



## Great Barrier Reef Marine Park Authority Member's report on activities to ICRI

Reporting period 2007/2008

### 1. General Information

Representation to ICRI (Country / Organization):	Great Barrier Reef Marine Park Authority
Focal Point 1:	John Baldwin
Focal point 2:	vacant
Last meeting attended:	Washington DC January 2008
How do you circulate ICRI information within your country (a) and/or organization (b)?	Formalised intra- and inter-governmental committees (a) and Senior Executive briefings (b)
Budget allocated for coral reef related activities (please mention for year/period):	\$AUD46,000,000 (2007/08 year)

For countries only:

<b>National Action Plan / Initiative</b>	
Do you have a National Coral Reef action plan?	YES <sup>1</sup> / NO
Is this plan publicly available? If so, please provide location:	<a href="http://www.environment.gov.au/coasts/mpa/commonwealth/coord/index.html">http://www.environment.gov.au/coasts/mpa/commonwealth/coord/index.html</a>
Do you have a National Coral Reef Initiative or Task Force?	YES <sup>2</sup> / NO
Are you engaged in any regional programs / initiatives relevant to coral reefs:	The Australian Government is engaged in various multi-lateral and bilateral environmental initiatives within the Asia/Pacific region with coral reef implications.
If yes, please indicate which programs/initiatives:	
<b>Marine Protected Areas</b>	
How many MPA(s) with coral reefs?	>100
What is the percentage of coral reef MPA(s) to the (coastal zone / marine area)?	Unknown for Australia at time of writing, however, for GBRMPA please see: <a href="http://www.gbrmpa.gov.au/_data/assets/pdf_file/0003/7158/area_statement_082004_updated_w3version.pdf">http://www.gbrmpa.gov.au/_data/assets/pdf_file/0003/7158/area_statement_082004_updated_w3version.pdf</a>
Please provide the appropriate contact name for MPA data holdings	Collaborative Australian Protected Area Database (CAPAD) <a href="http://www.environment.gov.au/parks/nrs/capad/index.html">http://www.environment.gov.au/parks/nrs/capad/index.html</a>
Details for contact (email/fax/telephone)	<a href="http://www.environment.gov.au/coasts/comments-md.html">http://www.environment.gov.au/coasts/comments-md.html</a>

<sup>1</sup> Within the context of the Australian National Representative System of Marine Protected Areas (NRSMPA)

<sup>2</sup> Within the context of the Australian "Marine Protected Areas Working Group"

## **A. Summary of IYOR 2008 Activities**

- Commonwealth Government “Science Meets Parliament” (March '08)
- IYOR 2008 Calendar
- Link the Festival of Chamber Music theme to IYOR for 2008
- Badge media releases with the IYOR banner
- Align our Reef Beat poster series and Reef Video Conferencing with IYOR '08.
- Circulate IYOR information through our Reef Guardian Schools and Reef Guardian Councils networks
- Build in IYOR information into interpretive shows at Reef HQ ie coral tour, dive shows etc
- Reef Guardian Schools Future Leaders Eco Challenge in association with the Port Douglas IYOR 2008 festival
- Link to IYOR and ICRI websites from our website
- Reef HQ teacher's calendar

## **B. Great Barrier Reef Outlook Report**

An Outlook Report for the Great Barrier Reef was one of the key recommendations of the 2006 Review of the *Great Barrier Reef Marine Park Act 1975*.

The Report will take stock of a range of matters throughout the Great Barrier Reef, focusing particularly on where we are now, how we are doing and what are likely to be key issues in the future. It will be prepared by the Great Barrier Reef Marine Park Authority and will be important in identifying future management needs.

The Great Barrier Reef Outlook Report will summarise the current state of the Marine Park's ecosystems, uses and management, look at the trends and pressures and make a risk assessment of the key issues. It will draw together a long-term outlook for the ecosystem and its uses (incorporating community and industry perspectives).

An initial analysis of the risks has been undertaken (considering the likelihood and consequence of the key pressures) to ensure the priority issues are being addressed as the Outlook Report is being drafted. This analysis has produced results that broadly agree with the results of the consultation with community.

Preparing an “assessment of the existing measures to protect and manage the (Great Barrier Reef) ecosystem”, as required by the legislation, will be an important component of the Outlook Report. For more on the Outlook Report, go to: [http://www.gbrmpa.gov.au/corp\\_site/about\\_us/great\\_barrier\\_reef\\_outlook\\_report](http://www.gbrmpa.gov.au/corp_site/about_us/great_barrier_reef_outlook_report)

## **C. Coral Triangle Initiative**

The Australian Government has committed to supporting the *Coral Triangle Initiative on Coral Reefs, Fisheries and Food Security* through the provision of technical and expert assistance and information exchange. The Australian Government will hold a workshop on management and conservation of coral reefs using marine protected areas and zoning regimes as the first practical example of this support. It is intended that the workshop will take place in Townsville, Queensland in late November 2008.

This workshop will bring together the Coral Triangle Governments (CT6) to discuss the management and conservation of coral reefs using marine protected areas and zoning regimes. It will draw upon Australia's considerable expertise, with the key objectives being to build capacity, enhance cooperation, improve networking and share best practice solutions under four key themes.

It is intended that the workshop themes respond to the national consultations and plans of action undertaken by the CT6 and maintain a focus on management capacity building, covering spatial tools such as marine protection areas, rather than science.

#### **D. Great Barrier Reef Zoning Plan Effectiveness**

There's good news for the Great Barrier Reef Marine Park, with recent research showing dramatic evidence that the zoning implemented in 2004 is working to protect the biodiversity of the Great Barrier Reef. Like a town planning scheme, zoning defines what activities can occur in each location in the Marine Park and includes a network of no-take Green Zones where fishing and extractive activities are not allowed.

This latest research shows coral trout (grouper) numbers rebounded by 31 to 75 per cent on a majority of reefs which have been closed to fishing for as little as 1.5 to 2 years. It also revealed closed inshore reefs in the Palm and Whitsunday islands off the coast of North Queensland showed increases in coral trout population densities of 65 and 75 per cent respectively, compared with paired reefs left open to fishing.

Closed reefs offshore of the cities of Townsville (64%), Cairns (53%) and Mackay (57%) also showed marked improvements. Densities of coral trout on the reefs left open to fishers showed little or no change in fish density.

The research was carried out by Professor Garry Russ of the ARC Centre of Excellence for Coral Reef Studies and James Cook University, Dr Hugh Sweatman of the Australian Institute of Marine Science and supported by the Australian Government's Marine and Tropical Sciences Research Facility (MTSRF).

The research confirms that zoning is helping protect plants and animals and building the strength of the Great Barrier Reef, which is important in the face of threats like climate change and declining water quality.