



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

# PLANNING FOR PRIORITY PORTS

## Purpose

### **Applying Reef 2050 policies to master plans for priority ports**

Developing master plans for the priority ports of Gladstone, Abbot Point, Townsville and Mackay/Hay Point, which are adjacent to the Great Barrier Reef, is a priority for the Queensland Government. This delivers on its commitment to Reef 2050 policies and the *Sustainable Ports Development Act 2015* (SPD Act).

*This case study describes how Reef 2050 policies about cumulative impact management, net benefits and offsets should be applied to master planning for priority ports.*

## Context and scope

### **Protecting the Reef while expanding the regional economy**

The SPD Act contains measures for increasing protection of the Great Barrier Reef and meeting the government's commitment to expand Queensland's economy, create more jobs and develop regions. For example, under the SPD Act capital dredging outside of the four priority ports and the Port of Cairns is prohibited. Authorities managing dredging at priority ports need to ensure the dredge material is beneficially reused. This ensures a net benefit to the Reef.

Master plans for the four priority ports will ensure the best possible use of existing port infrastructure for delivering economic and operational outcomes while still pursuing environmental and community responsibilities.

The Reef 2050 Plan sets out the vision for the future of the Great Barrier Reef World Heritage Area and how this will be achieved. The Reef 2050 Plan committed to developing guidelines for assessing cumulative impact and a net benefit policy to refine and improve guidance and procedural requirements for avoiding, mitigating and offsetting impacts and guiding future planning and development decisions in the management of the World Heritage Area and associated management activities in its adjacent catchment.

Master plans need to apply Reef 2050 policies to (a) identify and recognise the cumulative impacts of human actions on the Reef, (b) ensure there are overall net benefits for the Reef's health from any development, and (c) apply offset measures to positively mitigate against any impacts. Cumulative impacts and net benefits need to be considered in designing a master plan's strategy and in choosing specific approaches. Offsets may be required when approaches are implemented during the operational phase of port master plans.

Along with considering Reef 2050 policies, master plans also need to consider a range of existing tools and legal instruments, including those shown on the right of Figure 1.



**Figure 1:** Inputs to priority port master plans and tools for implementing plans

## Application

### **Planning needs to get it right for the Reef at each stage**

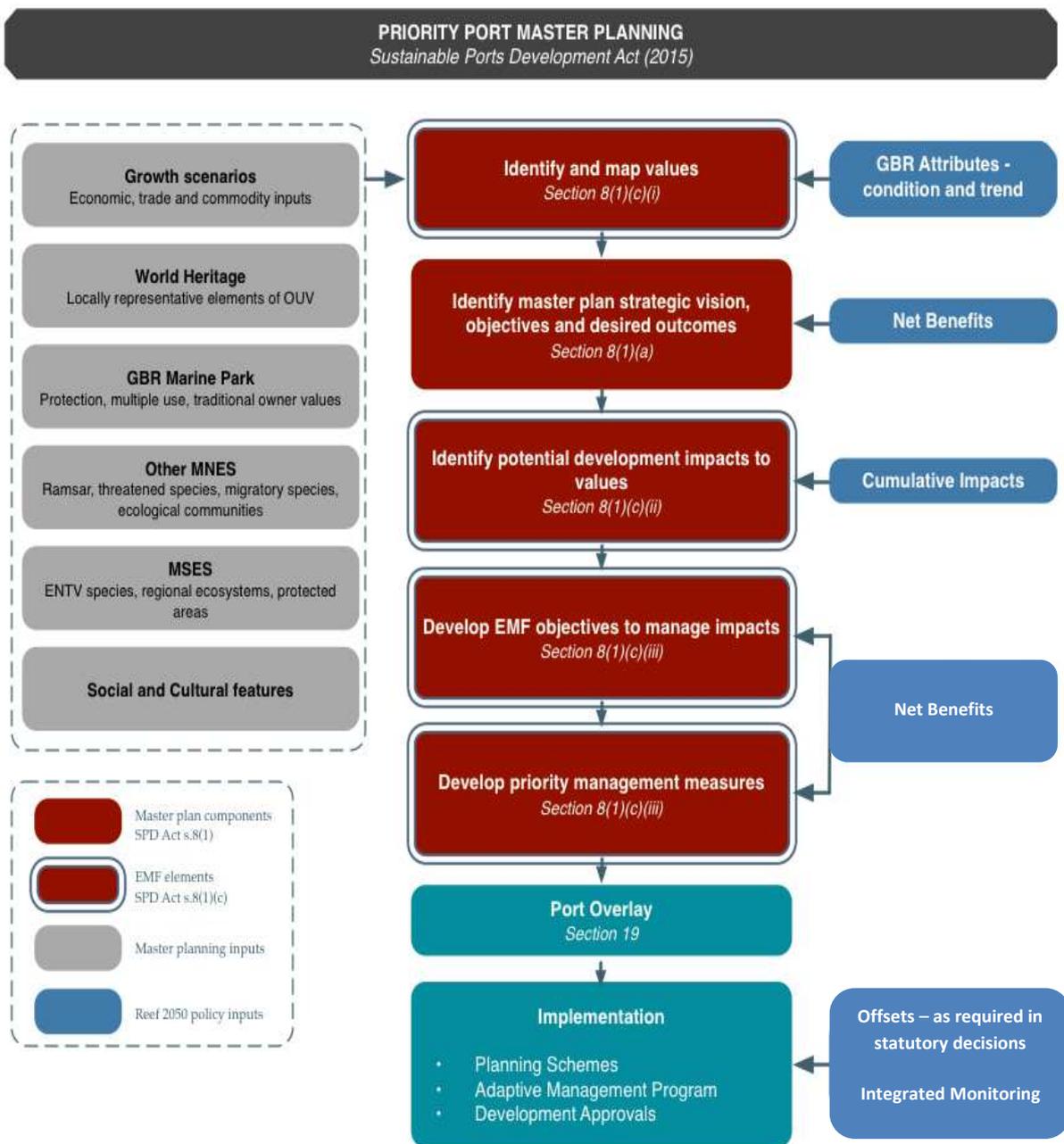
The various steps in developing a master plan - including when planners need to consider environmental values such as those for the Great Barrier Reef (GBR), Outstanding Universal Value (OUV), Matters of National Environmental Significance (MNES), Matters of State Environmental Significance (MSES) - are shown in Figure 2. Reef 2050 policy considerations are shown in the blue boxes on the right-hand side of the diagram.

### **Net Benefit and Cumulative Impact Management**

Planners need to consider Reef 2050 policies throughout the stages of master planning; developing the Environmental Management Framework (EMF); implementing, including through the port overlay. Getting it right for the Reef at each stage is important. This is particularly true if the port does not grow as predicted, given uncertain economic outcomes.

At the strategic level, planners need to identify the Reef values in the port and surrounding areas by developing an EMF. They also need to consider how port development may add to the cumulative impacts on those values. At this stage, planners should also consider actions that could provide a net benefit to the broader Reef ecosystem.

Planners can best address cumulative impacts at the planning stage. For example, when planners determine boundaries of their planning area, they need to investigate the surrounding natural systems, supply chains and critical infrastructure.



**Figure 2:** Priority port master planning; Reef 2050 policies are shown in the blue boxes on the right-hand side

## Outcome

### ***Planning will deliver a net benefit to the Great Barrier Reef***

By limiting major port development to the four priority ports and ensuring those ports have a master plan that considers the Reef 2050 policies, there will be a net benefit to the Great Barrier Reef. Achieving this net benefit is a responsibility shared by everyone.

## Insights

### ***Opportunities exist to align priority port master plans with Reef 2050 policies***

The cumulative impact and net benefit Reef 2050 policies are being developed to refine and improve guidance for avoiding, mitigating and offsetting impacts in planning and management of the Great Barrier Reef World Heritage Area and adjacent catchment, such as through the priority port master plans.

This case study highlights specific opportunities to align priority port master plans with the Reef 2050 policies by:

- ensuring that when master plans and EMFs are developed and implemented, they consider cumulative impact and net benefit policies
- explaining how to include cumulative impact and net benefit assessments in master plans
- highlighting how priority port master plans can deliver net benefits for the Reef.

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