



# MEDIA RELEASE

**The Hon Peter Garrett MP**

*Minister for the Environment, Heritage and the Arts*

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## **UNDERSTANDING OUR NORTHERN OCEANS**

Minister for the Environment, Heritage and the Arts Peter Garrett today launched a comprehensive report on the biodiversity, ecosystems and social and economic uses of the oceans of northern Australia.

“The *North Marine Bioregional Profile* brings together, for the first time, the best available information for the North Marine Region. It consolidates our knowledge of the unique shallow basin and shelf communities and habitats of the Arafura and eastern Timor Seas, including the area’s natural features and values and the ways in which we use and enjoy them.

Mr Garrett said the Australian Government was committed to protecting the biological diversity of its oceans for the benefit of current and future generations.

“Marine Profiles such as this will help to address our lack of knowledge of ocean biodiversity, especially the species and ecosystems of the more remote and deeper areas.

“These information gaps have presented challenges in developing effective strategies to manage both the large and small scale impacts of change in ocean ecosystems, such as climate change.”

“The Government’s program of marine bioregional planning is helping us to better understand and protect the marine environment, conserve biodiversity and deliver greater certainty to decision-makers and the wider community about Australia’s marine conservation priorities.

“It also assists industries that rely on the oceans natural resources, collectively worth billions of dollars each year to the Australian economy, to better plan and manage their activities.

“The North Bioregional Profile is the starting point for developing a Marine Bioregional Plan for the Region, which I will be releasing in 2010.

”This is one of five Plans that together will identify the conservation values across more than seven million square kilometres of Australia’s oceans and the actions we need to take to protect them, including the areas we will look to include in the national marine protected area network.

“No-where else in the world is marine conservation planning being undertaken at this scale and in this timeframe.”

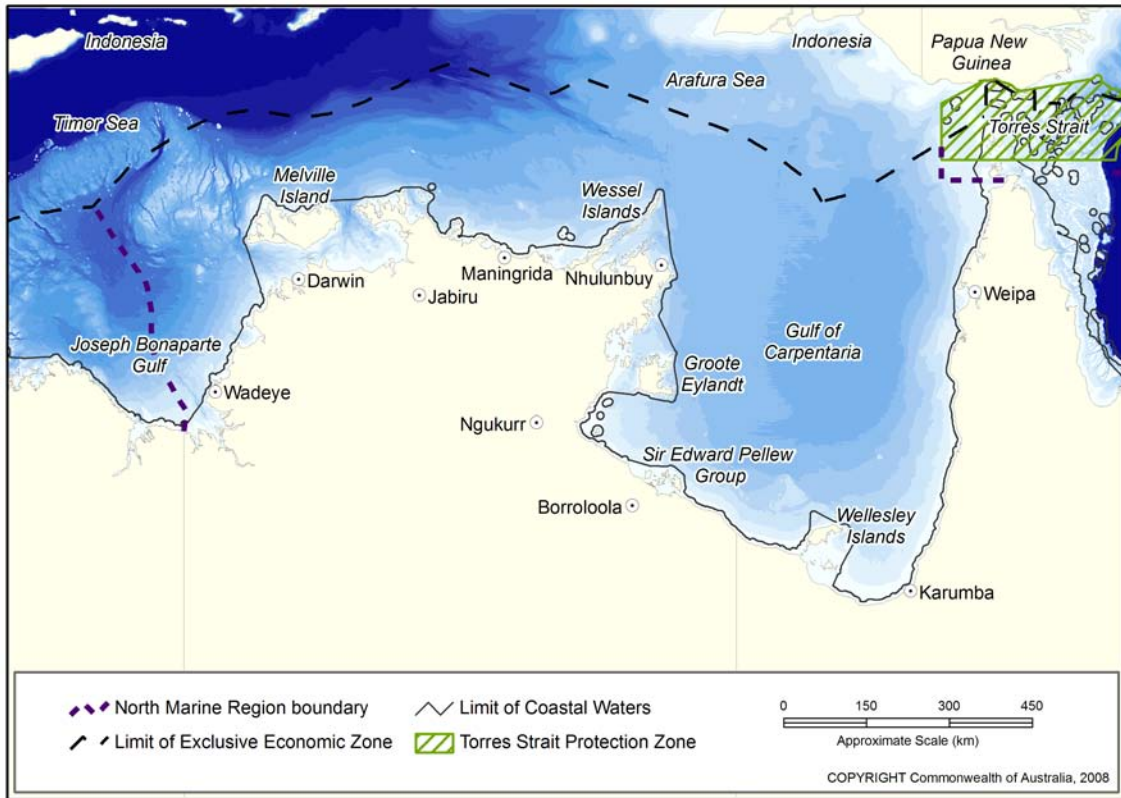
Australia’s existing marine protected area estate, covering some 88 million hectares, is already among the largest in the world.

“With the assistance and involvement of all stakeholders, I believe that bioregional planning can set a global standard in marine planning and management.”

The North Marine Region includes Commonwealth waters stretching from the Northern Territory/Western Australian border in the west, to the Torres Strait in the east, including the Gulf of Carpentaria.

Commonwealth waters extend from three nautical miles offshore out to the limit of Australia's Exclusive Economic Zone, some 200 nautical miles offshore.

### The North Marine Region



The *North Marine Bioregional Profile* can be downloaded at:  
<http://www.environment.gov.au/coasts/mbp/north/>