



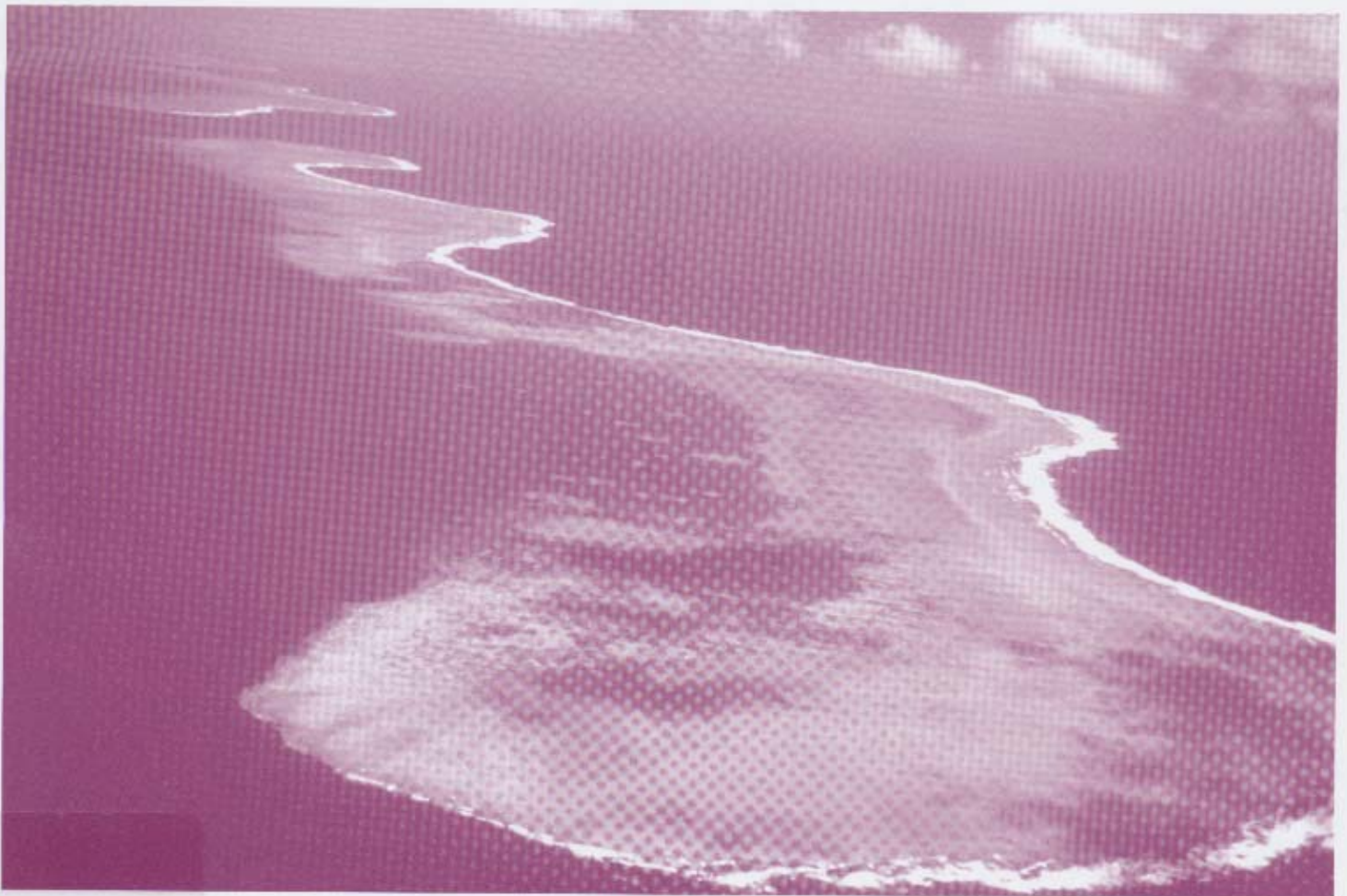
Australian Government

Great Barrier Reef  
Marine Park Authority

# Cairns Area Plan of Management

*A guide to the amended  
Cairns Area Plan of Management*

*December 2004*

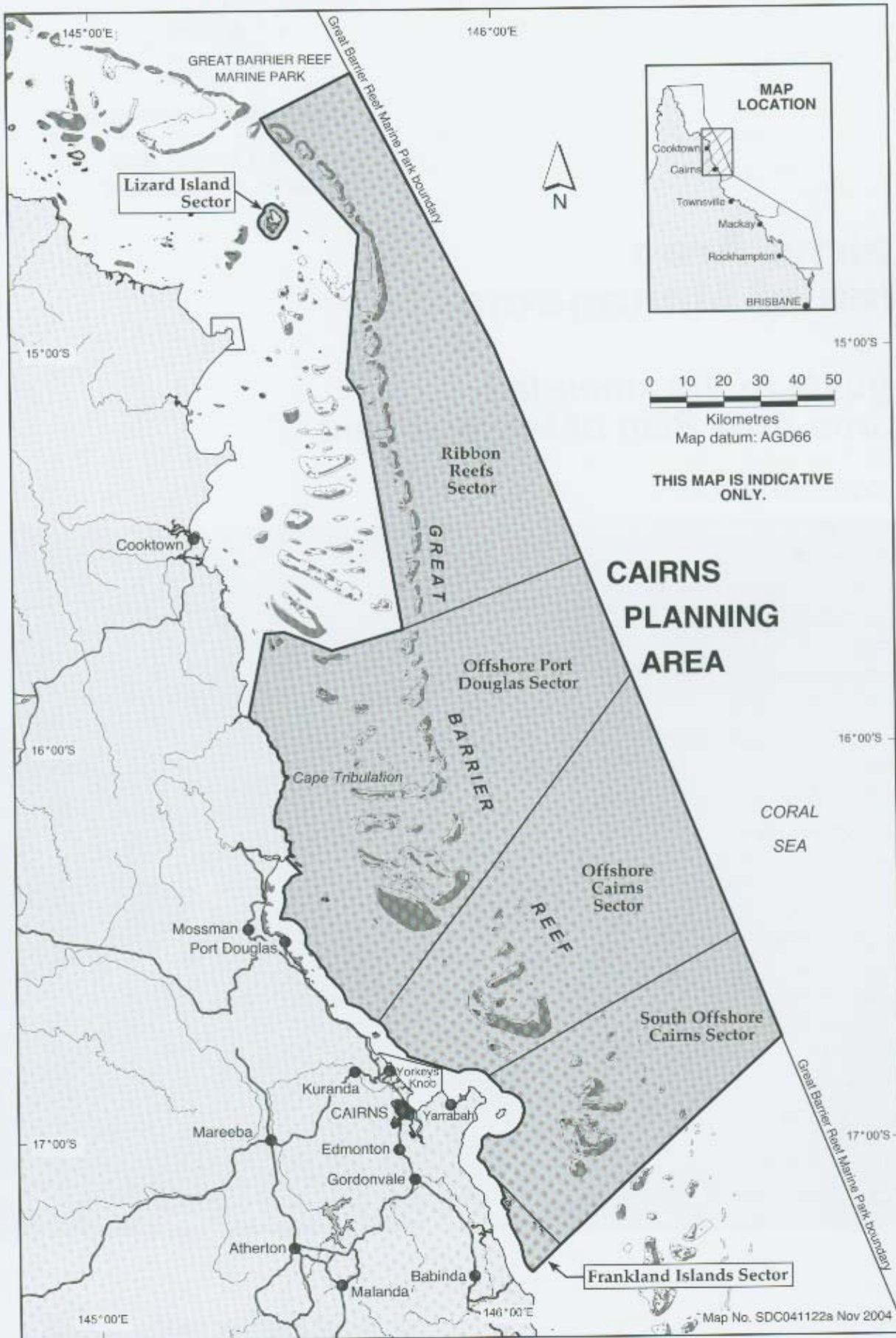


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# MAP 1 THE CAIRNS AREA





This booklet explains the key points of the amended Cairns Area Plan of Management. **These include restrictions that apply to all users of the Cairns Area (as defined in the Plan) plus others which apply only to permitted tourism operators.** It is important that Marine Park users read and understand the information contained in the booklet before visiting the Cairns Area of the Great Barrier Reef Marine Park. It must be used in conjunction with the *Great Barrier Reef Marine Park Act 1975*, the *Great Barrier Reef Marine Park Regulations 1983* and the *Great Barrier Reef Marine Park Zoning Plan 2003*.

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## INTRODUCTION

The Cairns Area Plan of Management (the Plan) was released by the Great Barrier Reef Marine Park Authority (the Authority) in June 1998 to provide strategies for protecting the values of the offshore areas of Cairns, Port Douglas, the Ribbon Reefs, Lizard Island and the Frankland Islands. Amendments were made to the Plan in 1999 and 2002. The Authority has again amended the Plan in 2004 in response to submissions from users of the Area.

The Area includes some of the most spectacular reefs in the world and abundant wildlife including dugong, whales, dolphins, turtles and seabirds. These natural attractions are the focus of a dynamic tourism industry which accounts for over 50% of the total annual tourism visitation to the Great Barrier Reef Marine Park.

The amended Cairns Area Plan of Management provides limits for use of the Area, particularly in relation to anchoring and access to sites. These strategies are additional to the Zoning Plan provisions. They will ensure ongoing protection of natural, cultural, scientific and social values, and will provide future opportunities for a range of uses.

## USEFUL DEFINITIONS

For management purposes the Cairns Area has been divided into six different Sectors:

- Lizard Island Sector;
- Ribbon Reefs Sector;
- Offshore Port Douglas Sector;
- Offshore Cairns Sector;
- South Offshore Cairns Sector; and
- Frankland Islands Sector.

SEE MAP 1

Within each Sector of the Cairns Area individual **Locations** are defined, as a general rule, as the area within the 500 metre line of a reef. **Localities** (e.g. Lizard Island – Map 6) are described in the Plan in detail.

## LIMITS ON ACCESS

### Group size limits (settings for low, moderate and intensive use)

Every Location (and Locality) in the Cairns Area has been defined for low, moderate or intensive use, and limits on group sizes apply to all users when visiting the Location. Locations which have high natural, scientific and cultural values have generally been designated as Low Use or Moderate Use Locations.

SEE MAP 2-4

The following group size limits will apply to vessels and aircraft entering Locations in the Cairns Area:

- Low Use Location            15 people
- Moderate Use Location    60 people
- Intensive Use Location    no limit

**NOTE:** These limits do not apply to:

- a vessel or aircraft if it is in transit through the Location by the most direct route;
- a permitted tourism operator who has a relevant permission and a special endorsement or authorisation from the Authority;
- a vessel or aircraft operating to a pontoon, or a mooring at a pontoon site (other than at Low Island Locality);
- a traditional inhabitant conducting non-commercial traditional activities;
- a large vessel operating as part of a tourist program and is operating in accordance with an approved anchoring strategy for a Location/Locality;
- a vessel anchoring at a Location with a Reef Anchorage for increased group size limit; or
- a vessel operating to a mooring for vessels with high group size limits.

### Access to Ribbon Reefs Sector

Access to a Location in the Ribbon Reefs Sector will be limited to 30 days in any period of 60 days, unless in transit.

## ANCHORING IN THE CAIRNS AREA

Some of the most spectacular coral reefs in the world are found in the Cairns Area of the Great Barrier Reef Marine Park. Because corals are easily damaged by careless anchoring, the Plan contains a number of protection measures aimed at anchoring activities.





## Anchoring care

Where possible anchor in a Reef Anchorage (see below) according to best environment practice for anchoring:

- Take care to avoid damage to coral;
- Check out the area before anchoring;
- Anchor in sand wherever possible;
- Use the appropriate type of anchor for the substrate you are anchoring in, for example, use a reef pick when anchoring on coral;
- Carry enough chain for the depth you want to anchor in; and
- Motor in the direction of the anchor when hauling it in.

It is an offence to intentionally, recklessly or negligently damage coral.

Special consideration will be given if it is necessary to anchor amongst coral in order to shelter from northerly winds, provided due care is taken to avoid damage to coral.

*NOTE: The Plan does not restrict anchoring whenever necessary for the specific purpose of safety of life or vessels.*

## Reef Anchorages

A number of places in the Cairns Area have been designated as Reef Anchorages. These are preferred anchoring sites where the Authority will not permit the installation of any new private moorings or pontoons.

SEE MAP 2-4\*

Reef Anchorages have been defined:

- to encourage the use of places that are least likely to cause damage to coral; and
- to provide some places where access will not be restricted by the presence of moorings.

Where possible, anchor in the designated Reef Anchorages.

Reef Anchorages are available in Low, Moderate and Intensive use Locations in the Cairns Area. In addition, the following Reef Anchorages have an increased group size limit, allowing for vessels operating in a tourist program and carrying up to 100 people.

- Moore Reef Locality 2;
- Ribbon Reef No 3 (15-050);
- Ribbon Reef No 9 (14-154); or
- Thetford Reef (16-068).

*\* NOTE: Maps are indicative only. Reef Anchorage areas are described in Schedule 8 of the Plan.*

## Anchoring in mooring sites or pontoon sites

No anchoring will be allowed around mooring and pontoon sites. This is to protect these areas from anchor damage and to encourage tourism operators to exercise responsibility for managing use of the moorings. The following limits apply only to anchoring and do not restrict access if you are not anchoring.

Do not anchor a vessel or aircraft:

- within a 50 metre radius of a permitted mooring; or
- within a 200 metre radius of a permitted pontoon.

These restrictions do not apply at the following Locations:

- Lizard Island Locality 2;
- Lizard Island Locality 3;
- East Hope Island Reef;
- Cape Tribulation Locality 1;
- Low Island Locality; and
- Green Island Reef Locality 1.

### ‘No anchoring area’

A ‘no anchoring area’ has been defined at the Cod Hole Locality (Ribbon Reefs Sector) to protect coral from anchor damage at this heavily used location.

- Vessels or aircraft must not be anchored inside the ‘no anchoring area’ (Cod Hole Locality).

SEE MAP 5

### Anchoring at Lizard Island

Vessels or aircraft greater than seven metres long must not anchor in Lizard Island Locality 1.

SEE MAP 6

### Anchoring large vessels (35–70 metres overall length)

- Large vessels may anchor *outside* defined Locations in the Planning Area unless otherwise restricted in a permit.
- Large vessels may anchor *inside* the following defined Locations in the Planning Area:
  - in a nominated Reef Anchorage;
  - Lizard Island Locality 2;
  - Lizard Island Locality 3;
  - Ribbon Reef No. 5 (15-038);
  - Ribbon Reef No. 2 (15-075); or
  - in, or adjacent to Blue Lagoon (Lizard Island) in a northerly wind only.
- Certain areas *outside* designated Reef Anchorages are available for large vessel anchoring. Conditions, including an approved anchoring strategy, apply to these sites:

SEE MAP 2-5

Location	Conditions
Lizard Island Locality 4	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• for protection against northerly wind;</li> <li>• the vessel is being operated as part of a tourist program;</li> <li>• the vessel is carrying no more than 100 people;</li> <li>• the vessel has an approved anchoring strategy for that Location; and</li> <li>• vessel anchoring is in accordance with the strategy.</li> </ul>
Moore Reef Locality 2	
Rachel Carson Reef (15-092)*	
Ribbon Reef No 3 (15-050)	
Ribbon Reef No 9 (14-154)	
Thetford Reef (16-068)	
Unnamed Reef (14-153)	

\*NOTE: No group size limit applies to Intensive Use Locations, including Rachel Carson Reef (15-092).

An anchoring strategy is a document setting out how coral damage from anchoring at the site will be minimised. It outlines alternative anchoring sites, coral cover at relevant sites and how best environmental practices will be applied when anchoring. An anchoring strategy must be approved by the Authority. A vessel will be required to anchor according to the anchoring strategy when using the particular Location.





## Anchoring ships (greater than 70 metres overall length)

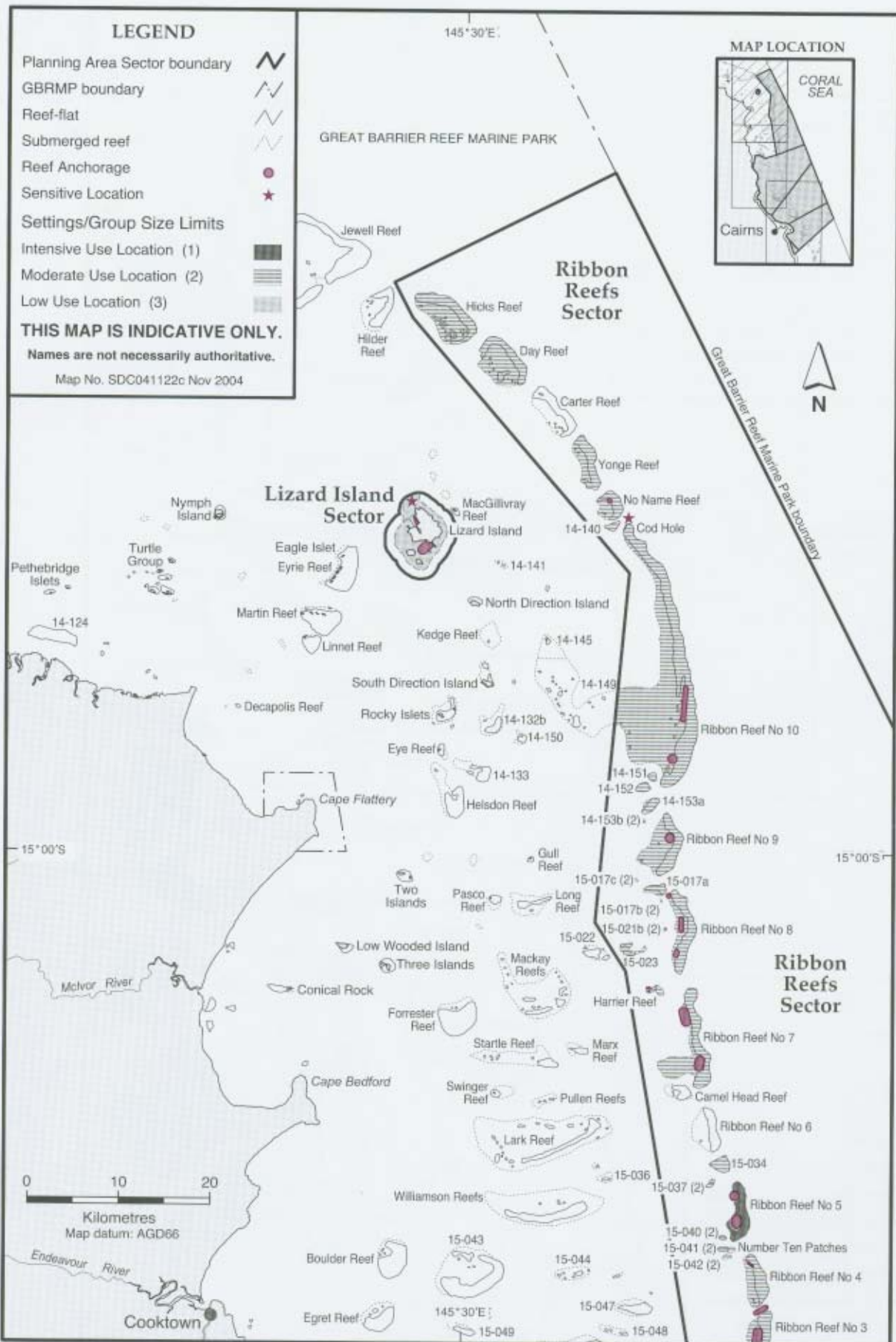
- Ships may anchor *outside* defined Locations in the Planning Area unless otherwise restricted in a permit.
- Ships may only anchor *inside* the following defined Locations in the Planning Area:
  - Lizard Island Locality 2;
  - Lizard Island Locality 3;
  - Ribbon Reef No. 5 (15-038); or
  - Ribbon Reef No. 2 (15-075).

SEE MAP 2-5



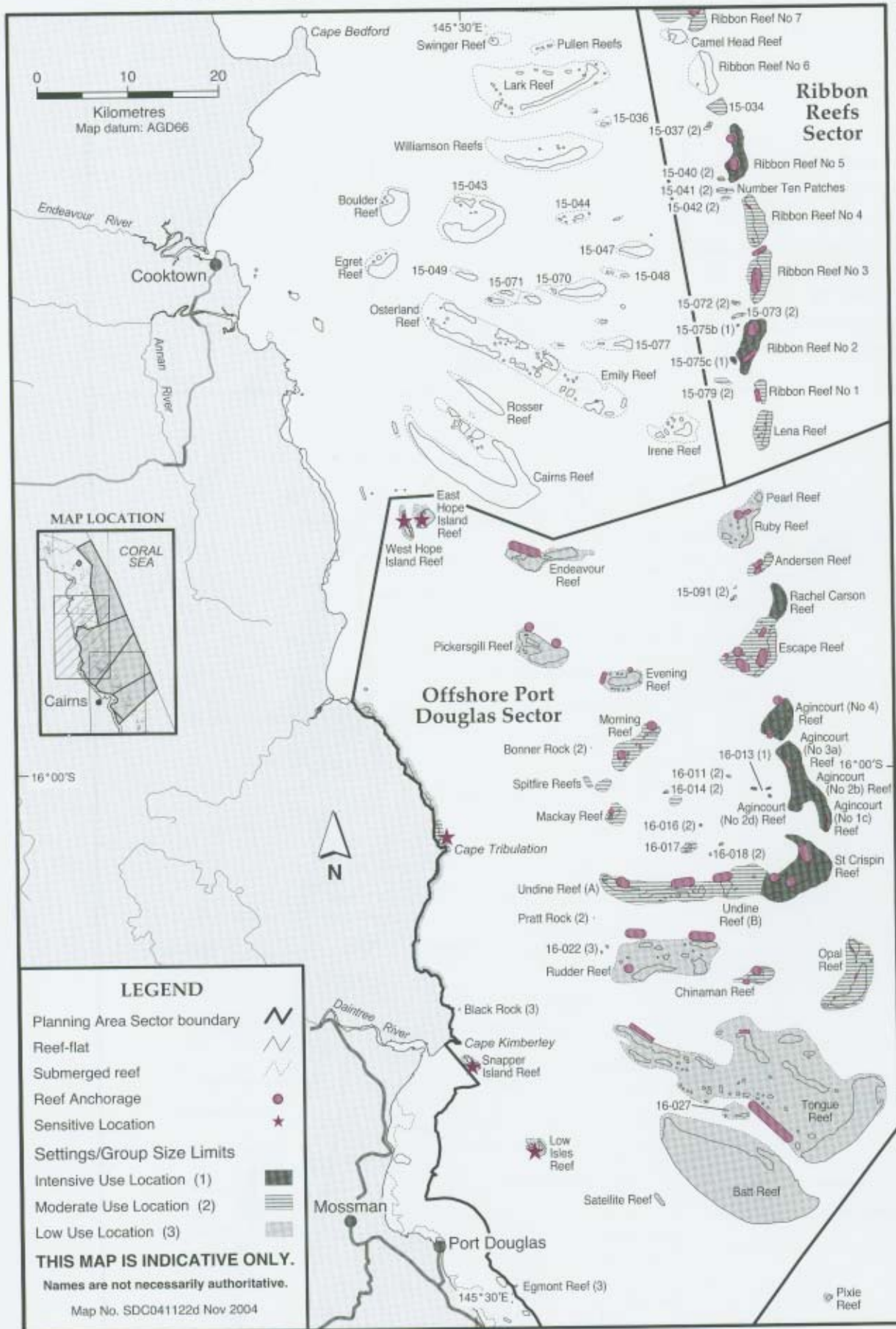
# MAP 2 CAIRNS AREA SETTINGS & REEF ANCHORAGES

(Map 1 of 3)



# MAP 3 CAIRNS AREA SETTINGS & REEF ANCHORAGES

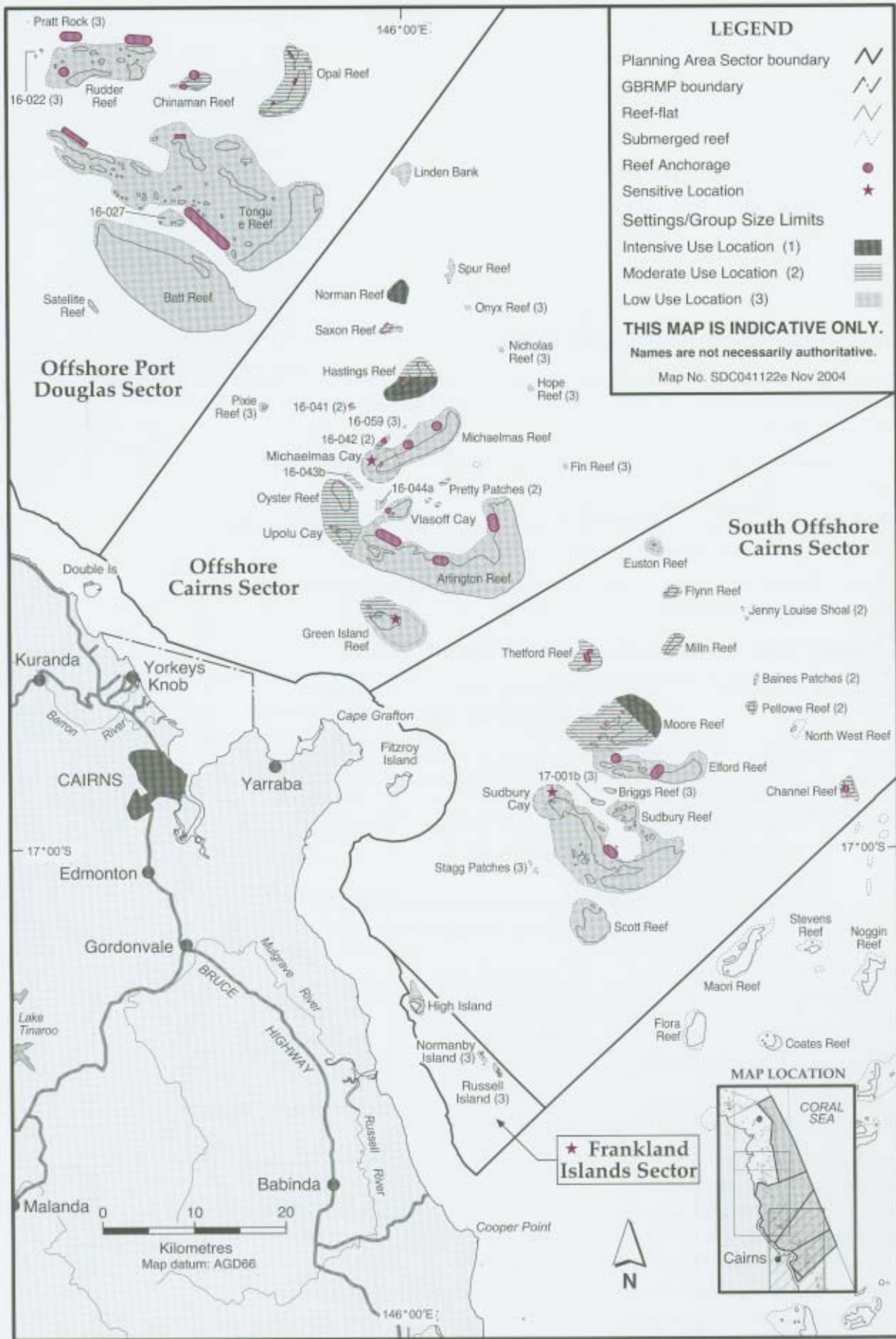
(Map 2 of 3)





# MAP 4 CAIRNS AREA SETTINGS & REEF ANCHORAGES

(Map 3 of 3)





## VISITING SENSITIVE LOCATIONS

Some Locations in the Cairns Area have been identified as having special values (nature conservation, cultural and heritage, scientific or use values) and are defined as Sensitive Locations (Table 1).

Sensitive Locations will be managed for low or moderate levels of use, with the following requirements.

### Requirements for all users

Special requirements exist for certain activities at Lizard Island Locality 1, Cod Hole Locality, Low Island Locality and Michaelmas Cay Locality

(for further information refer to the Cairns Area Plan of Management).

### Requirements for tourism operators

- Tourism operators must book to access Sensitive Locations, with daily limits on bookings (this does not apply at Lizard Island Locality 1, Cod Hole Locality) (Table 1).
- A tourism operator may not visit an individual Sensitive Location on more than 50 days a year.
- No aircraft operations are permitted in a Sensitive Location other than at the Cod Hole Locality and Lizard Island Locality 1.

**NOTE:** These limits do not apply to a tourism operator who has a relevant permission and a special endorsement or authorisation from the Authority.

**Table 1. Access limits at Sensitive Locations in the Cairns Area**

Sector	Location	Booking limit* (vessels per day) <small>(tourism program only)</small>	Special requirements <small>(applies to all users)</small>
Ribbon Reefs	Cod Hole Locality	No set limit	see Map 5
Lizard Island	Lizard Island Locality 1	No set limit	see Map 6
Offshore Port Douglas	Low Island Locality	2 vessels per day	see Map 7
	East Hope Island Reef Locality	2 vessels per day	nil
	West Hope Island Reef	1 vessel per day	nil
	Cape Tribulation Bay Locality 1	1 vessel per day	nil
	Snapper Island Reef	1 vessel per day	nil
Offshore Cairns	Michaelmas Cay Locality	1 vessel per day	see Map 8**
	Green Island Reef	4 vessels per day	nil (Map 9)
South Offshore Cairns	Sudbury Cay Locality	1 vessel per day	nil
Frankland Islands	Frankland Islands Sector	1 vessel per day	nil

\***Booking procedure** (tourism programs only)

Bookings to access Sensitive Locations may be made by contacting the Cairns Office of the Environmental Protection Agency, Queensland Parks and Wildlife Service:

Phone : BH (07) 4046 6660 AH 0417004815 Fax: (07) 4046 6643

A booking database for the Low Island Locality is available at [www.gbrmpa.gov.au](http://www.gbrmpa.gov.au)

\*\*Cairns Professional Game Fishing Association (CPGFA) may access the Association's mooring without a booking.

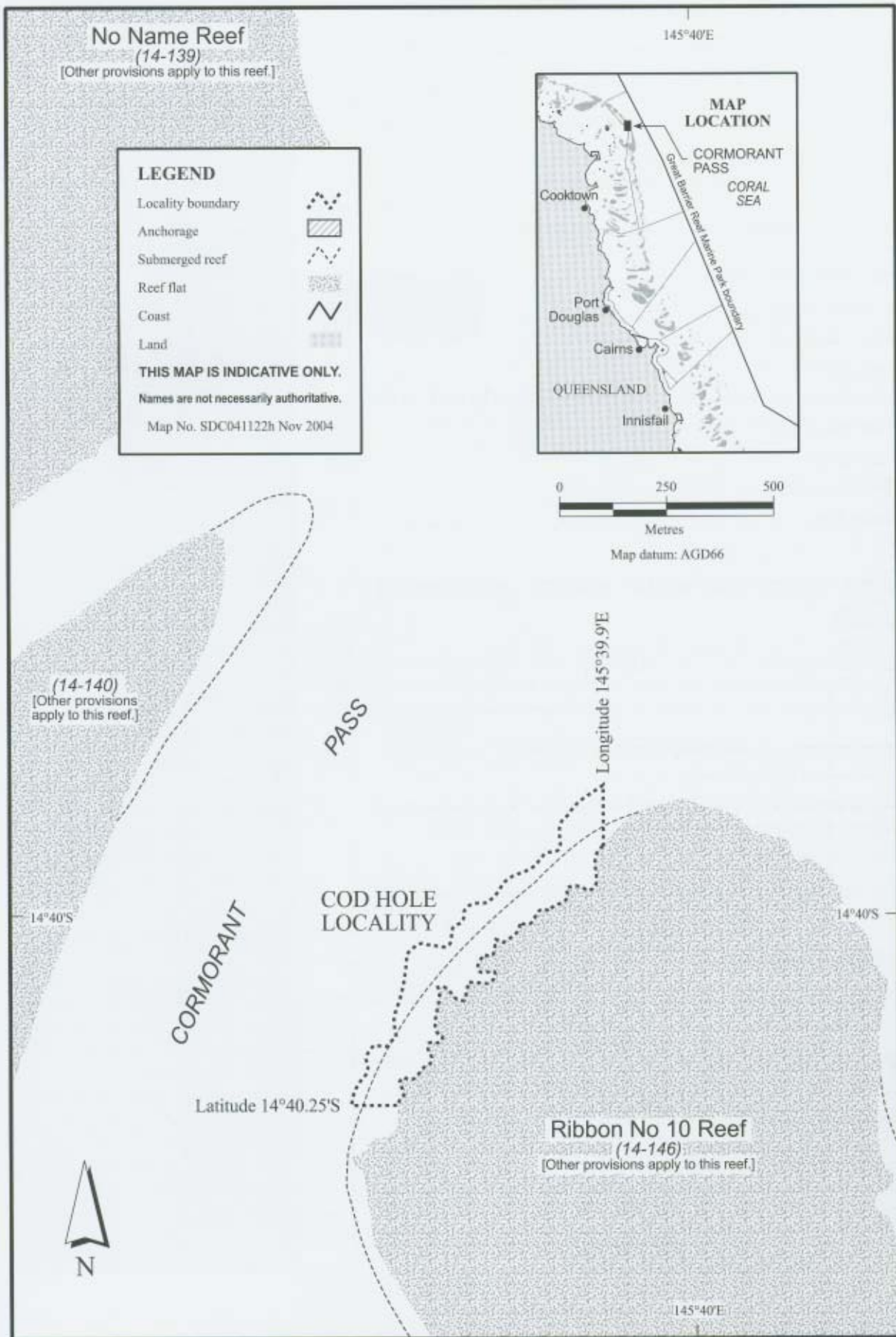
## MAP 5

### COD HOLE LOCALITY

- maximum group size of 60 people per vessel or aircraft (including crew)
- no anchoring allowed, access for vessels or aircraft via moorings only
- no mooring of vessels or aircraft to public moorings for more than four hours in any 24-hour period
- no motorised water sports or hovercraft
- limits on vessel bookings per day refer to Table 1

SEE MAP 5-9

# MAP 5 COD HOLE LOCALITY





## LIMITS ON CERTAIN ACTIVITIES

### Limits on intrusive activities at bird sites

A number of sites in the Cairns Area have been identified as important bird nesting and roosting sites. Birds are easily disturbed by noisy or intrusive activities and inappropriate visitor behaviour. These sites have generally been designated as low or moderate use settings.

- Special activity restrictions apply at Low Island Locality and at Michaelmas Cay Locality to protect nesting and roosting birds.

Take care not to disturb birds at nesting and roosting sites:

- Seabird Islet (Lizard Island);
- West Hope Island;
- Woody Islands;
- Mackay Cay;
- Undine Cay;
- Michaelmas Cay;
- Vlasoff Cay;
- Upolo Cay; and
- Sudbury Cay.

SEE MAP 7-8

### Limits on motorised water sports and use of hovercraft

Motorised water sports such as use of personal watercraft, waterskiing, and hovercraft activities can be very intrusive and may disturb other people's activities as well as birds at nesting and roosting sites.

- Motorised water sports may only be conducted outside the boundaries of all Locations.
- Personal watercraft may be used inside the boundaries of all Locations for normal transportation by the most direct reasonable route between two places.
- Hovercraft may only be operated at Lizard Island Locality 2.

### Protecting dugong

Dugong populations are under pressure from habitat loss, gill netting, hunting and boat strikes.

- Dugong must not be harassed, caught or killed in the Cairns Area.
- Limit boat speed near dugong or in shallow seagrass areas.
- Do not alarm, feed, approach, swim with or herd dugong.

## MAP 6

### LIZARD ISLAND LOCALITY 1

- maximum group size of 15 people per vessel or aircraft (including crew)
- no anchoring of vessels or aircraft more than seven metres in overall length
- no mooring of vessels or aircraft to public moorings for more than four hours in any 24-hour period
- no motorised water sports or hovercraft
- no fishing (except trolling for pelagics or bait netting for pelagics) inshore of the coastal 250 metre line, except as part of a permitted research program
- limits on vessel bookings per day refer to Table 1.

### LIZARD ISLAND LOCALITY 2

- no limit on group size
- no limit on size of vessel or aircraft that may anchor
- anchoring is allowed within 50 metres of moorings
- no motorised water sports

### LIZARD ISLAND LOCALITY 3

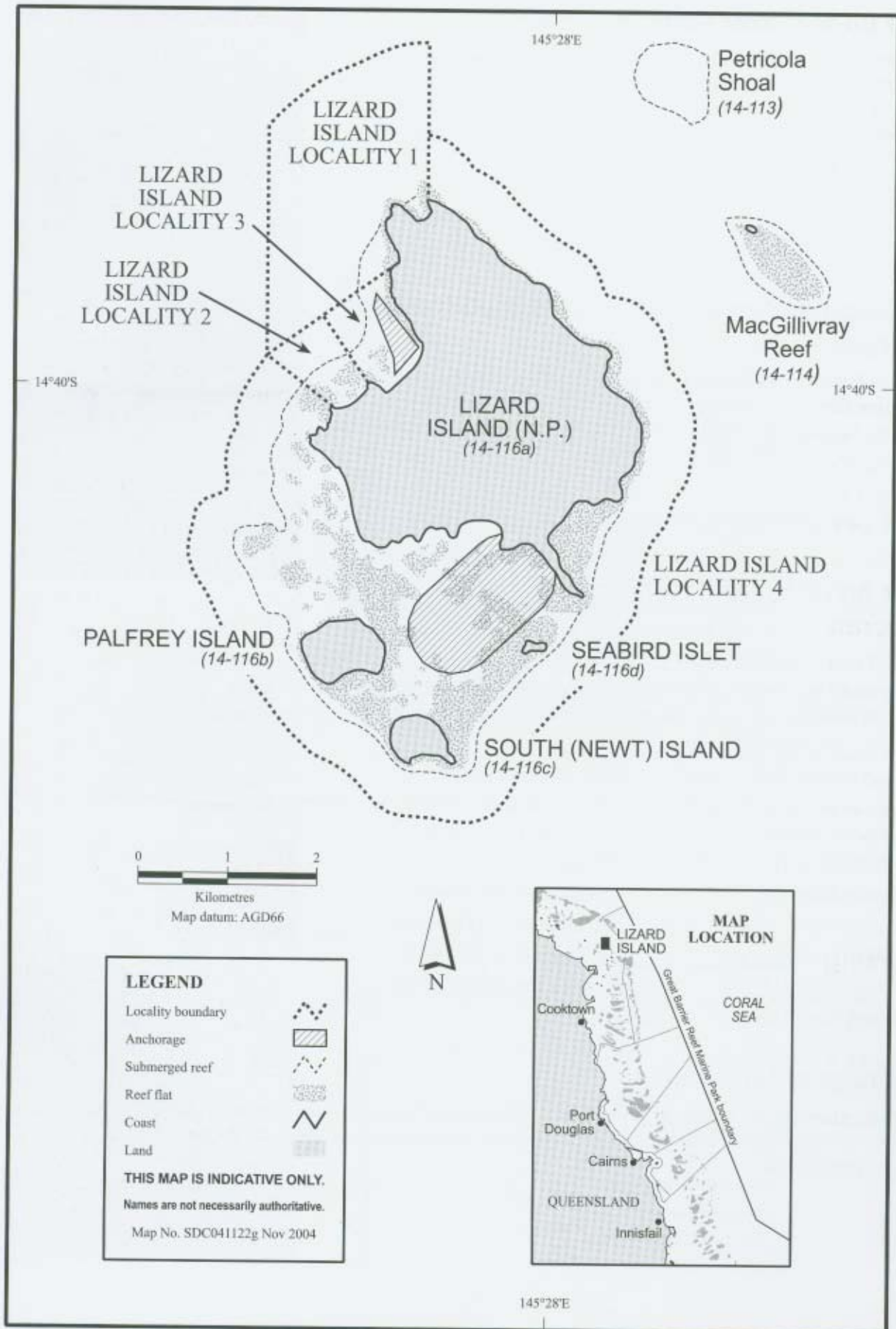
- no limit on group size
- no limit on size of vessel or aircraft that may anchor
- anchoring is allowed within 50 metres of moorings
- no motorised water sports or hovercraft.

### LIZARD ISLAND LOCALITY 4

- maximum group size of 15 people per vessel or aircraft (including crew), unless in a northerly wind
- no anchoring of vessels or aircraft more than 35 metres in overall length inside the reef anchorage
- 35-70 metre vessels may anchor in a northerly wind according to an approved anchoring strategy
- no motorised water sports or hovercraft



# MAP 6 LIZARD ISLAND LOCALITIES



# MANAGING MOORINGS

## Use of public moorings

A number of public moorings (blue in colour) have been installed – two at the Cod Hole Locality, two at the Lizard Island Locality 1, and one at Lizard Island Locality 3 – for use by vessels and aircraft of the appropriate size (size limits are stated on the mooring). In addition to size limits, use of public moorings is subject to the following restriction.

- A vessel or aircraft must not be attached to a public mooring for more than four hours in any 24-hour period.

## Installation and operation of permitted (private) moorings

Over 300 permitted moorings have been installed at reefs in the Cairns Area to enable tourism operators to access sites regularly without damaging the reef. In order to easily identify these moorings the buoys will be standardised.

## Use of permitted moorings

The number of permitted moorings in the Cairns Area has been limited to provide a balance of private and public use. Anchoring is not allowed within a 50 metre radius of permitted moorings to reduce anchor damage and to encourage tourism operators to exercise responsibility for managing use of the moorings.

Setting group size limits apply to tourist programs operating to moorings. The following Locations allow for the mooring of vessels operating as a tourist program, carrying up to 100 people:

Andersen Reef (15-090)

Breaking Patches Reef (16-042)

Channel Reef (16-075)

Escape Reef (15-094)

Moore Reef Locality 2

Opal Reef (16-025)

Oyster Reef (16-043)

Ribbon Reef No. 9 (14-154)

Ribbon Reef No. 3 (15-050)

Saxon Reef (16-032)

Thetford Reef (16-068)

Unnamed reef (14-153)

Unnamed reef (16-011)

Unnamed reef (16-016)

Unnamed reef (16-018a)

Unnamed reef (16-018b)

Upolu Cay Reef (16-046)

## Relocation of facilities

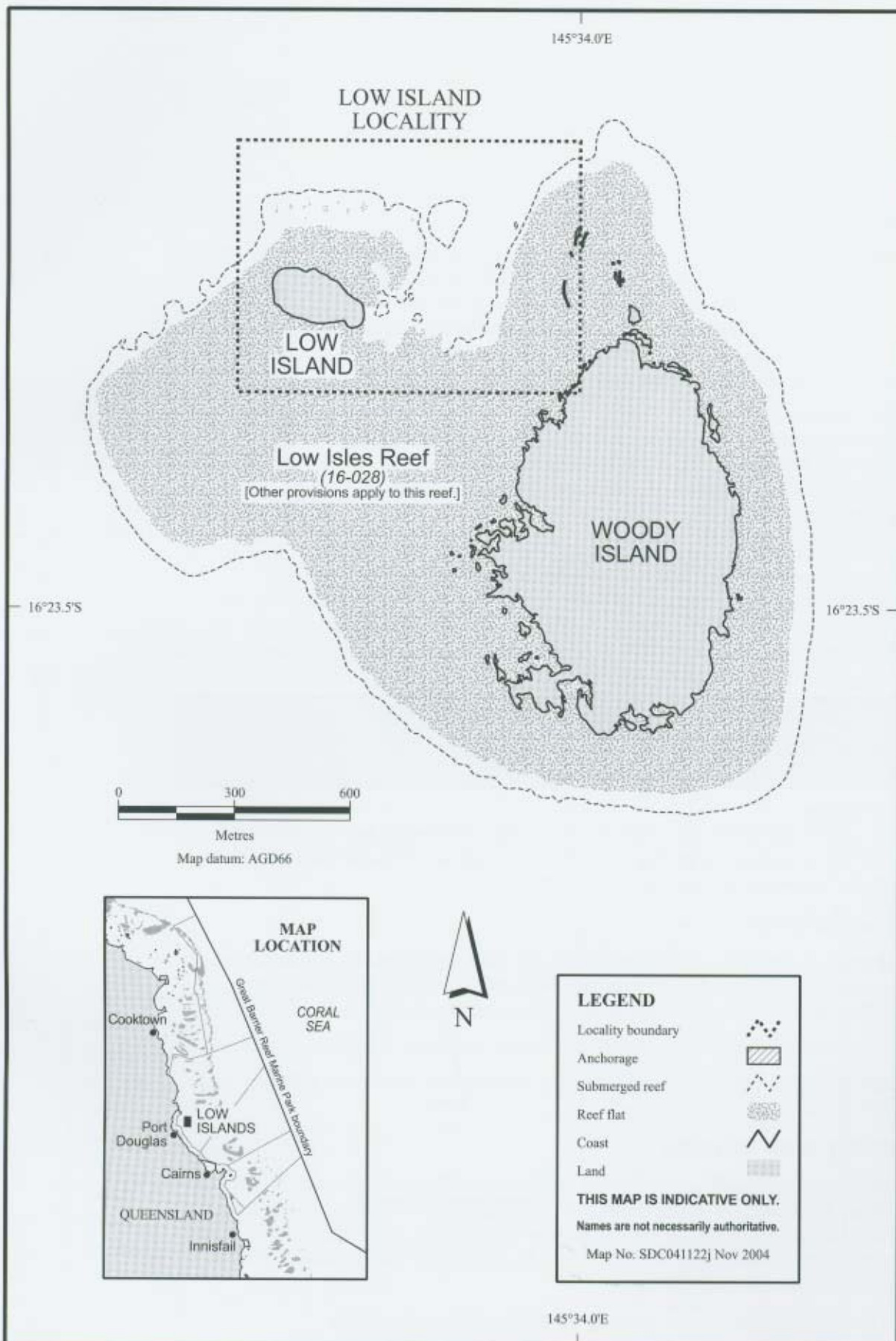
Tourist facilities may be temporarily relocated within the Planning Area in the event of a severe environmental incident, subject to certain restrictions including obtaining a relevant permission.

## MAP 7

### LOW ISLAND LOCALITY

- maximum group size of 15 people per vessel or aircraft (including crew)
- no anchoring of vessels or aircraft more than 35 metres in overall length
- anchoring is allowed within 50 metres of moorings
- anchoring is allowed within 200 metres of pontoons
- no motorised water sports or hovercraft
- no island access between sunset and sunrise
- no waste discharge, including greywater and sewage
- vessel or aircraft speed limit of 6 knots
- limits on vessel bookings per day refer to Table 1
- no hull scraping or painting

# MAP 7 LOW ISLAND LOCALITY





## TOURISM MANAGEMENT

The Plan manages tourism growth within the Cairns Area of the Great Barrier Reef Marine Park.

### Permit management

All-year access to the Area is only permitted if using a mooring or a pontoon, or if operations are *eligible*. Otherwise access is generally limited to 50 days a year with a booking.

*NOTE: Special provisions apply to Sensitive Locations (refer to the Cairns Area Plan of Management).*

The amended Plan allows up to an additional 20 new all-year access permits to be granted once an appropriate allocation mechanism has been developed. Five of the new permissions are reserved for traditional inhabitants with traditional affiliations with the Planning Area. Five others will be allocated to tourism operations predominantly from the Cooktown/Bloomfield area.

### Eligible operations

Those operations that are eligible for anchoring access to the Cairns Area all year are limited to 50 days anchoring access a year to any specific Location. Some of these operations may be eligible for an exemption to certain Locations.

### Other tourism operations

Operations that are only permitted 50 days access to the Area (by anchoring) generally must book to the Area. The number of such vessels that may book to the area is limited to 40 vessels per day. Some tourism operations may be eligible for exemption from the booking requirement. Regular access to moorings and pontoons is permitted without a booking.

*Booking to access the Cairns Area may be made by contacting the Cairns office of the Queensland Parks and Wildlife Service on BH (07) 4046 6660 (8am-4.30pm), AH Mobile 0417 004 815 (7-8am and 4.30-9pm), Fax: (07) 4046 6643.*

### New innovations

The Plan provides the Authority with the flexibility to consider new innovations within the Planning Area. Approval of such operations will remain subject to the normal permit assessment process.

### Whale watching

Several species of migratory whale, including the rare dwarf minke whale, breed in north Queensland waters between July and September. Whales are a vulnerable species in the Great Barrier Reef and may be disturbed by human activities.

- Nine permissions have been granted for whale watching activities.
- No additional permits for whale watching by tourism operations will be granted in the Area.

### Swimming-with-whales

Populations of dwarf minke whales occur off northern Queensland, most often seen in the Ribbon Reefs Sectors in June and July although present in the Marine Park from about May to October each year. These whales appear to be attracted to boats and swimmers, snorkellers and scuba divers. These whales may be disturbed by inappropriate human activities.

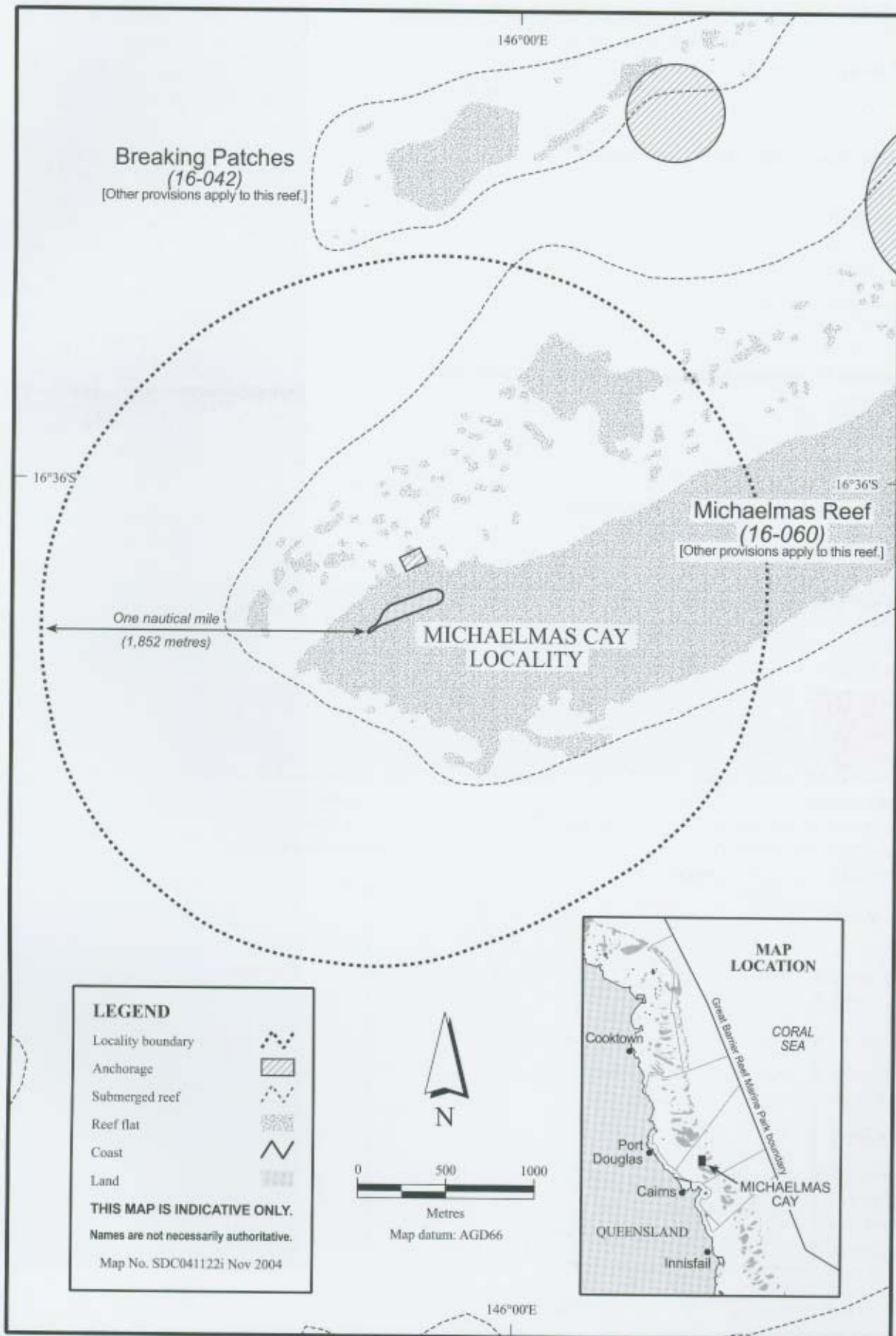
- Nine permissions have been granted for swimming with whales.
- No additional permits for swimming with whales will be granted in the area.

## MAP 8

### MICHAELMAS CAY LOCALITY

- maximum group size of 15 people per vessel or aircraft (including crew)
- no anchoring of vessels more than 35 metres in overall length
- no anchoring within 50 metres of moorings
- vessel or aircraft speed limit of six knots
- no operation of horns, loud speakers or sirens
- no aircraft to fly below 3000 feet
- no motorised water sports
- limits on vessel bookings per day refer to Table 1

# MAP 8 MICHAELMAS CAY LOCALITY





## NEED MORE INFORMATION?

For additional information or to clarify points from this booklet, please consult the Cairns Area Plan of Management (*Reprinted as in force in December 2004, includes Amendment No.1 2004*). If you have any further enquiries concerning the Plan please contact either of the following organisations:

### Great Barrier Reef Marine Park Authority

PO Box 1379  
Townsville 4810  
Phone: (07) 4750 0700  
Fax: (07) 4772 6093

[www.gbrmpa.gov.au](http://www.gbrmpa.gov.au)

### Environmental Protection Agency – Queensland Parks and Wildlife Service

PO Box 2066  
Cairns 4870  
Phone: (07) 4046 6601  
Fax: (07) 4046 6604

**Report pollution incidents, marine animal strandings and wildlife issues to the EPA Hotline: 1300 130 372  
1300 130 EPA**

## MAP 9

### GREEN ISLAND REEF

#### LOCALITY 1

- maximum group size of 60 people per vessel or aircraft (including crew)
- no anchoring of vessels or aircraft more than 35 metres in overall length
- anchoring is allowed within 50 metres of moorings
- no motorised water sports
- limits on vessel bookings per day refer to Table 1.

### GREEN ISLAND REEF

#### LOCALITY 2

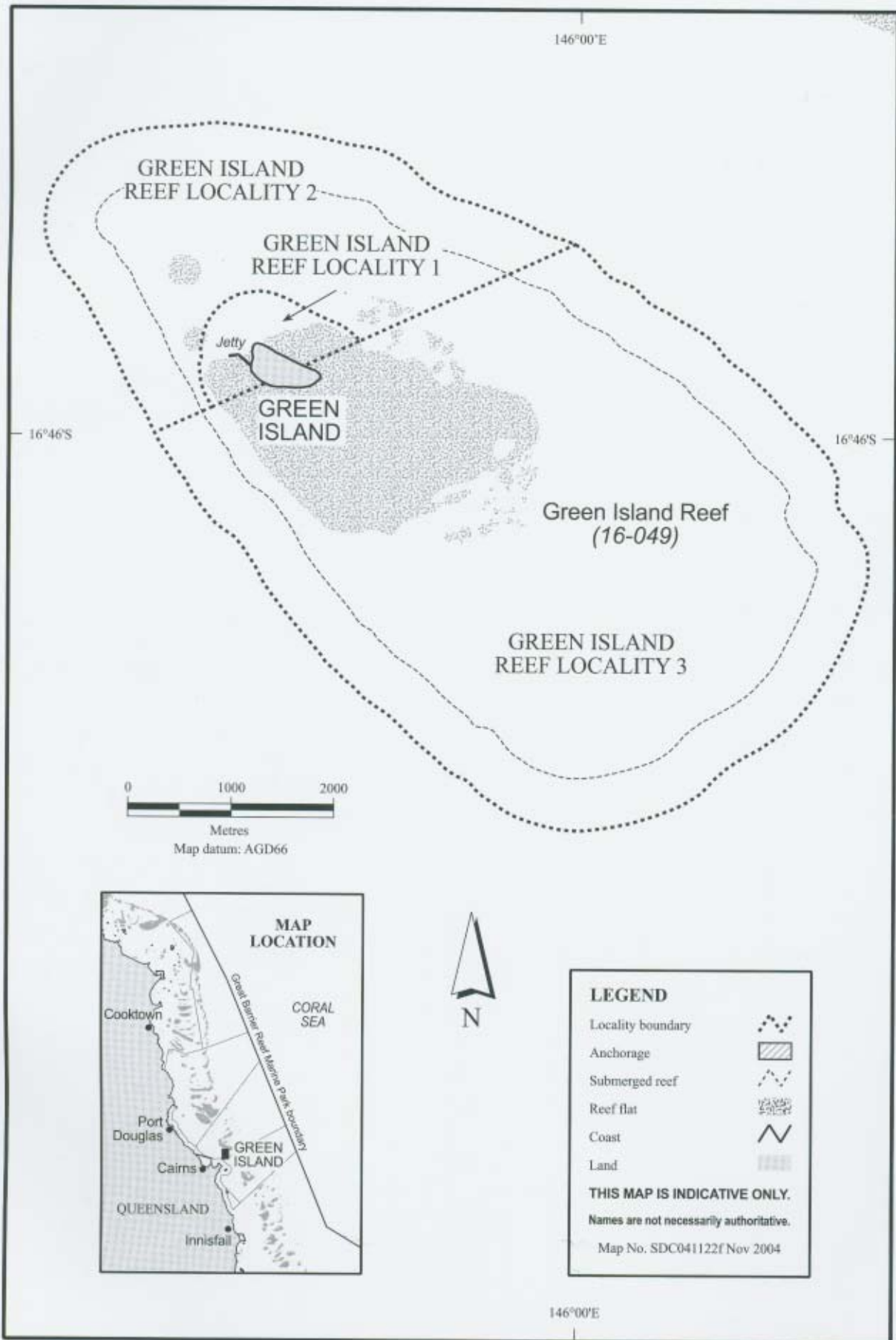
- maximum group size of 60 people per vessel or aircraft (including crew)
- no anchoring of vessels or aircraft more than 35 metres in overall length
- no anchoring within 50 metres of moorings
- no motorised water sports
- limits on vessel bookings per day refer to Table 1.

### GREEN ISLAND REEF

#### LOCALITY 3

- maximum group size of 15 people per vessel or aircraft (including crew)
- no anchoring of vessels or aircraft more than 35 metres in overall length
- no motorised water sports
- limits on vessel bookings per day refer to Table 1

# MAP 9 GREEN ISLAND REEF LOCALITIES







**Australian Government**

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Marine Park Authority**

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