



Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples are the Traditional Owners of the Great Barrier Reef area and have a continuing connection to their land and sea country

## Reef 2050 Plan

# IMPLEMENTING THE REEF 2050 POLICIES IN THE GREAT BARRIER REEF MARINE PARK PERMISSION SYSTEM

## Purpose

The term permission system refers to the legislation, policies, guidelines, procedures and systems related to how the agency manages permissions and accreditations that are regulated under the Act, the Regulations and the Zoning Plan; and activities outlined in Part 5 of the Great Barrier Reef Marine Park Zoning Plan 2003.

*The purpose of this case study is to outline how the draft Reef 2050 policy documents for net benefit and cumulative impact management apply to the Great Barrier Reef Marine Park permission system.*

## Context and scope

The primary objective of the *Great Barrier Reef Marine Park Act 1975* (the Act) is to provide for the long-term protection and conservation of the environment, biodiversity and heritage values of the Great Barrier Reef Region. The [Great Barrier Reef Marine Park Zoning Plan 2003](#) is the primary planning instrument for the conservation and management of the Marine Park. The Zoning Plan provides for activities that are 'as of right' activities and those activities that require permission or notification consistent with the primary object of the Act.

The permission system is one management tool available to the Great Barrier Reef Marine Park Authority (the Authority) applying to individual projects within the Great Barrier Reef Marine Park. More strategic tools, such as Plans of Management, site plans and issue-specific policies, manage pressures and impacts at a broader scale. The permission system complements these strategic tools and translates their objectives into individual project decisions.

The Authority works cooperatively to manage the permission system through the delivery of a joint permitting with the Queensland Parks and Wildlife Service and where relevant a coordinated process with the Department of the Environment and Energy when approvals are also required under the *Environment Protection and Biodiversity Conservation Act 1999*.

## Application

### **Cumulative Impact Management**

The cumulative impact management policy will not apply to permission applications where cumulative impacts have been considered in existing plans or governing arrangements. For example, level 1 (routine assessment), 2 (tailored assessment) and 3 (public information package) permission applications will not be required to undertake a cumulative impact assessment where cumulative impacts for the proposed activity have been considered under a Plan of Management, site specific management arrangements or class assessment.

The Authority will require an assessment of cumulative impacts, in accordance with the cumulative impact management policy, for activities that pose a higher risk to the Marine Park. Generally

these activities will be the subject of a Public Environment Report (level 4 assessment) or Environmental Impact Statement (level 5 assessment). A Public Information Package (level 3) assessment process may require an assessment of cumulative impacts, depending on the risks identified through the Authority's risk assessment procedure and whether the activities proposed have been considered in existing plans or governing arrangements. The [Environmental Impact Management: Permission system policy](#)) provides a description of the types of assessment processes under the GBRMP Act for activities requiring a permission.

### **Net Benefit**

The Authority does not require net benefit actions from applicants as part of its permission system. If an applicant for a Marine Park permission wants to nominate a net benefit as part of the proposal, the Authority can consider the proposed net benefit as part of its assessment. If the net benefit is proposed for within the Marine Park, the Authority can decide to grant permission for the net benefit activity. If work for the net benefit is proposed for outside the Marine Park, the Authority may note in the assessment that an additional action may occur outside the Marine Park as part of the permitted activity.

## **Outcome**

The permission system does not require net benefit actions from applicants, but it does allow applicants to voluntarily propose a net benefit. This will be identified in the Authority's revised Environmental Impact Management Permission System policy that is currently being finalised.

The Authority's risk assessment procedure, which informs the assessment of permissions, provides a clear and consistent approach to determining when an activity does, or does not, require a cumulative impact assessment.

Progressive implementation of the Net Benefit and Cumulative Impact Management policies through the Authority's other management tools, such as Plans of Management, will be reflected in the Permission System as required.

## **Insights**

Development of Reef 2050 policy documents, designed to apply across Australian and Queensland government jurisdiction, will provide clarity and consistency around the desired outcomes for Great Barrier Reef values.

Formal statutory assessment processes such as the permission system are limited in what they are able to deliver for net environmental benefits, as this is not the purpose for which they were designed. Opportunities to foster net benefit outcomes are better provided through a diverse range of approaches, working with all stakeholders across the Reef and at local, regional, national and international scales.

## **Acknowledgments**

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- Queensland Parks and Wildlife Service
- Department of the Environment and Energy