

19 October 2005

Mr David Borthwick
Secretary
Department of the Environment and Heritage
GPO Box 787
CANBERRA ACT 2601

Dear Mr Borthwick 2/10

Re: Great Barrier Reef Marine Park Act Review

Many thanks for your opportunity to submit comments to the current review of the *Great Barrier Reef Marine Park Act*.

FNQ NRM Ltd is the Regional NRM Body for the Wet Tropics region. We are designated by both the State and Commonwealth governments and have responsibility for developing and implementing a target-based regional NRM plan. The success or otherwise of this plan will significantly influence the health of the Great Barrier Reef. As such, our working relationship with the Great Barrier Reef Marine Park Authority needs to be strong.

FNQ NRM Ltd commends the GBRMPA on the way in which it has expanded the degree of community engagement recently as part of its management and decision-making processes. Importantly this community engagement is given credibility because the locus of decision-making regarding reef issues is in northern Queensland, adjacent to the Great Barrier Reef.

Although we have only been operating for a few years, there are already some substantive areas of collaboration between FNQ NRM Ltd and the Authority. These include:

- Negotiation through the Reef Water Quality Advisory Committee of the most appropriate mechanisms for developing and implementing Reef Catchment Targets;
- Collaboration in establishing an effective reef catchments monitoring system to enable long term natural resource decision making;
- Co-investment in establishing research methods that allow both parties to establish more effective community capacity to engage in natural resource management;
- Working together to enhance the role of local governments in natural resource management within the region; and
- Emerging linkages between our developing education program and the Reef Guardian program.

In these endeavours, our relationship with the GBRMPA has been positive and collaborative.

We also strongly recognise the clear distinctions between our proactive non-regulatory role and the more regulation-based role of the GBRMPA.

ABN 53 106 385 899

45 Rankin Street PO Box 1756 Innisfail Qld 4860

Phone: (07) 4061 6477 Fax: (07) 4061 4677 Email: nrmboard@qldnet.com.au

Clear points that we would like to make in the course of this review include:

- It is important that the locus of decision making power in the GBRMPA remains in North Queensland. One reason our collaborative arrangements are continuing to improve is because we are both organisations situated in and staffed within the north;
- Proposed changes potentially could lead to the politicisation of the GBRMPA and reduce its independence from political processes;
- The GBRMPA should look in the future to even greater opportunities to collaborate with the NRM Board on non-regulatory approaches to natural resource management; and
- The GBRMPA needs to improve resourcing to indigenous communities ~~to assist them to develop and implement Traditional Use Marine Resource Agreements (TUMRA).~~

We do see significant opportunities for the GBRMPA to further improve its approaches to community engagement in the development and implementation of regulatory instruments. We do not, however, see a strong shift in the locus of decision making power to the south as being the way to achieve this. In fact we commend GBRMPA on the way in which it has greatly expanded the degree of community engagement as part of its management and decision-making processes in recent years. We would like to emphasise the fact that this engagement is given credibility because the locus of decision-making is in northern Queensland. A move to Canberra would seriously undermine public confidence in the GBRMPA and its ability to effectively engage the regional community.

In our experience the GBRMPA has benefited much from the extent that the Chair (Virginia Chadwick) has chosen to take a leading role in advancing the issues and policies of the Authority within the community. We suspect that such action gains credibility because of her local status.

We look forward to hearing the outcomes of the review, and also look to continuing our emerging working relationship with the Authority over time.

We would also be very pleased to meet with the Review Panel to discuss these issues further.

Yours sincerely



Mike Berwick
Chair
FNQ NRM Ltd