

ORDINARY MEETING 7 OCTOBER 2014	5.4
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GREAT BARRIER REEF 2050 LONG-TERM SUSTAINABILITY PLAN

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RECOMMENDATION:

- A. That Council makes a submission to the Department of Environment regarding the Draft for Comment Reef 2050 Long-Term Sustainability Plan raising the following issues:**
- 1. The Shire's coastline abuts the Great Barrier Reef and the Shire's lands form the Reef's catchment. Council's Planning Scheme acknowledges the meeting of the two World Heritage Areas and need for balanced development respective of these internationally recognised attributes. The proposed Plan sets a strategic path for future development, inherently the conservation of the reef for future generations and the guidelines for use by current generations who are the custodians of this environment. The Reef Plan should recognise the relationship of the Wet Tropics World Heritage Area with the Great Barrier Reef in the higher level components of the Plan, not just as a mention under Appendix C, Coastal Zone Program Commitments, "the Queensland Government will continue to support programs that improve the Outstanding Universal Value of the Wet Tropics World Heritage Area."**
 - 2. There should be an inclusion of a requirement for the Queensland Government and Local Governments to support the Great Barrier Reef in the development of local planning schemes.**
- B. That Council's future Planning Scheme should give recognition to the final Plan once the Plan is endorsed by the UNESCO World Heritage Committee.**

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY:

An encompassing strategic plan has been developed for the Great Barrier Reef acknowledging the need for a planned future care and appropriate use. The Plan has been developed by the Australian and Queensland Governments in consultation with user groups. The Plan has been released for public submissions for consideration prior to lodging with the UNESCO World Heritage Committee in June/ July 2015. The document has been well prepared and only minor concern is raised with the lack of suitable acknowledgment of the impact of the Wet Tropics World Heritage Areas and the need for local planning schemes to be respectful of the vision and desired outcomes.

BACKGROUND:

In 2011 a commitment was made between the Commonwealth and State governments and the UNESCO World Heritage Committee that a Strategic Plan, along with a comprehensive assessment and report will be submitted to the UNESCO World Heritage Committee Meeting in June/July 2015.

The Reef 2050 Long-Term Sustainability Plan is an overarching framework for protecting and managing the Great Barrier Reef from 2015 to 2050. The Plan sets out what Australia, as custodian for the international community, wants the future of the Reef to be and how this can be achieved. The overarching vision for the plan is that, *“In 2050 the Great Barrier Reef continues to demonstrate the Outstanding Universal Value for which it was listed as a World Heritage Area and supports a wide range of sustainable economic, social, cultural and traditional activities.”*

To achieve this vision the plan defines outcomes, objectives, targets and actions for seven themes: water quality, biodiversity, ecosystem health, heritage, community benefits, economic benefits and governance. The Plan has been developed in consultation with a Partnership Group with key organisations, industry groups and traditional owners. The Federal Government is seeking feedback from Council on the draft Plan. The Reef 2050 Long-Term Sustainability Plan can be viewed at the website link:

<http://www.environment.gov.au/marine/great-barrier-reef/consultation/reef-2050-long-term-sustainability-plan>. The Plan’s Executive Summary and a map of the Great Barrier Reef Region is included in Appendix 1.

OFFICER COMMENT

The Shire’s coastline abuts the Great Barrier Reef and the Shire’s lands form the Reef’s catchment. Council’s Planning Scheme acknowledges the meeting of the two World Heritage Areas and need for balanced development respective of these internationally recognised attributes. The proposed Plan sets a strategic path for future development, inherently the conservation of the reef for future generations and the guidelines for use by current generations who are the custodians of this environment. The plan is well written with identifiable strategic assessment commitments and actions.

The Reef Plan should recognise the relationship of the Wet Tropics World Heritage Area with the Great Barrier Reef in the higher level components of the Plan, not just as a mention under Appendix C, Coastal Zone Program Commitments, *“the Queensland Government will continue to support programs that improve the Outstanding Universal Value of the Wet Tropics World Heritage Area.”*

There should also be consideration of a requirement for the Queensland Government and Local Governments to support the Great Barrier Reef in the development of local planning schemes.

Council’s future Planning Scheme should give recognition to the final Plan once endorsed by the UNESCO World Heritage Committee.

CORPORATE/OPERATIONAL PLAN, POLICY REFERENCE:

Council’s Regulatory Role is prescribed under the Sustainable Planning Act 2009. This is not reflected in Council’s Corporate Plan other than “to manage the rate, extent and impacts of changes to the built environment” to “preserve the unique appeal to the Douglas Shire.”

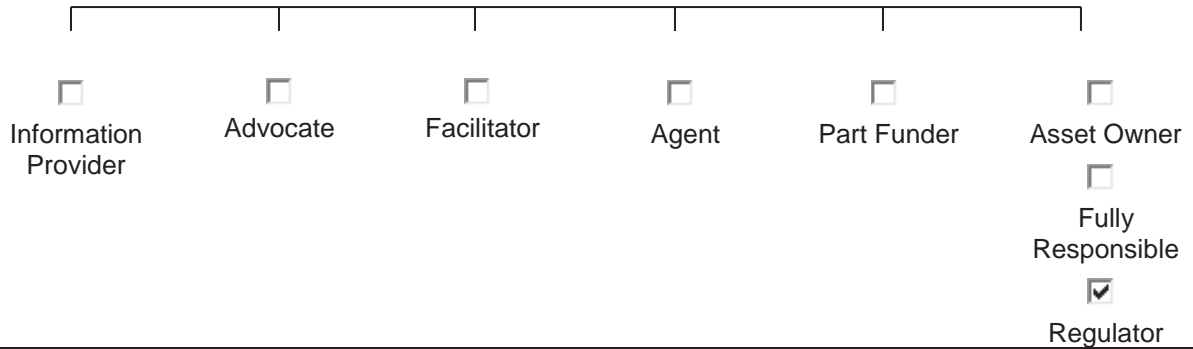
Through the SPA Council develops the Planning Scheme. The Operational plan requires a new draft Scheme to be prepared for State Interest check.

COUNCIL’S ROLE:

Council can play a number of different roles in certain circumstances and it is important to be clear about which role is appropriate for a specific purpose or circumstance. The implementation of actions will be a collective effort and Council’s involvement will vary from information only through to full responsibility for delivery.

The following area outlines where Council has a clear responsibility to act:

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Regulator:	Meeting the responsibilities associated with regulating activities through legislation or local law.
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FINANCIAL/RESOURCE IMPLICATIONS:

No further resources are required as Council already undertakes strategic planning in the development of a new Planning Scheme under the Sustainable Planning Act 2009.

RISK MANAGEMENT IMPLICATIONS:

None.

INTERNAL/EXTERNAL CONSULTATION:

None. The Plan is open to the public for the whole of the community to comment.

ATTACHMENTS:

Executive Summary and Great Barrier Reef Region Map, Reef 2050 Long-term Sustainability Plan.

Attachment 1: Executive Summary, Reef 2050 Long-term Sustainability Plan

Executive summary

The Great Barrier Reef is not only one of the natural wonders of the world, it is a significant part of Australia's national identity. It faces a number of pressures and whilst considerable progress has been made over many years to improve the management of the Reef, there is still more to be done. The Reef 2050 Long-Term Sustainability Plan presents a comprehensive strategy to protect the Reef's values into the future while allowing ecologically sustainable development and use.

When the Great Barrier Reef World Heritage Area was inscribed on the World Heritage List in 1981, it was already a multi-use area supporting a range of commercial and non-commercial activities. The adjacent catchment has undergone significant development including land clearing, agriculture, mining, industrial and urban growth. While some activities (such as commercial turtle harvesting and whaling), have been stopped and others (in the case of drilling for oil on the reef) were never allowed to start, it is clear that the full consequences of this ongoing development are only now being understood and addressed.

Since World Heritage listing, major steps have been taken to protect and manage the Reef. Almost all of the property is now within the Great Barrier Reef Marine Park and a strict zoning plan is in place. In addition, state and national laws were passed to curb land clearing in catchments and ensure that impacts of new development on the Reef and its Outstanding Universal Value are taken into account through planning systems and environmental assessment processes.

Industries and the community have played their part in protecting the Reef. For example, through the *Reef Water Quality Protection Plan*, improved land management practices by farmers and graziers have been instrumental in halting the long-term increases in sediment, nutrients and pesticides entering the Reef.

Despite this significant progress, the greatest risks to the Reef remain—as outlined in the *Great Barrier Reef Outlook Report 2014*—climate change, poor water quality from land-based run off, impacts from coastal development and some fishing activities. Many of the activities needed to improve the Reef's resilience have already commenced, and the Australian and Queensland governments agreed with the UNESCO World Heritage Committee that this long-term plan for the Reef was essential.

Equally important are the cultural and economic aspirations of the Indigenous communities of Queensland where strong connections with country continue. The cultural and ecological knowledge of Traditional Owners will be essential in delivering effective long-term management for the Reef.

This Plan identifies the actions that must be taken to protect the Reef for future generations. It brings programs and activities together to ensure greater coordination, efficiency and effectiveness. It describes how all levels of government, non-government organisations, industry and community groups can work together to further strengthen existing and implement new initiatives for the Reef. Integral to this approach will be the development of sectoral-based implementation plans around key human activities. These plans will outline how avoidance, mitigation, management and restoration actions combine to ensure development is sustainable.

In addition, regionally-based implementation plans will be important to address locally significant risks and to encourage community participation.

At the core of the Plan is an outcomes framework to guide the protection and management of the Great Barrier Reef towards an overarching vision:

In 2050 the Great Barrier Reef continues to demonstrate the Outstanding Universal Value for which it was listed as a World Heritage Area and supports a wide range of sustainable economic, social, cultural and traditional activities.

Outcomes, objectives and measurable targets have been identified across seven themes—water quality, biodiversity, ecosystem health, economic benefits, heritage, community benefits and governance—to form a comprehensive management framework to achieve the vision. Where appropriate, they build upon existing targets (such as those in the *Reef Water Quality Protection Plan 2013*) and focus on activities which will safeguard the Outstanding Universal Value of the Reef.

A Reef-wide integrated monitoring and reporting program is being developed to review the success of the Plan and inform adaptive management. It will build upon and coordinate existing monitoring and reporting activities and will be directly linked to the outcomes and targets identified in the Plan.

The Great Barrier Reef Ministerial Forum, which is made up of Australian and Queensland government ministers with portfolio responsibilities for the Great Barrier Reef, is overseeing the development and implementation of this Plan.

When completed, the Reef 2050 Long-Term Sustainability Plan will become a schedule to the Great Barrier Reef Intergovernmental Agreement 2009.

Attachment 2: Great Barrier Reef Region Map, Reef 2050 Long-term Sustainability Plan



Map of the Great Barrier Reef and catchment indicating the boundaries of the World Heritage Area, the Great Barrier Reef Region, the Marine Park and the Reef catchments.