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Eshelby Islands Site Plan

1. Background

1.1 Rationale

Site plans are an important management tool used jointly by the Great Barrier Reef Marine Park Authority (GBRMPA) and the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA). They identify the significant values and management arrangements at a particular site, concentrating on the specific use issues and cumulative impacts.

The waters surrounding Eshelby Island (20-012) and Little Eshelby Island (20-013) have been assigned to a protected setting (Setting 5) in the [Whitsundays Plan of Management 1998](#) (WPOM). Due to their protected setting, the WPOM requires that this site plan be developed to ensure protection of the natural, cultural and heritage values of the Eshelby Islands.

1.2 Location

Eshelby Island is a high continental island, located approximately 30 kilometres north of Airlie Beach.

[Figure 1: Map of Eshelby Islands](#)  [Adobe Acrobat Format 1262KB]

2. Natural, cultural and heritage values

The values described below are not exhaustive, but are indicative of the significance of the area covered by this site plan.

2.1 Seabirds

Birds are an integral part of the Marine Park and the Great Barrier Reef World Heritage Area and the Whitsundays are recognised internationally as an important stopover for migratory birds. Colfelt (1985) notes that Eshelby Island probably has the most prolific bird life of any island in the Whitsundays.

Eshelby Island is an important rookery for the bridled tern *Sterna anaethetus* and the common noddy *Anous stolidus*. Up to 10 000 bridled terns have been recorded on the island at one time. Both of these species are listed marine and

migratory species under the *Environment Protection and Biodiversity Conservation Act 1999*. Eshelby Island also hosts numerous other bird species, some of which are vulnerable, or at risk of becoming vulnerable, in the Whitsundays.

2.2 Lighthouse

In 1935 an unmanned navigational light was erected on Eshelby Island. Initially powered by batteries, it was converted to solar power in 1985.

2.3 Traditional Owners

The islands and surrounding areas are culturally significant to the Ngaro Aboriginal Traditional Owner Group. The islands, reefs and surrounding waters are part of the cultural landscape. Spiritual connections are often associated with the natural and cultural resources.

The Central Queensland Land Council Aboriginal Corporation is the representative body for Traditional Owners whose estates are located in the Whitsunday region.

3. Current Use

Eshelby Island is a Commonwealth Island, managed by the GBRMPA. Part of Eshelby Island is leased to the Australian Maritime Safety Authority (AMSA), which maintains the lighthouse on the island.

No recreational or commercial visitation to the islands or the surrounding waters is allowed as the islands are within a Preservation (Pink) Zone, which prohibits access.

NB: Access is allowed under exceptional circumstances. Refer to 4.1.2(a).

4. Management strategies

4.1 Current management

4.1.1 Zoning

The waters surrounding the Eshelby Islands are within a Preservation (Pink) Zone under both State and Commonwealth Zoning Plans. [Marine Park Zoning Map 10](http://www.gbrmpa.gov.au/_data/assets/pdf_file/0019/10675/mpz_10.pdf) (http://www.gbrmpa.gov.au/_data/assets/pdf_file/0019/10675/mpz_10.pdf) shows the zoning at the Eshelby Islands. The objective of the Preservation Zone is to preserve the natural integrity and values of the area, generally undisturbed by human activities.

Eshelby Island (as opposed to the waters surrounding the island) is zoned as a Commonwealth Island.

The [Zoning Plan](#) is one of a range of management tools for the Eshelby Islands. Other management tools include the Whitsundays Plan of Management 1998, the [Great Barrier Reef Marine Park Act 1975](http://www.frli.gov.au/ComLaw/Legislation/ActCompilation1.nsf/0/AA27A8C98CD88ABACA25730E002199AC/$file/GrtBarrierRfMarPk1975WD02.pdf) ([http://www.frli.gov.au/ComLaw/Legislation/ActCompilation1.nsf/0/AA27A8C98CD88ABACA25730E002199AC/\\$file/GrtBarrierRfMarPk1975WD02.pdf](http://www.frli.gov.au/ComLaw/Legislation/ActCompilation1.nsf/0/AA27A8C98CD88ABACA25730E002199AC/$file/GrtBarrierRfMarPk1975WD02.pdf)) and *Great Barrier Reef Marine Park Regulations 1983*.

4.1.2 Restricted access

4.1.2(a) Vessel access

Access into the Preservation Zone surrounding the islands is prohibited without the written permission of the GBRMPA.

Under exceptional circumstances, such as responding to an emergency, permission is not required to enter the Preservation Zone. These circumstances are described in Part 5 of the [Zoning Plan](#).

4.1.2(b) Aircraft access

The Eshelby Islands are identified as significant bird sites in the Whitsundays Plan of Management 1998. Aircraft are not allowed to approach within 1000 metres of the islands below 1500 feet (above ground or water).

4.1.3 Research and monitoring

Written permission from the GBRMPA is required to conduct research activities in the Preservation Zone surrounding the Eshelby Islands, or on the islands themselves. In accordance with section 2.8.4 of the [Zoning Plan](#), permission will only be granted if the research:

- a) is relevant to, and a priority for, the management of the Marine Park
- b) cannot reasonably be conducted elsewhere.

4.2 Proposed management

Access to the Eshelby Islands is adequately managed under the [Zoning Plan](#). At this time no further management strategies are required.

5. Community engagement

This site plan was developed in consultation with the Environmental Protection Agency, the Whitsunday Local Marine Advisory Committee, the Tourism and Recreation Reef Advisory Committee, Traditional Owners and local users of the Marine Park. The site plan was available for public consultation from 14 February 2007 to 19 March 2007 and comments were incorporated prior to the site plan being finalised. For further information or to provide comments on the site plan, please call (07) 4750 0700 or email info@gbrmpa.gov.au (<mailto:info@gbrmpa.gov.au>) marked attention Manager, Planning.

References

- Blackwood, R.(1997). *The Whitsunday Islands: an Historic Dictionary*. Central Queensland University Press.
- Colfelt, D.(1985). *100 Magic Miles of the Great Barrier Reef – the Whitsunday Islands*. Windward Publications.

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