

Reef 2050 Long-Term Sustainability Plan

Australian Government and Queensland Government, 2015

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3.3.3 Coastal land-use change—immediate, local/regional

Under Australia's federal structure, the Queensland Government has responsibility for land tenure, resources management and land-use planning in the coastal zone and catchments. As outlined in Section 3.2.1, there are a range of laws which cover all aspects of environmental protection, planning and development assessment in Queensland.

Through the coastal zone component of the comprehensive strategic environmental assessment^{9, 10}, the Queensland Government committed to ensuring that development in the Great Barrier Reef coastal zone occurs in an ecologically sustainable manner and that negative impacts on Outstanding Universal Value are avoided. This included the following enhancements to its current management:

- add to the coastal zone protected area estate
- require port master planning that considers potential marine-based as well as land-based environmental impacts
- meet the standards required by the EPBC Act for protection of matters of national environmental significance
- develop a *Direct Benefit Environmental Offsets Management Plan* to maximise the Reef's health and resilience.

In addition, the Queensland Government will:

- strengthen vegetation management laws to protect remnant and high value regrowth native vegetation (including in riparian zones)
- strengthen coastal planning laws based on the best available science, making allowance for expected sea level rise, protecting ecologically important areas such as wetlands and prohibiting development in high-hazard greenfield areas
- ensure ecologically sustainable regulation of water extraction in catchments leading to the Great Barrier Reef.

The Australian and Queensland governments are taking action to limit the impact of ports and port development on the Great Barrier Reef.

When the current Australian Government was elected in September 2013 there were five capital dredging projects either planned or under active assessment that proposed to dispose of dredge material in the Marine Park. The Australian Government has reduced that number to zero (see Appendix F). To ensure this position continues, the Australian Government will use its regulatory powers to permanently ban the disposal of capital dredge material in the Great Barrier Reef Marine Park. In addition the new Queensland Government will, through

current and new legislation:

- Protect greenfield areas by restricting new port development in and adjoining the Great Barrier Reef World Heritage Area to within current port limits. These port limits are long-established and fixed in regulations under the *Transport Infrastructure Act 1994* (Qld).
- **Restrict *capital dredging* for the development of new or expansion of existing port facilities to within the regulated port limits of Gladstone, Hay Point/Mackay, Abbot Point and Townsville.**
- Ensure that any new development inside these port limits is also consistent with the Great Barrier Reef Marine Park Act, the Queensland Marine Parks Act, their regulations and zoning plans.
- Prohibit the sea-based disposal of material into the Great Barrier Reef World Heritage Area generated by port-related capital dredging.
- Mandate the beneficial reuse of port-related capital dredge spoil, such as land reclamation in port development areas, or disposal on land where it is environmentally safe to do so.
- The Queensland Government will require all proponents of new dredging works to demonstrate their project is commercially viable.
- **Establish a maintenance dredging framework which identifies future dredging requirements, ascertains appropriate environmental windows to avoid coral spawning and protect seagrass, and examines opportunities for beneficial reuse of dredge material or on-land disposal where it is environmentally safe to do so.**
- Require master plans at the major ports of Gladstone, Hay Point/Mackay, Abbot Point and Townsville which optimise infrastructure and address operational, economic, environmental and social relationships as well as supply chains and surrounding land uses.
- Support on-land disposal or land reclamation for capital dredge material at Abbot Point.
- Not support trans-shipping operations that adversely affect the Great Barrier Reef Marine Park.
- Further protect the Fitzroy Delta, including North Curtis Island and Keppel Bay which are clearly outside the Gladstone port area, through:
 - extension and strengthened conservation zoning in the Great Barrier Reef Coast Marine Park
 - extension of the existing Fish Habitat area
 - establishment of a new net-free zone under fisheries legislation
 - additional protections in associated intertidal and terrestrial areas.

Further port re-development other than capital dredging may occur at Port Alma subject to environmental assessment and appropriate conditions.

Port planning and port operations in and around the World Heritage Area continue to be improved through industry commitment to improve practices, implementation of new Queensland Government policies, the principles developed through the Independent Review of the Port of Gladstone¹¹, and partnership models such as the Gladstone Healthy Harbour Partnership (see Section 5.3). As a consequence, port development in the World Heritage Area and the adjacent coastal zone will be strictly controlled. Further, these initiatives incorporate a best practice approach to port planning, ensuring Outstanding Universal Value

is an intrinsic consideration in port management and governance, optimisation of long-established port footprints, transparent decision making and meaningful engagement with affected stakeholders.

Glossary of commonly used terms

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Dredging: digging, excavating or removing material from waterways to deepen channels, create harbours, and keep channels and approaches to ports at defined depths. Dredging can either be **capital dredging, for new channels and berths, or maintenance dredging, necessary to maintain existing and approved dredging areas.** (Queensland Ports Association Fact Sheet, November 2013)