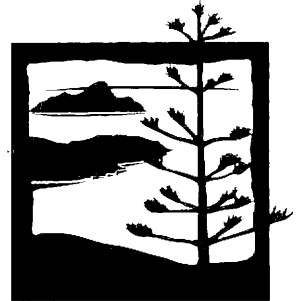


December 1997

# Whitsundays

## PLAN OF MANAGEMENT



# Information Summary

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GREAT BARRIER REEF  
MARINE PARK AUTHORITY

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**GREAT BARRIER REEF**  
**MARINE PARK AUTHORITY**

PO Box 1379  
Townsville Qld 4810  
Telephone: (077) 500 700  
International: +61 77 500 700  
Facsimile: (077) 726 093  
International: +61 77 726 093

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# ABOUT THIS BOOKLET

This booklet introduces and explains the proposed Plan of Management for the Whitsunday area of the Central Section of the Great Barrier Reef Marine Park (refer to map 1 on page 2).

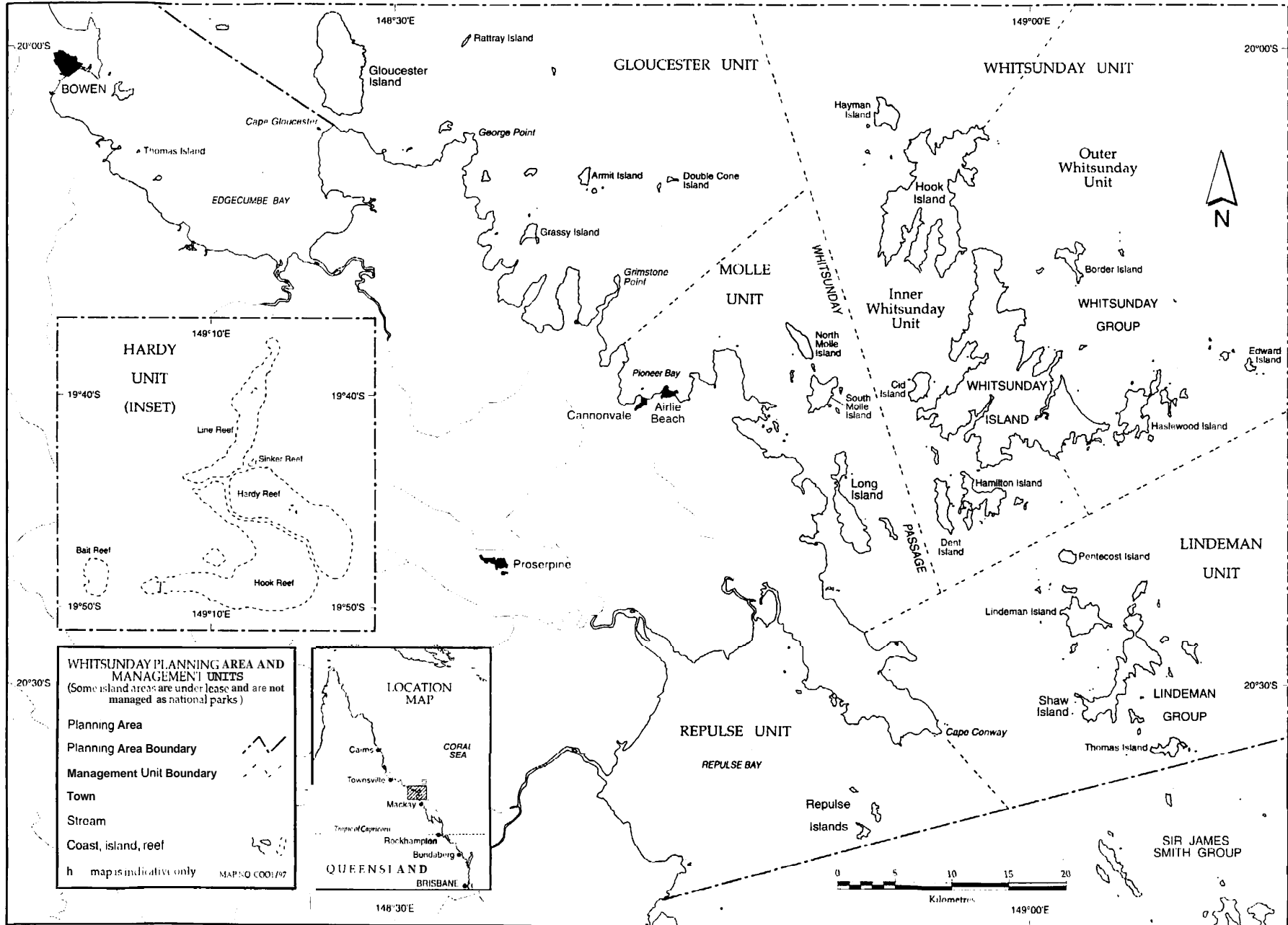
A draft management plan for the reefs and islands was released for public comment in October 1993, and attracted a lot of interest and written submissions. This plan has formed a basis for managing the Whitsundays since 1993 and has been revised to take into account submissions and comments received since that time.

Changes to the Great *Barrier Reef Marine Park Act* in 1994 introduced new provisions relating to management plans, to enable the preparation of statutory plans of management.

This booklet introduces the statutory plan, the **Whitsundays Plan of Management** (the Plan), for the Great Barrier Reef Marine Park component of the Whitsundays (the Area). The Plan has been prepared by the Great Barrier Reef Marine Park Authority in collaboration with the Queensland Department of Environment and with input from the Whitsunday Coastal Advisory Committee and other user groups. The Plan sets out the proposed laws for future management of the Area, additional to the zoning in the Central Section Zoning Plan. This booklet explains how the Plan will affect different users of the of the Area reefs and waters.

Readers involved in the Whitsunday marine tourism industry should also refer to the 'Tourism Industry Information' booklet for details of permit management proposals for the Area.

MAP 1: Whitsunday Planning Area and Management Units



# INTRODUCTION

The Great Barrier Reef, one of the world's last healthy reef systems, is also one of Australia's biggest natural tourist attractions. Each year over half a million people visit the Whitsunday region of the Great Barrier Reef Marine Park.

Visitors to the Whitsundays are attracted by the spectacular scenery of the numerous islands (mostly national parks), the fringing reefs and the offshore reefs. The reefs and islands support a huge range of animal and plant life, including threatened species such as the humpback whale, dugong, loggerhead turtle, beach stone curlew, and the Proserpine rock-wallaby. Scattered throughout the islands are special Aboriginal cultural sites including unique rock art paintings at Nara Inlet, and sites of European history.

Tourism and recreation are the major uses of the Whitsundays. The Whitsundays is therefore an important area for educating and informing visitors from around Australia and the world, about World Heritage values. In addition to tourism and recreation the Whitsundays is also used for commercial fishing and collecting, research and education, traditional hunting, and shipping.

## **Objectives of the Plan**

In order to maintain the scenic, conservation, cultural and use values of the area, and to ensure that the quality of presentation continues to meet World Heritage standards, it is important that the Whitsundays is well managed.

The basis for future management of the Great Barrier Reef Marine Park in the Whitsundays is set out in the Whitsundays Plan of Management. The Plan aims to provide opportunities for a range of tourism and recreation uses as well as research and education, limited commercial collecting and fishing, traditional hunting, and safe shipping, and to ensure that use of the area does not threaten the values.

# MANAGEMENT FRAMEWORK

## Management units

(refer to map 1 on page 2)

For the purposes of management the Whitsunday Planning Area can be divided into Management Units which represent natural groupings of islands, fringing reefs, offshore reefs and adjacent waters. The Hardy Unit, the Gloucester Unit, the Inner Whitsunday Unit, the Outer Whitsunday Unit, the Molle Unit, the Lindeman Unit, and the Repulse Unit.

The major management focus will be on the high-use areas of the Hardy, Inner Whitsunday and Molle Units where there will be opportunities for managed growth. Historically these areas have been the major focus of visitation and with careful management should be able to accommodate the projected increasing levels of use of the Whitsundays for the foreseeable future.

However, some popular destinations require quite detailed management. Most of the sensitive sites have designated 'no anchoring areas' and public moorings have been installed to protect the reefs. Detailed site management is in place or proposed at the following sites:

Hardy Reef, Bait Reef; Butterfly Bay, Maureen's Cove, Luncheon Bay, Manta Ray Bay and Pinnacle Bay, Mackerel Bay and Osprey Bay, Saba Bay, Stonehaven Anchorage and Caves Cove, Raven's Cove and False Nara Inlet (Hook Island); Black Island, Langford and Bird Islands; Blue Pearl Bay (Hayman Island); Whitehaven Beach, Hill Inlet, Chance Bay (Whitsunday Island); CATERAN Bay (Border Island); Waite Bay (Haslewood Island), Sunlovers Bay (Daydream Island).

## Settings for tourism and recreation

(refer to maps 2 – 5 on pages 7 – 10)

With increasing levels of visitation to the Whitsundays there is crowding and increased conflict of activities at some locations. In order to manage these social impacts and to continue to provide a range of recreation and tourism opportunities the Plan assigns settings to the reefs and coastal waters of the Whitsundays, additional to the Marine Park zoning. There are five settings (described on page 5) ranging from Setting 1: Developed, to Setting 5: Protected. Table 2 on page 11 lists the types of aircraft, vessel, facility, and activity which are either generally acceptable or not acceptable within each setting.



### Setting 1: Developed

Immediately adjacent to urban areas and resorts. These areas are the access points to the Area and a focus for intensive tourism and recreation. You can expect these areas to be heavily used by a wide range of craft, and to contain permanent facilities (e.g. marinas, jetties and boat ramps).

Max. number of people per vessel (includes crew)	Max. length of vessel
No limit	70 metres *

\*Cruise ships (vessels larger than 70 metres) may only anchor within designated 'large vessel anchoring areas' (e.g. Cid Harbour).



### Setting 2: High use

A natural setting that may have high levels of visitation. These areas are easily accessed, and appropriate facilities (e.g. pontoons, reef protection markers) may be required to manage impacts and assist in visitor interpretation of the area. You can expect these areas to be regularly visited by larger vessels and aircraft.

Max. number of people per vessel (includes crew).	Max. length of vessel
No limit	35 metres



### Setting 3: Moderate use

A natural setting that may have moderate levels of visitation, with appropriate moorings and management facilities to manage impacts. You can expect these areas to be occasionally visited by larger vessels and aircraft.

Max. number of people per vessel (includes crew)	Max. length of vessel
40	35 metres

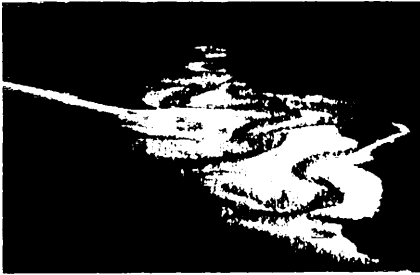


### Setting 4: Natural

A natural setting with low levels of visitation. You can expect these areas to be generally free from facilities and larger vessels and aircraft.

Max. number of people per vessel (includes crew)	Max. length of vessel
15	20 metres





### Setting 5: Protected

A protected natural setting, for areas of outstanding or unique conservation value and areas of special management concern. Access to these locations will be limited and managed according to individual site plans.

Max. number of people per vessel (includes crew) limited by site	Max. length of vessel limited by site
--	--

Seven areas in the Whitsundays have been identified as requiring a protected natural setting. Significant values of these areas include rare and endangered species habitat, cultural significance and spectacular scenery (refer to table 1 below).









Access to setting 5 areas will be limited to protect the values, and individual site plans will detail specific management required. In some cases access will be prohibited. In others, there may be site plan provisions for limited access through a booking system. Site plans are being developed in consultation with representatives of stakeholder groups.

**Table 1. Setting 5 (Protected) areas**

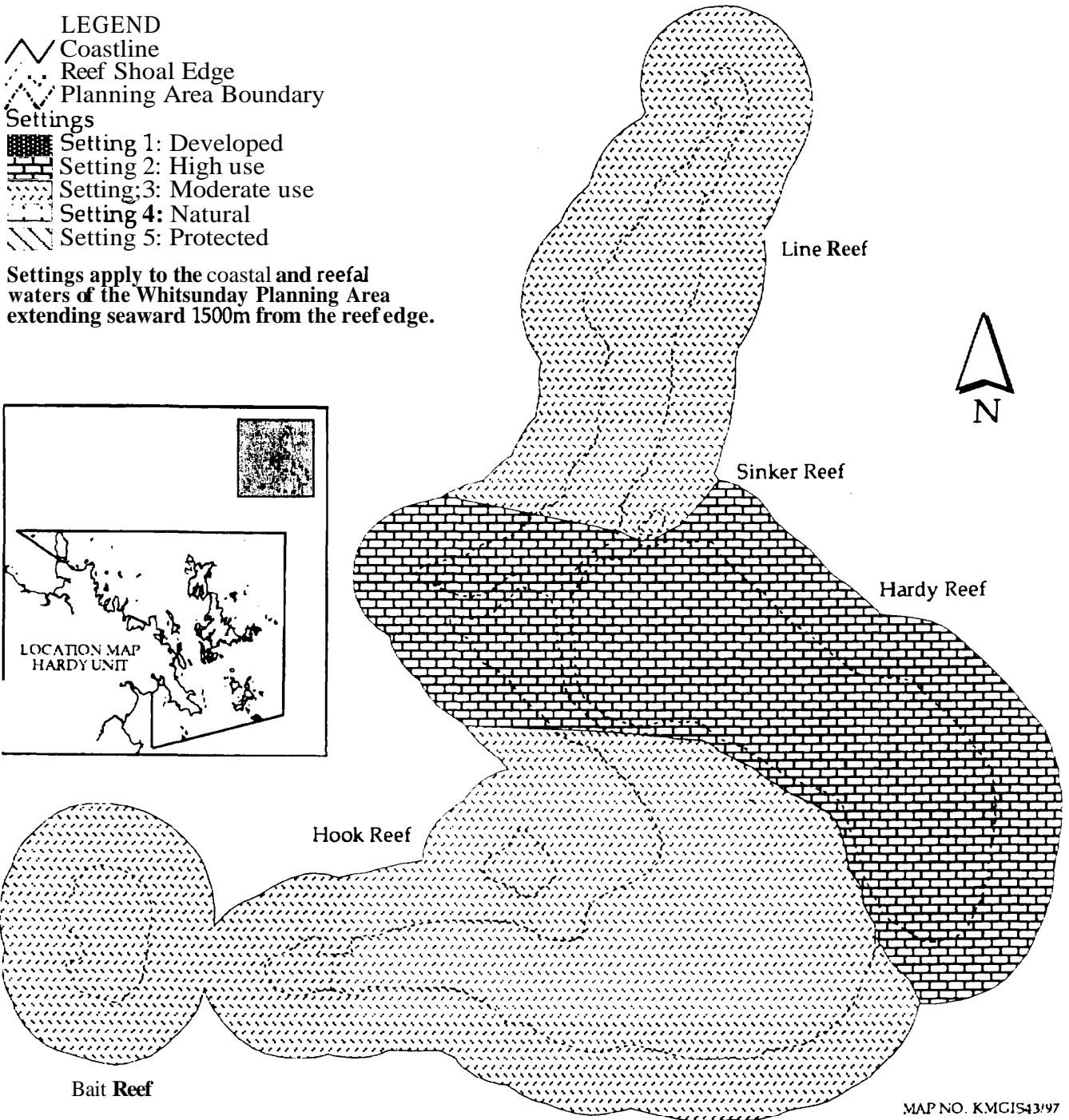
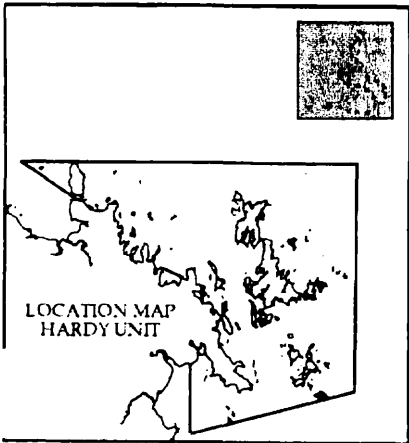
Setting 5 area	Significant values
1. Cow & Calf Islands area	Conservation: inshore fringing reef, mangrove A remote location of scientific interest
2. Deloraine Island area	Conservation: fringing reef, rare sponge species Remote location
3. East Double Bay area	Conservation: fringing reef, rare coral species
4. Eshelby area (including Eshelby and Little Eshelby Islands)	Conservation: seabird nesting and roosting Preservation Zone
5. Hill Inlet area (including Hill Inlet and the northern end of Whitehaven Beach)	Conservation: mangroves, seabird nesting. Landscape: unique silica sand inlet and delta (an icon for the Whitsundays) Cultural significance
6. Little Grassy Island area	Conservation: seabird nesting and roosting, fringing reef
7. Waite Bay area (including Waite Bay, Lupton Island, Nicolson Island, Worthington Island, and Turrum Island)	Conservation: seagrass beds, turtle feeding and nesting, seabird nesting and roosting, fringing reef, including deepwater bommies (source reef for Whitsundays)

NOTE: the values listed above are not exhaustive but indicative of the significance of the locations in the setting 5 areas.

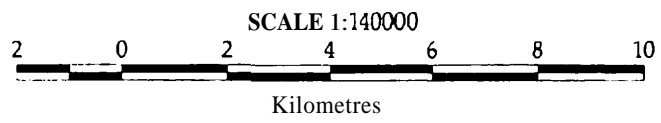
**MAP 2: Settings for Tourism and Recreation - Hardy Unit**

- LEGEND**
-  Coastline
  -  Reef Shoal Edge
  -  Planning Area Boundary
- Settings**
-  Setting 1: Developed
  -  Setting 2: High use
  -  Setting 3: Moderate use
  -  Setting 4: Natural
  -  Setting 5: Protected

Settings apply to the coastal and reefal waters of the Whitsunday Planning Area extending seaward 1500m from the reef edge.

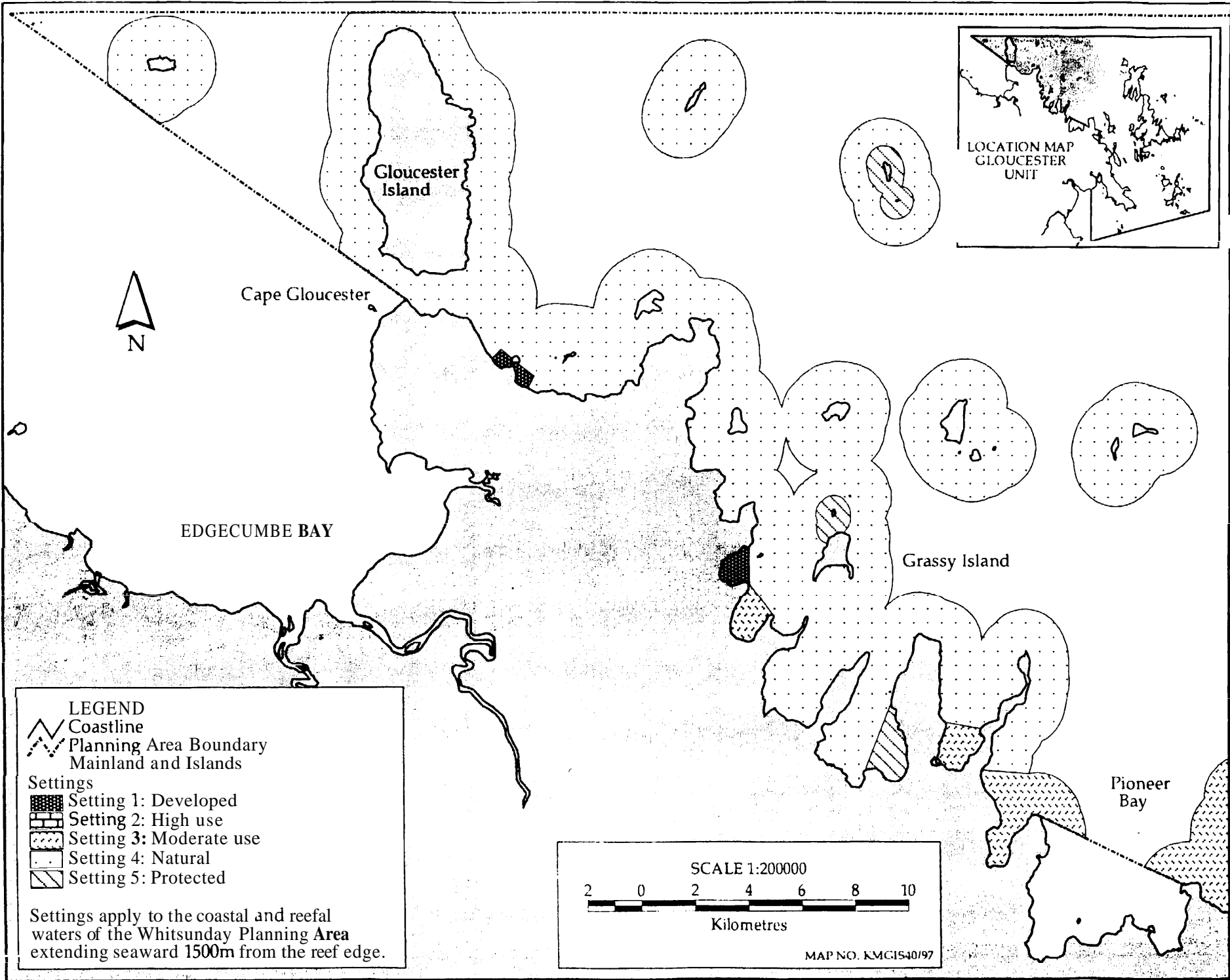


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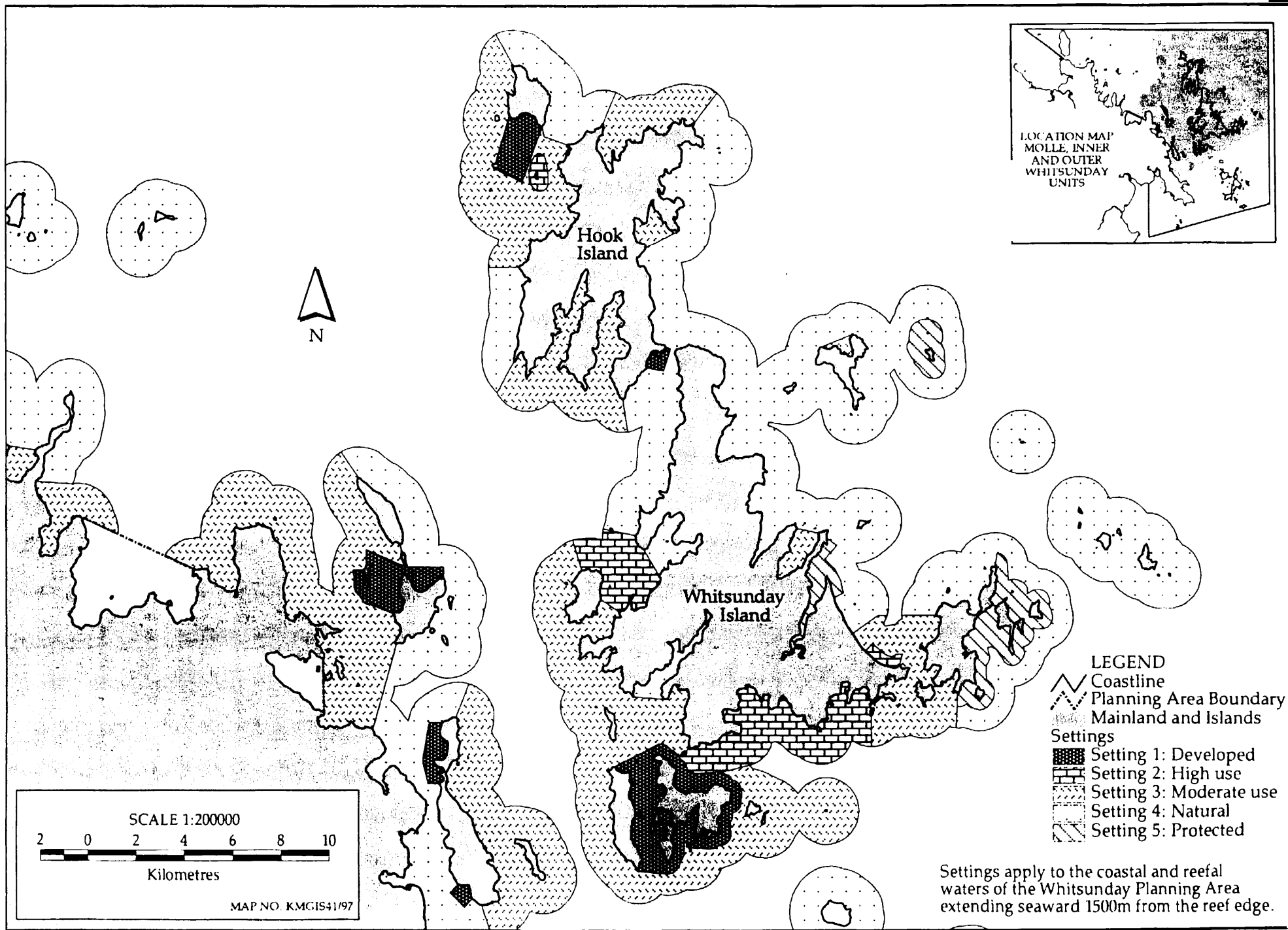


The Great Barrier Reef  
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MAP 3: Settings for Tourism and Recreation - Gloucester

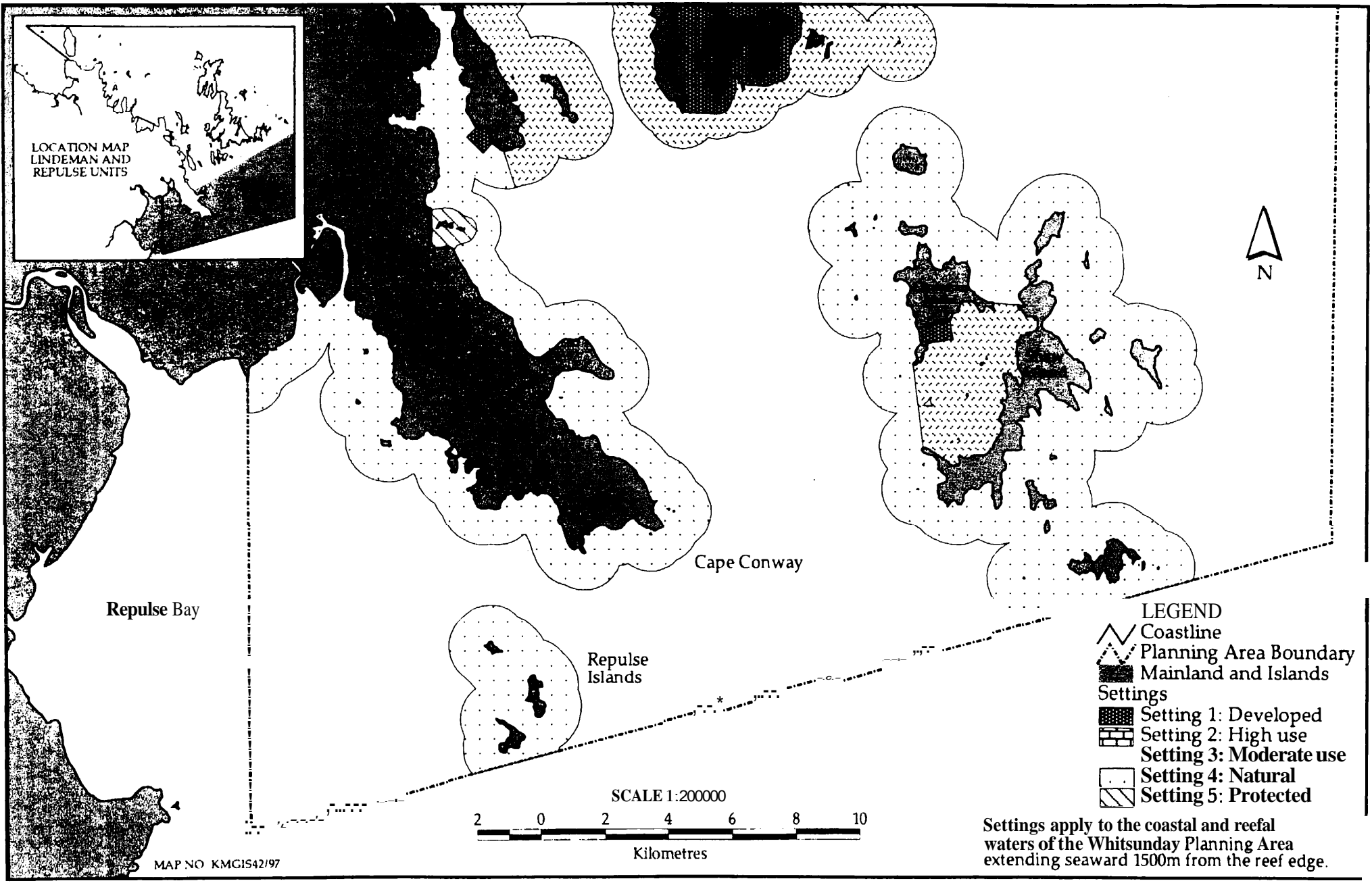


MAP 4: Settings for Tourism and Recreation - Molle and Whitsunday Units



Settings apply to the coastal and reefal waters of the Whitsunday Planning Area extending seaward 1500m from the reef edge.

MAP 5: Settings for Tourism and Recreation - Lindeman and Repulse Bay



MAP NO KMGIS42/97

**LEGEND**  
 Coastline  
 Planning Area Boundary  
 Mainland and Islands  
 Settings  
 Setting 1: Developed  
 Setting 2: High use  
 Setting 3: Moderate use  
 Setting 4: Natural  
 Setting 5: Protected

Settings apply to the coastal and reefal waters of the Whitsunday Planning Area extending seaward 1500m from the reef edge.

**Table 2. What the settings allow you to do**

This table lists the types of aircraft, vessel, facility and activity which are either generally acceptable (✓) or not acceptable (✗) in settings 1 to 5. Access to setting 5 will not be allowed unless provided for in a site plan.

Types of Aircraft, Vessel, Facility and Activity	Setting 1 <i>Developed</i>	Setting 2 <i>High use</i>	Setting 3 <i>Moderate use</i>	Setting 4 <i>Natural</i>	Setting 5 Protected
<b>Aircraft</b> (e.g. seaplane, helicopter)	✓	✓	✓	✓	If stated in a site plan
<b>Hovercraft, wing-in-ground effects and personal water craft</b> (including jet skis)	✓	✗	✗	✗	✗
<b>Other vessels</b> (e.g. motor boat, yacht, kayak)	Limits 70 metres	Limits 35 metres	Limits 35 metres & 40 pax	Limits 20 metres & 15 pas	As stated in a site plan
<b>Permanent facilities</b> (e.g. marina, jetty, boat ramp)	✓	✗	✗	✗	✗
<b>Semi-permanent facilities</b> (e.g. pontoon, helipad, mooring, marker)	✓	Hardy Reef only	✗	✗	✗
<b>Hiring and vending</b> (e.g. beach hire, goods and services vending)	✓	✗	✗	✗	✗
<b>Motorised water sports and aerobatics</b> (e.g. water-skiing, jet-skiing, parasailing)	✓	✗	✗	✗	✗
<b>Special events</b> (e.g. regatta, flotilla, beach part.;	✓	✗	✗	✗	✗

**NOTE:**

- An aircraft, vessel, facility or activity not listed in table 2 above is not 'as of right' but subject to the provisions of the Central Section Zoning Plan.
- Aircraft are limited to 2 visits per location per week except to designated regular aircraft landing areas (refer to map 6 on page 14)
- 'Limits' refer to overall length and group size ('pax' means passengers and crew). Limits do not apply to vessels passing through a setting or when visiting a designated large vessel anchoring area (e.g. Cid Harbour).
- Restrictions on facilities do not apply to approved management, research monitoring or navigation facilities (e.g. moorings and markers).
- Some established uses which are inconsistent with table 2 above, may be allowed to continue with the appropriate permissions (refer to Tourism Industry Information booklet).

## Summary of setting limits for all users

- Access to reefs and coastal waters will be subject to group and vessel size limits.
- No access to setting 5 (Protected) areas unless provided for in a site plan.
- Motorised water sports, aerobatics and special events can generally only be conducted in setting 1 (Developed) areas, adjacent to a resort or coastal settlement.

## Reef protection program

The reef protection program was initiated in 1993 to reduce impacts on fringing reefs at sensitive sites in the Whitsundays. At these sites the reef edge is marked by a line of pyramid-shaped reef protection markers, and anchoring is not allowed inshore of this line.

To further reduce coral damage, and to provide a service to visiting craft, blue public moorings have been installed at some sensitive sites. Additional public moorings will be installed during the next year to provide added reef protection and access.

### Reef protection requirements:

- No anchoring on coral.
- No anchoring in defined 'no anchoring areas' (e.g. northern bays of Hook Island).
- Users of public moorings must observe the conditions of use (e.g. vessel size limits).

## Bird protection

A number of the Whitsunday sites have been identified as significant for seabird, shorebird or raptor nesting and roosting (refer to map 7 on page 15), and are closed to beach access during the restriction period:

Restriction period: All year

Bird Island	Double Cone Island
Eshelby Island	Little Eshelby Island

Restriction period: 1 April to 30 September (inclusive)

Esk Island

Restriction period: 1 October to 31 March (inclusive)

Armit Island	East Repulse Island
East Rock	Edwin Rock
Grassy Island	Hill Inlet (Whitsunday Island)
Little Armit Island	Little Grassy Island
Low Island	North Repulse Island
Olden Island	Petrel Islets
Pig Bay (Haslewood Island)	Repair Island
Tancred Island	White Rock

**Bird protection requirements:**

- Access to within one kilometre of a significant bird site is restricted during the restriction period:
  - aircraft must not operate below 1500 feet (above ground or water); and
  - vessel speeds must not exceed 6 knots; and
  - horns, loud speakers or sirens must not be sounded.

**Whale protection**

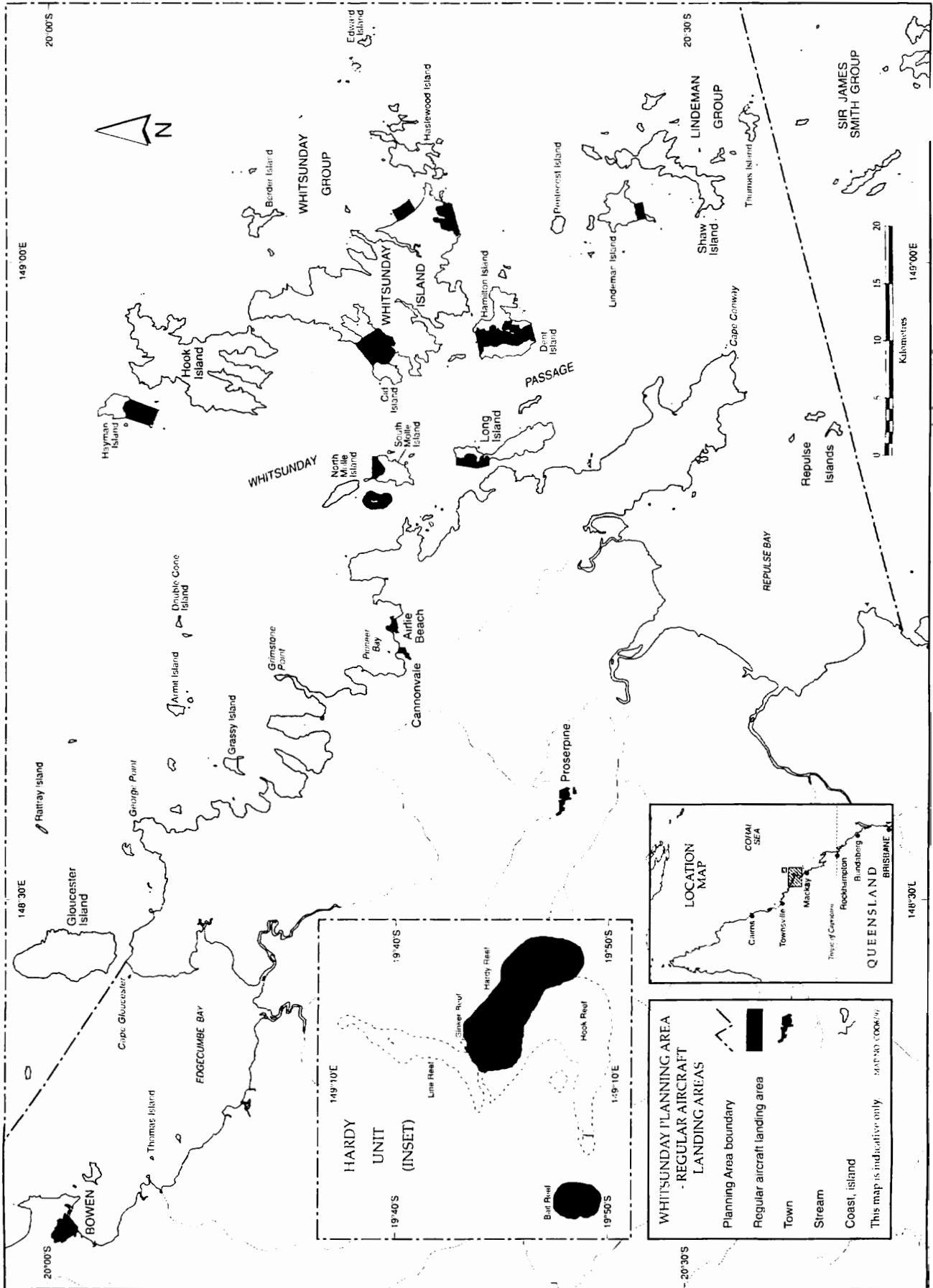
The Whitsundays is an important calving ground for whales which migrate north from the Southern Ocean during winter. Adult whales and calves may be disturbed by vessels and aircraft at close range. To minimise disturbance, vessels and aircraft will be prohibited from approaching within 300 metres of a whale inside the designated whale protection area (refer to map 8 on page 16).

**Whale protection requirements**

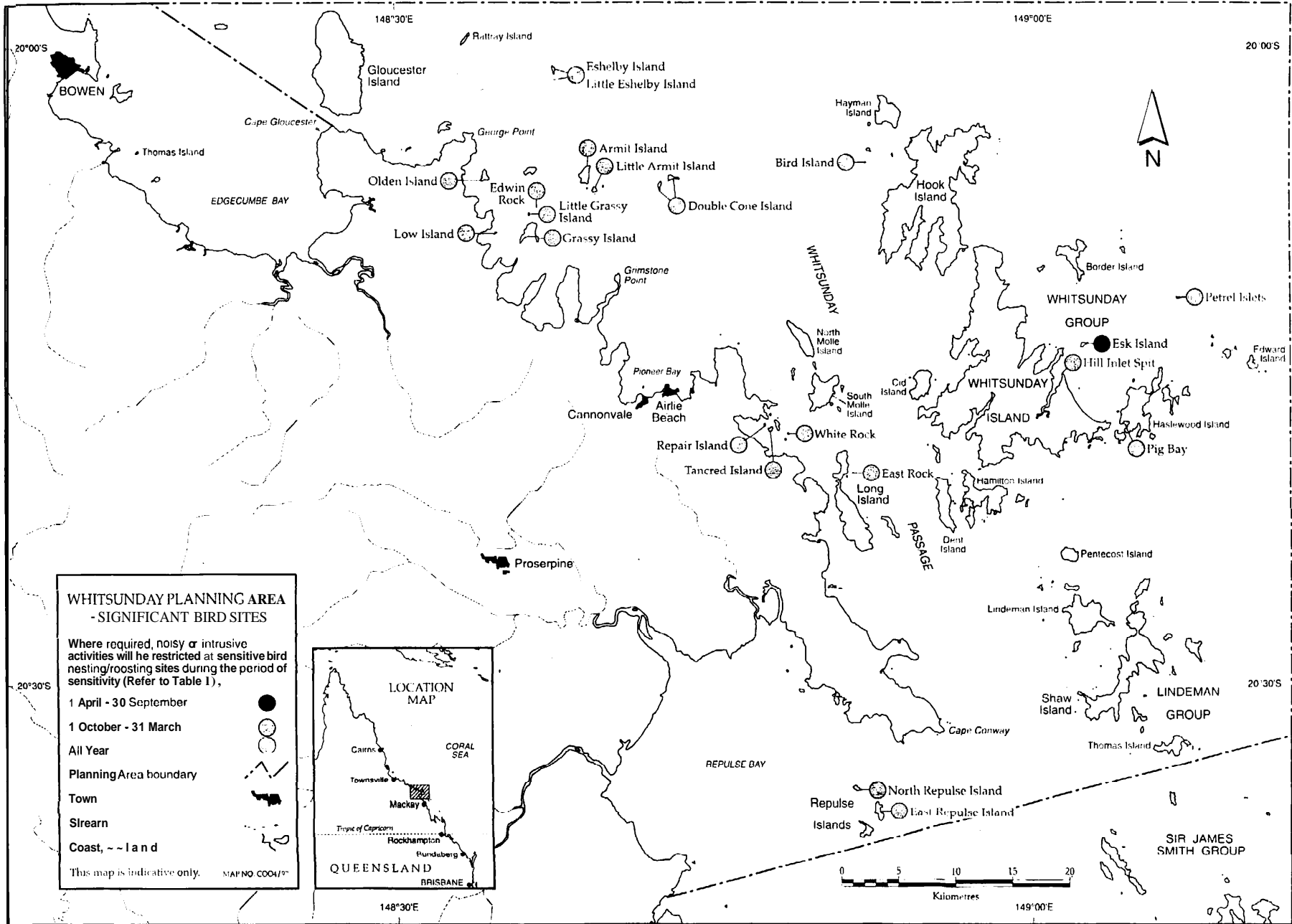
- Whale-watching provisions must be observed by all vessels and aircraft involved in the activity (refer to best environmental practices for whale watching). The minimum approach distance is 300 metres inside the whale protection area, and 100 metres outside the whale protection area.



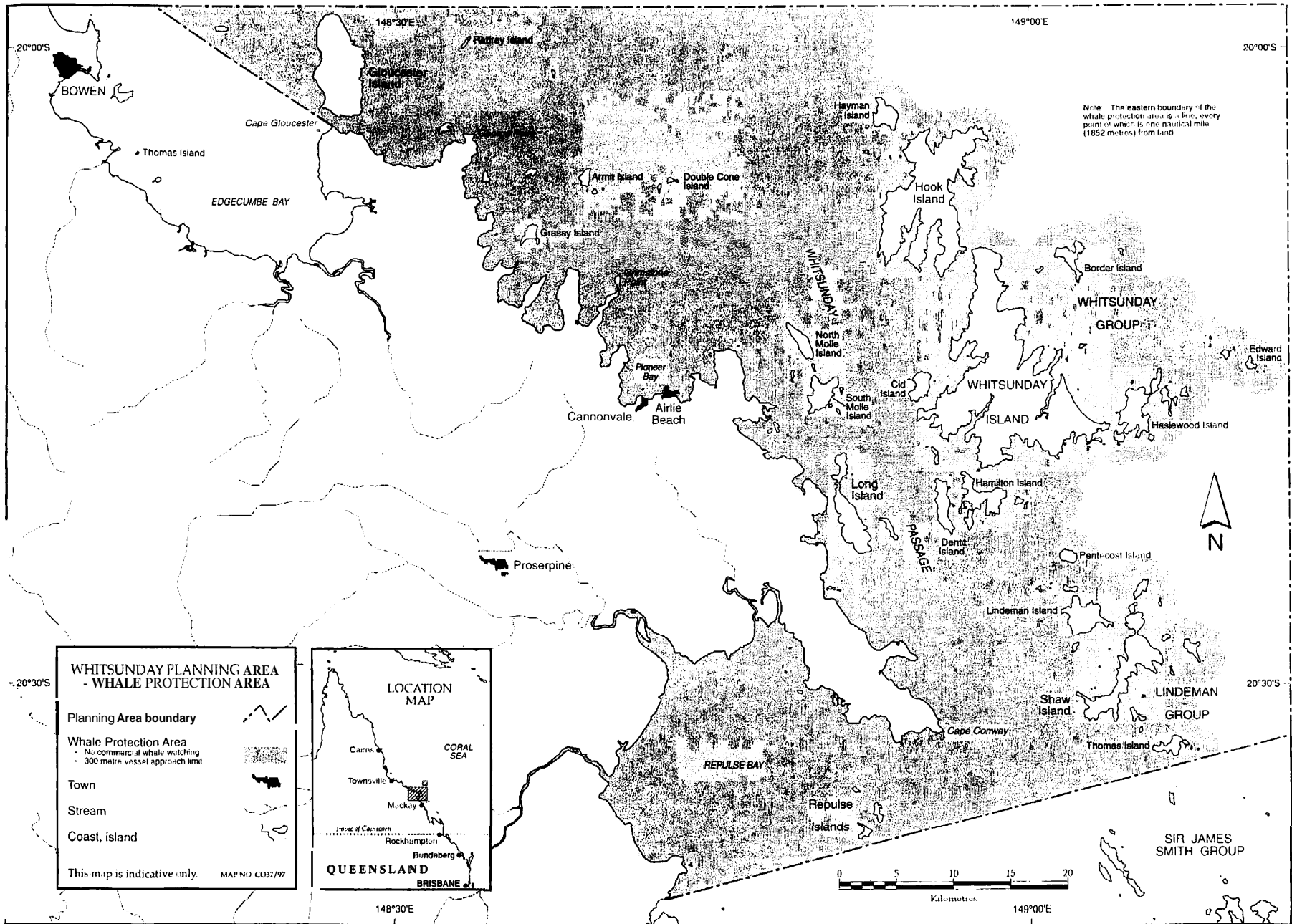
Map 6: Regular Aircraft Landing Areas



Map 7: Significant Bird Sites



Map 8: Whale Protection Area



## HOW THE PLAN AFFECTS YOU

The requirements of the settings for tourism and recreation (maps 2-5), the reef protection program, restrictions near significant bird sites, and whale approach limits, will apply to everyone who visits the Area, whether a commercial operator or a private boat owner.

As a general principal best environmental practices (BEPs) should be observed by all people (e.g. anchoring, waste disposal etc.) whilst visiting reef and island locations in the Whitsundays, and throughout the Great Barrier Reef Marine Park.

You should refer to the Whitsundays Plan of Management and the Tourism Industry Information booklet for more detailed information.

## REVIEW OF THE PLAN

Once in place the Plan will be subject to periodic review, in a time frame set by the relevant Commonwealth legislation which is currently before Parliament. In the future it may be necessary to modify the Plan in response to new information obtained through the programs that are in place to monitor threatened species (e.g. humpback whales, dugong, seabirds), fringing reefs (e.g. anchor damage and recovery), site visitation and changing community attitudes. Amendments to the Plan may be made at any time, subject to a period of public comment.



## NEED MORE INFORMATION?

For additional information about the Whitsundays Plan of Management, or to clarify points from this booklet, please direct your enquiries to the following organisations:

Great Barrier Reef Marine Park Authority  
PO Box 1379  
Townsville QLD 4810  
Phone: (077) 500 700  
Fax: (077) 726 093

Queensland Department of Environment  
Whitsundays District Office  
PO Box 332  
Airlie Beach QLD 4802  
Phone: (079) 46 7022  
Fax: (079) 46 7023

Written comments on the Plan should be sent to the Great Barrier Reef Marine Park Authority at the above address. Closing date for receipt of submissions is 16 February 1998.