



Great Barrier Reef 2050 Partnership Program  
Attention: Committee Secretary  
Environment and Communications References Committee  
PO Box 6100  
Parliament House  
CANBERRA ACT 2600

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Dear Committee Secretary

### **Inquiry into the Great Barrier Reef 2050 Partnership Program**

Thank you for the opportunity to provide a submission on behalf of the Great Barrier Reef Marine Park Authority (the Authority) to the inquiry into the Great Barrier Reef 2050 Partnership Program.

This submission is intended to provide the Committee with information about the Authority's involvement in the process for granting funding to the Great Barrier Reef Foundation for the Great Barrier Reef 2050 Partnership Program, and address how the Authority has managed any perceived conflict of interest through its engagement with the Great Barrier Reef Foundation.

#### **Investment in the Reef 2050 Plan**

The Government's \$443.3 million partnership with the Great Barrier Reef Foundation will deliver actions to support implementation of the Reef 2050 Long-Term Sustainability Plan (Reef 2050 Plan). The Reef 2050 Plan builds on the findings of the 2014 Outlook Report and the Strategic Assessment of the Great Barrier Reef World Heritage Area and adjacent coastal zone. It is the centerpiece of the Australian and Queensland governments' efforts to build the resilience of the Great Barrier Reef and drive priorities, and provides an overarching framework for management, focusing on actions to address key threats and build the health and resilience of the Reef in the face of a changing climate. Implementation of Reef 2050 Plan actions is a priority for the Authority.

In 2016, the Australian and Queensland governments released the Reef 2050 Plan Investment Framework to guide investment decisions to support the delivery and implementation of the Reef 2050 Plan and identify strategies to boost investment and diversify sources of funding, including through private and philanthropic partnerships. Adequate investment is fundamental to the effective and successful implementation of the Reef 2050 Plan.

The Australian Government's decision to invest an additional \$500 million in the Great Barrier Reef, specifically to drive progress towards Reef 2050 outcomes, was taken as part of the 2018-19 Budget process. In addition to the \$443.3 million invested in the Reef Trust-Great Barrier Reef Foundation Partnership the funding announcement also included \$42.7 million to the Great Barrier Reef Marine Park Authority for the expansion of the Joint Field Management Program until 2023-24. As part of this Budget process the Authority also secured funding of an additional \$10.2 million each year after that to continue to expand essential work across the World Heritage Area.

### **The Authority's involvement in the process for the grant of funding to the Reef Trust-Great Barrier Reef Foundation Partnership**

As provided above, the Australian Government's decision to invest an additional \$500 million in the Great Barrier Reef was undertaken as part of the 2018-2019 Budget process. As is the case in the normal course of events in the budget policy-making process, the Authority was engaged in an extensive process of consultation within the Government to identify measures to deal with the pressures affecting the Great Barrier Reef and prioritise funding needs.

The Authority was not involved in the decision-making process that determined the appropriate vehicle to deliver the funds to support the identified measures.

The Authority was informed by the Department of Environment and Energy prior to the Australian Government's announcement on 29 April 2018 that funding in the amount \$443.3 million would be made from the Reef Trust to the Great Barrier Reef Foundation in 2017-18 to implement key outcomes of the Reef 2050 Plan.

### **Management of Conflicts of Interest**

As the Committee is aware, I am a member of the board of the Great Barrier Reef Foundation in my personal capacity. I have held a position on the board of the Great Barrier Reef Foundation for the past 11 years, which precedes my appointment as Chairperson and Accountable Authority of the Authority. I declared my role on the Great Barrier Reef Foundation to the appointing Minister at the time of my appointment as Chairperson of the Authority, and each meeting of the Authority since that time. It is acknowledged that there is a potential for a conflict of interest as a result of the roles that I hold and as such I declare my interests to each board meeting of both the Authority and the Great Barrier Reef Foundation.

The recent provision of funding by the Australian Government to the Great Barrier Reef Foundation as part of the 2018-19 Budget Measure Great Barrier Reef 2050 Partnership Program is the first time that a real perceived conflict of interest has arisen as a result of my appointment as Chairperson of the Authority and my role as a board member of the Great Barrier Reef Foundation. As a result of this identified potential for a conflict of interest I removed myself from discussions held by the board of the Great Barrier Reef Foundation when they were considering the approach by the Australian Government. It is also agreed that moving forward I will not be participating in any Great Barrier Reef Foundation board discussions about the allocation of funding in my role as a board member, but rather I will participate in my role as Chairperson of the Authority.

The members of the Great Barrier Reef Marine Park Authority Board were advised of the funding decision on the day of the Australian Government's announcement, being 29 April 2018.

Thank you again for the opportunity to make a submission and the Authority confirms the submission may be published.

Yours sincerely

Russell Reichelt

Chairman

6 July 2018