



MEDIA RELEASE

The Hon Peter Garrett MP

Minister for the Environment, Heritage and the Arts

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LONG TERM PROTECTION FOR THE GREAT BARRIER REEF

The long term protection of the Great Barrier Reef will be significantly strengthened under legislative changes introduced into Federal Parliament today by the Minister for the Environment Peter Garrett.

“The Great Barrier Reef is one of our most significant environmental assets. The amendments to the *Great Barrier Reef Marine Park Act 1975* I am announcing today will support the protection and ecologically sustainable use of the marine park,” Mr Garrett said.

“The marine park established under the Act is one of the largest and best protected marine areas in the world and now covers an area of 344, 400 square kilometres. It is widely recognised as a model for marine management and conservation.

“These legislative changes don’t change the marine park’s zoning, but they do ensure it delivers a high level of protection for the Great Barrier Reef,” he said.

Mr Garrett said the new legislation would do this through:

- recognising the World Heritage status of the Great Barrier Reef
- applying a new streamlined environmental impact assessment process
- an improved enforcement and compliance regime providing a wider range of enforcement options tailored to the circumstances, and
- addressing gaps in emergency management

“Together with measures such as the \$200 million Reef Rescue Plan and action on climate change, these legislative changes will form part of the Australian Government’s robust comprehensive framework for the Great Barrier Reef,” Mr Garrett said.

“These changes also see the Government deliver on an election commitment to reinstate the requirement for an Indigenous member of the Great Barrier Reef Marine Park Authority.

“While the Act was groundbreaking legislation at the time and has served its purpose well, it is now over 30 years old and many things have changed since its inception.

“The review of the Act in 2006 recommended changes to put in place a regulatory framework capable of meeting the challenges of the next 30 years and beyond. These amendments will deliver on that goal,” he said.