

As manager and research director of Undersea Explorer, a tourism, research and conservation organisation, I have strong involvement in reef issues. I applaud the governments recent acknowledgement of sustainable management and strongly support the recent changes in the zoning of the Great Barrier Reef. To ensure the long term future for this and further wise management decisions, I urge the government to maintain the Great Barrier Reef Marine Park Authority as a strong, independent statutory authority with full decision making powers capable of implementing major conservation initiatives into the future.

Your recent decisions reflect great recognition of tourism as a sustainable industry within the GBRMP and the need for major and diverse no-take areas to protect this important economic and environmental resource. The increase from 4.5% to 33% no-take areas is wonderful but is by no means the final hard decision which will need to be made to ensure sustainability and protection for the GBRMP. Any reduction in this protection level or the efficiency of management by GBRMPA will certainly have adverse effects on both the environment and the burgeoning economic and employment benefits of tourism to Australia.

Through Undersea Explorer and the Cod Hole and Ribbon Reef Operators Association (CHARROA), we are leading the way with many environmental initiatives. We will continue to work with management agencies to ensure sustainability of the GBRMP and Coral Sea areas. Undersea Explorer funds and conducts extensive marine research into many fields including sustainable tourism practices which have resulted in the implementation of acknowledged world leading codes of practice in conjunction with GBRMPA. We actively fund and facilitate industry, research, conservation and government groups to work together to positive, practical and informed outcomes for innovative management methods. Examples of this are the dwarf minke whale code of practice and permits and the evolving Memorandum of Understanding for protection of the northern Coral Sea reefs between CHARROA and the Coral Sea Fishery Group.

As well as supporting the recent wise decisions for the GBRMP, I would like to also add some future areas of need for further decision making. These include:

1. Support the maintenance of the Great Barrier Reef Marine Park Authority as a strong statutory authority, based in the region, with full decision making powers capable of implementing comprehensive conservation initiatives. The GBRMP Authority should retain its independent board and provide recommendations directly to the Minister for Environment and Heritage.

The future health of the Great Barrier Reef depends on ensuring that GBRMPA has the power to control all damaging activities that affect the reef.

2. That the planning and management of the GBR Marine Park and GBR World Heritage Area as a whole under the GBRMP Act, regulations, zoning plans and plans of management be maintained but emphasis continues to be made by the GBRMP Authority of the need for integrated catchment planning and management in the coastal areas adjacent to the GBR.

3. Extend the eastern boundary of the GBRMP to include the Coral Sea reefs and surrounding waters. Major reef systems include: Osprey Reef, the already highly protected Lihou Reef (an existing National Nature Reserve), Marion Reef, Flinders Reef, the Willis Group, Coringa Islands and the Saumarez Reefs. The extended Park should include a comprehensive network of no-take zones to ensure the protection of the Coral Sea reefs.

4. Development of legislation under the GBRMP Act to regulate land-sourced marine pollution from existing and new development within the GBR catchment, including such issues as:

- \* Transforming farming practices that contribute to sediment, nutrient and other pollutant loads;
- \* Ensuring all aquaculture is sustainable and has no net impact on water quality or ecosystem health
- \* Reducing the impact of discharges of industrial waste and sewage effluent; and
- \* Managing stormwater

5. Provide provisions to adequately resource indigenous communities to assist them to develop and implement Traditional Use Marine Resource Agreements (TUMRA) with the Great Barrier Reef Marine Park Authority. A major component of these TUMRA's will be agreements to ensure a sustainable level of take by indigenous communities of dugong and turtle.

6. That the practice of seafloor trawling is recognised as an inappropriate activity within the Great Barrier Reef World Heritage Area, and a commitment is made to its eventual phase-out.

7. Introduce regulations to make pilotage compulsory for the entire inner shipping route of the GBR Marine Park and introduce a dual-pilot system to ensure that one pilot is constantly at the helm in the inner route north of Cairns.

8. Introduce regulations to prohibit intensive sea-based aquaculture (involving the addition of feed) throughout the GBRMP and World Heritage Area.

9. Introduce legislation to extend the existing legislative ban on oil and gas exploration and drilling in the GBRMP eastwards to the boundary of Australia's Exclusive Economic Zone.

Yours sincerely,

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