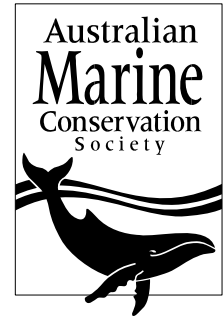


# Australian Marine Conservation Society

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September 30

Dr Diana Wright  
Executive Policy Advisor  
Department of the Environment and Heritage  
GPO Box 787  
CANBERRA ACT 2601

Dear Dr Wright

## **Re: review of the Great Barrier Reef Marine Park Act 1975.**

Thank you for the opportunity to provide a submission to the review of the Great Barrier Reef Marine Park Act 1975. The Australian Marine Conservation Society (AMCS) has been involved with the protection, declaration and management of the Great Barrier Reef since the Society's inception in 1965. We remain stout advocates of the Great Barrier Reef Marine Park Authority and would strongly refute any outcome of this review that intentionally or otherwise undermined the Authority's ability to deliver its charter.

The Great Barrier Reef Marine Park Authority (GBRMPA) has recently implemented one of the most significant marine conservation decisions in Australia's history – increasing marine sanctuaries from less than 5 per cent to more than 33 per cent of the Marine Park. This decision will be heralded by future generations of Australians as one of the key conservation measures achieved for our oceans during our time.

The GBR rezoning will not only assist us in protecting the future health of the Great Barrier Reef, but also help ensure the profitability and ecological sustainability of the fisheries which continue to access the reefs natural bounty. Without the rezoning, AMCS has little confidence that fisheries management arrangements alone could have prevented fishing from further eroding the Reef's integrity and thus value as the world's most valuable marine ecotourism destination.

In responding to the GBRMPA Review, AMCS wishes to respond specifically to the following issues:

1. Preferred governance arrangements
2. Legislative arrangements
3. Chair of the Authority
4. Consultation processes

### **1. Preferred governance arrangements**

Neither of the two templates outlined by the Uhrig Review for Commonwealth Statutory Authorities for governance arrangements adequately fit the GBRMPA situation. Uhrig acknowledges that 'circumstances may exist where, for valid reasons, the templates would need to be varied to take into account any unique factors'. AMCS believes that such circumstances exist and that the templates need varying.

In fact, several factors make the current management requirements for the Great Barrier Reef unique. These factors include, but are not limited to:

- the shared responsibility for the management of the GBRMP between the Australian and Queensland Government;

- the need to maintain and build effective relationships with large number of stakeholder and community members, particularly at a local and regional level;
- the enormous public interest in the GBR as a world treasure;
- the enormous size and complexity of managing an area such as the GBR; and,
- the need to work closely with the Queensland Government to effectively manage wetlands and the impact of water quality on the Reef.

AMCS strongly opposes the recommendation (under the Executive Management template) to subsume the policy development functions of GBRMPA into the bureaucracy of the Department of Environment and Heritage in Canberra. In our view, this would be a regressive move that flies in the face of the international regard that the Authority is held in for the effectiveness of its integrated policy and management framework.

This proposal would threaten the strong working relationship that exists between the Authority and the Queensland Government and distant the policy making process from the functional delivery of management initiatives. The Reef Water Quality Plan and the Wetlands Protecting Plan would be the first initiatives impacted by this proposal.

### **Recommendation**

AMCS strongly supports the recommendation outlined in WWF submission namely<sup>1</sup>;

That the best model for the GBRMPA is a combination of the two templates provided by Uhrig, namely:

- **Maintaining a Board.** According to Uhrig a board should comprise of a minimum of six people, and should be skills-based, not based on representation. Uhrig also regards appointments of departmental staff members to boards as something generally to be avoided. AMCS would regard the following as an appropriate board structure:
  - a chairperson, appointed by the Minister
  - a Queensland Government representative
  - an expert in marine science with global experience, based in the GBR region
  - an expert in community consultation and education
  - an expert in socio-economic analysis, with experience in Natural Resource Management
  - a representative of the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities
- **Providing direction.** The Minister should furnish GBRMPA with greater clarity of the Authority's role through the appropriate use of tools such as a ministerial Statement of Expectations
- **Performance appraisal.** The performance of the GBRMPA to be measured by setting clear management targets and milestones through the use of Key Performance Indicators.

AMCS does not support the idea of a 'dual' reporting responsibility, whereby GBRMPA reports to both a board and to the Secretary of the Department of Environment and Heritage. This situation would create an unnecessarily complex layer of management at the top of the GBRMPA hierarchy. However, maintaining a close working relationship with

## **2. Legislative Arrangements**

AMCS would expect that any review of the GBRMPA would include a review of the legislative arrangements required to effectively manage current and future uses of, and impacts on the Reef.

<sup>1</sup> WWF Submission Re: Great Barrier Reef Marine Park Act Review 30<sup>th</sup> September 2005

In this regard, AMCS fully supports the recommendations outlined in the WWF submission. These are that the Australian Government;

1. Develop 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.
- Managing stormwater.

2. Provide adequate resources to assist indigenous communities in the development and implementation of Traditional Use Marine Resource Agreements with the GBRMP. A major component of these TUMRA's should be agreements to ensure a sustainable level of take by indigenous communities of dugong and turtle.

3. Increase the emphasis by the GBRMPA on the need for integrated catchment planning and management in the coastal areas adjacent to the GBR.

4. Recognise the practice of seafloor trawling as an inappropriate activity within the Great Barrier Reef World Heritage Area, and make a commitment to its phase-out. As part of the transition to reaching this goal, a commitment to facilitating research and development aimed into viable alternative prawn capture techniques should be made.

5. 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.

6. Make regulations under the GBRMP Act to increase protection via Special Management Areas. These should include a prohibition on trawling and commercial netting for Princess Charlotte Bay, Rockingham Bay, Bowling Green Bay and Repulse Bay, and a seasonal no-fishing zone in the Round Hill Head to Wreck Rock area during the turtle nesting and hatching season.

7. Review and strengthen the existing Dugong Protection Area network. In the southern GBR, all Zone B Dugong Protection Areas should be upgraded to Zone A status; and a new Zone A network of DPA's should be established in the northern GBR.

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.

10. Extend the eastern boundary of the GBRMP eastwards to include the Coral Sea reefs and surrounding waters of the Coral Sea. 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 highly protect the reefs of the Coral Sea.

11. Amend the GBRMP Act to complement the EPBC Act for the conservation and management of threatened species, migratory species, listed marine species and cetaceans. This amendment would adopt a 'seamless management' approach throughout the entire GBRMP and GBR World Heritage Area. The amendments need also to include penalty provisions that are consistent with those of the EPBC Act.

### **3. Chair of the Authority**

AMCS recommends that there is a separation of powers between the Chair and the Chief-Executive Officer. This recommendation is consistent with the Uhrig report and should help to ensure the implementation of clear accountability frameworks.

### **4. Consultation Processes**

The recent re-zoning of the GBR was possibly the largest consultation process ever carried out in Australia. This process and the capacity of Queenslanders, and indeed all Australians, to be involved is a testament to the time, energy and commitment of the GBRMPA and its staff.

Ongoing consultation by GBRMPA with Queenslanders and members of the Australian community and stakeholders is essential. This follow up extension work is essential to ensure that the decisions made in this process are understood and respected by users of the GBR. This extension work will also help engender even greater stewardship for the rezoned park and in the long term ensure that Australia's pride for the rezoning process and the protective measures are ensured.

AMCS further supports;

- The Great Barrier Reef Consultative Committee – AMCS supports the Consultative Committee and recommends that it be given a clear mandate to meet regularly and be guided by clear Terms Of Reference which mandate its involvement in the protection and management of the Reef.
- Reef Advisory Committees – As formal members of two of these Committees, AMCS fully supports the continuation of these committees. AMCS respects that these committees contain a broad range of expertise and should thus be more fully exploited and maintained as an outcome of this review.

Yours sincerely



Kate Davey  
Director