

Chapter 8

Governance and management arrangements

8.1 This chapter examines the evidence received about governance arrangements and decision-making processes relating to the management of the Great Barrier Reef, including:

- general comments on the overall management of the Great Barrier Reef;
- the role, resourcing and independence of the Great Barrier Reef Marine Park Authority;
- cooperation and coordination between governments, including the government's one stop shop proposal;
- decision-making processes relating to the Great Barrier Reef;
- the role and value of the Strategic Assessments and proposed Long-Term Sustainability Plan.

General comments on the overall management of the Great Barrier Reef

8.2 Most submitters and witnesses were in agreement that more needs to be done to prevent and, indeed, reverse the decline of the Great Barrier Reef. For example, Professor Hoegh-Guldberg told the committee that 'not enough is being done' and that 'current Australian and Queensland government efforts to stop the rapid decline of the Great Barrier Reef are proving inadequate'.¹

8.3 Shipping Australia agreed that 'a persistent and bigger effort will be required in the future to achieve complete protection of the reef from further decline'.²

8.4 Ms Wendy Tubman of the North Queensland Conservation Council (NQCC) told the committee that the 'parlous state of the reef' means that 'almost by definition we have to say that things are not working'. She identified 'lack of political will' as the key underlying problem and expressed concern that 'governments want to find simple and speedy solutions to what is an extremely complex issue'.³

8.5 Mr Jeremy Tager agreed that the political culture surrounding the Great Barrier Reef needs to change:

...the politics of the reef is the impossible dream, the notion that you can build massive coal ports and coalmines, dredge and dump on a scale so far beyond anything that has happened in the past and even beyond what I can imagine and that you can protect the reef at the same time by imposing

1 Professor Ove Hoegh-Guldberg, *Committee Hansard*, 21 July 2014, p. 8.

2 Shipping Australia, *Submission 3*, p. 6.

3 Ms Wendy Tubman, Coordinator, NQCC, *Committee Hansard*, 23 July 2014, p. 1; see also Mr Jeremy Tager, *Committee Hansard*, 23 July 2014, p. 2.

conditions and offsets is pure fantasy. Until that changes, I'm afraid nothing will change.⁴

8.6 Several submitters and witnesses also expressed a desire to move away from a 'business as usual' approach.⁵ Mr Tager suggested that 'the solutions at a general level are really clear: reverse declines, avoid impacts and build resilience'. He cautioned that 'you cannot manage away all impacts; you must learn to say no' and:

...when you have opportunities to demonstrate a commitment to protecting the reef...you make those decisions.⁶

8.7 Mr Richard Leck from WWF-Australia agreed that concrete action is needed:

To date, the response we have seen from both governments has been to announce a series of reviews, inquiries and plans, many of which total thousands of pages. What I think the Australian people, and certainly conservation groups like WWF, want to see is real solutions, not the endless reports that document the reef's decline.⁷

8.8 In contrast, the Minerals Council of Australia supported 'the current program of science based Strategic Assessments, management plans and development strategies as the right mix of approaches to complement and strengthen the existing regulatory framework', although noted that that effort will be needed to ensure 'success in implementation' and 'that the outcomes sought are achieved'.⁸

8.9 Dr Oliver of the Australian Institute of Marine Science (AIMS) also acknowledged:

...the significant accomplishments of the Commonwealth and state governments and in particular the Great Barrier Reef Marine Park Authority in its work to establish world-leading management practices and new globally recognised standards for the protection and multiple-use management of the park.⁹

8.10 At the same time, he described managing the pressures on the Great Barrier as a 'Sisyphean task': It is huge, it is complex and it is never-ending.¹⁰ The committee also notes that the *Outlook Report 2014* recognised that 'progress in reducing threats is

4 Mr Jeremy Tager, *Committee Hansard*, 23 July 2014, p. 3.

5 See, for example, Mr Tony Fontes, *Committee Hansard*, 22 July 2014, p. 2; Mr Jeremy Tager, *Committee Hansard*, 23 July 2014, pp 3 and 5.

6 Mr Jeremy Tager, *Committee Hansard*, 23 July 2014, p. 3.

7 Mr Richard Leck, National Manager, Marine Conservation and Sustainable Development, WWF-Australia, *Committee Hansard*, 21 July 2014, p. 15; see also Ms Ginny Gerlach, Director and Coordinator, Keppel and Fitzroy Delta Alliance, *Committee Hansard*, 22 July 2014, p. 35; Mr Jeremy Tager, *Committee Hansard*, 23 July 2014, p. 3.

8 Minerals Council of Australia, *Submission 35*, p. 9.

9 Dr Jamie Oliver, Research Director, AIMS, *Committee Hansard*, 23 July 2014, p. 18.

10 Dr Jamie Oliver, Research Director, AIMS, *Committee Hansard*, 23 July 2014, p. 18.

slow' and there are difficulties in 'achieving positive outcomes', given the complexity of the issues.¹¹

8.11 Nevertheless, the Australian and Queensland Governments expressed confidence that:

...we have the processes, resources, environmental protection mechanisms, and the appropriate level of investment in place to ensure that the Great Barrier Reef continues to be among the best managed and protected World Heritage areas in the world.¹²

8.12 However, as the *Outlook Report 2014* concluded:

A business as usual approach to managing threats will not be enough. Achieving a healthy and resilient Great Barrier Reef into the future will require continued focus and even more effective action...Without promptly reducing threats, there is a serious risk that resilience will not be improved and there will be irreversible declines in the Region's values.¹³

Role and resourcing of GBRMPA

8.13 As outlined in Chapter 2, GBRMPA was established under the GBRMP Act in 1975 and is responsible for the protection and management of the environment, biodiversity and heritage values of the Great Barrier Reef Marine Park. The Australian and Queensland Governments advised that:

In managing the Marine Park, GBRMPA must have regard to, and seek to act in a way that is consistent with the objects of the GBRMP Act, the protection of the world heritage values of the GBRWHA, and the principles of ecologically sustainable use – including the precautionary principle.¹⁴

8.14 The Australian and Queensland Governments submitted that:

Australia and Queensland are world leaders in marine park management, and have a long history in this area. The Great Barrier Reef Marine Park Authority was created almost 40 years ago to protect the reef. The first agreement between the Australian and Queensland governments to jointly manage the reef was signed in 1979, and just two years later we were privileged to receive a World Heritage listing.¹⁵

8.15 Professor Pandolfi described GBRMPA as:

...one of the key agencies that provides liaison between the scientific evidence on the reef and the science from the reef, and incorporating that into the management of the reef. Without the marine park authority, the scientists are left with a muddle of individuals to deal with. The Great Barrier Reef Marine Park Authority represents a place where we can go to

11 GBRMPA, *Outlook Report 2014*, p. vi and see also p. 220.

12 Australian and Queensland Governments, *Submission 34*, p. 9.

13 GBRMPA, *Outlook Report 2014*, p. 275.

14 Australian and Queensland Governments, *Submission 34*, p. 12.

15 Australian and Queensland Governments, *Submission 34*, p. 6.

tell government what the science is about the reef, and they can use that information to transfer into real management practice.¹⁶

8.16 Others expressed concern about GBRMPA's role. For example, Professor Terry Hughes expressed concern that GBRMPA is being disempowered, and that it is 'no longer the one-stop shop custom-designed institution for managing and governing the Great Barrier Reef that it once was'.¹⁷ Similarly, WWF-Australia and the Australian Marine Conservation Society submitted that there has been a progressive 'erosion of clarity of responsibilities' and a dilution in the independence of GBRMPA over the years.¹⁸ Some submitters and witnesses therefore suggested that the role of GBRMPA needs to be expanded, or that GBRMPA needs greater power.¹⁹

8.17 Several witnesses and submitters referred to the objects of the GBRMP Act. As noted in Chapter 2, the main object of the GBRMP Act is to 'provide for the long term protection and conservation of the environment, biodiversity and heritage values of Great Barrier Reef Region'. However, Mr Colin McKenzie of the Association of Marine Park Tourism Operators (AMPTO) queried whether GBRMPA is adequately applying the Act in practice.²⁰ For example, Mr Jeremy Tager suggested that there needs to be 'greater enforcement of the overriding objectives' of the GBRMP Act.²¹

8.18 Ms Moorhouse of the Alliance to Save Hinchinbrook suggested that the object should be strengthened along the lines of the preamble to the *Wet Tropics World Heritage Protection and Management Act 1993* (Qld), which states that the area 'should be established and maintained as a world heritage area of the highest standard'.²²

8.19 NQCC submitted that 'there appears to be confusion' at high levels of GBRMPA about:

...how the objects of the GBRMP Act should influence the use of the [Marine Park]. The [Marine Park] is regularly referred to by both Federal and State governments as a 'multiple use park', without acknowledgment of the fact that the Act allows uses only to the extent that they are consistent with the main object of providing for the long term protection and

16 Professor John Pandolfi, Councillor and Past President, Australian Coral Reef Society, *Committee Hansard*, 21 July 2014, p. 3.

17 Professor Terry Hughes, *Committee Hansard*, 23 July 2014, p. 25.

18 WWF-Australia and the Australian Marine Conservation Society, *Submission 23*, p. 11.

19 See, for example, Mr Jeremy Tager, *Committee Hansard*, 23 July 2014, p. 3; Mr Tony Fontes, 22 July 2014, p. 2.

20 Mr Colin McKenzie, Executive Director, AMPTO, *Committee Hansard*, 23 July 2014, pp 33 and 36.

21 Mr Jeremy Tager, *Committee Hansard*, 23 July 2014, p. 3.

22 Ms Margaret Moorhouse, Spokesperson, Alliance to Save Hinchinbrook, *Committee Hansard*, 23 July 2014, p. 11.

conservation of the Great Barrier Reef Region. Greater emphasis on the primary object is needed if the [Great Barrier Reef] region is to survive.²³

8.20 In contrast, the Minerals Council emphasised the need for the Great Barrier Reef to remain available for multiple uses, particularly given the importance of the industries located adjacent to or exported through the reef to the Queensland and national economies and local communities.²⁴

Independence of, and confidence in, GBRMPA

8.21 Concern was also expressed about the independence of GBRMPA, with several submissions and witnesses emphasising the need for GBRMPA to be a strongly independent authority.²⁵ For example, Professor Hoegh-Guldberg told the committee:

Continuing to have a strong Great Barrier Reef Marine Park Authority is really important—maintaining that independence, which has been eroded somewhat over the past decade. But rebuilding that independence is really important, because this goes beyond politics.²⁶

8.22 Shipping Australia submitted that the *Great Barrier Reef Marine Park Act 1975* 'provides GBRMPA with sufficient legislative backing to work as an independent body to act in the best interest of the long-term health of the GBR'.²⁷ Shipping Australia further stated that 'GBRMPA conducts continuous assessments of the health of the [Great Barrier Reef] and addresses any shortcomings without procrastinating'.²⁸

8.23 However, other witnesses and submitters expressed concerns that GBRMPA's independence has eroded in recent years.²⁹ For example, CAFNEC submitted that it has 'serious concerns regarding actual and perceived independence of GBRMPA'.³⁰ Mr Coates from CAFNEC explained confidence in GBRMPA has been undermined as

23 NQCC, *Submission 30*, p. 3; see also Ms Wendy Tubman, Coordinator, NQCC, *Committee Hansard*, 23 July 2014, p. 2.

24 Minerals Council of Australia, *Submission 35*, p. 5; see also Mr Chris McCombe, Assistant Director, Environmental Policy, Minerals Council of Australia, *Committee Hansard*, 21 July 2014, p. 31.

25 See, for example, Mr Jeremy Tager, *Submission 18*, p. 1; WWF-Australia and the Australian Marine Conservation Society, *Submission 23*, p. 11; Whitsunday Residents Against Dumping, *Submission 39*, p. 3; Whitsunday Charter Boat Industry Association, *Submission 46*, p. 9; Ms Wendy Tubman, Coordinator, NQCC, *Committee Hansard*, 23 July 2014, p. 1 and NQCC, *Submission 30*, p. 3.

26 Professor Ove Hoegh-Guldberg, *Committee Hansard*, 21 July 2014, p. 11.

27 Shipping Australia, *Submission 3*, p. 4.

28 Shipping Australia, *Submission 3*, p. 6.

29 See, for example, Mr Tony Fontes, *Committee Hansard*, 22 July 2014, p. 2; WWF-Australia and the Australian Marine Conservation Society, *Submission 23*, p. 11.

30 CAFNEC, *Submission 19*, p. 7.

a result of concerns about the independence of the GBRMPA Board, the Abbot Point decision and whether GBRMPA has 'the resources it needs to do its job'.³¹

GBRMPA Board

8.24 Several submitters and witnesses raised issues relating to the composition of the GBRMPA Board. In particular, it was suggested that some current members of the GBRMPA Board may have a conflict of interest. For example, Southern Cross Sailing Adventures suggested that the independence of GBRMPA has been 'compromised' by the appointment of two directors with mining interests on the five person board'.³² Mr Jeremy Tager similarly told the committee that 'individuals with deeply vested financial interests in the coal industry' have been appointed to the GBRMPA Board.³³

8.25 The committee notes that there was an investigation into these allegations of conflicts of interest, which were found to be 'unfounded'.³⁴ Nevertheless, it seems from evidence to the committee that a perception of bias and lack of independence remains. As CAFNEC submitted:

The perceived or real conflict of interest of GBRMPA board members with mining or other interests was not alleviated by an exonerating investigation or the subsequent divestment of some of the interests by a GBRMPA board member.³⁵

8.26 Others queried why the Chief Executive Officer is also the Chair of the Marine Park Authority, suggesting that the Chair of GBRMPA should be an independent person, appointed by the Minister, who 'should be ensuring that the GBRMPA is performing correctly'.³⁶ Ms Moorhouse of the Alliance to Save Hinchinbrook similarly noted that the Chair and the CEO of GBRMPA 'are vested in the same person', which she described as 'a bit like somebody making a recommendation and then sitting on the recommendation themselves'.³⁷

8.27 Ms Tubman of the NQCC also suggested that GBRMPA needs to have larger board with a greater skills base, and in particular members with marine science

31 Mr Josh Coates, Marine Program Coordinator, CAFNEC, *Committee Hansard*, 23 July 2014, p. 15.

32 Southern Cross Sailing Adventures, *Submission 25*, p. 1; see also Whitsunday Charter Boat Industry Association, *Submission 46*, p. 2; Mr Tony Brown, President, Whitsunday Charter Boat Industry Association, *Committee Hansard*, 23 July 2014, p. 13.

33 Mr Jeremy Tager, *Committee Hansard*, 23 July 2014, p. 2.

34 The Hon Greg Hunt MP, Great Barrier Reef Marine Park Authority conflict of interest inquiry, 24 February 2014, <http://www.environment.gov.au/minister/hunt/2014/mr20140224a.html> (accessed 12 August 2014).

35 CAFNEC, *Submission 19*, p. 7; see also, for example, Ms Wendy Tubman, Coordinator, NQCC, *Committee Hansard*, 23 July 2014, p. 1.

36 AMPTO, *Submission 41*, p. 3.

37 Ms Margaret Moorhouse, Spokesperson, Alliance to Save Hinchinbrook, *Committee Hansard*, 23 July 2014, p. 13.

experience or qualifications.³⁸ In response to questioning on this issue, Dr Reichelt noted that he was the only one with scientific qualifications on the board but that there was also a 'traditional owner with traditional marine values' and a 'marine diving expert'.³⁹

8.28 The committee notes that the role and independence of GBRMPA, including the composition of the GBRMPA Board, was examined in detail in the review of the *Great Barrier Reef Marine Park Act 1975* in 2006.⁴⁰ The Australian and Queensland Governments submitted that this review:

...concurred with the original conception of a dedicated statutory authority responsible for advising and acting on behalf of the Australian Government in relation to management of the Marine Park. The Review Panel considered the statutory authority allows for a focused, specialised and expertise-based approach to management, as well as providing a degree of independence from government, while being accountable to government.⁴¹

Relationships with stakeholders

8.29 Some submitters, such as the Cairns Local Marine Advisory Committee, praised GBRMPA for its 'genuine willingness to engage with stakeholders and community members and actively seek input to policies and management decisions'.⁴²

8.30 However, this was in contrast to other evidence. For example, the Association of Marine Park Tourism Operators, submitted that:

Over the last two years there has been a significant drop in consultation and interaction with the industry. The Tourism Recreation Reef Advisory Committee (TRRAC) has not met to discuss any issues other than the strategic assessment and many issues are now reaching crisis point. As the only industry user group that pays for access to the GBRMP, our industry should be able to at least be listened to.⁴³

8.31 Ports Australia also expressed concern that their attempts to be 'willing participants in a clear and transparent assessment processes are not reciprocated by GBRMPA':

Port proponents have increasingly experienced less certainty with environmental assessment and approval conditions from the GBRMPA...

38 Ms Wendy Tubman, Coordinator, NQCC, *Committee Hansard*, 23 July 2014, pp 1 and 3–4; see also Mr Jeremy Tager, *Submission 18*, p. 4.

39 Dr Russell Reichelt, Chairman and Chief Executive, GBRMPA, *Committee Hansard*, 23 July 2014, pp 58–59.

40 Department of the Environment and Heritage, *Review of the Great Barrier Reef Marine Park Act 1975–Review Panel Report*, 2006, <http://www.environment.gov.au/resource/review-great-barrier-reef-marine-park-act-1975-review-panel-report> (accessed 21 August 2014).

41 Australian and Queensland Governments, *Submission 34*, p. 12.

42 Cairns Local Marine Advisory Committee, *Submission 7*, p. 5.

43 AMPTO, *Submission 41*, p. 3.

we require a coherent management approach from GBRMPA that provides clarity on process and adherence to specified time frames instead of capricious regulation that adds a significant cost to projects and is becoming increasingly detached from the macro-economic goals of the Government.⁴⁴

Abbot Point decision

8.32 Several submissions and witnesses expressed concern at GBRMPA's role in the approval process in relation to Abbot Point (as discussed in Chapter 6). The evidence to the committee indicated that the recent decision by GBRMPA to approve the dumping of dredge spoil near Abbot Point has undermined community confidence in the role and independence of GBRMPA.⁴⁵ For example, Mr Colin McKenzie of the Association of Marine Park Tourism Operators told the committee that they have had a 'close working relationship' with GBRMPA in the past but were 'disappointed, shocked, dismayed, even angry at the decisions we have seen from GBRMPA'.⁴⁶

8.33 In this context, the committee notes that the Australian National Audit Office has recently commenced an audit to assess the effectiveness of the Great Barrier Reef Marine Park Authority's regulation of permits and approvals within the Great Barrier Reef Marine Park.⁴⁷

8.34 Ms Wishart of the Australian Marine Conservation Society told the committee that GBRMPA's advice had also been ignored in relation to other decisions, such as the Fitzroy Delta transshipping proposal (mentioned in Chapter 5), where GBRMPA's advice was that the proposal had 'unacceptable high risks and should not have been referred'.⁴⁸

Zoning in the Marine Park

8.35 In contrast, several submissions and witnesses expressed support for GBRMPA and its management of the rezoning process. In 2004, after a considerable period of consultation, GBRMPA introduced zoning maps depicting permitted activities in various areas of the Great Barrier Reef. Some areas were defined as off-limits areas while other zones prohibited certain specified activities, such as

44 Ports Australia, *Submission 11*, pp 1–2.

45 See, for example, Cairns Local Marine Advisory Committee, *Submission 7*, p. 3; AMPTO, *Submission 41*, p. 3; CAFNEC, *Submission 19*, p. 8; NQCC, *Submission 30*, p. 3; Ms Felicity Wishart, Great Barrier Reef Campaign Director, Australian Marine Conservation Society, *Committee Hansard*, 21 July 2014, pp 15 and 20; Mr Josh Coates, Marine Program Coordinator, CAFNEC, *Committee Hansard*, 23 July 2014, pp 11 and 15.

46 Mr Colin McKenzie, Executive Director, AMPTO, *Committee Hansard*, 23 July 2014, p. 33; see also Mrs Jan Claxton, *Committee Hansard*, 22 July 2014, p. 6.

47 Australian National Audit Office, *Regulation of Great Barrier Reef Marine Park Approvals*, <http://www.anao.gov.au/Publications/Audits-in-Progress/2015/Winter/Regulation-of-Great-Barrier-Reef-Marine-Park-Permits-and-Approvals> (accessed 27 August 2014).

48 Ms Felicity Wishart, Great Barrier Reef Campaign Director, Australian Marine Conservation Society, *Committee Hansard*, 21 July 2014, pp 15–16.

commercial fishing. Professor Hughes observed that the rezoning of the Great Barrier Reef was recognition by GBRMPA that the health of the marine park was suffering as a result of human activity.⁴⁹ The zones were designed to enable better management and protection of plants, animals and habitats in accordance with best practice principles.⁵⁰

8.36 For example, AIMS submitted that GBRMPA 'has established an international reputation as a leader in marine park management':

In the last [Great Barrier Reef] rezoning plan, it led the way in setting new international benchmarks for establishment of no-take areas that are comprehensive, adequate and representative. GBRMPA's international reputation is, in part, based on the emphasis it has placed on scientific information to manage the GBRWHA.⁵¹

8.37 Submitters noted that the zoning plans were positive steps towards improving the overall health of the Great Barrier Reef. Research shows that both fish numbers and the average size of fish have improved in zones where fishing has been prohibited.⁵² Shipping Australia submitted that although the zoning restrictions have helped to protect the health of the Great Barrier Reef, the patrol and enforcement capabilities of GBRMPA have not been sufficient to prevent prohibited activities.⁵³ Professor Hughes noted that there have been and continue to be issues with fishing, particularly with bycatch and with poaching.⁵⁴ The Cairns Local Marine Advisory Committee suggested that GBRMPA needs to play a greater role in fisheries management.⁵⁵

8.38 Professor Hoegh-Guldberg submitted that additional areas may need to be rezoned in order to improve resilience of the Great Barrier Reef ecology to accommodate the emerging threats of climate change. Furthermore, it was suggested

49 Professor Terry Hughes, Director, ARC Centre of Excellence for Coral Reef Studies, James Cook University, *Committee Hansard*, 23 July 2014, p. 25.

50 Shipping Australia Limited, *Submission 3*, p. 6; Tom Farrell Institute for the Environment, University of Newcastle, *Submission 43*, p. 7; see also Professor Peter Mumby, President, Australian Coral Reef Society, *Committee Hansard*, 21 July 2014, p. 5; Professor Ove Hoegh-Guldberg, *Committee Hansard*, 21 July 2014, p.10.

51 AIMS, *Submission 36*, p. 1.

52 Shipping Australia Limited, *Submission 3*, p. 6; Tom Farrell Institute for the Environment, University of Newcastle, *Submission 43*, p. 7; see also Professor Peter Mumby, President, Australian Coral Reef Society, *Committee Hansard*, 21 July 2014, p. 5; Professor Ove Hoegh-Guldberg, *Committee Hansard*, 21 July 2014, p.10.

53 Shipping Australia Limited, *Submission 3*, p. 6.

54 Professor Terry Hughes, Director, ARC Centre of Excellence for Coral Reef Studies, James Cook University, *Committee Hansard*, 23 July 2014, p. 25.

55 Cairns Local Marine Advisory Committee, *Submission 7*, p. 4; see also CAFNEC, *Submission 19*, p. 9 and Mr Josh Coates, Marine Program Coordinator, CAFNEC, *Committee Hansard*, 23 July 2014, p. 11; Ms Margaret Moorhouse, Spokesperson, Alliance to Save Hinchinbrook, *Committee Hansard*, 23 July 2014, p. 12.

that the current zoning plan should be revisited at least every 10 years to assess whether new areas of zoning are required to combat the effects of increased urban and industrial activities. It was also submitted that, before rezoning takes place, GBRMPA should comprehensively consider the impacts of land-based activities when deciding what and where to protect.⁵⁶

Funding and resourcing of GBRMPA and reef management

8.39 Submissions and witnesses were also concerned about resourcing for GBRMPA, and particularly recent cuts to GBRMPA's budget and staffing levels.⁵⁷ It was suggested that GBRMPA actually needs more funding for its increasing workload.⁵⁸ For example, CAFNEC submitted that it has 'serious concerns regarding resourcing of GBRMPA', and that:

...recent cuts to GBRMPA funding are very poorly timed: they come at a time when more resources are required to address the serious ongoing problems and threats faced by the GBR.⁵⁹

8.40 CAFNEC submitted that GBRMPA needs increased resourcing, particularly in the areas of compliance, ecological research into threats, and fisheries management.⁶⁰

8.41 The Australian Coral Reef Society expressed the view that the government 'needs to invest more heavily in the management of the Great Barrier Reef and watershed improvement in particular'.⁶¹ The Australian Coral Reef Society further submitted that:

We are also significantly dismayed to see that the Commonwealth government has significantly cut the funding of the GBRMPA at a time when the reef is in its worst state ever.⁶²

8.42 Professor Ove Hoegh-Guldberg suggested that Australia is not putting enough resources into managing the threats to the reef:

...the economic value of this ecosystem is enormous, yet we are spending a tiny fraction on what are clear threats to the reef. If you were running a business, you would not be spending a part of one per cent on research and

56 Professor Hoegh-Guldberg, *Submission 6*, p. 3; see also Brian Bycroft, *Submission 3*, p. 5.

57 See, for example, Australian Coral Reef Society, *Submission 8*, p. 2; WWF-Australia and the Australian Marine Conservation Society, *Submission 23*, pp 11–12; Save the Reef, *Submission 50*, p. 11; Mr Tony Fontes, 22 July 2014, p. 2; Mr Colin McKenzie, Executive Director, AMPTO, *Committee Hansard*, 23 July 2014, pp 33–34.

58 See, for example, Ms Wendy Tubman, Coordinator, NQCC, *Committee Hansard*, 23 July 2014, p. 1; Ms Margaret Moorhouse, Spokesperson, Alliance to Save Hinchinbrook, *Committee Hansard*, 23 July 2014, pp 11–12.

59 CAFNEC, *Submission 19*, p. 7.

60 CAFNEC, *Submission 19*, p. 8.

61 Australian Coral Reef Society, *Submission 8*, p. 1.

62 Australian Coral Reef Society, *Submission 8*, p. 2.

development or minimising risk; you would be spending a lot more—10 per cent or so.⁶³

8.43 Professor Pandolfi of the Australian Coral Reef Society told the committee that GBRMPA is being compromised by 'severe cutbacks':

The Great Barrier Reef Marine Park Authority has been held up as the world's best practice in a reef management context. Its budget has been severely cut; there has been a recent round of severance and many of the top scientists within GBRMPA are moving on.⁶⁴

8.44 Mr Jon Brodie expressed a similar concern that:

...all the people who are competent in this field in the Great Barrier Reef Marine Park Authority are about to leave, disillusioned with what is happening in the Great Barrier Reef Marine Park Authority and with the fact that their advice [in relation to Abbot Point] was overturned by the chair of the marine park authority.⁶⁵

8.45 The Cairns Local Marine Advisory Committee agreed that, 'given the extent of corporate knowledge set to leave the organisation with voluntary redundancies, there is a question mark over the capacity of the Authority to deliver existing programs to a meaningful and worthwhile extent'.⁶⁶

8.46 In response to questioning on this issue, Dr Reichelt of GBRMPA advised that they had reduced from around 220 full-time equivalent staff to 'about 200 or just less' and that 'a number of senior people' have left GBRMPA 'for their own reasons'.⁶⁷

Industry contributions

8.47 Several tourism industry representatives noted that they help GBRMPA collect an Environmental Management Charge (EMC) from visitors. The EMC is currently set at \$3.50 per day per visitor. The committee heard that this will rise to \$6.50 in 2015.⁶⁸

63 Professor Ove Hoegh-Guldberg, *Committee Hansard*, 21 July 2014, p. 9.

64 Professor John Pandolfi, Councillor and Past President, Australian Coral Reef Society, *Committee Hansard*, 21 July 2014, p. 3; see also Professor Peter Mumby, President, Australian Coral Reef Society, *Committee Hansard*, 21 July 2014, p. 2.

65 Mr Jon Brodie, *Committee Hansard*, 23 July 2014, p. 27.

66 Cairns Local Marine Advisory Committee, *Submission 7*, p. 3.

67 Dr Russell Reichelt, Chairman and Chief Executive, GBRMPA, *Committee Hansard*, 23 July 2014, p. 53; see also Department of the Environment, Queensland Government and GBRMPA, *Answers to questions on notice from public hearing on 21 July 2014*, pp 9–10.

68 Mr Colin McKenzie, Executive Director, Association of Marine Park Tourism Operators, *Committee Hansard*, 23 July 2014, p. 34; see also Mrs Jan Claxton, *Committee Hansard*, 22 July 2014, p. 4; Mr Tony Brown, President, Whitsunday Charter Boat Industry Association, *Committee Hansard*, 22 July 2014, p. 11; Mr Allen Grundy, Director, Southern Cross Sailing Adventures, *Committee Hansard*, 22 July 2014, p. 42.

8.48 The committee notes that the GBRMPA website states that the EMC is a charge associated with most commercial activities, including tourism operations, non-tourist charter operations and facilities, operated under a permit issued by GBRMPA and that:

The funds received from the EMC are vitally important in the day-to-day management of the Great Barrier Reef Marine Park and in improving its long-term resilience.

All funds received as EMC payments are applied directly to management of the Great Barrier Reef Marine Park including education, research, ranger patrols and policy development.⁶⁹

8.49 However, the committee heard some resentment about the charge from the tourism industry in light of recent decisions made by GBRMPA. For example, the Whitsunday Charter Boat Industry Association submitted that:

It seems extremely ironic that tourism collects an environment management charge for the GBRMPA who then do a risk assessment on the impacts of dredging and sea dumping and finds that it is medium to high to the environment and high to stakeholders. They then pass the permit for this action to the detriment of the only industry that collects money for the GBRMPA in the form of an environment management charge.⁷⁰

8.50 As Professor Terry Hughes noted:

Tourism is the big loser in this shift away from protection of the Great Barrier Reef. The tourism industry have been exemplary in supporting management of the Great Barrier Reef and they feel very threatened—rightly so—by these dredging projects.⁷¹

8.51 Tourism operators further queried, for example, why there is no charge for sea dumping permits.⁷² However, industry groups pointed out that they contribute to a range of programs in the Great Barrier Reef region. For example, Mr David Anderson, Chief Executive Officer of Ports Australia, told the committee that Queensland Ports have 'developed and funded nearly all of the seagrass research and monitoring in Queensland for a period of more than a decade'.⁷³

8.52 Similarly the Queensland Resources Council submitted that their industry:

...makes significant direct contributions to the protection, management and improvement of the [Great Barrier Reef] environment. For instance, during the 2012/13 financial year resource companies contributed almost \$40

69 GBRMPA, *Environmental Management Charge*, <http://www.gbrmpa.gov.au/zoning-permits-and-plans/environmental-management-charge> (accessed 8 August 2014).

70 Whitsunday Charter Boat Industry Association, *Submission 46*, p. 8; see also Mr Colin McKenzie, Executive Director, AMPTO, *Committee Hansard*, 23 July 2014, p. 33.

71 Professor Terry Hughes, *Committee Hansard*, 23 July 2014, p. 27.

72 Whitsunday Charter Boat Industry Association, *Submission 46*, p. 9.

73 Mr David Anderson, Chief Executive Officer, *Ports Australia*, 21 July 2014, p. 22.

million to a broad range of environmental programs that had a direct or indirect benefit to the management and protection of the GBR. Additionally, future spending on [Great Barrier Reef] related environmental programs, based on current commitments, is expected to be in the order of \$250 million over the next 5 years.⁷⁴

Prioritisation of spending

8.53 Several submissions and witnesses emphasised the need to prioritise management actions to ensure efficient and effective use of funds to manage the Great Barrier Reef. For example, Professor Hoegh-Guldberg suggested that it is 'really important to prioritise' in terms of spending to manage the reef:

To improve Reef health, we need to significantly invest in better management of current activities...as well as restoring key ecosystems...Not only is increased investment needed from the private and public sectors, we need to ensure this money is spent to most cost-effectively address the key risks to the Reef's health. A cost-effective prioritization of management actions that explicitly considers the economic costs, feasibility, and biodiversity benefits of a range of marine and terrestrial management actions to identify priorities has not been done in the [Great Barrier Reef], and is urgently required if we want to spend the limited budget effectively.⁷⁵

8.54 In terms of priorities, CAFNEC suggested that 'maintaining northern reef health' should be a priority, 'to conserve existing ecosystem values and function and provide the basis for recovery of southern reefs'.⁷⁶

Coordination and cooperation between governments

8.55 The committee also received evidence on the importance of coordination between all levels of government involved in management of the Great Barrier Reef and its catchments. As AIMS observed:

...responsibility for protecting the health and integrity of the GBRWHA is not solely GBRMPA's. There is a pressing need to ensure that we have a coherent and active program of environmental management across all levels of Government...⁷⁷

8.56 Other witnesses and submitters also emphasised the importance of a coordinated effort involving all stakeholders working together in partnership. For example, Dr Jamie Oliver of AIMS told the committee that restoring the reef 'will require concerted and coordinated efforts between all stakeholders'.⁷⁸ The Minerals

74 Queensland Resources Council, *Submission 28*, p. 6.

75 Professor Hoegh-Guldberg, *Submission 6*, p. 4; see also Professor Ove Hoegh-Guldberg, *Committee Hansard*, 21 July 2014, p. 9; Professor Peter Mumby, President, Australian Coral Reef Society, *Committee Hansard*, 21 July 2014, p. 5.

76 CAFNEC, *Submission 19*, p. 1.

77 AIMS, *Submission 36*, p. 1.

78 Dr Jamie Oliver, Research Director, AIMS, *Committee Hansard*, 23 July 2014, p. 19.

Council of Australia similarly submitted that collaboration between government, industry, landholders and other key stakeholders on programs to improve the Great Barrier Reef should be encouraged.⁷⁹ A representative of the Department of the Environment observed that there is 'a very large swag of partners working very proactively towards the future protection of the reef'.⁸⁰

8.57 In their joint submission to the inquiry, the Australian and Queensland Governments referred to their history of working together, including the 'Emerald Agreement' in 1979 and the Great Barrier Reef Intergovernmental Agreement, signed by the Prime Minister and Queensland Premier, in 2009. They noted that this agreement 'recognises that key pressures on the Reef cannot be effectively addressed by either government on their own', the:

...objective of this agreement is to ensure an integrated and collaborative approach is taken by the Australian and Queensland governments to manage marine and land environments within and adjacent to the [Great Barrier Reef World Heritage Area].⁸¹

One stop shop proposal

8.58 A key issue raised during the committee's inquiry relating to the coordination between governments was the proposed 'one stop shop' approach to environmental assessments and approvals in the context of the Great Barrier Reef.

8.59 The Australian and Queensland Governments have signed a Memorandum of Understanding to create a 'one stop shop' for environmental approvals. A refreshed assessment bilateral agreement was signed in December 2013. This agreement accredits Queensland Government assessment processes for the purposes of the EPBC Act. The Commonwealth is currently still responsible for making the final approval decision under the EPBC Act.⁸² However, the Memorandum of Understanding also included a commitment to develop an approval bilateral agreement within 12 months. A draft approval bilateral agreement was released for public consultation on 14 May 2014. The draft agreement proposes the accreditation of Part 4A of the *State Development and Public Works Organisation Act 1971 (Qld)* and Chapter 5 of the *Environmental Protection Act 1994 (Qld)*. If this approval agreement is finalised, actions that are assessed and approved under these processes will not require further

79 Minerals Council of Australia, *Submission 35*, p. 9.

80 Dr Kimberley Dripps, Deputy Secretary, Department of the Environment, *Committee Hansard*, 21 July 2014, p. 54.

81 Australian and Queensland Governments, *Submission 34*, p. 13.

82 Australian and Queensland Governments, *Submission 34*, p. 34.

approval under the EPBC Act, including actions that may significantly impact on the Great Barrier Reef.⁸³

8.60 The submission from the Australian and Queensland Governments referred to the one stop shop proposal as evidence of 'significant progress' towards responding to the World Heritage Committee's 2013 decision which urged Australia to ensure that 'legislation protecting the property remains strong and adequate to maintain and enhance Outstanding Universal Value'.⁸⁴ However, the committee notes that, in its most recent decision in June 2014 (made after the Governments' submission), the World Heritage Committee considered that it 'would be premature to transfer decision-making powers from Federal to State levels' before the Long-Term Sustainability Plan is completed, and that any transfer should be postponed to allow further consideration.⁸⁵

8.61 Some submitters and witnesses expressed support for the proposed one stop shop proposal. For example, the Minerals Council of Australia suggested that there is a 'need to improve the coordination and consistency of existing regulatory processes' and that this 'can be achieved through the implementation of approval bilateral agreements'.⁸⁶

8.62 The Queensland Ports Association similarly supported a 'single and centralised approach to policy development and environmental assessment'. The Association suggested that the 'combined reform of the State planning process with Commonwealth accreditation' could provide:

...a simplified and more efficient legal and policy framework that gives a clear 'line of sight' alignment of broad national and state policies right through to project approvals and delivery.⁸⁷

8.63 Ports Australia similarly expressed support for a more streamlined assessment and approval process, noting that there is a need for a 'higher degree of consistency and regulatory certainty', as well as better communication with proponents. They suggested that:

83 Australian and Queensland Governments, *Submission 34*, pp 34–35, citing Department of the Environment, *Standards for Accreditation of Environmental Approvals under the Environment Protection and Biodiversity Conservation Act 1999*, 2004, http://www.environment.gov.au/system/files/resources/40e7000f-4d52-47fe-9a61-ff2b321aec3b/files/standards-accreditation-2014_0.pdf (accessed 7 August 2014). See also Dr Kimberley Dripps, Deputy Secretary, Department of the Environment, *Committee Hansard*, 21 July 2014, p. 52.

84 Australian and Queensland Governments, *Submission 34*, p. 7; see also UNESCO World Heritage Committee, Decision 37 COM 7B.10, 2013, <http://whc.unesco.org/en/decisions/4959> (accessed 9 July 2014).

85 UNESCO World Heritage Committee, Decision 38 COM 7B.63, 2014, pp 116–117, <http://whc.unesco.org/archive/2014/whc14-38com-16en.pdf> (accessed 9 July 2014).

86 Minerals Council of Australia, *Submission 35*, p. 8.

87 Queensland Ports Association, *Submission 13*, p. 12, see also pp 13–14.

As part of the government's one-stop-shop process and the internal strategic review of the Department, we propose that assessments and referrals under the EPBC Act, Sea Dumping Act and the GBRMP Act should be undertaken by a single, Canberra based team...One team would reduce the burden on proponents, make the internal processes considerably more efficient, eliminate duplication and reduce the overlap between different regulators who are essentially undertaking a similar function.⁸⁸

8.64 Mr Anderson of Ports Australia further noted that the Australian Government will continue to 'stay very close to the process', for example, by 'embedding staff in the state agencies to ensure that the standards that are safeguarded by the EPBC Act continue'.⁸⁹

8.65 However, other submitters and witnesses were concerned about the government's one stop shop proposal.⁹⁰ A key concern was that if, Commonwealth approval powers were delegated to the Queensland Government, a conflict of interest may arise as the Queensland Government has been a vocal supporter of major economic developments or, in some cases, the actual proponent.⁹¹ A related issue was that the Queensland Government may not allocate sufficient resources to impose and enforce the relevant conditions in development approvals necessary to protect the Great Barrier Reef.⁹²

8.66 For example, CAFNEC submitted that:

88 Ports Australia, *Submission 11*, p. 3.

89 Mr David Anderson, Chief Executive Officer, *Ports Australia*, 21 July 2014, p. 28; see also Department of the Environment, *Answers to written questions on notice*, p. 21.

90 See, for example, Cairns Local Marine Advisory Committee, *Submission 7*, pp 4–5; Australian Coral Reef Society, *Submission 8*, p. 2; CAFNEC, *Submission 19*, p. 5; WWF-Australia and the Australian Marine Conservation Society, *Submission 23*, p. 4; Wildlife Preservation Society of Queensland, *Submission 33*, p. 3; Dr Chris McGrath, *Committee Hansard*, 21 July 2014, p. 3; Mr Richard Leck, National Manager, Marine Conservation and Sustainable Development, WWF-Australia, *Committee Hansard*, 21 July 2014, p. 16; Mr Tony Fontes, 22 July 2014, p. 2; Mr Josh Coates, Marine Program Coordinator, CAFNEC, *Committee Hansard*, 23 July 2014, p. 10; Professor Ove Hoegh-Guldberg, *Committee Hansard*, 21 July 2014, p. 9; Mr Josh Coates, Marine Program Coordinator, CAFNEC, *Committee Hansard*, 23 July 2014, p. 10; Ms Suzanne Arnold, Coordinator, Australians for Animals, *Committee Hansard*, 23 July 2014, pp 46–47 and 49.

91 Mr Josh Coates, Marine Program Coordinator, CAFNEC, *Committee Hansard*, 23 July 2014, p. 10; see also Cairns Local Marine Advisory Committee, *Submission 7*, pp 4–5; CAFNEC, *Submission 19*, p. 5; Keppel and Fitzroy Delta Alliance, *Submission 40*, p. 4; Dr Chris McGrath, *Committee Hansard*, 21 July 2014, p. 3.

92 Cairns Local Marine Advisory Committee, *Submission 7*, pp 4–5; Cairns and Far North Environment Centre, *Submission 19*, p. 5.

We have little confidence that the Queensland Government will allocate the resources, or have the appropriate culture, to impose and enforce the conditions necessary to protect the Reef.⁹³

8.67 Mr Richard Leck of WWF-Australia described it as a 'very inopportune time' to be transferring assessment and approval powers, explaining that their concerns included that:

...there have been significant rollbacks in environmental protection at a state level for the reef. There have also been issues with enforcement of and compliance with the state government's own approval conditions for their developments that they have approved.⁹⁴

8.68 Mr Leck also suggested that there would be an inherent conflict of interest in situations where the Queensland Government (and in particular, the Coordinator-General) was responsible for approving projects for which it is the development proponent:

...the Coordinator-General would be charged both with the promotion of major projects in Queensland and with their approval as well. To WWF that removes a whole bunch of checks and balances that should be in place to ensure that big projects do not damage the reef.⁹⁵

8.69 Professor Mumby of the Australian Coral Reef Society was similarly concerned that the proposal would remove:

...the oversight that Commonwealth provides over decisions that would affect the Great Barrier Reef, including proposals from state governments themselves. It means that the state governments would be able to propose a development that affects the Great Barrier Reef and authorise it as well, without significant oversight.⁹⁶

8.70 Ms Wishart of the Australian Marine Conservation Society also expressed a concern as to whether third-party appeal rights might be lost under the one stop shop proposal.⁹⁷ Queensland Government representatives told the committee that judicial review 'is in the legislation before the Queensland parliament'.⁹⁸ As to whether those

93 CAFNEC, *Submission 19*, p. 5 and Mr Josh Coates, Marine Program Coordinator, CAFNEC, *Committee Hansard*, 23 July 2014, p. 10; see also Cairns Local Marine Advisory Committee, *Submission 7*, pp 4–5; WWF-Australia and the Australian Marine Conservation Society, *Submission 23*, p. 5.

94 Mr Richard Leck, National Manager, Marine Conservation and Sustainable Development, WWF-Australia, *Committee Hansard*, 21 July 2014, pp 16–17.

95 Mr Richard Leck, National Manager, Marine Conservation and Sustainable Development, WWF-Australia, *Committee Hansard*, 21 July 2014, p. 17.

96 Professor Peter Mumby, President, Australian Coral Reef Society, *Committee Hansard*, 21 July 2014, p. 2; see also Australian Coral Reef Society, *Submission 8*, p. 2.

97 Ms Felicity Wishart, Great Barrier Reef Campaign Director, Australian Marine Conservation Society, *Committee Hansard*, 21 July 2014, p. 17.

98 Mr Jon Black, Director-General, Queensland Department of Environment and Heritage Protection, *Committee Hansard*, 21 July 2014, p. 62.

rights are comparable with those in the EPBC Act, in answers to questions on notice, the Queensland Government advised that:

Under the new Part 4A of the *State Development and Public Works Organisation Act 1971* (Qld), decisions in relation to assessment and approval of coordinated projects under the Approval Bilateral Agreement between Queensland and the Commonwealth is subject to the *Judicial Review Act 1991* (Qld) (JR Act). Case law relating to standing under the JR Act indicates that, in practical terms, there is close congruence with the 'extended' standing provisions of the EPBC Act.⁹⁹

8.71 Dr Chris McGrath acknowledged that there is a 'complex system of laws that regulate activities impacting on the GBR'.¹⁰⁰ However, Dr McGrath told the committee that, under the current system, the Commonwealth plays an oversight role and has in a number of instances 'showed real independence in oversight and planning'. He expressed concern that the one stop shop proposal will:

...effectively give approval of the major projects to the Coordinator-General in Queensland, who is a powerful public servant who is pretty well dedicated to development of the state. So you are taking final approval from the federal environment minister and effectively giving it to a state bureaucrat who is dedicated to development of the major projects...to the very entity that has shown a poor track record in the past. That has got to be, objectively, a problem.¹⁰¹

8.72 Professor Barbara Norman submitted that there should be a:

...clear statement of national responsibility for the environmental outcomes in the Great Barrier Reef region by the Australian Government. The responsibilities of international obligations and long term stewardship is a matter of national interest and should not be delegated to subnational governments, and subjected to significant local and regional vested interests.¹⁰²

8.73 Indeed, it was suggested that the Australian Government needs to maintain and improve its Great Barrier Reef assessment and approval powers.¹⁰³ For example, Ms Wishart suggested that there has been too much rhetoric about 'green tape'. She cited a number of examples of significant failures in current regulation, and urged that there needs to be 'greater protections' for the Great Barrier Reef. This included the approval of dumping dredge spoil for developments at Abbot Point; transshipping

99 Department of the Environment, Queensland Government and GBRMPA, *Answers to questions on notice from public hearing on 21 July 2014*, pp 18–19; and see also Department of the Environment, *Answers to written questions on notice*, p. 20.

100 Dr Chris McGrath, *Submission 32*, p. 1.

101 Dr Chris McGrath, *Committee Hansard*, 21 July 2014, p. 3.

102 Professor Barbara Norman, *Submission 49*, p. 1.

103 Mr Richard Leck, National Manager, Marine Conservation and Sustainable Development, WWF-Australia, *Committee Hansard*, 21 July 2014, p. 15; see also Cairns Local Marine Advisory Committee, *Submission 7*, p. 5.

proposals near the Fitzroy Delta; and the Gladstone Harbour (as discussed in Chapters 5 and 6 of this report).¹⁰⁴ Some of these issues with decision-making processes are discussed later in this chapter.

8.74 It was also suggested that the one stop shop proposal is inconsistent with the World Heritage Committee's recommendations in relation to the management of the Great Barrier Reef (as noted above).¹⁰⁵ WWF-Australia and the Australian Marine Conservation Society expressed further concern that 'this transfer of powers is happening very rapidly' and will be completed before the Long-Term Sustainability Plan for the reef is written.¹⁰⁶

8.75 However, Shipping Australia submitted its understanding that the draft Long-Term Sustainability Plan will at least be released for public comment before the approval bilateral agreement with Queensland is finalised.¹⁰⁷

8.76 In response to questioning on this issue, the Department of the Environment advised that:

The Government has considered the World Heritage Committee's request to postpone the accreditation of Queensland planning systems until the Reef 2050 Long-Term Sustainability Plan is released. The Government intends to release the Reef 2050 Long-Term Sustainability Plan for public comment before the Approval Bilateral Agreement with Queensland is considered for finalisation.¹⁰⁸

8.77 The Australian and Queensland Governments advised that any accreditation of Queensland processes under an approval bilateral agreement will only take place after Queensland has met the relevant standards embedded within the EPBC Act. The Australian Government has developed 'an Assurance Framework to ensure standards are maintained under approval bilateral agreements'.¹⁰⁹ A representative of the Department of the Environment explained that there are '122 standards for protection that exist under the EPBC Act' and that:

...the work that has been undertaken with Queensland on the strategic assessments provides considerable confidence about the way in which the Queensland system works.¹¹⁰

104 See, for example, Ms Felicity Wishart, Great Barrier Reef Campaign Director, Australian Marine Conservation Society, *Committee Hansard*, 21 July 2014, pp 15–16.

105 Australian Coral Reef Society, *Submission 8*, p. 3.

106 WWF-Australia and the Australian Marine Conservation Society, *Submission 23*, p. 4.

107 Shipping Australia, *Submission 3*, p. 7.

108 Department of the Environment, *Answers to written questions on notice*, p. 15.

109 Australian Government and Queensland Government, *Submission 34*, pp 34–35; Dr Kimberley Dripps, Deputy Secretary, Department of the Environment, *Committee Hansard*, 21 July 2014, p. 56; see also Queensland Resources Council, *Submission 28*, p. 15.

110 Dr Kimberley Dripps, Deputy Secretary, Department of the Environment, *Committee Hansard*, 21 July 2014, p. 56.

8.78 She further noted there 'are number of measures in the assurance framework for the one-stop shop' which provide for a 'stepped level of intervention'. These include arrangements such as: a senior officials committee to oversight the operation of the agreement; processes of audit, monitoring and compliance with the agreement; the ability for Queensland to decide to opt out of the agreement if it feels it is not going to be able to meet the standards; and the ability of the Commonwealth Minister to call in a project under certain circumstances. Finally, she noted that the EPBC Act also includes the ability to terminate an approval bilateral agreement if that should be necessary. She concluded that:

These are all intended to step the regulation or the oversight of the agreement up to a point so that it is not necessary for projects to be considered by the Commonwealth minister and so that it is not necessary to ever consider the termination of the agreement.¹¹¹

Role of GBRMPA under the 'one stop shop'

8.79 The role of GBRMPA under the one stop shop proposal was also raised as an issue, with some submitters and witnesses worried that GBRMPA would be sidelined by the bilateral agreements.¹¹² For example, the Australian Coral Reef Society was concerned that under the proposal GBRMPA would be:

...relegated to simply an advisory role over plans advanced by the State to develop infrastructure that might affect the GBR. This is unacceptable and clearly undermines the ability of the GBRMPA to undertake its mandate.¹¹³

8.80 In response to questioning on this issue, a representative of the Department of the Environment noted that:

There are two roles of GBRMPA under the system as it operates presently. One is to provide technical advice to the department as one part of constructing an assessment under the EPBC Act, and that role will continue, with an MOU between GBRMPA and the Queensland government in order for them to provide an equivalent level of technical advice to the Queensland government. In terms of the roles of the Great Barrier Reef Marine Park Authority under its own act, I am not aware of any plans to revisit those powers.¹¹⁴

8.81 In answers to questions on notice, the Department further explained that:

111 Dr Kimberley Dripps, Deputy Secretary, Department of the Environment, *Committee Hansard*, 21 July 2014, pp 56–57; and see also Department of the Environment, *Answers to written questions on notice*, pp 18–19.

112 See, for example, Ms Margaret Moorhouse, Spokesperson, Alliance to Save Hinchinbrook, *Committee Hansard*, 23 July 2014, p. 12; see also Australian Coral Reef Society, *Submission 8*, p. 2.

113 Australian Coral Reef Society, *Submission 8*, p. 2.

114 Dr Kimberley Dripps, Deputy Secretary, Department of the Environment, *Committee Hansard*, 21 July 2014, p. 57.

The Approvals Bilateral Agreement, if endorsed, would allow Queensland to assess and approve actions that are taken within the state waters, or may significantly impact on, the Great Barrier Reef Marine Park and World Heritage Area.

The Great Barrier Reef Marine Park Authority continues to be responsible for permit requirements under the *Great Barrier Reef Marine Park Act 1975* (Cth).

The Australian Government continues to be responsible for permits under the *Sea Dumping Act 1981* (Cth) and for approvals for actions under the EPBC Act that are taken within a Commonwealth area of the Great Barrier Reef Marine Park and World Heritage Area or are undertaken by a Commonwealth agency.¹¹⁵

Decision-making processes

8.82 As noted above, the need for better coordination and even streamlining of decision-making processes was discussed during the committee's inquiry. However, a range of additional concerns were also raised about decision-making processes in relation to the Great Barrier Reef and, in particular, environmental assessment and approval processes.

8.83 As noted in Chapter 3, several submissions and witnesses expressed concern about the fact that regulatory decision-making is often underpinned by scientific work and environmental assessments which are commissioned and provided by proponents. It was suggested that this may affect the independence of that scientific work.

8.84 As noted in Chapter 5, and in the context of the Abbot Point case study, another issue raised was whether alternative measures are being adequately considered.¹¹⁶ A further concern related to the adequacy of conditions of approval and their enforcement. This issue is also discussed in further detail in the Gladstone Harbour case study in Chapter 6. For example, Mr Coates of CAFNEC told the committee:

We also have very serious concerns about the current trend in Queensland of approving projects with conditions without adequate consideration or knowledge of the effectiveness or the practicality of the conditions, combined with a lack of political will and resourcing for the enforcement of these conditions.¹¹⁷

8.85 The Australian Coral Reef Society also suggested that 'approval processes should be revisited in the context of climate change'. The Society argued, for example, that the scenario of a 'one in a 100-year storm' may no longer be adequate given sea level rise and changes to storm intensity the resulting from the changing climate.¹¹⁸

115 Department of the Environment, *Answers to written questions on notice*, p. 16.

116 See also, for example, Australian Coral Reef Society, *Submission 8*, p. 1.

117 Mr Josh Coates, Marine Program Coordinator, CAFNEC, *Committee Hansard*, 23 July 2014, p. 10.

118 Australian Coral Reef Society, *Submission 8*, pp 1–2.

8.86 As outlined in Chapter 3, concern was expressed that activities and developments are being approved with conditions requiring further research to discover the impacts of those activities and developments. It was suggested that this was inappropriate and not consistent with the precautionary principle.¹¹⁹

8.87 Another issue was the ability of the environmental assessment process to deal with the cumulative impacts of developments. The issue of cumulative impacts is discussed further later in this chapter.

Offsets

8.88 Professor Hughes told the committee that the environmental impact assessment processes is 'deeply flawed' and needs to be reformed'. In this regard, he had particular concerns about the use of offsets, telling the committee that offsets need to be abandoned.¹²⁰ Indeed, although the Australian and Queensland Governments' submission discussed offsets under the heading of 'recent regulatory and policy improvements',¹²¹ many submitters and witnesses to this inquiry did not appear to consider offsets as a 'regulatory improvement'. Rather, concerns were raised about the use of offsets as conditions of approval for decisions relating to developments impacting on the Great Barrier Reef.¹²² The conditions relating to the proposed offsets in the Abbot Point port development were discussed in further detail in Chapter 6.

8.89 For example, Mr McCabe of the Capricorn Conservation Council told the committee that 'offsets can work in theory but we have little evidence that they ever have'.¹²³ Ms Tubman of the NQCC described the use of offsets as 'smoke and mirrors'.¹²⁴ Mr Coates from CAFNEC expressed concerned about the 'move towards offsets as a solution to environmental damage', and in particular the use of:

...offsets that are unrealistic, have inappropriate time lines, are not enforced and are not backed by credible science. They will not achieve the stated goals and are not an acceptable justification for allowing damaging coastal developments.¹²⁵

119 See, for example, NQCC, *Submission 30*, p. 4; Ms Ellen Roberts, Coordinator, Mackay Conservation Group, *Committee Hansard*, 22 July 2014, p. 15.

120 Professor Terry Hughes, *Committee Hansard*, 23 July 2014, p. 26.

121 Australian and Queensland Governments, *Submission 34*, pp 13, 15–16; Professor Terry Hughes, *Committee Hansard*, 23 July 2014, p. 25.

122 See, for example, CAFNEC, *Submission 19*, pp 4 and 11; Professor Hoegh-Guldberg, *Submission 6*, pp 8–9; Whitsunday Charter Boat Industry Association, *Submission 46*, p. 9; Ms Wendy Tubman, Coordinator, NQCC, *Committee Hansard*, 23 July 2014, p. 2; Mr Josh Coates, Marine Program Coordinator, CAFNEC, *Committee Hansard*, 23 July 2014, p. 10.

123 Mr Michael McCabe, Coordinator, Capricorn Conservation Council, *Committee Hansard*, 22 July 2014, p. 29.

124 Ms Wendy Tubman, Coordinator, NQCC, *Committee Hansard*, 23 July 2014, p. 2.

125 Mr Josh Coates, Marine Program Coordinator, CAFNEC, *Committee Hansard*, 23 July 2014, p. 9.

8.90 The committee also notes that it recently conducted an extensive inquiry into environmental offsets, which included consideration of the offsets in relation to Abbot Point and Curtis Island, and a discussion of the problems with the use of offsets in the marine environment and in relation to World Heritage Areas such as the Great Barrier Reef. The committee notes that a number of recommendations in that report are particularly relevant to the use of offsets in the context of the Great Barrier Reef, including, for example, that:

- the EPBC Act Offsets Policy be revised to provide greater guidance on developments in which offsets are unacceptable, including a list of 'red flag' areas, such as World Heritage and critically endangered ecological communities and species (recommendation 6); and
- the Department of the Environment develop a separate offsets policy in relation to the marine environment (recommendation 10).¹²⁶

Cumulative impacts

8.91 A key discussion during the committee's inquiry was whether the cumulative impacts of activities and developments affecting the Great Barrier Reef are being adequately addressed and considered in management and decision-making. For example, CAFNEC were concerned that:

There is no legislative or policy framework that consider[s] cumulative impacts, with the narrow exception of the Reef Water Quality Program.¹²⁷

8.92 In contrast, the Minerals Council of Australia submitted that 'there is an increasing focus on the assessment of cumulative impacts as part of EPBC approvals'.¹²⁸

8.93 The *Outlook Report 2014* noted that there is concern that the resilience of the Great Barrier Reef is being seriously, and increasingly rapidly, eroded.¹²⁹ It was noted that resilience is determined by a range of variables and therefore a loss of resilience generally 'cannot be attributed to any single cause, but is almost certainly the consequence of impacts from all the different activities and influencing factors, and their accumulation through time'.¹³⁰ The *Outlook Report 2014* noted that 'the ability to address cumulative impacts remains weak'.¹³¹ The *Outlook Report 2014* concluded:

126 See further Senate Environment and Communications References Committee, *Environmental Offsets*, June 2014, http://www.aph.gov.au/Parliamentary_Business/Committees/Senate/Environment_and_Communications/Environmental_Offsets/Report/index (accessed 31 July 2014).

127 CAFNEC, *Submission 19*, p. 4.

128 Minerals Council of Australia, *Submission 35*, p. 5.

129 GBRMPA, *Outlook Report 2014*, p. 243.

130 GBRMPA, *Outlook Report 2014*, p. 226.

131 GBRMPA, *Outlook Report 2014*, p. vi and see also p. 220.

...threats have the potential to work in combination to weaken the resilience of the Great Barrier Reef ecosystem and therefore its ability to recover from serious disturbances...An increasing understanding of the cumulative effects of threats has highlighted the need for a management approach that takes into account all threats affecting an area and for a combination of Reef-wide, regional and local solutions.¹³²

8.94 The *Coastal Zone Strategic Assessment 2014 Program Report* acknowledged this problem, stating that:

Despite the fact cumulative impact assessments are considered in EPBC Act decisions, there is currently no established methodology to inform the preparation of project-specific assessments in relation to regionally based cumulative impacts.¹³³

8.95 Dr Reichelt of GBRMPA told the committee that the need to manage cumulative impacts was addressed in the Strategic Assessments.¹³⁴ The committee also notes that one of the outcomes of the Strategic Assessment is for cumulative impact assessment policy and guidelines to be developed to help a transparent, consistent and systematic approach to identifying, measuring and managing collective impacts on the region and its values.¹³⁵ However, the committee notes that one of the purposes of Strategic Assessments is to deal with cumulative impacts on matters of national environmental significance.¹³⁶ The Strategic Assessments are discussed further below.

Strategic Assessments and the Long-Term Sustainability Plan

8.96 As outlined in Chapter 2, the Commonwealth and Queensland Governments recently finalised their 'comprehensive Strategic Assessment' of the Great Barrier Reef

132 GBRMPA, *Outlook Report 2014*, p. 264.

133 Queensland Department of State Development, Infrastructure and Planning, *Great Barrier Reef Coastal Zone Strategic Assessment 2014, Program Report*, July 2014, p. 64, <http://www.dsdip.qld.gov.au/resources/report/gbr/gbr-coastal-zone-strategic-assessment-program-report.pdf> (accessed 13 August 2014). See also, Cairns and Far North Environment Centre, *Submission 19, Attachment 5*, p. 50: EDO analysis; *EDO Qld and EDO NQ Submission on the Draft Coastal Zone Strategic Assessment Report*, p. 15, <http://www.edoqld.org.au/wp-content/uploads/2014/01/2014-01-31-EDO-Qld-and-EDO-NQ-Joint-Submission-on-the-Draft-GBR-Coastal-Zone-SA-Program-Report.pdf> (accessed 7 August 2014).

134 Dr Russell Reichelt, Chairman and Chief Executive, GBRMPA, *Committee Hansard*, 23 July 2014, p. 52.

135 The Hon Greg Hunt MP, Minister for the Environment, 'Strategic Assessment bolsters protection of the Great Barrier Reef', *Media release*, 12 August 2014, <http://www.environment.gov.au/minister/hunt/2014/mr20140812.html> (accessed 13 August 2014); see also Ms Carolyn Cameron, Assistant Secretary, Department of the Environment, *Committee Hansard*, 21 July 2014, p. 60; *Great Barrier Reef Coastal Zone Strategic Assessment 2014, Program Report*, July 2014, p. 64.

136 Department of the Environment, *Strategic Assessments*, <http://www.environment.gov.au/topics/environment-protection/environment-assessments/strategic-assessments> (accessed 21 August 2014).

World Heritage Area and adjacent coastal zone. The Great Barrier Reef Strategic Assessment had two key components: a marine component led by GBRMPA and a coastal component led by the Queensland government. The Commonwealth and Queensland Governments advised that the Strategic Assessments 'will inform a long-term plan for protecting the reef and coastal zone'.¹³⁷

8.97 The committee notes that most of the evidence to its inquiry was received prior to the release of the final Strategic Assessments. Nevertheless, some submitters and witnesses were very supportive of the Strategic Assessment process. For example, the Minerals Council of Australia submitted that the Strategic Assessments 'represent a leading practice approach which could be emulated in other parts of the world'.¹³⁸

8.98 Queensland Ports Association suggested that the draft Strategic Assessment is a 'testament to the strong, coordinated approach to environmental management within the region'.¹³⁹ However, as noted in Chapter 5, the Queensland Ports Association also submitted its view that the Strategic Assessment 'significantly overstates the risks and impacts of dredging and dredge material placement at-sea' and 'significantly under represents the role and need for ports and shipping'.¹⁴⁰ Finally, the Queensland Ports Association called for the 'coordination and alignment of the various reviews, inquiries, Strategic Assessment and operational activities' and suggested that 'further standalone or separate process[es] must be avoided where possible'.¹⁴¹

8.99 The Australian Institute of Marine Science (AIMS) similarly submitted that the Strategic Assessments 'comprehensively reviewed the multiple elements' of the Great Barrier Reef World Heritage Area system.¹⁴² In AIMS' view, the Strategic Assessments have 'effectively synthesised a number of critical issues' and propose 'ways forward to enhance the management and protection' of the Great Barrier Reef. AIMS commended GBRMPA and the Queensland Government for 'their compilation of this resource in a relatively short time frame'.¹⁴³

137 Australian and Queensland Governments, *Submission 34*, p. 8; see also Department of the Environment, *Strategic assessment – Great Barrier Reef*, at: <http://www.environment.gov.au/protection/assessments/strategic/great-barrier-reef> (accessed 27 June 2014).

138 Minerals Council of Australia, *Submission 35*, p. 7.

139 Queensland Ports Association, *Submission 13*, pp 3 and 10.

140 Queensland Ports Association, *Submission 13*, pp 10 and 11; see also Ports Australia, *Submission 11*, p. 2

141 Queensland Ports Association, *Submission 13*, p. 15.

142 AIMS, *Submission 36*, p. 2; see also Dr Jamie Oliver, Research Director, AIMS, *Committee Hansard*, 23 July 2014, p. 19.

143 AIMS, *Submission 36*, p. 3.

8.100 At the same time, other submitters and witnesses identified a number of deficiencies in the Strategic Assessments.¹⁴⁴ In particular, AIMS suggested that they tended to 'downplay or leave the bad news until the end of the sections':

For example, the statement that "at the scale of the [Great Barrier Reef] region, most of its habitats and species are assessed to be in good to very good condition." may be technically correct, but as most of its KEY habitats and vulnerable species (corals, seagrasses, seabirds, dolphins, dugong, turtles) are in very poor to poor condition and declining in the southern GBR, it would seem appropriate to lead with this point.¹⁴⁵

8.101 AIMS also submitted that:

...the depth of coverage across the many topics is variable with respect to the attention paid to, and quality of, knowledge synthesis. Scientific literature specific to the [Great Barrier Reef] is generally well referenced, however the international science related to our understanding of general drivers and impacts in tropical systems is not as comprehensively reviewed.¹⁴⁶

8.102 It was also suggested that the treatment of cumulative impacts needed strengthening in the Strategic Assessments.¹⁴⁷ Ms Wishart suggested that the World Heritage Committee was expecting the Strategic Assessments to deal with the issue of cumulative impacts.¹⁴⁸

8.103 Finally, while AIMS agreed with the initiatives proposed in the Strategic Assessment and associated Program Report, AIMS was concerned that they only provide a 'limited assessment of the scope and scale of additional work and additional resources that may be required to fully implement these initiatives'. AIMS noted that:

If the resources needed to carry out the various recommendations and initiatives set out in the Assessments and Program Reports are not fully scoped and provided within appropriate time scales, the ability of these documents to catalyse the protection of the Reef from further decline will be significantly compromised.¹⁴⁹

144 See, for example, Cairns Local Marine Advisory Committee, *Submission 7*, p. 4; CAFNEC, *Submission 19*, p. 10 and Attachment 3; WWF-Australia and the Australian Marine Conservation Society, *Submission 23*, p. 14; NQCC, *Submission 30*, Attachment 1; AIMS, *Submission 36*, pp 3–4.

145 AIMS, *Submission 36*, pp 3–4.

146 AIMS, *Submission 36*, p. 3.

147 WWF-Australia and the Australian Marine Conservation Society, *Submission 23*, p. 14; AIMS, *Submission 36*, p. 4; see also Mr Colin McKenzie, Executive Director, AMPTO, *Committee Hansard*, 23 July 2014, p. 34.

148 See, for example, Ms Felicity Wishart, Great Barrier Reef Campaign Director, Australian Marine Conservation Society, *Committee Hansard*, 21 July 2014, p. 19; see also Mr Colin McKenzie, Executive Director, AMPTO, *Committee Hansard*, 23 July 2014, p. 37.

149 AIMS, *Submission 36*, p. 4.

8.104 In response to questioning on this issue, the Department of the Environment noted that the Strategic Assessment agreements require the 'commitments in both Programs to be adequately resourced throughout their life'.¹⁵⁰

8.105 The Australian Coral Reef Society remarked that the Strategic Assessments were 'comprehensive and generally accurate'.¹⁵¹ However, the Society was concerned that the Strategic Assessment did not adequately consider 'future development scenarios', such as the potential for agricultural development in north Queensland.¹⁵²

8.106 WWF-Australia and the Australian Marine Conservation Society submitted that the Strategic Assessments 'represent plans for more planning, rather than a significant investment in effective management interventions to address the critical issues confronting the health of the Reef'.¹⁵³ Mr Leck of WWF-Australia applauded the Australian Government 'for getting key stakeholders around a table and building on the absolute plethora of knowledge that we have about the reef's decline and what is needed'. However, he emphasised the need for the Strategic Assessment process to deliver 'clear outcomes, not more strategic reviews, not more inquiries but actual clear outcomes that can be implemented immediately'. At the same time, he noted that the two assessments:

...are quite different in their outlook and their analysis of the condition and trend of the reef...it is quite confusing when you look at them because one paints a very positive picture of the reef and one paints a very negative picture. How those two documents and how those two views with the different levels of government are going to come together is a big challenge.¹⁵⁴

8.107 CAFNEC told the committee that it does not consider that the Strategic Assessments are likely protect the reef from further decline. They submitted that it 'contains a good collation and assessment of the reef health' and 'many positive initiatives', but does not 'go far enough in the proposed actions to reverse these trends or minimise the threats'. In particular, they suggested that:

The strategic assessment reports also lack real actions and targets and instead comprise motherhood statements that fail to link to real actions and shifts responsibility for action on to other inadequate plans, policies which in many cases are yet to be produced or are in draft form.¹⁵⁵

150 Department of the Environment, *Answers to Written Questions on Notice*, p. 2.

151 Professor Peter Mumby, President, Australian Coral Reef Society, *Committee Hansard*, 21 July 2014, p. 2.

152 Australian Coral Reef Society, *Submission 8*, p. 3.

153 WWF-Australia and the Australian Marine Conservation Society, *Submission 23*, p. 14.

154 Mr Richard Leck, National Manager, Marine Conservation and Sustainable Development, WWF-Australia, *Committee Hansard*, 21 July 2014, p. 19.

155 CAFNEC, *Submission 19*, p. 10 and Attachment 3, p. 1.

8.108 Some submitters and witnesses were particularly critical of the Queensland Coastal Strategic Assessment. For example, NQCC described it as 'sadly lacking'.¹⁵⁶ CAFNEC submitted that the Queensland report 'concludes by recommending a plan for a plan to better coordinate plans'.¹⁵⁷

8.109 CAFNEC also queried whether the Strategic Assessments incorporated sufficient consultation and genuine consideration of community views, stating that:

At this time CAFNEC has no confidence that the input that was provided to the strategic assessments by us and other community groups and members will be incorporated into the final draft. We have seen no consultation whatsoever on the reef 2050 plan.¹⁵⁸

8.110 The Environment Minister noted when releasing the final Strategic Assessment that a number of initiatives will be adopted by the Commonwealth and Queensland Government, including:

- a cumulative impact assessment policy and guidelines for a transparent, consistent and systematic approach to identifying, measuring and managing collective impacts on the region and its values;
- a net benefit policy to guide actions aimed at restoring ecosystem health and improve the condition of values;
- a new approach to decision making based on clear targets for maintaining the reef's Outstanding Universal Value;
- no port development outside the key long-established ports of Townsville, Abbot Point, Hay Point/Mackay and Gladstone;
- a Reef recovery program to support local communities and other stakeholders to protect and restore sites of high environmental value and critical ecosystem functions through cooperative regional-scale management approaches; and
- reef-wide integrated monitoring and reporting that underpins the Great Barrier Reef Marine Park Authority's adaptive management and provides good feedback on the effectiveness of management actions.¹⁵⁹

Reef 2050 Long-Term Sustainability Plan

8.111 As noted elsewhere, the Strategic Assessments will inform the Reef 2050 Long-Term Sustainability Plan, which aims to provide an overarching framework to

156 NQCC, *Submission 30*, p. 4.

157 CAFNEC, *Submission 19*, p. 10 and Attachment 3, pp 1–2; see also Mr Josh Coates, Marine Program Coordinator, CAFNEC, *Committee Hansard*, 23 July 2014, p. 10.

158 CAFNEC, *Submission 19*, p. 13.

159 The Hon Greg Hunt MP, Minister for the Environment, 'Strategic Assessment bolsters protection of the Great Barrier Reef', *Media release*, 12 August 2014, <http://www.environment.gov.au/minister/hunt/2014/mr20140812.html> (accessed 13 August 2014); see also Ms Carolyn Cameron, Assistant Secretary, Department of the Environment, *Committee Hansard*, 21 July 2014, p. 60.

guide protection and management of the Great Barrier Reef World Heritage Area from 2015 to 2050.¹⁶⁰ The committee heard that Reef 2050 Long-Term Sustainability Plan will be released for public comment in August, with a view to refining it after comment by the end of the year in time for consideration by the World Heritage Committee.¹⁶¹

8.112 The Queensland Ports Association, Ports Australia and the Queensland Resources Council expressed support for the proposed Long-Term Sustainability Plan, noting that they had contributed to its development and are 'keen to participate in future management activities and consultation activities'.¹⁶²

8.113 Shipping Australia expressed its view that the consultation process in relation to the draft Long-Term Sustainability Plan:

...will involve genuine, open and transparent consultation with the Australian community, affected industries and relevant scientific experts, and genuine consideration of the broader community's views in coming to a final decision.¹⁶³

8.114 However, Ms Tubman of NQCC expressed concern that the plan 'has to be presented to UNESCO in February', so 'there is an extremely short period of time in which comments that are made can be considered and incorporated'.¹⁶⁴

8.115 In response to questioning, representatives from the Department of the Environment explained that the long-term sustainability plan is not just 'a plan for a plan' and will contain clear actions:

The long-term sustainable development plan is intended to bring all of the pieces of reef management together into an easily digestible form so that the community can see what is being done across the whole gamut of different programs, policies, investments and areas, between the Commonwealth, the universities, GBRMPA, the Queensland government and all of the relevant institutions. That is a piece of work that should be out shortly. It is a very complex task to bring together that system of targets and visions, and to bring those actions together into a format that is easy to understand...¹⁶⁵

160 Australian and Queensland Governments, *Submission 34*, p. 31.

161 Dr Russell Reichelt, Chairman and Chief Executive, GBRMPA, *Committee Hansard*, 23 July 2014, p. 55.

162 Queensland Ports Association, *Submission 13*, p. 11; see also Mr David Anderson, Chief Executive Officer, *Ports Australia*, 21 July 2014, p. 23; Mr David Anderson, Chief Executive Officer, *Ports Australia*, 21 July 2014, p. 31.

163 Shipping Australia, *Submission 3*, p. 7.

164 Ms Wendy Tubman, Coordinator, NQCC, *Committee Hansard*, 23 July 2014, p. 3.

165 Ms Carolyn Cameron, Assistant Secretary, Department of the Environment, *Committee Hansard*, 21 July 2014, p. 63; Dr Kimberley Dripps, Deputy Secretary, Department of the Environment, *Committee Hansard*, 21 July 2014, p. 54.

8.116 Dr Reichelt from GBRMPA described the Long-Term Sustainability Plan as 'a blueprint for managing the reef for the next 25 years'. He explained that:

It will become an intergovernmental agreement to a ministerial forum that governs the Marine Parks Act and the joint operations with Queensland. It has a strong governance basis. The challenge over the next four or five months will be to ensure that there is continued buy-in and cooperation with the stakeholders—there is quite a big group of industry-sector and conservation people working on it—and that we can put some serious standards, targets and outcomes in that long-term plan in the same way that the authority did with water quality guidelines 10 years ago.¹⁶⁶

166 Dr Russell Reichelt, Chairman and Chief Executive, GBRMPA, *Committee Hansard*, 23 July 2014, p. 54.