Bureau of Meteorology. This online dashboard, the first significant product to be operational, will present remote-sensed data over the entire GBRWHA, giving managers direct access to current and past information on a range of parameters such as chlorophyll, temperature, suspended solids and coloured dissolved organic matter.
- The scheduling (putting into regulation) of **Environmental Values and Water Quality Objectives** (derived from Queensland and GBR water quality guideline trigger values) has been completed for the Townsville area and the Mackay Whitsunday region and is in draft form for the Capricorn Coast region.³⁶ These objectives require all developments affecting water quality to provide mechanisms to achieve specific water quality standards.
- A review of **Water Quality Improvement Plans**, first introduced into the GBR catchment in 2003, has begun in the Mackay Whitsunday Region. This review will assess progress towards the Plan's region specific targets, which underpin the broader Reef Plan and Reef Rescue targets.
- The Australian Government's Australian Pest and Veterinary Management Authority released a **Diuron Review Findings Report** in September 2012.³⁷ This report proposes reducing Diuron use in a number of ways and across a number of industries. Diuron is the most prevalent herbicide found in the GBR and this action may significantly reduce its use.

³⁴ <http://www.gbrmpa.gov.au/outlook-for-the-reef/great-barrier-reef-coastal-ecosystems>

³⁵ <http://www.bom.gov.au/environment/activities/coastal-info.shtml>

³⁶ <http://www.ehp.qld.gov.au/water/policy/>

³⁷ http://www.apvma.gov.au/products/review/docs/diuron_review_report.pdf

Coastal development

The comprehensive strategic assessment is the primary way in which the State Party is addressing the pressures of coastal development on the GBRWHA, including by improving the integration of management and planning, and addressing the cumulative impacts of coastal development on the property. A range of other steps have also been taken since the last State Party Report was prepared.

The previous State Party Report (2012) detailed the Queensland Government's planning framework for the GBR coastal zone, in particular the Queensland State Coastal Plan and associated State Planning Policies. The Queensland State Coastal Plan has two parts: the State Policy for Coastal Management developed under the *Coastal Protection and Management Act 1995* and the State Planning Policy 3/11 Coastal Protection (SPP 3/11) developed under the *Sustainable Planning Act 2009*. Since the preparation of the State Party Report (2012), the Queensland Government has introduced a number of significant planning reforms, with further reforms flagged to occur in 2013. For further information on changes to Queensland's coastal planning framework, refer to the State Party's response to decision paragraph five.

- The Queensland Government has commenced work on new **statutory regional plans for the Central Queensland and Cape York regions**. Statutory Regional Plans provide a framework to respond to and plan for a broad range of existing and emerging regional opportunities and challenges including economic, environmental and social matters. There are a range of other existing regional plans adjacent to the GBRWHA (e.g. Far North Queensland and Mackay, Isaac and Whitsundays Regional Plans).
- The Queensland Government has released a **land use map** of the area adjacent to the GBR.³⁸ This snapshot of the GBR's catchment areas details what each square kilometre of land is used for. It will be used to improve planning of development through strengthening understand of changing land use patterns.

Fishing

Fishing on the GBR is an important pastime and a source of income for both Queensland coastal communities and the Queensland seafood industry, and is subject to ongoing adaptive management to ensure continuing sustainability of GBR fisheries.

Netting

- The Queensland Government commenced work on buying out some net fishery licences in 2012 and will continue this process until 2014. As an election commitment, a **\$9 million buyback of netting licences** is being conducted in the East Coast Inshore Fin Fish fishery. Licences that allow the use of large mesh nets are the priority for the first round of buybacks. The objectives of the buyback scheme are to:
 - improve recreational fishing
 - reduce the impacts of netting on species of conservation interest
 - improve the economic viability of commercial fishers
 - minimise the community's loss of access to local fish in stores and restaurants, and

³⁸ <http://www.derm.qld.gov.au/science/lump/index.html>

- achieve positive environmental outcomes.

Trawling

- The GBRMPA, Fisheries Queensland and the Queensland Seafood Industry Association have been working together to develop an **Ecological Risk Assessment of the East Coast Trawl Fishery in the Great Barrier Reef**.³⁹ The assessment of available ecological information indicates that under current practices and effort levels, overall ecological risks from trawling in the GBR are relatively low. The assessment has also built understanding of the few remaining risks (such as to sea snakes) and is informing risk management and monitoring.
- A **climate change vulnerability assessment** of the East Coast Otter Trawl Fishery has also been published by GBRMPA, and key stakeholders have been engaged in a climate change adaptation planning process.⁴⁰
- A major review of the **Fishery Management Plan** for the trawl fishery by Queensland is underway.⁴¹ The review will consider issues of sustainability, profitability and social responsibility and will focus on the development of improved management arrangements. The review has been informed by the findings of the ecological risk assessment of the East Coast Otter Trawl Fishery and by a Fisheries Research and Development Corporation project led by CSIRO that defined management objectives and reviewed governance arrangements for the fishery.

Line fishing

- A **vulnerability assessment for coral trout** is being developed by GBRMPA in response to concerns, following the extreme weather events of 2010–11, about where fishing is taking place and how much effort is being applied. A stock assessment for coral trout by the Queensland Department of Agriculture, Fisheries and Forestry is also nearing completion. A management strategy evaluation for the fishery is being developed through a CSIRO—Fisheries Research and Development Corporation project.

Harvest fisheries (collecting)

- Negotiation is underway with industry to continue the **voluntary moratorium on coral collection** at the Keppel Islands group under the ProVision Reef Stewardship Action Plan. A comprehensive Ecological Risk Assessment to address the Convention on International Trade in Endangered Species (CITES) non-detriment principle is planned for mid-2013 as a collaborative effort between Fisheries Queensland and the GBRMPA.

39 <http://www.gbrmpa.gov.au/about-the-reef/how-the-reefs-managed/fisheries-in-the-marine-park/east-coast-otter-trawl-fishery/ecological-information-on-the-east-coast-otter-trawl-fishery>

40 A.K. Morison & R.J. Pears, 'Assessment of the ecological vulnerability of the East Coast Otter Trawl Fishery to climate change: a brief synthesis of information and results of an expert workshop' GBRMPA, 2012. <http://hdl.handle.net/11017/522>

41 http://www.daff.qld.gov.au/28_15487.htm

Ports and shipping

- The GBRMPA is preparing a **Ports Position Statement** which aims to establish ecologically sustainable management frameworks and incorporate best practice management techniques to minimise environmental impacts from ports. It will undergo targeted consultation with GBRMPA's Regional Advisory Committee's and key stakeholders prior to incorporation into the draft strategic assessment for broader public comment.
- The GBMPA has developed guidelines on the use of **hydrodynamic numerical modelling for dredging projects in the GBR Marine Park**.⁴² The guidelines will provide a framework for effective application of modelling in the Marine Park and will assist in the prediction of potential impacts associated with dredge plumes.
- eReefs is developing a **whole-of-GBR receiving waters model**, to place the local models used for assessing the impacts of ports and other developments into a whole-of-GBR context. The model will also make it possible to begin assessing the cumulative impacts of a range of port developments occurring at or around the same time.
- The GBRMPA has developed a **Ports and Shipping Information Sheet** to inform stakeholders and the general public about the role of ports and shipping in the GBR region and how GBRMPA is meeting the challenges of managing an ecologically sustainable multiple-use Marine Park.⁴³
- The Australian Transport Safety Bureau (ATSB) released a report into **Queensland coastal pilotage** in October 2012. The report highlighted issues resulting from individual pilot contractors being accountable for managing safety risks associated with pilotage operations.⁴⁴ The report also identified issues in relation to pilot training, fatigue management, incident reporting, competency assessment and use of coastal vessel traffic services. The ATSB investigation was commenced in December 2010 on the request of AMSA, following the release of a report into the grounding of a piloted tanker in the Torres Strait. Since 2010, AMSA has significantly reformed coastal pilotage regulation and has taken action in response to all the issues identified by the ATSB. Working closely with pilots and pilotage providers, AMSA is on track to implement the report's three recommendations by 2013, including assigning overall responsibility of risk management of pilotage to pilotage providers.

For further details of management activities in relation to ports and shipping, see response to decision paragraphs five and six and mission recommendation 13.

42 <http://hdl.handle.net/11017/970>

43 <http://hdl.handle.net/11017/969>

44 http://www.atsb.gov.au/publications/investigation_reports/2010/mair/282-mi-2010-011.aspx

Biodiversity protection

Protection of the important biodiversity values of the GBR is a key and ongoing objective of both the Australian and Queensland governments, including through the development of a draft GBR Biodiversity Conservation Strategy.

- The Australian Government announced the **Coral Sea Commonwealth Marine Reserve** in November 2012.⁴⁵ The Coral Sea marine reserve abuts the entire eastern edge of the GBRWHA, making the combined area one of the largest marine protected areas in the world, covering 1.3 million square kilometres. The declaration of a Coral Sea marine reserve offers substantial additional protection for the integrity of the property.
- The **Great Barrier Reef Biodiversity Conservation Strategy 2012** has been developed by GBRMPA to respond to pressures identified in the *GBR Outlook Report 2009* and to ongoing biodiversity declines.⁴⁶ The strategy provides a framework for improving biodiversity conservation throughout the GBR region. It has been developed in consultation with Australian and Queensland government agencies, researchers, industry representatives and conservation groups. The strategy's approach includes continuing to foster industry and community stewardship of the GBR, building ecosystem resilience in a changing climate and improving our knowledge to make more informed decisions.

45 <http://www.environment.gov.au/coasts/mbp/reserves/coralsea-region.html>

46 <http://www.gbrmpa.gov.au/about-the-reef/biodiversity/biodiversity-conservation-strategy-for-public-consultation>

Great Barrier Reef Biodiversity Conservation Strategy 2012

The Great Barrier Reef Biodiversity Conservation Strategy 2012 was released for a six-week public consultation period ending on 28 September 2012. The strategy provides a framework for improving biodiversity conservation in the GBR region. It has been developed in consultation with Australian and Queensland government agencies, researchers, industry representatives and conservation groups. The strategy's approach includes continuing to foster industry and community stewardship of the GBR, building ecosystem resilience in a changing climate and improving our knowledge to make more informed decisions.

This strategy establishes a process for determining and documenting the habitats, species and groups of species that are potentially 'at-risk'. Vulnerability assessments are being completed to identify actions to reduce the threats and pressures facing at-risk biodiversity. Identifying priority habitats and species is vital when managing such a large, complex ecosystem as it allows resources to be directed to where help is most needed.

The habitats considered to be potentially at-risk are coral reefs, islands, the lagoon floor, mangroves and associated estuarine ecosystems, open waters and seagrass meadows. The species or species groups considered to be potentially at-risk are the dwarf minke whale, dugong, grey mackerel, holothurians (sea cucumbers, in particular the black teatfish), humpback whale, inshore dolphins, king and blue threadfin salmon, marine turtles, seabirds, sea snakes, sharks and rays (including sawfish) and snapper.

In developing the strategy it became clear that inshore habitats along the developed coast and many of the species that rely on them are impacted by a range of threats. These include declining water quality due to catchment run-off, loss of habitat due to coastal and port development and climate change, and loss of connectivity through fragmentation and modification of ecosystems. Illegal fishing and poaching are also having some impact.

While there have been large-scale projects to better understand the biodiversity and habitats of the GBR and significant programs addressing water quality and specific inshore species, there is an urgent need to systematically address the cumulative impacts on inshore biodiversity. A key proposal of the strategy is to establish an integrated inshore biodiversity program to focus on these threats and to set priorities to restore degraded habitats and re-establish the connectivity and function of coastal ecosystems.

- A recent study by the Australian Institute of Marine Science (AIMS) on the decline of corals observed a 50 per cent reduction in hard coral cover since 1985 which was attributed to storms and cyclones (48 per cent), coral predation by crown-of-thorns starfish (42 per cent), and coral bleaching (10 per cent).⁴⁷ The findings reinforce the importance of initiatives being undertaken to improve water quality to reduce the risk of future crown-of-thorns starfish outbreaks which are closely linked to excess nutrient runoff. Both governments have committed to continuing efforts to ensure the quality of water entering the reef from adjacent catchments has no detrimental effect on the health and resilience of the GBR.
- Recent research based on bathymetry and habitat modelling suggests that there may be up to 14 000 square kilometres of **deep reef habitat** suitable for coral growth (compared to about 16 000 square kilometres of shallow habitat)⁴⁸. However, these deeper reef habitats (between 30–150 metres) have much lower coral species diversity and typically have low coral cover when compared to shallower reefs. These deep reef habitats are poorly studied and certainly not monitored in the way that shallow reef habitats have been to date. Consequently there is no information on whether or not deep reef habitats have suffered a coral decline similar to that of their shallow counterparts. It is reasonable to suggest that deep reef habitat is less vulnerable to some impacts, particularly coral bleaching and storm damage. Consequently deep reef habitats may prove to be important refugia for some coral species from future impacts driven by climate change.
- In conjunction with the Biodiversity Conservation Strategy, GBRMPA is developing comprehensive **vulnerability assessments** which identify elements of biodiversity that need specific attention and actions to address them.⁴⁹ These assessments document the status of species and ecosystems in and adjacent to the GBR, the ecosystem services they provide, the pressures they are experiencing, how they are managed, and actions or potential actions that may maintain their health and resilience. Twelve vulnerability assessments have been completed to date (including seagrass, shorebirds, sharks and rays, inshore dolphins) and others are currently being developed.
- The GBRMPA report *Informing the Outlook for Great Barrier Reef Coastal Ecosystems* identifies how coastal ecosystems have been modified since European settlement in the catchment and the implications for inshore ecosystems and species in the GBRWHA. The report also documents changes in land use and for example identifies that the footprint of urban expansion in the GBR catchment, while small, has generally doubled in areas south of Cooktown in the last decade. The work to develop the report also provides a framework for assessing the cumulative impacts of coastal development on Great Barrier Reef ecosystems and species. This provides a process which can be repeated for future assessments to quantify changes against this baseline.

47 De'Ath et al, 'Expand+The 27-year decline of coral cover on the Great Barrier Reef and its causes' *Proceedings of the National Association of Science of the United States of America*, October 1, 2012. <http://www.pnas.org/content/early/2012/09/25/1208909109>

48 Harris et al. 2012, 'Submerged banks in the Great Barrier Reef, Australia, greatly increase available coral reef habitat'. *ICES Journal of Marine Science*, November 2012. doi:10.1093/icesjms/fss165

49 <http://www.gbrmpa.gov.au/about-the-reef/biodiversity/biodiversity-conservation-strategy-for-public-consultation/vulnerability-assessments>

- The **Eye on the Reef** program incorporates surveys by field staff with data collected by researchers, the tourist industry and stakeholder observations, to detect and assess impacts from a range of pressures including: extreme weather events, warm-water bleaching, disease, flood plumes, crown-of-thorns starfish and vessel groundings. The integrated database, mapping and reporting system is undergoing final testing and will enable a wide range of users to contribute to GBR management through:
 - reef health status reporting
 - reef-wide early warning system
 - reef-wide and local incident response, and
 - increased stewardship.
- Several Queensland Government agencies and institutions have adopted **incident response structures and processes** to improve investigation of major turtle and dugong mortalities in 2011 and 2012. Turtle deaths in 2011 and 2012 were very high along the Queensland coast, particularly in the southern half of the GBR. Much of the mortality is associated with starvation following depleted sea grass in the wake of extreme weather events. Other factors include netting, boat strikes and suspected toxic effects. Numbers of dugong deaths in 2012 are lower than 2011, but surveys indicate that there are significantly fewer dugong left in the southern GBR area.⁵⁰
- The Queensland Government has developed a new database called **Strandnet** to manage marine wildlife stranding data and improve determinations of the cause of death for turtles and marine mammals.⁵¹
- New **oiled wildlife response equipment** has been strategically placed to assist trained staff along the GBR coast to respond to oil spill threats.
- A new **seabird monitoring strategy** targeting high priority species and issues has been developed and is being implemented. The new strategy is informed by analysis of the GBR Seabird Atlas which revealed declining seabird breeding in several seabird species and research observations of poor breeding during warm water events.
- The **Reef HQ Aquarium Turtle Hospital** continues to be highly successful. The hospital operates under and promotes the C.A.R.E (Conserve. Act. Rehabilitate. Educate.) philosophy, playing a key role in raising community awareness in relation to threatened species and encouraging behavioural change that will benefit these species. Since opening in August 2009 over 60 000 people have visited the turtle hospital and 125 marine turtle have been cared for.

50 <http://www.nerptropical.edu.au/article/news/aerial-survey-shows-dugong-decline>

51 <http://www.ehp.qld.gov.au/wildlife/caring-for-wildlife/strandnet-reports.html>

Tourism

Tourism and recreation are primary uses of the GBRWHA, contributing more than \$5 billion annually to the national economy.

- The GBR was officially launched as a **National Landscape** on 2 March 2012.⁵² Australia's National Landscapes Program is a partnership between tourism and conservation, co-managed by Tourism Australia and Parks Australia. A regional Steering Committee is chaired by Tourism Queensland with members from GBRMPA, Queensland Parks and Wildlife Service, and representatives from the tourism industry and the conservation sector. The GBR is an important addition to the suite of Australia's National Landscapes as it represents one of Australia's most iconic natural environments and a globally recognised tourism destination. It is expected that the National Landscapes program will significantly contribute to reinvigorating tourism on the reef.
- **Marine Tourism Coordination Framework for Environmental Incidents** is a joint initiative between relevant government agencies and industry associations. When an incident occurs, the Coordination Framework provides for a Tourism Incident Response Group, comprised of representatives from the government agencies and industry associations, who will:
 - assess the incident
 - identify joint actions
 - implement a Joint Response Plan, and
 - evaluate the response.

The GBRMPA is the Coordinator for the Tourism Incident Response Group. The Coordination Framework has been approved, and the designed product is being finalised and should be available on the GBRMPA website this year.

- **Marine Tourism Contingency Plan for the GBR Marine Park** was released in 2004. The Plan sets out how the GBRMPA can assist individual tourism operators who are impacted by a severe environmental incident. The 2004 Plan focused on temporarily relocating these tourism operations to another location within a Planning Area. The revised draft policy:
 - clarifies the definition of a severe environmental incident
 - provides a greater range of responses to a severe environmental incident, and
 - where possible, provides for the continuity of tourism operations and commits to treating all valid marine park applications made under the policy with priority.
- This Plan was reviewed in 2011–12 and a revised draft policy on the Marine Tourism Contingency Plan is out for public comment until 5 December 2012. It is intended that comments will be incorporated and approval sought from the Marine Park Authority Board by April 2013.

52 <http://www.environment.gov.au/parks/national-landscapes/index.html>

- The GBRMPA encourages tourism operators to be involved in the **High Standard Tourism Program** where operators work to protect and present the reef. Operators must be independently assessed under Ecotourism Australia's ECO Certification Program as operating at the two highest levels of the Program: Ecotourism and Advanced Ecotourism to be recognised as high standard by the GBRMPA. In 2012, there are 58 high standard reef tourism operators, which carry over 60 per cent of all tourists who visit the GBR.
- The GBRMPA has developed **factsheets to assist tourism operators** to reduce their emissions and adapt to climate change. The factsheets contain case studies outlining how some tourism operators have reduced their emissions.⁵³

Recreation

Recreation is one of the major uses of the GBR. It is estimated that there are over 14 million recreational visits to the Marine Park by GBR catchment residents every year, plus visits by free and independent travellers from outside the catchment (including grey nomads/retirees and cruising yachties).

- The GBRMPA has developed a **Recreation Management Strategy** which provides an overarching framework for managing recreation by the GBRMPA.⁵⁴
- An **analysis of recreational vessel registrations** is currently being drafted by GBRMPA. The analysis will inform the GBRMPA report 'Patterns of Recreational Vessel Registration for the Great Barrier Reef', which is a work in progress. Assessing change in recreational vessel registrations is critical in identifying areas of the GBR Marine Park, and sizes and types of vessels, which may require dedicated management consideration now, or in the future.

Island Management

There are some 1050 islands and cays within the GBRWHA, many of which have important biodiversity, cultural or historic values. The majority of these islands are managed by Queensland Government agencies.

- Implementation of the **Raine Island Adaptation Plan** has begun with island works including fencing, barriers and deflectors to lower deaths of adult breeding female green turtles. Remote camera and sensors have also been installed to monitor fauna and environmental parameters.
- A NERP project is underway to determine **priorities for island management** in the face of climate change and other threats. This comprises adaptation planning for islands with a plan in place for one key island and other plans in preparation.
- **Passive acoustic monitoring for seabird nesting** is being trialled for species that are difficult to monitor using standard methodology.
- **Remedial works** have been undertaken to repair infrastructure damaged by a series of recent cyclones, particularly Cyclone Yasi.

⁵³ <http://www.gbrmpa.gov.au/our-partners/tourism-industry/tackling-climate-change>

⁵⁴ <http://www.gbrmpa.gov.au/about-the-reef/how-the-reefs-managed/recreation-in-the-great-barrier-reef-marine-park>

- **Fire management and activities to control pest plants and animals** are ongoing. A small set of priority conservation projects include the eradication of black rats from the Boydong Islands, a 90 per cent reduction in lantana infestations on Wuthara Island NP Cape York Peninsula Aboriginal Land, guinea grass control on Lizard Island, feral goat eradication on South Percy Island and the removal of a large proportion of goats from St Bees Island.

Indigenous Partnerships

In December 2008, the Australian Government under the Caring for our Country initiative, committed \$10 million over five years towards the Reef Rescue Land and Sea Country Indigenous Partnerships Program. The program, administered by the GBRMPA, engages Indigenous communities located along the GBR in the management and sustainability of the region's marine resources. The program includes:

Traditional Use of Marine Resources

Traditional use of marine resources agreements (TUMRA) may include activities that are identified as part of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people's customs or traditions, for the purposes of satisfying personal, domestic or communal needs. In addition to specific management strategies for the sustainable use of species, other TUMRA activities may include: cultural heritage mapping/surveys; protection, research and monitoring of sea country; compliance, leadership and knowledge management; and education, information exchange and language mapping on sea country.

- Six formal **Traditional Owner management agreements** now cover 42 860 square kilometres of GBR sea country and involve 14 Traditional Owner groups. The five TUMRA and one Indigenous Land Use Agreement (ILUA) cover approximately 21.55 per cent of the Queensland coastline that is within the GBR Marine Park.
- Since the initial commencement of the Caring for our Country—Reef Rescue Initiative in 2008, the GBRMPA has **expanded its engagement on TUMRA** from four groups (Girringun, Woppaburra, Mamu & Wuthathi) to eleven groups (Yuku-Baja-Muliku, Lama Lama, Umpila, Port Curtis-Coral Coast, Yirrganydji, Pul Pul—including Kuuku Ya'u ILUA).
- In addition to the formal TUMRA pathway, a further four Traditional Owner groups Yirrganydji, Gimuy Yidinji, Gunggandji and Eastern Kuku-Yalanji (representative of multiple Traditional Owner groups) are now involved in either a TUMRA development or sea country planning process (supported by the small grants program).

Enhanced compliance

- Two Indigenous Community Compliance Liaison Officers continue to work closely with Elders, Indigenous rangers, Indigenous Shire Councils and other members of the Indigenous communities to address poaching and other illegal activities that are of concern to Traditional Owners. These positions coordinate delivery of 'Eye's and Ear's Compliance Training'. This training assists Traditional Owners understand:
 - how different users can utilise the Marine Park and what the zoning means for them
 - how Native Title works with the zoning and other marine legislation
 - how to identify local issues/risks, and
 - how to identify stakeholders/knowing who to contact if they suspect illegal activity.
- During 2010–12, over 240 Traditional Owners from 28 Groups have received the Compliance Training. This up skilling has created a pathway over the last 12 months for 36 Indigenous community rangers to participate, as equal land and sea managers, on nine formal patrols, logging 23 patrol days, under the Field Management Program (2011–12).

The **Reef Rescue Land and Sea Country Indigenous Partnerships Program** also supports:

- A **small grants program** representing twenty three projects focused on the management of natural and cultural values across all four marine park management areas. Grant recipients will complete their projects by 30 June 2013.
- A **sponsorship program** providing an opportunity for GBR Traditional Owners to be more involved in sea country management. The sponsorship program has provided support to approximately 75 Traditional Owners to share and increase their knowledge and skills base in sea country management.
- The **Sense Activity (Leadership) Pilot Project** in Rockhampton has focused on Indigenous male students and is based on sensory activities where the student group can learn holistically from Traditional Owners, GBRMPA and QPWS about the protection and conservation of land and sea country.
- An **Indigenous Women's Gathering** was held in September 2012 to better understand women's roles in land and sea management.
- Reef Rescue funding support has increased **Traditional Owner representation on Local Marine Advisory Committees** along the GBR coast from one Local Marine Advisory Committee (Cape York) to six (Cape York, Cairns, Cassowary Coast, Hinchinbrook, Gladstone, Burnett).
- A successful **GBR Sea Country Photographic Competition** provided an important avenue for the community to communicate Indigenous sea country management initiatives such as TUMRA, Reef Rescue Grants and Compliance Projects. Another aim of the competition was to foster awareness about Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Traditional Owners, their sea country areas and the ways they contribute to the management of the GBR. The photographs were promoted through an exhibition at Reef HQ aquarium, enabling visitors to better understand and appreciate the traditional customs that continue to be practiced by Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples today.

- An update of GBRMPA's 2005 **GBR Heritage Strategy** is underway; this will recommend a much greater focus on Indigenous heritage given the greater recognition now provided by the 2009 amendments to the GBRMP Act and the recently approved Statement of Outstanding Universal Value for the GBRWHA.
- The Australian Government, with the support of the Queensland Government, is currently working to develop a **world heritage nomination for areas of Cape York Peninsula**. The boundaries of a future world heritage nomination will depend upon Traditional Owner consent and on where cultural and natural values are identified and considered to be of Outstanding Universal Value.

Historic cultural heritage

- The Queensland Department of Environment and Heritage Protection is coordinating a survey of historic shipwrecks along the Queensland coast, including the GBR. **The Queensland Historic Shipwreck Survey** seeks to update the official records in the Australian National Shipwreck Database (ANSDB) to provide a comprehensive online resource, and enhance public information and management of the state's estimated 1300 historic shipwrecks.⁵⁵ To date, 1071 records have updated as part of the survey. Funding support is provided through the Australian Government's Historic Shipwrecks Program.⁵⁶
- Over the last twelve months work has also focused on assessing the **impacts of Cyclone Yasi** on far northern historic shipwrecks including SS Yongala, which suffered increased deterioration due to storm damage. Researchers from James Cook University have also been involved with this assessment.
- DSEWPaC is assisting the GBRMPA to develop a more comprehensive **database and Geographic Information System for cultural heritage** located within the marine park. Historic shipwreck information from the ANSDB is being made available to GBRMPA through the Historic Shipwrecks Program.⁵⁷
- The GBRMPA is currently developing an **on-line 'heritage register'** to meet its legislative requirements under EPBC Act; this is expected to be publicly available by early 2013.

⁵⁵ <http://www.ehp.qld.gov.au/heritage/archaeology/initiatives.html#shipwrecksurvey>

⁵⁶ <http://www.environment.gov.au/heritage/shipwrecks/database.html>

⁵⁷ <http://www.environment.gov.au/heritage/shipwrecks/program/index.html>

Reef Guardians stewardship program

The GBRMPA's Reef Guardians program recognises the good environmental work undertaken by communities and industries to protect the GBR.⁵⁸ The program involves working closely with those who use and rely on the reef or its catchment to help build a healthier and more resilient reef. The program began with schools in 2003 and has expanded to include around 10 per cent of the entire population within the GBR catchment. It has now been further expanded to other sectors of the community such as councils, fishers and farmers. Recent achievements of the program include:

- The **Reef Guardian Farmer and Graziers pilot programs** have been finalised in the cane, banana and grazing sectors.
- The **Reef Guardian Fishers pilot programs** have been finalised in the reef line and marine aquarium fish and coral collection sectors.
- **Electronic data collection devices** have been trialled by Reef Guardian Fishers in the inshore gillnet fishery.
- Action plans have been received from all 13 **Reef Guardian Councils**. This included over 920 projects in the areas of land management, waste management, water management, climate change, community education and capacity building.
- A **new catchment council** has been added to the Reef Guardian Councils program, bringing the total number of Reef Guardian Council to 14.
- **Reef Guardian School students** are currently undertaking over 1600 projects in their schools and local communities in the areas of waste management, water management, biodiversity/land management and climate change mitigation and adaptation.
- Thirty-five **Future Leaders Eco Challenges** involving over 1500 students were held in the GBR catchment, enabling students and teachers to participate in local environmental projects aimed at improving catchments, water quality, sustainability and reef health.

Defence activities

- The existing **Management Agreement** between Defence and GBRMPA on environmental management of Defence activities in the GBRWHA is currently being updated and is expected to be finalised in early 2013.
- Defence is updating its internal **Strategic Environmental Assessment of Defence Activities** in the GBRWHA. Defence is currently scoping a review of the existing strategic assessment. The scope of works for the review was put out to tender in October 2012 and due for commencement in December 2012. It will integrate with the GBRMPA strategic assessment currently underway.
- Defence has provided \$40 000 to assist **with strategic research on dugongs, turtles and seagrass** in Shoalwater Bay.

⁵⁸ <http://www.gbrmpa.gov.au/our-partners/reef-guardians>

Scientific research

- GBRMPA is updating its **Scientific Information Needs for Management of the GBRMP** as a key input to the development of an integrated monitoring framework for the GBRWHA (2012–13).⁵⁹
- Various significant **research projects** have recently been published, including:
 - Research shows that no-take green zones can help to restock exploited fish populations on neighbouring reefs which are open to fishing. Using DNA finger-printing technology, scientists tracked the dispersal pathways of larval and juvenile coral trout and stripey snappers from the green zones where they spawned. A very large proportion were found to have settled on adjacent reefs that were open to fishing, up to 30 kilometres from where they spawned.⁶⁰
 - Research shows the number of dugong in the southern GBR was the lowest since surveys began in 1986 (about 500–600 animals compared with previous estimates in the order of 2000–2500 animals). No calves were seen in the surveys during the 2011 surveys indicating a reduction in fertility in response to the extreme weather in 2011 which exacerbated a decline in their seagrass feeding grounds over several years.⁶¹
 - Research has found that corals are responding to rates of warming of the oceans in accordance with predictions. In particular, corals at the southern end of their range (in cooler waters) are showing signs of increased growth rates as waters warm due to climate change.⁶²
- The five-year **eReefs** project commenced in January 2012. eReefs will provide vital tools for decision making and communication across the GBR region from catchment to ocean, as well as across space and time.⁶³ eReefs uses the latest technologies to collate data, develop new and integrated modelling and provide powerful visualisation, communication and reporting tools. eReefs is a collaboration between the Great Barrier Reef Foundation, the Bureau of Meteorology, CSIRO, AIMS and the Queensland Government. It will develop four main packages to assist research and management:
 - enhancing monitoring efforts
 - interoperable data and information systems
 - operational catchment and marine modelling, and
 - reporting and visualisation framework.

59 <http://hdl.handle.net/11017/968>

60 Harrison, H.B., Williamson, R.D.E., Almany, G.R., Thorrold, S.R., Russ, G.R., Feldheim, K.A., van Herwerden, L., Planes, S., Srinivasan, M., Berumen, M.L. and Jones, G.P. 2012, Larval export from marine reserves and the recruitment benefit for fish and fisheries, *Current Biology* 22(11): 1023–1028. <http://www.sciencedirect.com/science/article/pii/S0960982212003958>

61 Sobtzyk, S., Hagihara, R., Grech, A. and Marsh, H. 2012, *Aerial survey of the urban coast of Queensland to evaluate the response of the dugong population to the widespread effects of the extreme weather events of the summer of 2010–11. Final report to the Australian Marine Mammal Centre and the National Environmental Research Program*, James Cook University, Townsville, Queensland. <http://www.nerptropical.edu.au/publication/aerial-survey-urban-coast-queensland-evaluate-response-dugong-population-widespread>

62 Cooper, T.F., O'Leary, R.A. and Lough, J.M. 2012, Growth of Western Australian Corals in the Anthropocene, *Science* 335 (6068): 593–596. <http://www.sciencemag.org/content/335/6068/593.abstract>

63 <http://www.bom.gov.au/environment/activities/coastal-info.shtml>

- The Australian Government is investing \$29.2 million over four years to promote sustainable development in high growth regions across Australia through the **Sustainable Regional Development program**.⁶⁴ The focus of the program is protection of matters of national environmental significance, and it is to be delivered through regional sustainability planning in selected high growth regions.
- The Australian Government's **NERP** will provide up to \$68.5 million in funding over four years to December 2014 for applied, public good research.⁶⁵ The largest of the five NERP hubs, the **Tropical Ecosystems Hub** is addressing issues of concern for the management, conservation and sustainable use of the GBR and its catchments; tropical rainforests including the Wet Tropics World Heritage Area; and the terrestrial and marine assets underpinning resilient communities in the Torres Strait.⁶⁶
 - Almost \$384 000 of that investment is supporting a research project at the AIMS, focusing on understanding GBR diversity which includes analysis of 27 years of AIMS research, to help identify and quantify the main forms of environmental pressures imposed on the coral reefs and seafloor communities of the GBR.
 - Another major output of this project is a recently released research paper from AIMS detailing the decline of coral cover on the GBR over the last 27 years. The paper highlighted crown-of-thorns starfish as one of the leading causes for coral decline.
 - NERP funding is also supporting an AIMS project: *Monitoring status and trends of coral reefs of the Great Barrier Reef*. This has a total value of \$1 861 889, including \$725 000 from the NERP.
 - Funds of \$400 000 from the NERP's Emerging Priorities stream has been given to AIMS to undertake research on crown-of-thorns starfish outbreaks, including investigating the feasibility of direct intervention options for outbreaks. Part of this work will enable scientists at James Cook University to trial a new method of more rapidly destroying the crown-of-thorns starfish.

⁶⁴ <http://www.environment.gov.au/sustainability/regional-development/index.html>

⁶⁵ <http://www.environment.gov.au/biodiversity/science/nerp/>

⁶⁶ <http://www.nerptropical.edu.au/research>

Compliance

- During 2011–12, the compliance activities of the **Field Management Program** have included:
 - more than 1440 dedicated compliance vessel patrol days in the GBR by a range of government agencies
 - over 560 marine park and island national park incidents detected in the GBRWHA, resulting in 75 prosecutions with advisory letters remaining the most common compliance outcome
 - 125 pollution and shipping incidents including small vessels reported in or adjacent to the GBRWHA, and
 - a range of fines have been imposed by the courts, including one operator fined \$31 000 for three offences and another \$7500 for one offence.
- The previous State Party Report included information about the grounding of the **Shen Neng 1** in the southern part of the GBR. In October 2012, the second-in-charge, who was in control of the vessel at the time of the incident, lost his marine license and was sentenced to 18 months imprisonment, to be released after three months on a two-year good behaviour bond. In November 2012, the ship master, who had pleaded guilty to the charge of causing damage to a marine park, was ordered to pay a \$25 000 fine.
- An **enhanced intelligence database** has been implemented. The database effectively integrates data sourced from information reports, incident reports, post-patrol reports and Border Protection Command sightings to improve understanding of ongoing problems and emerging compliance trends within the GBR Marine Park.
- GBRMPA and the Queensland Government work together to **collect and enforce court-imposed fines**. This ensures there is a consequence for an offender who is prosecuted by the court. The capacity to do this was enhanced by proactively changing legislation.
- The capacity to make formal applications to criminal courts to **impose additional sanctions** on offenders being placed before the court has also been enhanced. This involves undertaking research to enable the impending application of the ‘three strikes and you’re out’ legislation for an offender prosecuted and convicted in court.
- Legislation has recently been amended so those responsible for causing damage to the GBRWHA (particularly coral damage) can be required to pay for costs such as **remediation**. Civil compliance actions in relation to damage to the GBR Marine Park have commenced.
- Administrative compliance actions to **stop and or prevent damage to the GBRWHA** have been undertaken, including actions to remove non-permitted/non-compliant structures such as moorings from the GBRWHA. A number of non-compliant structures have now been removed.

Chapter 3—Notification of proposed developments

Assessment of proposed developments under Australia’s environmental legislation

The Australian Government’s primary environmental legislation, the EPBC Act, requires that proposals that are likely to have a significant impact on matters of national environmental significance, including Outstanding Universal Value, undergo a rigorous assessment and approval process. Potential impacts on Outstanding Universal Value are assessed regardless of whether the proposed action is within or outside of the boundary of a world heritage property. There are significant penalties, including fines and imprisonment, for taking an action that might impact on a matter that is protected under the Act without approval.

The length of time it takes to assess a proposed development varies depending on the complexity and magnitude of the proposal, the availability of required data, and the assessment approach decided by the Australian Government environment minister. Due to the level of detailed consideration involved, assessment under the EPBC Act often takes up to twelve months or more. An overview of the process, including the different forms of assessment that may be applied to a proposed action, is illustrated in the EPBC Act environment assessment process flowchart at Appendix 7.

Actions can be assessed using one of the following assessment methods:

- accredited assessment
- assessment on referral information (assessment done solely on the information provided in the referral form)
- assessment on preliminary documentation (referral form and any other relevant material identified by the minister as being necessary to adequately assess a proposed action)
- assessment by environmental impact statement (EIS) or public environment report (PER), or
- assessment by public inquiry.

The EPBC Act sets out the process and timing requirements for each type of assessment, as summarised in the EPBC Act environment assessment process flowchart.

Once an assessment is complete, the minister may decide to approve the proposed action, refuse the proposed action or approve the proposed action with conditions designed to mitigate any impacts. Proposals will not receive approval unless the impacts on a protected matter are assessed as not unacceptable, and are consistent with the long-term protection of the property. Rigorous conditions can be set to minimise the level of impact.

When deciding if a proposed action should be approved, and if approved what conditions to impose, the minister will consider the impacts of the proposed action on matters protected by the EPBC Act and other economic and social matters. The minister takes into account the following:

- the principles of ecologically sustainable development
- the results of the assessment of the impacts of the proposed action, including the recommendations of the secretary of the federal environment department and including impacts on the Outstanding Universal Value of the property
- referral documentation
- community and stakeholder comments
- relevant comments from other Australian Government and state and territory government ministers
- social and economic matters, and
- any other relevant information available on the impacts of the proposed action.

The minister may also take into account the environmental history of the individual or company proposing to take the action, including the environmental history of the executive officers of companies, and parent companies and their executive officers.

Conditions imposed when the minister approves an action are strictly monitored and enforced. Conditions can include the requirement for substantial financial contributions to be made to restore or maintain protected matters in the area of the proposed activity.

EPBC Act reform

On 31 October 2008 the Australian Government environment minister commissioned an independent review of the EPBC Act. Section 522A of the EPBC Act requires it to be reviewed every 10 years from its commencement. The review was undertaken by Dr Allan Hawke. After extensive consultation, the review was delivered to the minister on 30 October 2009.⁶⁷

On 24 August 2011 the Australian Government environment minister released the government response to the independent review of the EPBC Act as part of a broad package of reforms for Australia's national environment law.⁶⁸ Announcing the reform package the minister said that these reforms would:

- deliver better environmental protection focusing on whole regions and ecosystems and faster environmental assessments
- provide a consistent national approach to environmental impact assessments that removes duplication, and
- provide better upfront guidance on legislation requirements, with more long-term certainty and transparency.

67 <http://www.environment.gov.au/epbc/review/publications/pubs/final-report.pdf>

68 <http://www.environment.gov.au/epbc/publications/pubs/epbc-review-govt-response.pdf>

As part of its work to implement this reform package, the Australian Government has been leading a national reform process to deliver a simpler environmental protection system that has clearer standards and gives faster decisions to ensure our nation has a both a resilient environment and a strong economy.

In December 2012, the Council of Australian Governments (COAG) re-affirmed its commitment to broad environmental regulation reform that enhances efficiency and increases certainty for business, while maintaining high environmental standards. COAG is the peak intergovernmental forum in Australia comprised of the Prime Minister of Australia, all State and Territory Premiers and Chief Ministers and the President of the Australian Local Government Association. In its meeting, COAG noted that the Commonwealth will introduce legislative reforms to progress its response to the Hawke review of the EPBC Act to further streamline and strengthen environmental regulation.

The EPBC Act reform process is rigorous and ongoing. Any changes to the environmental assessment process affecting world heritage matters will be reported to the World Heritage Centre through the State Party's regular quarterly notification process.

Summary of changes to the status of development proposals since the previous State Party Report

The previous State Party Report (2012) advised that there were 42 proposed developments being assessed for potential impacts on the area's world heritage values. Of these, 25 are still undergoing assessment, six have been withdrawn, two have lapsed and nine have been approved. In the interim timeframe between the production of this State Party Report and the previous one, one project was proposed and subsequently approved. Nineteen new proposals are being assessed for potential impacts on the area's world heritage values. There are currently 43 proposals being assessed for potential impacts on the area's world heritage values. Table 2 below provides an overview of these changes since the last report.

The information on proposed developments in this chapter is up-to-date as of **14 January 2013**. Subsequent changes to the status of proposed developments after this date will be captured as part of the State Party's regular quarterly notification process to the World Heritage Centre, with notification reports to be provided March and June 2013.

Table 2: Summary of changes to the status of development proposals since the previous State Party Report (current at 14 January 2013)

Type of Action	SPR 2012	Still under assessment	Withdrawn	Lapsed	Approved	New Proposals	Total Under Assessment
WITHIN WH PROPERTY							
LNG Processing Facilities and Associated Infrastructure	3	2*	1				2
Port Facilities and Dredging	8**	6	1		1	7	13
Tourism Developments	4	4				1	5
Aquaculture	1	1					1
OUTSIDE WH PROPERTY							
Mining and Extractive Industries	6	4			2	4	8
Processing Facilities and Infrastructure	2		2				
Transport Infrastructure (excluding port facilities)	1		1			4	4
Pipelines	1		1		1***	1***	
Water Treatment Facilities and Water Supply Infrastructure	9	5			4		5
Tourism Developments	4	2		1	1	1	3
Agricultural Developments	1	1					1
Residential Developments	2			1	1	1	1
TOTAL	42	25	6	2	10***	19***	43

* Two referrals were originally made by Arrow LNG, one for an LNG treatment facility and one for an associated pipeline. These were reported in the 2012 State Party Report. There has since been a change of proponent from Arrow LNG to Shell CSG (Australia) Pty Ltd and these proposals are being assessed as a single project. Links to documentation are provided below.

** In the previous State Party Report, the Wongai underground coal mine project was reported under both *port facilities and dredging*, and *mining and extractive industries*. To avoid duplication, this project is now solely reported under *mining and extractive industries*.

*** A new proposal to construct a pipeline was declared a controlled action and approved in the timeframe between the publishing of the previous State Party Report and this State Party Report. The status of the project was reported to the World Heritage Centre through the State Party's regular quarterly reporting.

The following sections of the report summarise all proposed developments **currently being assessed** for potential impacts on the area's world heritage values. This includes proposed developments previously reported in State Party Report 2012 which are still being assessed. The accompanying text provides information about changes to proposed developments since the State Party Report 2012—withdrawals, lapses, approvals and new proposals.

Summary of proposed developments *within* the Great Barrier Reef World Heritage Area

LNG processing facilities and associated infrastructure

A previously reported proposal by Santos Ltd to construct a bridge and road connecting the proposed liquefied natural gas facility on Curtis Island with the existing land road near Gladstone was withdrawn on 9 May 2012.

Table 3: Proposals for LNG processing facilities and associated infrastructure within the Great Barrier Reef World Heritage Area currently under assessment

Project	Links to further information
Shell CSG (Australia) Pty Ltd, Development of a Liquefied Natural Gas Facility	http://www.environment.gov.au/cgi-bin/epbc/epbc_ap.pl?name=current_referrals&limit=999999&text_search=2009%2F5007
Shell CSG (Australia) Pty Ltd, Development of high pressure gas pipeline	http://www.environment.gov.au/cgi-bin/epbc/epbc_ap.pl?name=current_referrals&limit=999999&text_search=2009%2F5008

Port facilities and dredging

A previously reported proposal by Hancock Coal Infrastructure Pty Ltd to construct and operate a coal terminal at the existing major port of Abbott Point was approved on 5 October 2012. The approval is with 60 strict conditions to protect matters of national environmental significance, including the development of a heritage management plan to 'maximise the ongoing protection and long term conservation of the outstanding universal value' of the GBRWHA.⁶⁹

The Australian Government has received seven new proposals for the development of port facilities and dredging activities which are being assessed for potential impacts on the area's world heritage values. These new proposals are all located within existing major ports. Three are located at Abbot Point—two for the construction and operation of new coal terminals (Waratah Coal Terminal and Adani Abbott Point Coal Terminal) and one to undertake capital dredging and dredge spoil disposal (Abbot Point Terminal 0, 2 & 3 capital dredging). Other new proposals in this category are:

- the expansion and operation of coal export facilities at Dudgeon Point (Dudgeon Point Port of Hay Point Expansion)

⁶⁹ <http://www.environment.gov.au/epbc/notices/assessments/2008/4468/2008-4468-approval-decision.pdf>

- the construction and operation of coal export facilities at Yarwun Coal Terminal in the Port of Gladstone (Tenement to Terminal Limited Development of the Yarwun Coal Terminal, Port Gladstone)
- dredging in Gladstone Harbour to duplicate the existing Gatcombe and Golding Cutting shipping channel (Gladstone Ports Corporation, Port of Gladstone Gatcombe and Golding Cutting Channel Duplication Project), and
- dredging of an existing shipping channel in the Port of Cairns Far North Queensland Ports Corporation Limited, Cairns Shipping Development Project.

The Multi Cargo Facility at Abbot Point was formally withdrawn on 21 December 2012.

Table 4: Proposals for port facilities and dredging within the GBRWHA

Project	Links to further information
Port of Townsville Limited, Port Expansion Project	http://www.environment.gov.au/cgi-bin/epbc/epbc_ap.pl?limit=999999&name=current_referrals&text_search=2011%2F5979
BHPB Abbot Point Coal Terminal 2	http://www.environment.gov.au/cgi-bin/epbc/epbc_ap.pl?name=current_referral_detail&proposal_id=6185
Hancock Prospecting Pty Ltd, Alpha Coal Project—Port Options Development	http://www.environment.gov.au/cgi-bin/epbc/epbc_ap.pl?name=current_referral_detail&proposal_id=4647
Queensland Curtis LNG Project-Swing Basin and Channel Dredging	http://www.environment.gov.au/cgi-bin/epbc/epbc_ap.pl?name=current_referral_detail&proposal_id=4406
Xstrata Coal Queensland Pty Ltd, Balaclava Island Coal Export Terminal	http://www.environment.gov.au/cgi-bin/epbc/epbc_ap.pl?limit=999999&name=current_referrals&text_search=2009%2F5158
Fitzroy Terminal Project Pty Ltd, Fitzroy Terminal Project	http://www.environment.gov.au/cgi-bin/epbc/epbc_ap.pl?name=current_referrals&limit=999999&text_search=2011%2F6069
Abbot Point Terminal 0, 2 & 3 Capital Dredging	http://www.environment.gov.au/cgi-bin/epbc/epbc_ap.pl?name=current_referral_detail&proposal_id=6213
Dudgeon Point Port of Hay Point Expansion	http://www.environment.gov.au/cgi-bin/epbc/epbc_ap.pl?name=current_referral_detail&proposal_id=6240
Waratah Coal Terminal	http://www.environment.gov.au/cgi-bin/epbc/epbc_ap.pl?name=current_referral_detail&proposal_id=6250
Tenement to Terminal Limited (3TL) Development of the Yarwun Coal Terminal, Port Gladstone	http://www.environment.gov.au/cgi-bin/epbc/epbc_ap.pl?name=current_referral_detail&proposal_id=6348
Adani Abbot Point Coal Terminal 0	http://www.environment.gov.au/cgi-bin/epbc/epbc_ap.pl?name=current_referral_detail&proposal_id=6194
Gladstone Ports Corporation, Port of Gladstone Gatcombe and Golding Cutting Channel Duplication Project	http://www.environment.gov.au/cgi-bin/epbc/epbc_ap.pl?name=current_referral_detail&proposal_id=6558
Far North Queensland Ports Corporation Limited, Cairns Shipping Development (Trinity Inlet) Project	http://www.environment.gov.au/cgi-bin/epbc/epbc_ap.pl?name=current_referral_detail&proposal_id=6538

Tourism developments

One new proposal has been received for a tourism development within the GBRWHA which is being assessed for potential impacts on the area's world heritage values. This is for a tourism and residential development located at Hummock Hill Island near Gladstone (Eaton Place Pty Ltd, Pacificus Tourism Project).

Table 5: Proposals for tourism developments within the GBRWHA

Project	Links to further information
GKI Resort Pty Ltd, Tourism & Marina Development	http://www.environment.gov.au/cgi-bin/epbc/epbc_ap.pl?name=current_referrals&limit=999999&text_search=2010%2F5521
Pathold No 84 Pty Ltd, Ecotourism resort on Wild Duck Island	http://www.environment.gov.au/cgi-bin/epbc/epbc_ap.pl?name=current_referrals&limit=999999&text_search=2008%2F3971
Laguna Pty Ltd resort expansion	http://www.environment.gov.au/cgi-bin/epbc/epbc_ap.pl?name=current_referral_detail&proposal_id=3580
Shute Harbour Marina Development Pty Ltd, Construction of Marina Facility	http://www.environment.gov.au/cgi-bin/epbc/epbc_ap.pl?name=current_referral_detail&proposal_id=2939
Eaton Place Pty Ltd, Pacificus Tourism Project	http://www.environment.gov.au/cgi-bin/epbc/epbc_ap.pl?name=current_referral_detail&proposal_id=6643

Aquaculture developments

There are no changes to the proposed aquaculture developments within the GBRWHA since the previous State Party Report.

Table 6: Proposals for aquaculture developments within the GBRWHA

Project	Links to further information
Coolgaree Aboriginal Corporation for CDEP, Palm Island Sponge Aquaculture Project	http://www.environment.gov.au/cgi-bin/epbc/epbc_ap.pl?name=current_referral_detail&proposal_id=3613

Summary of proposed developments *outside* the Great Barrier Reef World Heritage Area

Mining and extractive industries

A previously reported proposal by Bedrock Landscape Supplies Pty Ltd to construct and operate a staged sand extraction at Cape Cleveland was approved on 21 November 2012 with strict conditions.⁷⁰

The Australian Government has received four new proposals regarding mining and extractive industries which are being assessed for potential impacts on the area's world heritage values. Two are for the construction and operation of coal mines and associated infrastructure in the Bowen Basin (Harrybrandt Open Cut Coal Mine and Associated Infrastructure; and Grosvenor West Coal Project). Another is to expand the existing Sarsfield open cut gold mine in Ravenswood, 120 kilometres south of Townsville (Sarsfield Expansion).

The other new proposed development for a bauxite mine and port development on the western side of the Cape York Peninsula was referred in 2010 for assessment of potential impacts on listed threatened species and communities, listed migratory species and the Commonwealth marine area (RTA Weipa Pty Ltd, South of Embley Bauxite Mine and Port Development). In November 2011, the Australian Government environment minister received a request to reconsider the referral decision on the basis of new information presented in the draft EIS related to shipping activities through the GBR.

On 15 March 2012, the minister revoked the original referral decision for the bauxite mine and associated port and substituted it with one that takes impacts on the GBR into account. In making his decision, the minister considered advice from DSEWPaC, the GBRMPA, the proponent, and the submissions received during the public comment period on the reconsideration, which was open from 12–25 January 2012. The revised draft environmental impact statement was available for public comment between 19 November and 21 December 2012. At the time of printing, the proponent was preparing their final environmental impact statement that must address any relevant concerns raised through the public consultation period for submission to DSEWPaC. Once the final environmental impact statement is received the Australian Government environment minister will then have 40 business days to make a decision on whether or not this project is acceptable under national environmental law.

A previously reported proposal by GVK Hancock to construct and operate an open-cut coal mine and 495 kilometre railway line to Abbot Point was approved on 23 August 2012 with 19 strict approval conditions.⁷¹

70 <http://www.environment.gov.au/epbc/notices/assessments/2011/6072/2011-6072-approval-decision.pdf>

71 <http://www.environment.gov.au/epbc/notices/assessments/2008/4648/2008-4648-approval-decision.pdf>

Table 7: Proposals for mining and extractive industries outside the Great Barrier Reef World Heritage Area

Project	Links to further information
Xstrata Coal Queensland Pty Ltd, Rolleston Coal Expansion Project	http://www.environment.gov.au/cgi-bin/epbc/epbc_ap.pl?name=current_referral_detail&proposal_id=5965
Aust-Pac Capital, Wongai Underground Coal Mine Project, Queensland	http://www.environment.gov.au/cgi-bin/epbc/epbc_ap.pl?name=current_referral_detail&proposal_id=6092
Adani Mining Pty Ltd, Carmichael Coal and Rail Project	http://www.environment.gov.au/cgi-bin/epbc/epbc_ap.pl?name=current_referral_detail&proposal_id=5736
Waratah Coal, Incorporated Establishment of Galilee Coal Mine and Associated Infrastructure	http://www.environment.gov.au/cgi-bin/epbc/epbc_ap.pl?name=current_referrals&limit=999999&text_search=2009%2F4737
RTA Weipa Pty Ltd, South of Embley Bauxite Mine and Port Development , Cape York Qld	http://www.environment.gov.au/cgi-bin/epbc/epbc_ap.pl?name=current_referral_detail&proposal_id=5642
Sarsfield Expansion	http://www.environment.gov.au/cgi-bin/epbc/epbc_ap.pl?name=current_referral_detail&proposal_id=6062
Grosvenor West Coal Project	http://www.environment.gov.au/cgi-bin/epbc/epbc_ap.pl?name=current_referral_detail&proposal_id=6281
Harrybrandt Open Cut Coal Mine and Associated Infrastructure, Bowen Basin	http://www.environment.gov.au/cgi-bin/epbc/epbc_ap.pl?name=current_referral_detail&proposal_id=6483

Processing facilities and associated infrastructure

Chalco Australia's proposal for an alumina refinery and associated infrastructure at Abbot Point was withdrawn on 11 January 2012. LG Chem Ltd's proposal to construct a Chlor-Alkali/Ethylene Di-Chloride plant at Gladstone was withdrawn on 5 October 2012. There are no proposals for processing facilities and associated infrastructure outside the GBRWHA currently being assessed for potential impacts on the area's world heritage values.

Transport infrastructure (excluding port developments)

Chalco Australia's proposal for a transport corridor to link their proposed alumina refinery and associated infrastructure with port facilities at Abbott Point was withdrawn on 11 January 2012.

There are four new proposals for transport infrastructure that are being assessed for potential impacts on the area's world heritage values. Three are to provide transportation to the port of Abbot Point: the construction and operation of a new rail link from Goonyella (BHP Goonyella to Abbot Point Rail); the expansion of an existing railway from Goonyella (Aurizon (formerly QR Limited) Central Queensland Integrated Rail Project); and the construction and operation of an infrastructure corridor consisting of rail and telecommunications infrastructure from Galilee Basin (Galilee Infrastructure Corridor Project).

The other new proposal is for the construction and operation of a railway to connect the Galilee Basin with ports of Central Queensland including Abbot Point, Hay Point and Gladstone (Aurizon, Central Queensland Integrated Rail Project, South and Central Galilee to Newlands Junction, Qld). As described in chapter one, the Queensland Government has opted for one rail line from the Galilee Basin to Abbot Point.

Table 8: Proposals for transport infrastructure outside the Great Barrier Reef World Heritage Area

Project	Links to further information
BHPB Goonyella to Abbot Point Rail	http://www.environment.gov.au/cgi-bin/epbc/epbc_ap.pl?name=current_referral_detail&proposal_id=6082
Aurizon, Central Queensland Integrated Rail Project, Goonyella to Abbot Point	http://www.environment.gov.au/cgi-bin/epbc/epbc_ap.pl?name=current_referral_detail&proposal_id=6321
Aurizon, Central Queensland Integrated Rail Project, South and Central Galilee to Newlands Junction, Qld	http://www.environment.gov.au/cgi-bin/epbc/epbc_ap.pl?name=current_referral_detail&proposal_id=6322
Galilee Infrastructure Corridor Project, Abbot Point to Galilee Basin, Queensland	http://www.environment.gov.au/epbc/notices/assessments/2012/6489/2012-6489-referral-decision.pdf

Pipelines

The Bow Blackwater CSG Pty Ltd proposal to develop a gas pipeline from Bowen Basin to Gladstone was withdrawn on 8 May 2012.

A new proposal to construct and operate a 145 kilometre pipeline to transport treated coal seam gas water in central Queensland was declared a controlled action on 22 December 2011. The project was approved on 27 September 2012 under strict conditions.⁷²

There are no proposals for pipelines outside the GBRWHA currently being assessed for potential impacts on the area's world heritage values.

Water treatment facilities and water supply infrastructure

Four water treatment facilities reported in State Party Report 2012 have since been approved. Two are for local council water recycling facilities which will improve quality of water discharged into catchments—one in the Mackay region⁷³ and one in the Whitsunday region.⁷⁴ Another is for the construction of a stormwater return dam at Abbot Point⁷⁵ and another is for the construction of the Connors River Dam and water distribution pipelines in the Fitzroy River.⁷⁶

72 <http://www.environment.gov.au/epbc/notices/assessments/2011/6181/2011-6181-final-approval-notice.pdf>

73 <http://www.environment.gov.au/epbc/notices/assessments/2011/6005/2011-6005-approval-decision.pdf>

74 <http://www.environment.gov.au/epbc/notices/assessments/2010/5711/2010-5711-approval-decision.pdf>

75 <http://www.environment.gov.au/epbc/notices/assessments/2010/5561/2010-5561-approval-decision.pdf>

76 <http://www.environment.gov.au/epbc/notices/assessments/2008/4429/2008-4429-variation-approval-conditions.pdf>

The future of this project is currently uncertain because the proponent announced in July 2012 a decision to not proceed with the development. All proposals were rigorously assessed and received approval with strict conditions.

Table 9: Proposals for water treatment facilities and water supply infrastructure outside the GBRWHA

Project	Links to further information
Cassowary Coast Regional Council, Sewerage Treatment Plant & Outfall	http://www.environment.gov.au/cgi-bin/epbc/epbc_ap.pl?name=current_referrals&limit=999999&text_search=2010%2F5448
Gladstone Area Water Board & SunWater Limited, The Lower Fitzroy River Infrastructure Project	http://www.environment.gov.au/cgi-bin/epbc/epbc_ap.pl?limit=999999&name=current_referrals&text_search=2009%2F5173
SunWater, Construction and Operation of Nathan Dam	http://www.environment.gov.au/cgi-bin/epbc/epbc_ap.pl?name=current_referrals&limit=999999&text_search=2008%2F4313
SunWater, Water for Bowen Project	http://www.environment.gov.au/cgi-bin/epbc/epbc_ap.pl?name=current_referrals&limit=999999&text_search=2006%2F2527
Cairns Regional Council, Groundwater extracted from Mulgrave River Aquifer, bore field and associated infrastructure	http://www.environment.gov.au/cgi-bin/epbc/epbc_ap.pl?name=current_referral_detail&proposal_id=2390

Tourism developments

One proposal for a tourism development at False Cape in Cairns reported in State Party Report 2012 has lapsed. There is one new proposal for the construction of a recreational vehicle park at Coquette Point in Innisfail (Coquette Point Recreational Vehicle (RV) park).

A previously reported proposal by Satori Resorts Ella Bay Pty Ltd for a residential and tourism development at Ella Bay was approved on 11 December 2012 subject to 19 strict conditions to minimise its potential environmental impacts, including on the GBRWHA.

Table 10: Proposals for tourism developments outside the GBRWHA

Project	Links to further information
Tropical Resort Developments Pty Ltd, Cairns Queensland	http://www.environment.gov.au/cgi-bin/epbc/epbc_ap.pl?name=current_referral_detail&proposal_id=5211
Taylor Family Trust, Taylor Family Health Retreat	http://www.environment.gov.au/cgi-bin/epbc/epbc_ap.pl?name=current_referral_detail&proposal_id=4785
Coquette Point Recreational Vehicle (RV) park, Coquette Point, Queensland	http://www.environment.gov.au/cgi-bin/epbc/epbc_ap.pl?name=current_referral_detail&proposal_id=6482

Agricultural developments

There are no changes to the proposed agricultural developments within the GBRWHA since the State Party Report 2012.

Table 11: Proposals for agricultural developments outside the GBRWHA

Project	Links to further information
CassTech, The Burdekin Cassava Project	http://www.environment.gov.au/cgi-bin/epbc/epbc_ap.pl?name=current_referrals&limit=999999&text_search=2010%2F5514

Residential developments

Of the two residential proposals reported in the previous State Party Report, the proposal at Wongaling Beach has lapsed and proposal at Garners beach has been approved with conditions.⁷⁷

There is one new proposal for a residential development at Mt Low, 15 kilometres northwest of Townsville.

Table 12: Proposals for residential developments outside the GBRWHA

Project	Links to further information
Bushland Grove Pty Ltd, Mt Low Developments Master Planned Community, Townsville, Qld	http://www.environment.gov.au/cgi-bin/epbc/epbc_ap.pl?name=current_referral_detail&proposal_id=6351

⁷⁷ <http://www.environment.gov.au/epbc/notices/assessments/2008/4616/2008-4616-approval-decision.pdf>

Appendix 1—Decision from the World Heritage Committee

ANNEX I

Extract of the Decisions adopted by the World Heritage Committee at its 36th session (Saint- Petersburg, 2012)

Great Barrier Reef (Australia) (N 154)

Decision: 36 COM 7B.8

The World Heritage Committee,

1. Having examined Document WHC-12/36.COM/7B.Add,
2. Recalling Decision **35 COM 7B.10**, adopted at its 35th session (UNESCO, 2011),
3. Welcomes the initial positive results of the Reef Plan and associated measures to address major long-term impacts on the property from poor water quality, and requests the State Party, in collaboration with its partners, to maintain, and increase where necessary financial investment and sustain the positive trend beyond 2013;
4. Takes note of the findings of the joint World Heritage Centre/IUCN reactive monitoring mission to the property undertaken in March 2012, and also requests the State Party to address the mission recommendations in its future protection and management of the property;
5. Notes with great concern the potentially significant impact on the property's Outstanding Universal Value resulting from the unprecedented scale of coastal development currently being proposed within and affecting the property, and further requests the State Party to not permit any new port development or associated infrastructure outside of the existing and long-established major port areas within or adjoining the property, and to ensure that development is not permitted if it would impact individually or cumulatively on the Outstanding Universal Value of the property;
6. Requests furthermore the State Party to complete the Strategic Assessment and resulting long-term plan for the sustainable development of the property for consideration by the World Heritage Committee at its 39th session in 2015, and to ensure that the assessment and long-term plan are completed against a number of defined criteria for success, fully address direct, indirect and cumulative impacts on the reef and lead to concrete measures to ensure the overall conservation of the Outstanding Universal Value of the property;

7. Urges the State Party to establish the Outstanding Universal Value of the property as a clearly defined and central element within the protection and management system for the property, and to include an explicit assessment of Outstanding Universal Value within future Great Barrier Reef Outlook Reports;
8. Recommends the State Party, in collaboration with its partners, to sustain and increase its efforts and available resources to conserve the property, and to develop and adopt clearly defined and scientifically justified targets for improving its state of conservation and enhancing its resilience, and ensure that plans, policies and development proposals affecting the property demonstrate a positive contribution to the achievement of those targets, and an overall net benefit to the protection of Outstanding Universal Value;
9. Requests moreover the State Party to undertake an independent review of the management arrangements for Gladstone Harbour, that will result in the optimization of port development and operation in Gladstone Harbour and on Curtis Island, consistent with the highest internationally recognized standards for best practice commensurate with iconic World Heritage status;
10. Finally requests the State Party to submit to the World Heritage Centre, by **1 February 2013**, an updated report on the state of conservation of the property, including on the implementation of actions outlined above and in the mission report, for consideration by the World Heritage Committee at its 37th session in 2013, **with a view to consider, in the absence of substantial progress, the possible inscription of the property on the List of World Heritage in Danger**;
11. Decides to also consider a further report from the State Party on the state of conservation of the property, the findings of the second Great Barrier Reef Outlook Report, and the anticipated outcomes of the completed Strategic Environmental Assessment and related long term plan for sustainable development at its 39th session in 2015.

Appendix 2—Mission report recommendations

Based on the assessment of the State of Conservation of the property, considering its values, integrity and protection and management, the mission proposes 14 recommendations.

The mission considers that the State Party should take urgent measures to implement the following recommendations immediately to prevent a further erosion of the OUV and address important threats to the property:

R1: Sustain beyond 2013, and on a long-term basis, the current financial investment in the progressive and highly important Reef Water Quality Protection Plan and associated Reef Rescue measures, and where necessary increase this investment, to address impacts of water quality in the catchments that drain into the Great Barrier Reef, and ensure that these programmes and related planning policies consider water quality impacts from all uses within the catchments.

R2: Not permit any new port development or associated infrastructure outside of the existing and long-established major port areas within and adjoining the property. It is essential that development is not permitted if it would impact individually or cumulatively on OUV, including the integrity of the property. This measure should apply both within and in the adjacent areas to the property. This measure should take immediate effect and requires full application until the Strategic Assessment and the resulting long-term plan for the sustainable development of the property has been completed, and has been considered by the World Heritage Committee at its 39th session in 2015.

R3: Commission an independent review of all environmental concerns of consented developments in Gladstone Harbour and on Curtis Island, and the implications of the consented developments in Gladstone Harbour and on Curtis Island for Traditional Owners and the local community dependent on the resources of the area. The review should be undertaken by internationally recognized and widely respected scientific experts and conducted in an independent and transparent manner. The review should:

- a. Consider all previous review findings and all information used as a basis for the current approvals for development in Gladstone Harbour and on Curtis Island;
- b. Address the current and future planning and management of the Port of Gladstone and development of Curtis Island;
- c. Lead to clear recommendations for the optimization of port development and operation, including supporting activities and infrastructure, and according to the highest internationally recognized standards for best practice;
- d. Provide lessons learned for the development and operation of other port areas within and adjacent to the property;
- e. Lead to the implementation of concrete action to address issues identified in the review, as soon as possible and before any other major port development is commenced.

R4: Ensure that any development, including ports and other types of development, as well as all associated infrastructure and supporting activities are carried out consistent with the highest international standards of best practice, commensurate with status of an iconic World Heritage property, and enabling the State Party to continue to provide global leadership for the conservation and sustainable development of multiple use marine protected areas.

R5: Complete the Strategic Assessment and resulting long-term plan for the sustainable development of the property for consideration by the World Heritage Committee at its 39th session in 2015. The assessment and long-term plan should be completed in a coordinated and fully consultative process, against a number of defined criteria for success, and considering the conclusions and recommendations of the mission as set out in this report. Expectations of the Strategic Assessment include that it will lead to:

- A long-term plan with agreed leadership at Federal and State levels, that addresses the entire property and the adjacent areas where activities can affect the OUV of the property, and ensures that any development that is approved results in an overall net benefit for the property;
- Explicit incorporation of all elements that make up the OUV of the property, and in particular the long-term conservation of the integrity of the property, into the decision making process regarding all development and use that may negatively impact the property, both within the boundaries of the World Heritage area and in areas adjacent to the property;
- Improved effectiveness of the overall protection, planning and management of the OUV of the property as a whole, and the catchments, and coastal and marine areas that are intimately linked to it, including if necessary legal/statutory reforms to strengthen protection and management;
- A clear and target-driven framework to support planning and assessment of development proposals to protect OUV, and restore it where necessary, and to ensure resilience of the site, including the consideration of cumulative impacts;
- A clear analysis and related policies and strategies that will sustain long-term sustainable development, compatible with the protection of OUV, including consideration of the all economic sectors, including sustainable tourism and recreation and commercial fishing, as well as coastal development;
- Spatial policies that will identify appropriate and limited locations and standards for coastal development, and also identify areas that should not be subject to development, and which will provide greater business certainty regarding development proposals and community confidence and understanding of future development scenarios;
- Increased public confidence in their ability to engage with and influence policy and development decisions, including independent mechanisms to scrutinize and advise on the assessment of impacts of development;
- Support for new and enhanced policies and measures to regulate and manage shipping, and provide appropriate emergency planning and response;
- Appropriate systems to secure that, where development and use is permitted it will lead to net benefits to the property as a whole, including from contributions from developers to mitigate impacts of development;
- Measures, such as legislative change to enhance compliance, that may increase the results achieved from the funding available for management, and to also increase overall levels of funding where required to provide for effective protection and management.

R6: Include, in the future editions of the Outlook Report for the Great Barrier Reef, and commencing with the version to be published in 2014, a specific assessment on the condition, trends, threats and prospects for the OUV of Great Barrier Reef World Heritage Area. The assessment should be benchmarked at the date of inscription of the property in 1981, and its results should be reported to the World Heritage Committee for consideration at its 39th session in 2015.

R7: Ensure that any determination made for applications under the EPBC Act, considering this is the principal legislation to ensure development does not negatively impact the values and integrity of the property, includes for each application:

- a. A thorough assessment, supported by a detailed statement of reasons, and appropriate independent review input, on how the proposal will ensure conservation of each of the components that make up the OUV of the property, and avoid impacts upon it;
- b. A thorough consideration of the combined, cumulative and possible consequential impacts of development, infrastructure and associated activities on the OUV as material considerations in determining all applications, benchmarked on the date of inscription of the property in 1981;
- c. Detailed assessment of alternative options for all aspects of a development proposal, including supporting infrastructure and activities. This assessment should consider in detail the environmental, social and economic costs and benefits and lead to a clear indication of the net benefit of the development to the values and integrity of the property.

R8: Adopt the highest level of precaution in decision-making regarding development proposals with potential to impact the property, and to prevent any approval of major projects that may compromise the outcomes of the Strategic Assessment, until the Strategic Assessment is completed and its resulting plan for the long-term sustainable development for the property has been considered by the World Heritage Committee. During this period, the State Party is requested to ensure no developments are permitted which create individual, cumulative or combined impacts on the OUV of the Great Barrier Reef World Heritage area and its long-term conservation.

The mission considers that the following recommendations to further improve the conservation of the property and strengthen its management should also be implemented as soon as possible, and before the 39th Session of the World Heritage Committee:

R9: Ensure all components of the OUV of the Great Barrier Reef are a clearly defined and form a central element within the protection and management system for the property as well as the catchments and ecosystems that surround it. The OUV of the property should be a principal reference for all plans and legislation relating to the protection and management of the property as a whole, and in particular for legislation in relation to development within or in areas adjacent to the property. All the elements that constitute the OUV of the property should be included in the framework for future monitoring and reporting on the State of Conservation of the property to the World Heritage Committee.

R10: Develop and adopt, at the level of the Ministerial Forum, clearly defined and scientifically justified targets for improving the State of Conservation of the OUV of the Great Barrier Reef World Heritage Area, including for enhanced resilience of the property, and in particular for the conservation, and where necessary restoration, of the inshore areas of the property that are under greatest pressure. All plans, policies and development proposals affecting the property should demonstrate a positive contribution to the achievement of those targets.

R11: Commission an independent review, undertaken by internationally recognized and widely respected scientific experts, of the overall institutional and legal mechanisms that provide coordinated planning, protection and management of the Great Barrier Reef World Heritage Area as a whole. The results of the review should be reported to the Great Barrier Reef Ministerial Forum and provide input to the Strategic Assessment to which the State Party has committed. The review should address enhancement of the implementation of the Great Barrier Reef Intergovernmental Agreement, assessment of the effectiveness of legal protection, institutional and management planning arrangements for the property, and include specific attention to the areas of the property which are not managed by the Great Barrier Reef Marine Park Authority, as well as all adjacent marine, coastal and land areas. This review should be provided for consideration at the 37th session of the World Heritage Committee and subsequently lead to the implementation of concrete measures to address identified weaknesses, under the scrutiny of the Great Barrier Reef Ministerial Forum.

R12: Ensure increased resources from both State and Federal Governments for the protection and management of the property, in particular to cover growing costs associated with effective responses to key threats and increasing demand for use of both within the property and its adjacent areas that affect it. Resources allocated to the research, monitoring and surveillance of the property should consistently reflect the actual increase of costs associated with such activities.

R13: Develop a fully integrated approach to the planning, regulation and management of ports and shipping activity affecting the property, including via Shipping Policy for the property, the proposed Ports Strategy of Queensland, and individual Port Plans, that will ensure that ports and shipping activity does not negatively impact the OUV, including the integrity, of the property, and meets the highest international standards in its planning, regulation, assessment and operation.

R14: The mission recommends the State Party to strengthen the sharing of its best practices and success stories, in particular those related to the spatial and temporal management for tourism, recreation and fishing, the framework developed for surveillance, compliance and monitoring of the property as well as the community engagement programmes, with other World Heritage sites facing similar management challenges but lacking the capacity to deal with them. Recognising the excellence of many aspects of the management of the property that is derived from over 35 years of experience, this support should enhance the leadership role of the State Party to support World Heritage Sites to be drivers for positive change globally, and in excellence in marine protected area management in particular.

Finally the mission recalls the obligation of the State Party to report to the World Heritage Centre any new plans and proposals for developments that may impact the OUV of the property, consistent with paragraph 172 of the Operational Guidelines to the World Heritage Convention, and prior to their determination. This has been done regularly by the State Party since the 35th Session of the Committee, and the mission notes that in future, and at least until the World Heritage Committee has considered the completed Strategic Assessment and the resulting longterm plan for the sustainable development of the property at its 39th session in 2015, these reports should additionally include an executive summary detailing the outcomes of the assessments mentioned in Recommendation 9 of the mission report and confirming that the proposal will not individually or cumulatively impact on the OUV of the property. The report to the 39th session of the World Heritage Committee should be supported by a further World Heritage Centre/IUCN monitoring mission to the property.

Appendix 3—Final terms of reference for the Queensland Government strategic assessment

Great Barrier Reef Coastal Zone strategic assessment

Final Terms of Reference

1 Purpose and description of the Program

The Strategic Assessment Report must include an overview of the Program including its purpose and the area in which it will be implemented. For the purposes of the strategic assessment, the life of the Program is 25 years.

The Program Report will include:

1. the purpose of the Program
2. a description of the area to which the strategic assessment applies (the strategic assessment area) the component legislation, plans, policies and other material that make up the Program, including program commitments
4. the likely activities that will occur under the Program
5. the state and regional context (environmental, social, and economic) in which the Program operates, including activities outside the strategic assessment area that may influence the Program
6. other relevant national, state or regional planning or management frameworks that affect the Program
7. a description of how the Program identifies, protects and manages matters of national environment significance (MNES)
8. identification of how long the Program will be in effect and the process for review of the Program, including adaptive management
9. identification of the relevant authorities responsible for the implementation of the Program.

2 Matters of national environmental significance affected by the program

The scale and diversity of the geographic area requires that a tiered, or hierarchical approach be taken that looks at the existing and likely future risks and impacts to the Great Barrier Reef and adjacent coastal zone. It then needs to look in depth at specific locations and initiatives as a means of demonstrating the effectiveness of the Program in protecting matters of national environment significance (MNES), including outstanding universal value (OUV) at a local scale.

2.1 Identification of MNES including OUV

- The Strategic Assessment Report must describe the extent of the following MNES within the strategic assessment area:
- World Heritage properties (sections 12 and 15A)
- National Heritage places (sections 15B and 15C)
- Wetlands of international importance (sections 16 and 17B)
- Listed threatened species and ecological communities (sections 18 and 18A)
- Listed migratory species (sections 20 and 20A)
- Commonwealth marine area (sections 23 and 24A)
- The Great Barrier Reef Marine Park (sections 24B and 24C)

The description must include the key terrestrial, coastal, and marine biodiversity and heritage values and supporting ecological processes considered critical to the functioning of MNES including OUV. This will be achieved in part through:

- a. an assessment of Queensland's processes for identifying areas of MNES including OUV
- b. an assessment of Queensland's processes to otherwise represent MNES including OUV as non-mapped descriptions of biophysical attributes.

The Strategic Assessment Report must also:

- a. describe the current condition of MNES including the values described above, projected trends and existing threats from both within and outside the strategic assessment area
- b. for World Heritage values, describe the current condition of OUV against the retrospective statement of OUV which describes the state of the Great Barrier Reef World Heritage Area (GBRWHA) at the time of listing
- c. provide sufficient information to allow an understanding of the connectivity between MNES including OUV
- d. identify any key information gaps and the further studies needed
- e. identify any proposals or processes to address critical information needs
- f. describe the methodologies and data sources used for all of the above.

2.2 Identification and analysis of the potential impacts

The Strategic Assessment Report must describe how potential future impacts of activities taken under the Program are identified and taken into account in relevant decision making processes, in the context of past and existing impacts as described in Section 2.1 above.

For illustrative purposes, the activities described in the Program may include the following:

- urban developments within an urban footprint in a region within a statutory regional plan;
- planned tourist developments consistent with a Statutory Regional Plan;
- planned urban development within an urban development area where it is consistent with an approved development scheme;
- planned industrial development within state development areas where it is consistent with an approved development scheme;
- proposed port developments within existing port limits where it is consistent with a port land use plan and the Queensland Government's strategy for port developments; and
- aquaculture development (in aquaculture development areas).

In doing so, the Strategic Assessment Report must:

- a. analyse the effectiveness of Queensland's framework for mapping or otherwise describing MNES including OUV and the policies for protecting their values
- b. identify the following areas and the activities that may occur within them:
 - existing developed areas, including ports
 - protected areas
 - areas that may be subject to future development within the life of the Program
 - areas, including protected areas, where certain types of development or activity may be specifically prohibited to avoid impacts on MNES, including OUV
 - priority areas for conservation, that may be acquired as offsets, where development is restricted or excluded for the net benefit of ecological outcomes.

As part of this the Strategic Assessment Report will:

- describe the Queensland Government's strategy for port development and for managing the safety of vessel movements within port limits and compulsory port pilotage areas
 - identify existing and planned urban and industrial areas having regard to local and regional planning instruments
 - identify planned or potential state development areas and urban development areas
- c. describe how MNES including OUV are considered in relevant decision making processes, including:
 - declaring areas for development, including state development areas
 - planning of development areas
 - approving development proposals, including the consideration of alternative development scenarios and/or locations
 - declaring areas, including protected areas, where certain types of development or activity may be specifically prohibited
 - identifying areas that may be suitable for offsets, where development is restricted or excluded for the net benefit of ecological outcomes

- d. describe the processes in place to enhance MNES and OUV, including management of existing threats, both within and outside the strategic assessment area where impacts from those activities manifest themselves at the coastal interface
- e. identify and analyse the potential direct, indirect and cumulative impacts on relevant MNES and OUV arising from implementing the Program in general and more specifically in key demonstration areas
- f. describe how social and economic impacts and issues are considered and assessed
- g. consider and assess the effects of climate change and other long term influences on the potential future impacts
- h. include an assessment of uncertainties and the confidence associated with the likelihood and consequence(s) of potential impacts, including reference to scientific and other information relied upon in identifying and assessing those impacts.

2.3 Measures to avoid, mitigate and offset impacts

The Strategic Assessment Report must describe the avoidance, mitigation and offsetting measures that are proposed for future activities taken under the Program and analyse the effectiveness of these measures in protecting and enhancing MNES including OUV. This analysis may use demonstration cases to illustrate the application and effectiveness of particular measures and approaches and must include, but not be limited to:

- a. describing how impacts on MNES including OUV are avoided, including how alternative approaches are considered, including for restricted or no development
- b. describing, where impacts of development cannot be avoided, how impacts are mitigated and offset
- c. describing, where impacts of development cannot be avoided or mitigated, how impacts are offset, including through securing additional areas where development is restricted or excluded
- d. describing the extent to which cumulative impacts on MNES including OUV are considered and the methods used to determine cumulative impacts
- e. describing the extent to which measures are considered to enhance MNES and OUV both within and outside the strategic assessment area
- f. analysing resourcing, monitoring, evaluation and compliance regimes.

2.4 Demonstration of the Program

The Strategic Assessment Report must include a detailed analysis of the Program, through the use of demonstration cases to test the effectiveness of the Program in identifying and protecting MNES, including OUV, at a local and/or regional scale.

Demonstration cases will relate to a regional or local plan under Queensland's planning legislation and a development area, such as a port, state development area or urban area. They could also include a transect approach to demonstration cases which extends from key coastal zones through the Great Barrier Reef marine environment.

The locations for the demonstration cases will be chosen by Queensland in consultation with the Australian Government. This should be based on the following criteria:

- a. there should be multiple impacts acting upon the region, locality or value
- b. demonstration cases may relate to a specific value, place or pressure/impact
- c. learning that could transfer to other areas
- d. there may be an urgent need to act on a particular issue or area
- e. there is an opportunity to build capacity for future management.

Queensland will work with GBRMPA to identify demonstration cases relevant to both strategic assessments.

2.5 Recommendations for changes to the Program

The Strategic Assessment Report must include an evaluation of the resulting projected condition of MNES including OUV within the strategic assessment area of the Program taking into account:

- a. the baseline scenario, i.e. the analysis of the current condition of MNES including OUV, projected trends and existing threats
- b. the likely net impacts on MNES including OUV from implementing the Program and the effects of any ongoing management and enhancement activities.

The Strategic Assessment Report must include recommendations for changes to the Program if the assessment identifies that MNES including OUV are not adequately protected by the Program. The Strategic Assessment Report may include recommendations to:

- a. modify the state's processes for identifying MNES including OUV either through mapping or non-mapped descriptions of biophysical and heritage attributes
- b. change the policy framework by which impacts on MNES including OUV are considered by the Program
- c. change the state's processes for declaring, planning and deciding development including how certain types of development or activity may be specifically prohibited to avoid impacts on MNES, including OUV
- d. change the state's processes for identifying, declaring and managing protected areas to protect and enhance MNES, including OUV
- e. change to the state programs to avoid, mitigate and establish offsets for impacts on MNES, including OUV
- f. establish a program for further strategic assessments of specific areas and plans, policies or programs
- g. describe and analyse the circumstances where impacts on MNES and OUV are likely to be unacceptable and any process for resolving conflicts.

Recommendations for changes to the Program will seek to achieve a net benefit in terms of how the Program addresses impacts on MNES including the OUV of the GBRWHA.

3 Promoting Ecologically Sustainable Development

The Strategic Assessment Report must describe how the principles of ecologically sustainable development have been applied in the Program.

4 Adaptive management: addressing uncertainty and managing risk

The Strategic Assessment Report must identify the key adaptive management measures addressing uncertainties and risks inherent in the decision making process. Uncertainties could include knowledge gaps in scientific understanding and the timing, effectiveness, or capacity to implement, maintain, operate and enforce management measures.

The Strategic Assessment Report must describe how the adaptive management strategies will be implemented under the Program to ensure MNES including OUV are effectively protected over the life of the Program. This includes:

- a. how the monitoring of MNES including OUV will occur, how the monitoring will be analysed throughout the life of the Program and how the results of the monitoring will influence the Program
- b. how new information relating to MNES, OUV or the Program is to be assessed and accounted for in management of the area affected by the Program.

5 Auditing and reporting

The Strategic Assessment Report must describe:

- a. a monitoring, review and public reporting process to ensure implementation of the Program continues to adequately protect MNES including OUV
- b. the parties responsible for undertaking the monitoring, review, reporting and implementation of the activities arising.

6 Review, modification or abandonment

The Strategic Assessment Report must identify and analyse the likely circumstances and procedures that may result in the review, modification or abandonment of the Program. This is to include a discussion of how any commitments under the Program will continue to be met under these situations.

7 Endorsement criteria

When deciding whether to endorse the Program, the Commonwealth Minister (Minister) must be satisfied that the Strategic Assessment Report adequately addresses the impacts to which this Agreement relates, and that any recommendations by the Minister to modify the Program have been responded to appropriately.

In determining whether or not to endorse the Program, the Minister will have regard to the extent to which the Program meets the objects of the EPBC Act. In particular, that it:

- protects the environment, especially those aspects of the environment that are MNES;
- promotes ecologically sustainable development through the conservation and ecologically sustainable use of natural resources;
- promotes the conservation of biodiversity;
- provides for the protection and conservation of heritage;
- promotes a cooperative approach to the protection and management of the environment;
- assists in the co-operative implementation of Australia's international environmental responsibilities;
- recognises the role of indigenous people in the conservation and ecologically sustainable use of Australia's biodiversity; and
- promotes the use of indigenous peoples' knowledge of biodiversity with the involvement of, and in co-operation with, the owners of the knowledge.

Without limiting the matters the Minister may consider when making the decision to endorse the Program, the Minister will consider the manner in which the Program:

- identifies direct, indirect and cumulative impacts on MNES
- avoids impacts on MNES
- mitigates the impacts on MNES
- offsets the impacts on MNES
- contributes to the enhancement of MNES and management of existing threats
- demonstrates adaption to reasonable climate change scenarios.

Commitments in the Program must be adequately resourced throughout its life. The Program must demonstrate an effective system of adaptive management that addresses uncertainty and contingency management as well as procedures for monitoring, independent auditing and public reporting on implementation.

The Program must address all of the above matters for it to be considered for endorsement by the Minister in accordance with the EPBC Act.

8 Independent review

The Program Report and Strategic Assessment Report will be the subject of independent review by a suitably qualified party, external to both the Queensland and Australian Governments.

9 Information sources

For information and data used in the assessment, the Strategic Assessment Report must state:

- a. the source of the information
- b. how recent the information is
- c. the reliability and limitations of the information.

Wherever possible information underpinning the strategic assessment will be made publicly available.

10 Engagement

A draft of the Program Report and the draft Strategic Assessment Report will be released together for public comment prior to their finalisation and submission to the Minister for Sustainability, Environment, Water, Population and Communities.

The Strategic Assessment Report must describe the strategies employed to engage with the community, specific interest groups and other stakeholders, including but not limited to, the different stakeholder engagement approaches and how community and stakeholder views and comments have been taken into account in the preparation of the Program Report and the Strategic Assessment Report.

Appendix 4—Final terms of reference for the GBRMPA strategic assessment

Terms of reference

In preparing the Great Barrier Reef Region Strategic Assessment Report, the Authority must comply with the requirements set out below.

1. Purpose and Description of the Program

- 1.1 Provide an overview of the current Program. For the purposes of the Strategic Assessment the life of the Program is 25 years. The overview is to include a description of:
 - a. The purpose of the Program, including Program objectives.
 - b. The area to which the Program applies (the Strategic Assessment area).
 - c. Legislation, plans, policies and other mechanisms that make up the Program, including Program commitments.
 - d. Relevant activities within the scope of the Program.
 - e. International, national, state and regional context (environmental, social, cultural and economic) in which the Program operates, including activities outside the Strategic Assessment area that may influence the Program.
 - f. Relevant national, state, regional and local planning or management frameworks that affect the Program and contribute to protection and management the matters of national environmental significance.
 - g. Identification of how long the Program will be in effect and the process for review of the Program, including adaptive management.
 - h. Identification of the relevant authorities responsible for the implementation of the Program.

2. Matters of National Environmental Significance

- 2.1 Description of matters of national environmental significance
 - 2.1.1 Describe the extent to which the following relevant matters of national environmental significance, as defined in the *Environment Protection and Biodiversity Conservation Act 1999* apply to the Strategic Assessment area.
 - a. world heritage properties, including consideration of the Outstanding Universal Value of the Great Barrier Reef World Heritage Area
 - b. national heritage places

- c. wetlands of international importance
- d. listed threatened species and ecological communities
- e. listed migratory species
- f. Commonwealth marine areas
- g. the Great Barrier Reef Marine Park.

The description must:

- h. Identify key terrestrial, coastal and marine environmental, biodiversity and heritage values and/or attributes which underpin the relevant matters of national environmental significance, including the Outstanding Universal Value of the Great Barrier Reef World Heritage Area.
- i. Describe ecosystem processes considered critical to the functioning of the relevant matters of national environmental significance, including the Outstanding Universal Value of the Great Barrier Reef World Heritage Area.
- j. Provide sufficient information to allow an understanding the connectivity between the relevant matters of national environmental significance, including the Outstanding Universal Value of the Great Barrier Reef World Heritage Area.

2.2 Condition and trend of matters of national environmental significance

- 1. Describe the current condition and trend of key indicators of the relevant matters of national environmental significance, including the Outstanding Universal Value of the Great Barrier Reef World Heritage Area.
- 2. For world heritage values, benchmark the current condition of key indicators of Outstanding Universal Value against the retrospective statement of Outstanding Universal Value which describes the state of the Great Barrier Reef World Heritage Area at the time of listing in 1981.
- 3. Identify key information gaps and processes to address critical information needs.

3. Assessment of Impacts on Matters of National Environmental Significance

3.1 Actual and potential impacts

- a. Describe the environmental, social, cultural and economic drivers affecting the relevant matters of national environmental significance, including the Outstanding Universal Value of the Great Barrier Reef World Heritage Area.
- b. Describe and analyse the actual and potential impacts on the relevant matters of national environmental significance, including the Outstanding Universal Value of the Great Barrier Reef World Heritage Area, in the Strategic Assessment area, including:
 - i. impacts from past, present and future activities
 - ii. direct, indirect, consequential and cumulative impacts
 - iii. the likely impacts of climate change.

- d. Describe the spatial and temporal scale at which impacts and their effects on the relevant matters of national environmental significance, including the Outstanding Universal Value of the Great Barrier Reef World Heritage Area, are occurring or are likely to occur.
- e. Identify key information gaps and processes to address critical information needs.

4. Measures to Address Impacts

4.1 Current Program

4.1.1 Describe and assess the effectiveness of the Program to:

- a. Identify the relevant matters of national environmental significance, including the Outstanding Universal Value of the Great Barrier Reef World Heritage Area, and determine their current condition and trend, including spatial and non-spatial approaches.
- b. Identify and analyse direct, indirect, consequential and cumulative impacts, including the methods used to determine these types of impacts.
- c. Consider environmental, social, cultural and economic issues.
- d. Avoid, mitigate, offset and adaptively manage impacts.
- e. Address uncertainty and risk.
- f. Provide certainty regarding where uses may occur, the type of activities allowed, conditions under which activities may proceed and circumstances where impacts are likely to be unacceptable.
- g. Halt and reverse any declines and enhance the condition of the relevant matters of national environmental significance, including mechanisms to deliver a 'net benefit' to the condition of the relevant matters of national environmental significance, including the Outstanding Universal Value of the Great Barrier Reef World Heritage Area.
- h. Adapt to reasonable climate change scenarios.
- i. Integrate with related local, Queensland and Australian government programs to protect and manage the relevant matters of national environmental significance, including the Outstanding Universal Value of the Great Barrier Reef World Heritage Area.
- j. Meet Australia's international responsibilities in relation to the environment and protection of world heritage.
- k. Monitor, evaluate and report on the:
 - i. Condition and trends of the relevant matters of national environmental significance, including the Outstanding Universal Value of the Great Barrier Reef World Heritage Area.
 - ii. Impacts of activities, including the setting of targets to benchmark management performance.

- 4.1.2 In assessing the effectiveness of the Program, consideration must be given to:
- a. Statutory instruments, including regulations, zoning plans, plans of management and permits.
 - b. Non-statutory mechanisms including policies, position statements and guidelines.
 - c. Partnership and collaborative arrangements with Queensland and other Australian government agencies.
 - d. Partnerships with Traditional Owners in the management of marine resources.
 - e. Partnership and stewardship programs, including education programs and engagement, with local governments, communities, Indigenous persons, business and industry.
 - f. Research and monitoring programs.
 - g. Compliance and enforcement programs.
 - h. Resourcing of the Program.

4.2 Demonstration cases

- 4.2.1 Develop demonstration cases to assess in finer detail the effectiveness of the Program to protect and manage the relevant matters of national environmental significance, including the Outstanding Universal Value of the Great Barrier Reef World Heritage Area, and to guide improvements to the Program.
- 4.2.2 Demonstration cases are to be chosen by the Australian and Queensland governments. Criteria that will be used to guide this selection process include, but are not limited to:
- a. Where multiple impacts are acting or predicted to act upon a region, locality or value.
 - b. To examine a specific management approach or method to identify a set of values/ attributes or to assess a range of impacts/pressures.
 - c. To demonstrate connectivity across coastal and marine systems.
 - d. To demonstrate the integration of environmental, social, cultural and economic benefits in decision-making.
 - e. To improve understanding of factors affecting Great Barrier Reef ecosystem resilience.
 - f. Where lessons or outcomes could transfer to other areas.
 - g. Opportunities to build capacity for future management.
 - h. To examine the effectiveness of management across local, Queensland and Australian government jurisdictions.

5. Projected Condition of Matters of National Environmental Significance

- 5.1 Describe the projected condition of the relevant matters of national environmental significance, including the Outstanding Universal Value of the Great Barrier Reef World Heritage Area, based on an evaluation of their:
- a. Current status and trends.
 - b. Actual and potential impacts.

- c. The effectiveness of the Program to protect the relevant matters of national environmental significance, including the Outstanding Universal Value of the Great Barrier Reef World Heritage Area, and manage impacts.
- d. An understanding of ecosystem resilience.
- e. An assessment of overall risks to the relevant matters of national environmental significance, including the Outstanding Universal Value of the Great Barrier Reef World Heritage Area.

6. Proposed Program

6.1 Recommendations for changes to the Program

6.1.1 Recommend changes to the current Program to improve its effectiveness to deliver its objectives, including outcomes that protect the relevant matters of national environmental significance, including the Outstanding Universal Value of the Great Barrier Reef World Heritage Area. Recommendations for improvements should specifically address the matters listed in section 4.1.1.

6.1.2 Consistent with section 6.1.1 above, recommend improvements to related local, state and national government programs.

6.2 Principles of Ecologically Sustainable Development

Describe how the principles of ecologically sustainable development have been applied in the proposed Program. The principles of ecologically sustainable development as described in section 3A of the *Environment Protection and Biodiversity Conservation Act 1999* are:

- a. Decision-making processes should effectively integrate both long-term and short-term economic, environmental, social and equitable considerations.
- b. If there are threats of serious or irreversible environmental damage, lack of full scientific certainty should not be used as a reason for postponing measures to prevent environmental degradation.
- c. The principle of inter-generational equity—that the present generation should ensure that the health, diversity and productivity of the environment is maintained or enhanced for the benefit of future generations.
- d. The conservation of biological diversity and ecological integrity should be a fundamental consideration in decision-making.
- e. Improved valuation, pricing and incentive mechanisms should be promoted.

6.3 Adaptive management

- a. Identify the key adaptive management measures in the proposed Program that address uncertainties and risks inherent in the decision making process.
- b. Describe how the adaptive management measures will be implemented to ensure the relevant matters of national environmental significance, including the Outstanding Universal Value of the Great Barrier Reef World Heritage Area, are effectively protected and managed over the life of the Program.

- 6.4 Monitoring and reporting
 - a. Describe the monitoring, review and public reporting process that will be used to examine whether the Program adequately protects and manages the relevant matters of national environmental significance, including the Outstanding Universal Value of the Great Barrier Reef World Heritage Area, and the framework for measuring success.
 - b. Describe the processes for adapting the Program in response to new information.
 - c. Nominate the parties responsible for undertaking the monitoring, review and reporting and for implementing any actions arising.
- 6.5 Review, modification or abandonment
 - a. Identify and analyse likely circumstances and procedures that may result in the review, modification or abandonment of the Program. This is to include a discussion of how any commitments under the Program would continue to be met under these situations.

7. Strategic Assessment Process

- 7.1 Collaboration with the Queensland Government and other Australian Government agencies
 - a. Undertake the Strategic Assessment in consultation and collaboration with the Queensland Government, the Australian Government's Department of Sustainability, Environment, Water, Population and Communities and other relevant Australian Government agencies.
- 7.2 Community engagement
 - a. Document how the community and stakeholders were engaged in the Strategic Assessment process and how views and comments were taken into account in the preparation of the Strategic Assessment Report and the Program Report.
 - b. Along with the draft Program Report, make the draft Strategic Assessment Report available for public comment for a period of no less than 28 days.
 - c. Provide the Minister with a report on the public submissions received on the draft Reports, together with proposed final drafts of the Strategic Assessment Report and Program Report, incorporating any revisions made in response to public comments.
- 7.3 Independent review
 - a. Engage independent expertise to undertake an assessment of the effectiveness of the current Program to protect and manage the relevant matters of national environmental significance, including the Outstanding Universal Value of the Great Barrier Reef World Heritage Area.
 - b. Arrange for the content of the draft Strategic Assessment Report to be peer reviewed by at least three appropriately qualified persons.
 - c. Provide the Minister with the independent assessment of management effectiveness, the peer review comments and a report identifying how the findings of the independent assessment and peer review have been considered in the Strategic Assessment Report and the Program Report.

7.4 Information and assessments

- a. Use the best available information to undertake the Strategic Assessment, including scientific data, expert opinion, and Traditional Owner and community knowledge.
- b. Document the methods used to undertake the Strategic Assessment.
- c. For information used in the Strategic Assessment, indicate where possible:
 - i. the source of the information
 - ii. how recent the information is
 - iii. the reliability and limitations of the assessment.

8. Endorsement Criteria

Describe how the Strategic Assessment Report meets the Endorsement Criteria set out below:

Endorsement Criteria

When deciding whether to endorse the Program, the Minister must be satisfied that the *Strategic Assessment Report* adequately addresses the impacts to which this Agreement relates, and that any recommendations by the Minister to modify the Program have been responded to appropriately.

In determining whether or not to endorse the Program, the Minister will have regard to the extent to which the Program meets the objects of the *Environment Protection and Biodiversity Conservation Act 1999*. In particular, that it:

- a. Protects the environment, especially those aspects of the environment that are matters of national environmental significance.
- b. Promotes ecologically sustainable development through the conservation and ecologically sustainable use of natural resources.
- c. Promotes the conservation of biodiversity.
- d. Provides for the protection and conservation of heritage.
- e. Promotes a cooperative approach to the protection and management of the environment.
- f. Assists in the co-operative implementation of Australia's international environmental responsibilities.
- g. Recognises the role of Indigenous people in the conservation and ecologically sustainable use of Australia's biodiversity.
- h. Promotes the use of Indigenous peoples' knowledge of biodiversity with the involvement of, and in co-operation with, with the owners of the knowledge.

Without limiting the matters the Minister may consider when making the decision to endorse the Program, the Minister will consider the manner in which the Program:

- a. Identifies direct, indirect and cumulative impacts on matters of national environmental significance.
- b. Avoids impacts on matters of national environmental significance.
- c. Mitigates the impacts on matters of national environmental significance.
- d. Offsets the impacts on matters of national environmental significance.

- e. Contributes to the enhancement of the existing environment and management of existing threats.
- f. Demonstrates adaption to reasonable climate change scenarios.

Commitments in the Program must be adequately resourced throughout its life. The Program must demonstrate an effective system of adaptive management that addresses uncertainty and contingency management as well as procedures for monitoring, independent auditing and public reporting on implementation.

The Program must address all of the above matters for it to be considered for endorsement by the Minister in accordance with the *Environment Protection and Biodiversity Conservation Act 1999*.

Appendix 5—Strategic assessment under the EPBC Act brochure

Other strategic approaches under the EPBC Act

The EPBC Act provides several other ways to strategically protect matters of national environmental significance.

Conservation agreements

The Minister can enter into an agreement to protect the conservation of biodiversity, the values and the character of certain matters of national environmental significance in relation to specific activities.

Bilateral agreements

The Minister can enter into an agreement with the states and territories that delegates to them responsibility for assessing and/or granting environmental approvals under the EPBC Act. These are subject to stringent performance requirements.

Bioregional planning

The Minister may prepare a plan for a bioregion that is within, or contains, a Commonwealth area. Bioregional plans enable the ecologically sustainable management of biodiversity, heritage and other values.

Ramsar wetland (Bruce Gray); Royal Exhibition Building and Dinosaur Stampede National Monument (DEWHA)



North Head (DEWHA); Camaby's Black Cockatoo (Leonie McMahon); Wee Jasper Grevillea (JD Briggs)

Compliance

The Australian Government takes compliance with the EPBC Act seriously. Alleged breaches are investigated.

If you would like to discuss a compliance issue with the Department of the Environment, Water, Heritage and the Arts or have reason to believe that the EPBC Act has been, or is likely to be breached:

phone: **1800 110 395** or

email: **compliance@environment.gov.au** or **audit@environment.gov.au**

For more information

Further information about the EPBC Act is available on the Department of the Environment, Water, Heritage and the Arts website

www.environment.gov.au/epbc

or by contacting the Department's Community Information Unit, email **ciu@environment.gov.au** or freecall **1800 803 772**.

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Cover: Great Barrier Reef Marine Park (GBRMPA), Green Turtle (Gunther-Schmidl) Dunsborough Spider Orchid (Andrew Brown/DEC-WA)



Australian Government
Department of the Environment,
Water, Heritage and the Arts

ENVIRONMENT PROTECTION AND BIODIVERSITY CONSERVATION ACT 1999



Strategic Assessment under the EPBC Act

epboc

As well as dealing with projects on a case-by-case basis, the Australian Minister for the Environment, Heritage and the Arts can approve actions under the *Environment Protection and Biodiversity Conservation Act 1999* (EPBC Act) which relate to an endorsed policy, plan or program. These are called strategic assessments.

What is a strategic assessment?

A strategic assessment happens early in the planning process and examines the potential impacts of actions which might stem from one or more policy, program or plan.

These may include, but are not limited to:

- local government plans, schemes or policies
- district structure plans
- strategic land use plans
- regional plans and policies
- local environmental plans
- fire, vegetation or pest management policies, plans or programs
- water extraction/use policies
- statement of planning policies
- building design policy/guidelines, and
- infrastructure plans and policies.

Strategic assessments under the EPBC Act mainly involve individuals or agencies such as local councils, state ministers or government departments responsible for implementing the policy, plan or program.

What are the benefits?

Advantages of undertaking a strategic assessment include:

- early consideration of national environmental matters in planning processes
- greater certainty to the local communities and developers over future development
- reduced administrative burden for proponents and government
- capacity to achieve better environmental outcomes and address cumulative impacts at the landscape level, and
- flexible timeframes to better meet planning processes.

When is it appropriate?

Strategic assessment can help to address issues such as:

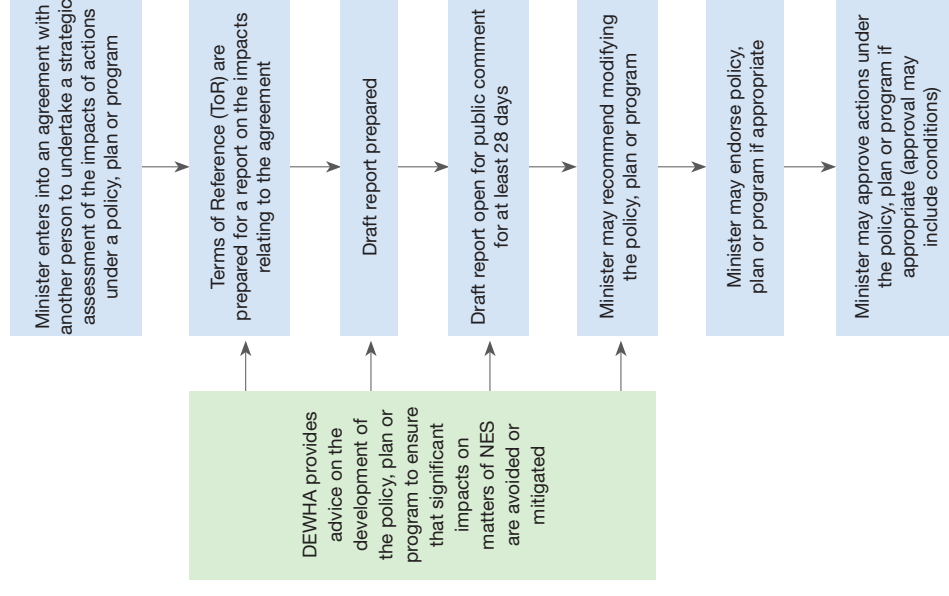
- region-wide development pressures
- high growth areas with a large number of projects requiring assessment and approval
- multiple stakeholders
- complex, large-scale actions, and
- cumulative impacts on matters of national environmental significance (NES) protected by the EPBC Act.

What are matters of national environmental significance?

- World Heritage properties
- National Heritage properties
- Wetlands of international importance
- Threatened species and ecological communities
- Migratory species
- Commonwealth marine areas, and
- Nuclear actions (including uranium mining).

How does it work?

A strategic assessment includes the following stages:



Southern Bell Frog (Nathan Lijens), Humpback Whale (Dave Watts), front view of a Gouldian Finch (Ian Morris)



Appendix 6—Great Barrier Reef strategic assessment fact sheet

September 2012

The Australian and Queensland governments share responsibility for managing the Reef. Together we are actively addressing these pressures to maintain the Great Barrier Reef World Heritage Area's reputation as one of the best managed marine protected areas in the world.

But we have also recognised the need to become more strategic in our joint planning to future proof the Reef against potential impacts from activities ranging from increased shipping to urban development.

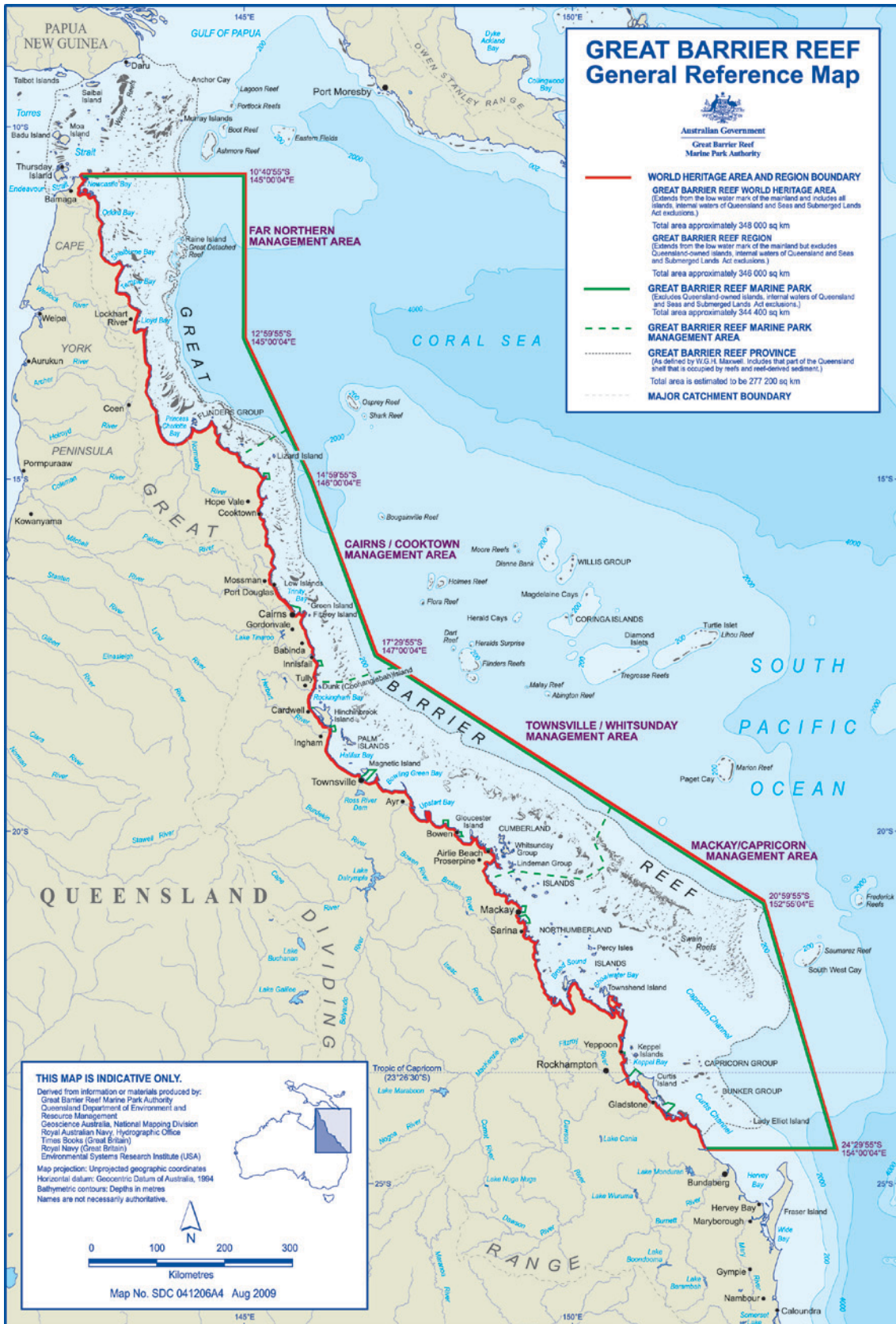
As a result, we have embarked on by far the largest, most wide-ranging and most complex strategic assessment ever undertaken in Australia. It will cover not only the Great Barrier Reef World Heritage Area but also the adjacent coastal zone where a range of activities occur that can impact on its environmental and heritage values.

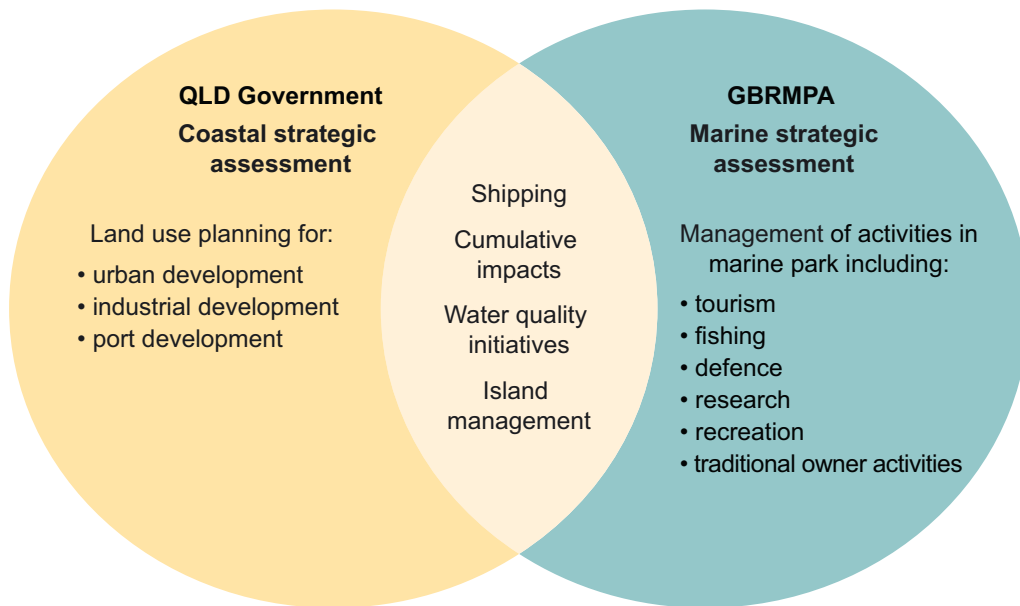
Strategic assessments enable a 'big-picture' approach to environment and heritage protection that provide certainty in the long term, by determining where sustainable development can occur, the type of development that will be allowed and the conditions under which development may proceed.

They go beyond normal project by project assessments to look at landscape-scale cumulative impacts, as well as all relevant direct and indirect impacts.

The comprehensive strategic assessment of the Great Barrier Reef will forge stronger links between planning for the land and marine environments, in recognition of how much one affects the other.

It will also provide an opportunity for more focussed studies of how planning approaches are applied in some of the highest growth coastal areas along the Reef's edge.





Once a strategic assessment is complete, new development projects or activities can be planned on a more sustainable basis and under more streamlined government processes that aim to cut red tape and reduce approval timeframes, benefitting the environment, local communities and business.

It will ensure the protection of the highest value environmental assets while guiding sustainable development in the Great Barrier Reef coastal area.

The Australian Government has signed two agreements to ensure the comprehensive strategic assessment strengthens protection for matters of national environmental significance, including the Great Barrier Reef Marine Park and relevant world heritage properties, wetlands of international importance, threatened species and ecological communities and migratory species.

The first agreement is with the Great Barrier Reef Marine Park Authority which manages the 344 400 square kilometre marine park for many uses, including conservation, recreation, tourism, fishing and shipping.

The second agreement is with the Queensland Government which manages the 2,300 km long coastal zone and the islands of the marine park.

These agreements establish the basis for the two strategic assessments that will together comprise a comprehensive strategic assessment of the Great Barrier Reef World Heritage Area and adjacent coastal zone.

The Australian and Queensland governments have been discussing ways of managing the Reef in a more strategic way for some time. This approach has been accelerated in response to the decision of the World Heritage Committee to investigate the state of conservation of the Great Barrier Reef World Heritage Area. The comprehensive strategic assessment is a key element of Australia's response to the concerns raised by the World Heritage Committee.

The comprehensive strategic assessment will investigate the adequacy of existing management arrangements to protect the Great Barrier Reef World Heritage Area as well as the Queensland Government's coastal management, planning and development framework.

The strategic assessment will assess all matters of national environmental significance in the coastal area including world heritage values.

It will be developed over a 12-16 month period, allowing time for public input into its development.

Subject to conditions, under an endorsed strategic assessment, the federal environment minister can approve certain classes of actions, avoiding the need for proponents to submit individual proposals for further environmental assessment under national environment law.

But the federal environment minister still retains the right to consider individual proposals that are large or complex and have not been approved under the strategic assessment, and to place appropriate conditions to ensure strict environmental standards apply.

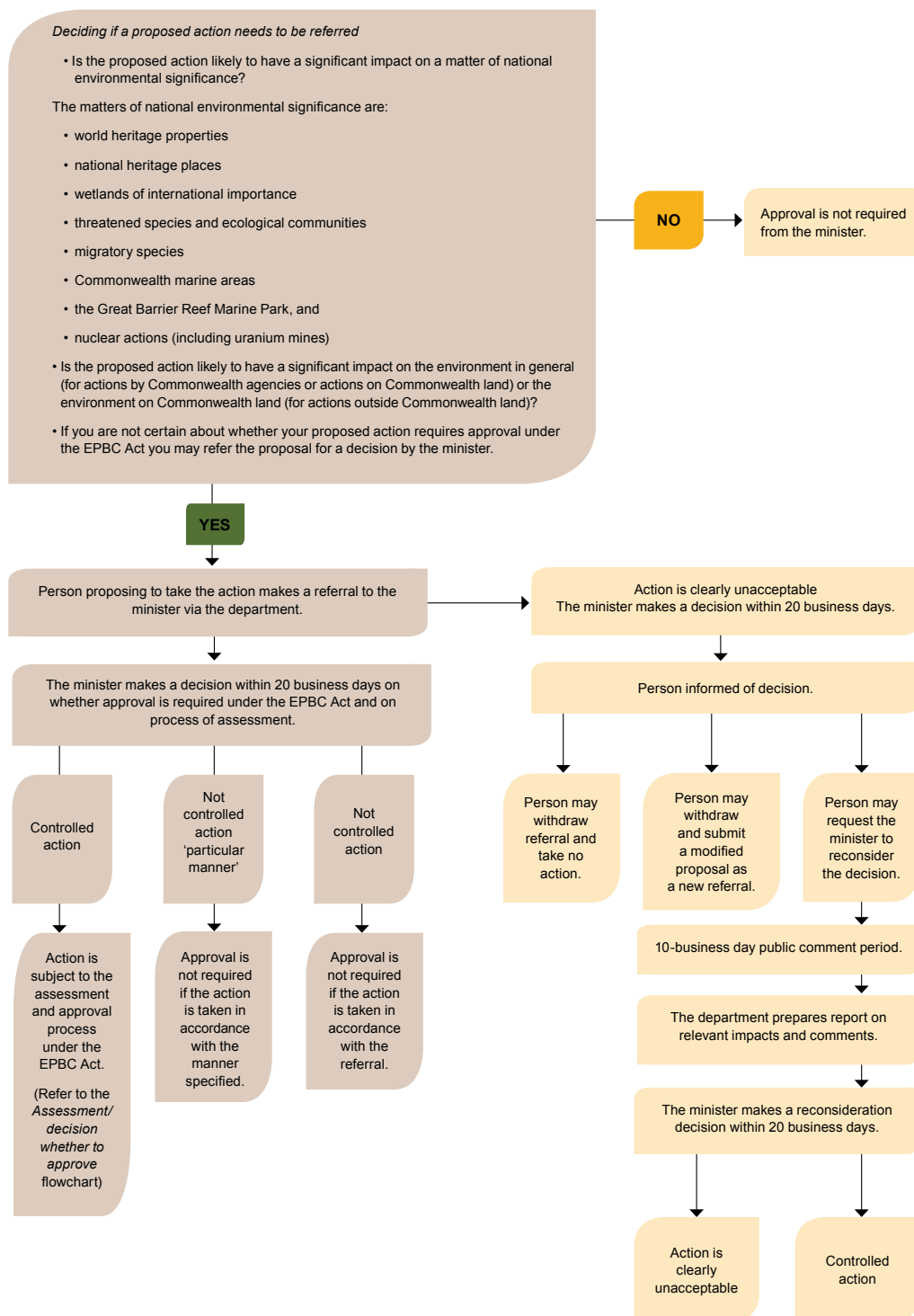
In the meantime, the Australian Government will continue to ensure that individual proposals for development in this area meet a high standard of assessment, including consideration of cumulative and other relevant impacts such as from shipping and associated infrastructure. It will also ensure these individual project assessments are aligned with the strategic assessment as it develops.

The World Heritage Committee's 2012 monitoring mission to the Great Barrier Reef highlighted the value of the strategic assessment now underway as a means of improving protection of this natural wonder.

Once complete, the strategic assessment will strengthen our protection of the Great Barrier Reef and guide its management for different uses for many years to come, building in enough flexibility to adapt to changing climatic and other circumstances.

Appendix 7—EPBC Act environment assessment process flowchart

EPBC Act environment assessment process—referral



EPBC Act environment assessment process—assessment/decision whether to approve

