

Great Barrier Reef Marine Park

# CAIRNS AREA

Plan of Management



A guide to the  
Cairns Area Plan  
of Management

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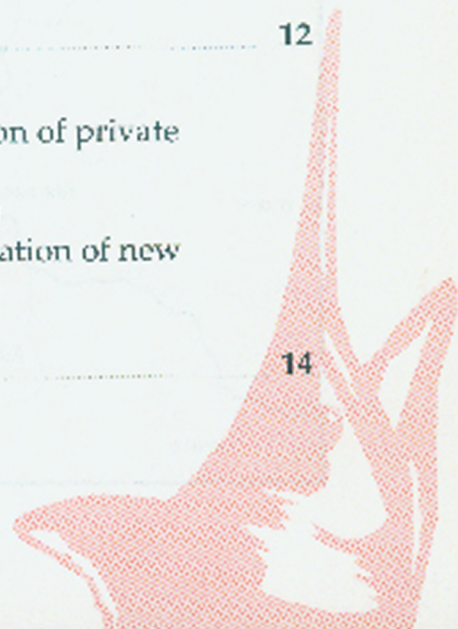
 GREAT BARRIER REEF  
MARINE PARK AUTHORITY



*This booklet explains the key points of the Cairns Area Plan of Management. This includes restrictions which will apply to all users of the Cairns Area on 1 July 1999 (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 this booklet before visiting the Cairns Area of the Great Barrier Reef Marine Park.*

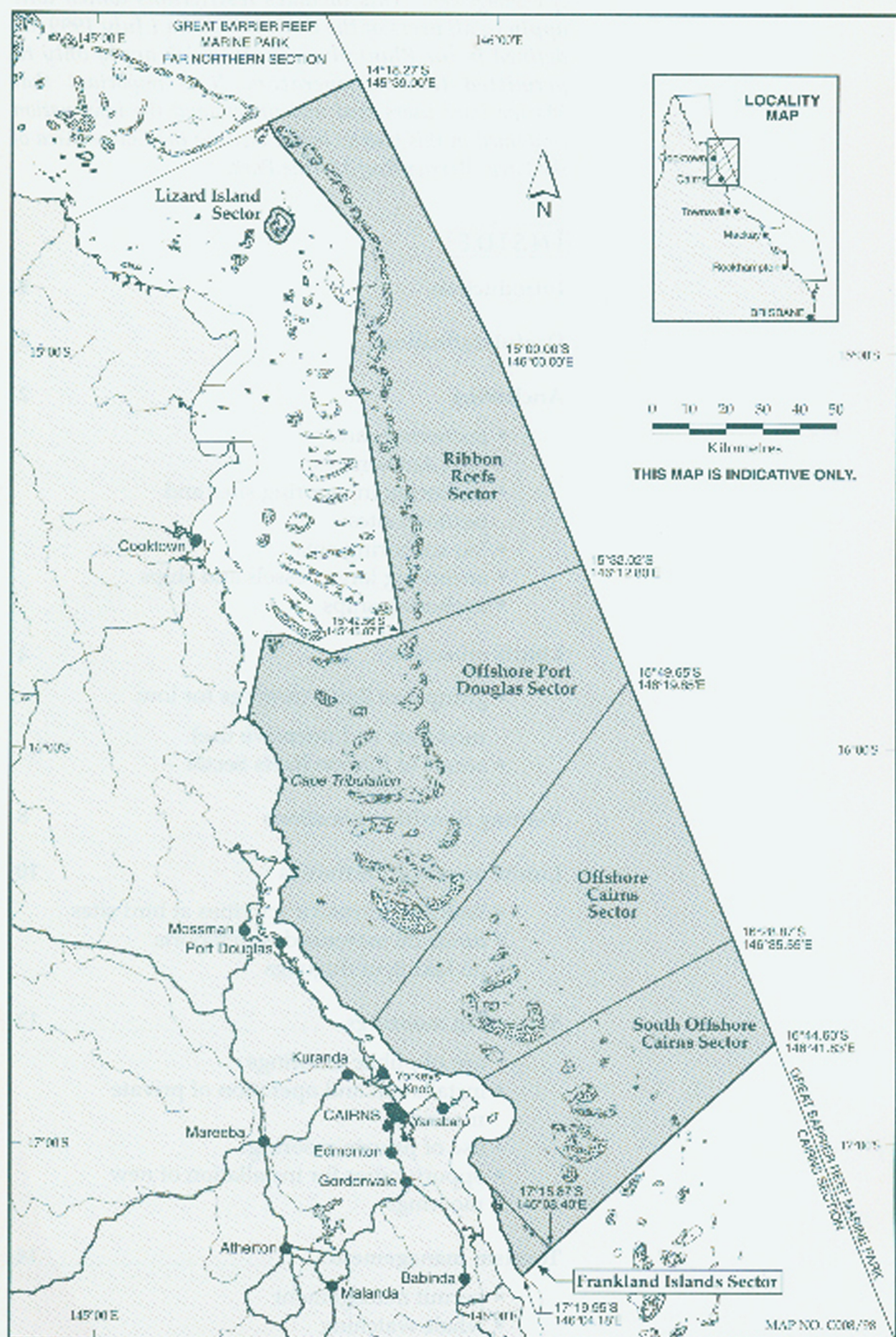
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MAP 1. THE CAIRNS AREA





## INTRODUCTION

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The Cairns Area Plan of Management was released by the Great Barrier Reef Marine Park Authority in June 1998 to provide new strategies for protecting values of the offshore areas from Cairns and Port Douglas, the Ribbon Reefs, Lizard Island and the Frankland Islands.

The area includes some of the most spectacular reefs in the world, and abundant wildlife including dugongs, whales, dolphins, turtles and seabirds. These natural attractions are the focus of a rapidly expanding tourism industry which accounts for over 60% of the total annual tourism visitation to the Great Barrier Reef Marine Park.

As visitor numbers to the Cairns Area have increased, so has the need for a review of existing management. The Cairns Area Plan of Management introduces some new limits on use of the Area, particularly in relation to anchoring, and on access to sites. These strategies are additional to the Zoning Plan provisions. They will ensure ongoing protection of natural, cultural and scientific values, and will provide future opportunities for a range of uses.



## USEFUL DEFINITIONS

SEE MAP 1

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
- Frankland Islands Sector.

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

## 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. Corals are easily damaged by careless anchoring. The Plan introduces measures to protect the Cairns reefs from future damage.

### Anchoring care

- It is an offence to intentionally, recklessly or negligently damage coral.
- Take care to avoid damage to coral:
  - anchor in sand wherever possible;
  - use a reef pick appropriate to the size of the vessel;
  - where possible anchor in a designated Reef Anchorage (see below).

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 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 MAPS 2-4

- Reef Anchorages have been defined:
  - to encourage the use of places that are least likely to cause damage to coral;
  - to provide some places where access will not be restricted by the presence of moorings.

Where possible, anchor in the designated Reef Anchorages.



\* NOTE: Maps are indicative only. Reef Anchorages are described in Schedule 8 of the Plan. Location maps showing Reef Anchorages and permitted moorings in more detail are available from the Authority.

#### **Anchoring in mooring sites or pontoon sites**

No anchoring will be allowed around mooring and pontoon sites, 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.
  - within a 200-metre radius of a pontoon.

This restriction does 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, Green Island Reef Locality 1.

#### **'No anchoring area'**

SEE MAP 5

A 'no anchoring area' has been defined at the Cod Hole (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).

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

SEE MAPS 2–5

- Large vessels must only be anchored in the following Locations in the Cairns 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)

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

SEE MAPS 2–5

- Ships must only be anchored in the following Locations in the Cairns Area:
  - Lizard Island Locality 2
  - Lizard Island Locality 3
  - Ribbon Reef No. 5 (15-038)
  - Ribbon Reef No. 2 (15-075)

NOTE: Large vessels and ships may also be anchored outside defined Locations in the Area unless otherwise restricted in a permit.



## LIMITS ON ACCESS

SIP 1995 2-4

**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, with limits on group sizes which 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.

- 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.*

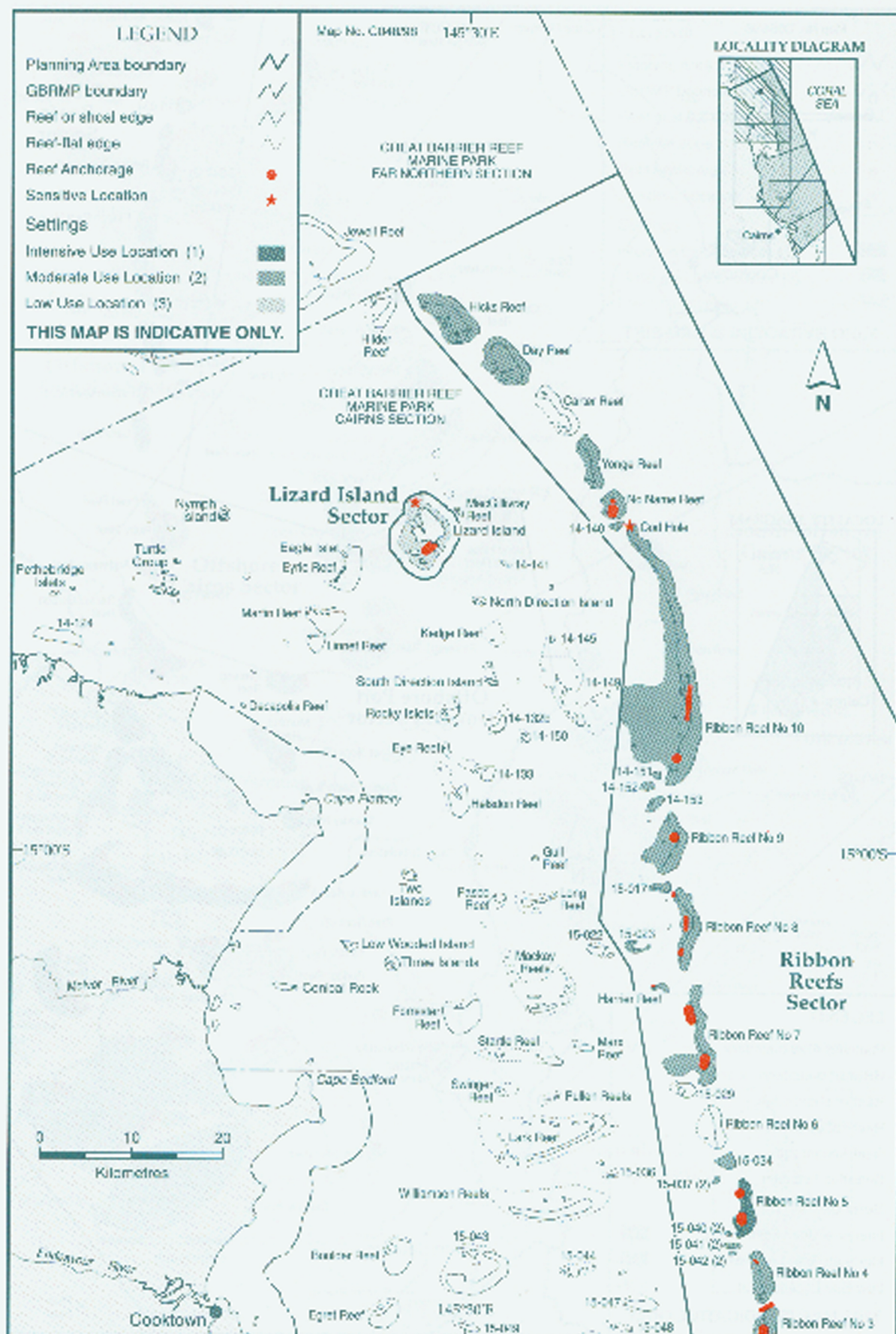
- to a vessel or aircraft if it is in transit through the Location by the most direct route
- to a permitted tourist operator who has a special endorsement from the Authority
- to a vessel or aircraft operating to a pontoon, or a mooring at a pontoon site (other than at Lure Island Locality)
- to a traditional inhabitant conducting non-commercial traditional activities other than hunting and collecting.

### Access to Ribbon Reefs Sector

- Access to a Location in the Ribbon Reefs Sector will be limited to no more than 30 days in any period of 60 days, unless in transit.



MAP 2. CAIRNS AREA SETTINGS & REEF ANCHORAGES (MAP 1 OF 3)

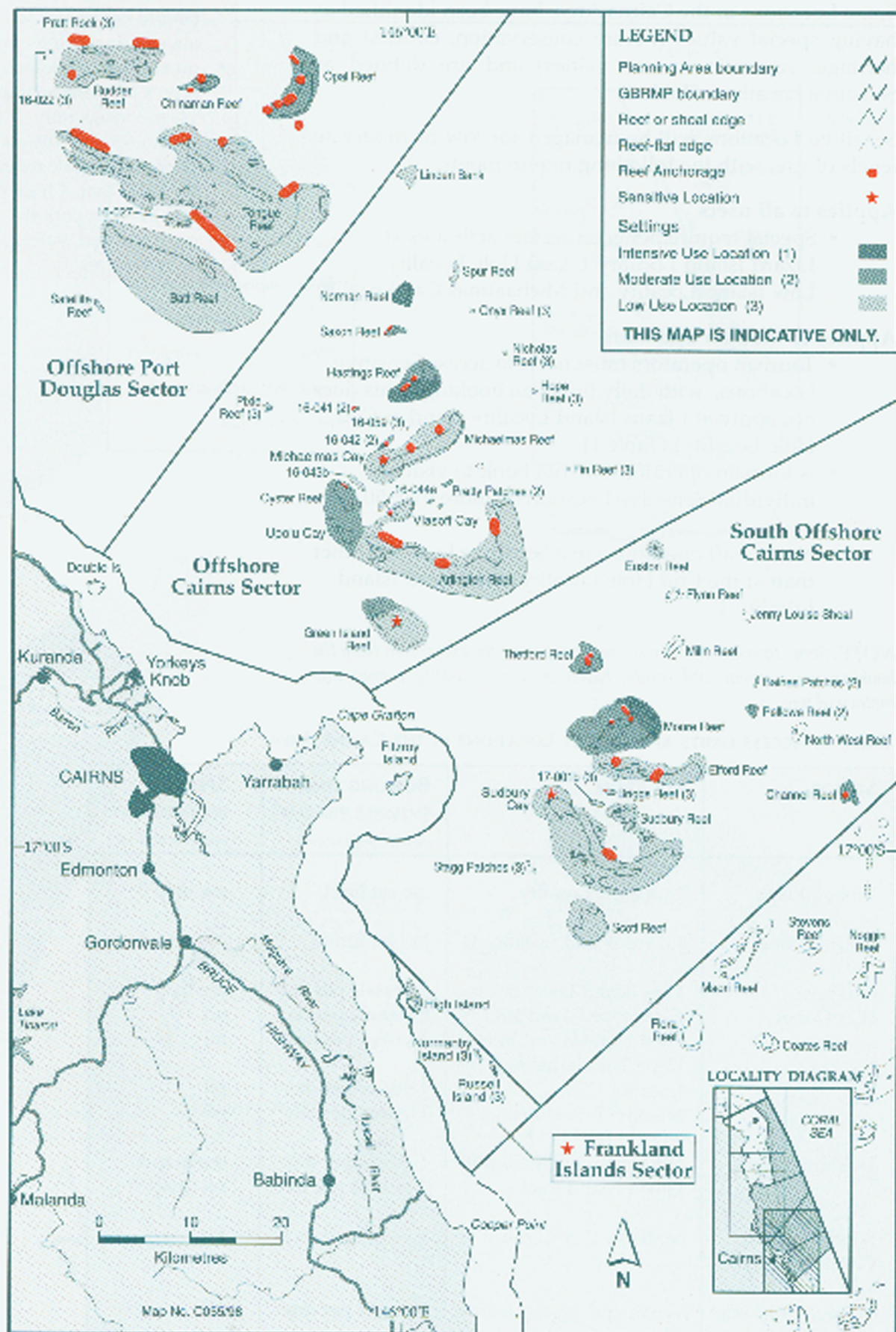








MAP 4. CAIRNS AREA SETTINGS & REEF ANCHORAGES (MAP 3 OF 3)





## VISITING SENSITIVE LOCATIONS

See maps 5-9

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:

### Applies to all users

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

### Applies to tourism operators

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

*NOTE: Some tourism operations may be eligible for exemption from the booking requirement and limits, based on their existing permit and history of use.*

TABLE 1. ACCESS LIMITS AT SENSITIVE LOCATIONS IN THE CAIRNS AREA

SECTOR	LOCATION	BOOKING LIMIT * (VESSELS PER DAY) <small>(tourism programs only)</small>	SPECIAL REQUIREMENTS <small>(apply to all users)</small>
Ribbon Reels	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	2 vessels per day	nil
	West Hope Island Reef, Cape Tribulation Bay	1 vessel per day	nil
	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 Queensland Department of Environment and Heritage:

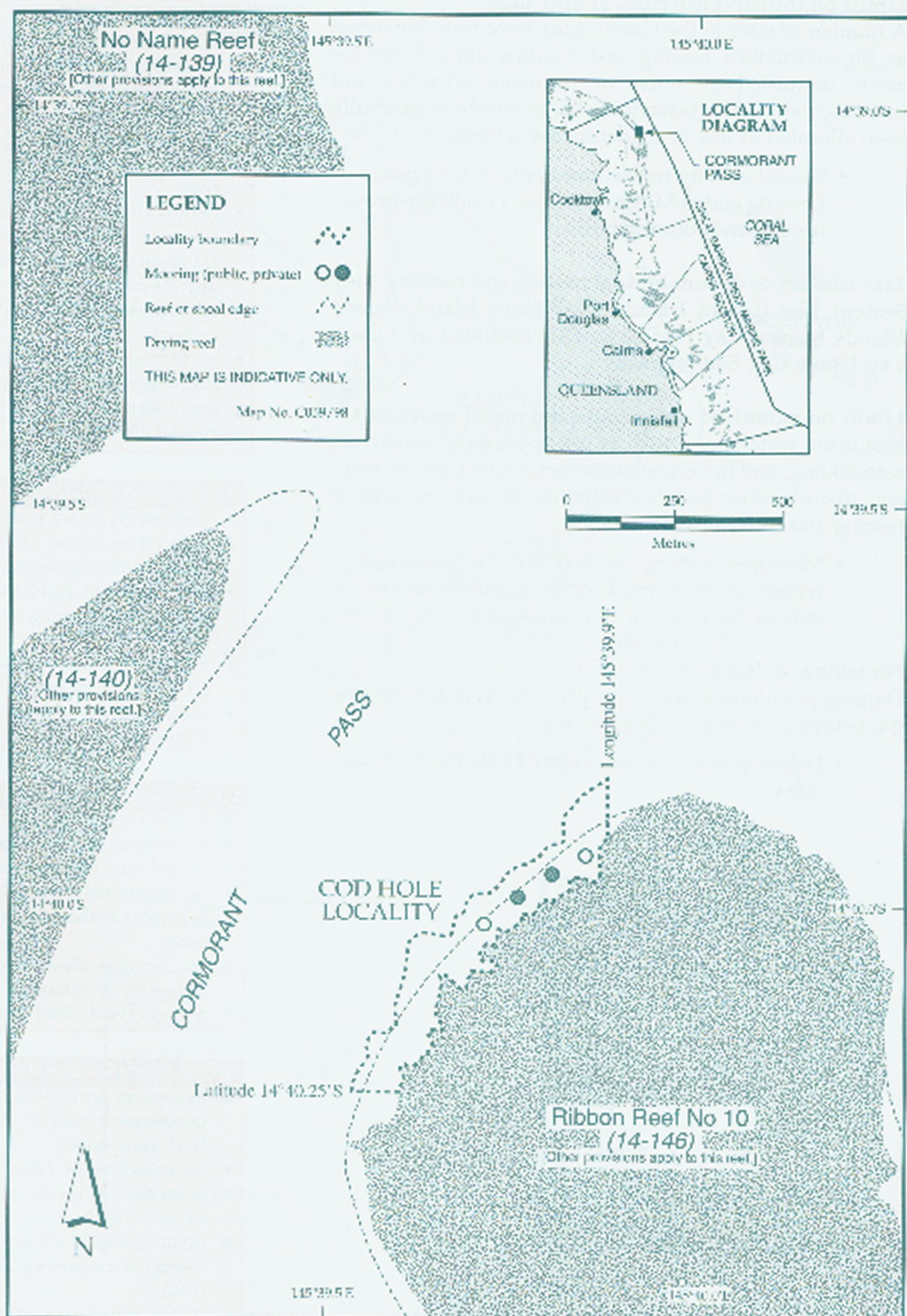
PHONE: BH (07) 4052 3013, AH (07) 4052 3096

TAX: (07) 4052 3016

### COD HOLE LOCALITY - MAP 5.

- 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 4 hours in any 24-hour period
- no motorised watersports or hovercraft







## LIMITS ON CERTAIN ACTIVITIES

SEE MAPS 7 & 8

### 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 allocated 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, Upolu Cay, Sudbury Cay.

### Limits on motorised watersports and use of hovercraft

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

- Motorised watersports may only be conducted within Lizard Island Locality 2, and otherwise outside the boundaries of all other Locations.

### No taking of dugongs

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

- Dugongs must not be caught or killed in the Cairns Area.

### LIZARD ISLAND LOCALITY 1 – MAP 6.

- maximum group size of 15 people per vessel or aircraft (including crew)
- no anchoring of vessels or aircraft more than 7 metres in overall length
- no intentional, reckless, negligent anchoring on coral
- no mooring of vessels or aircraft to public moorings for more than 4 hours in any 24-hour period
- no motorised watersports or hovercraft
- no fishing (except trolling for pelagics or bait netting for pelagics) inshore of the coastal 250 metre line

### LIZARD ISLAND LOCALITY 2 – MAP 6.

- no limit on group size
- no limit on size of vessel or aircraft that may anchor
- no intentional, reckless, negligent anchoring on coral
- anchoring is allowed within 50 metres of moorings
- motorised watersports are allowed

### LIZARD ISLAND LOCALITY 3 – MAP 6.

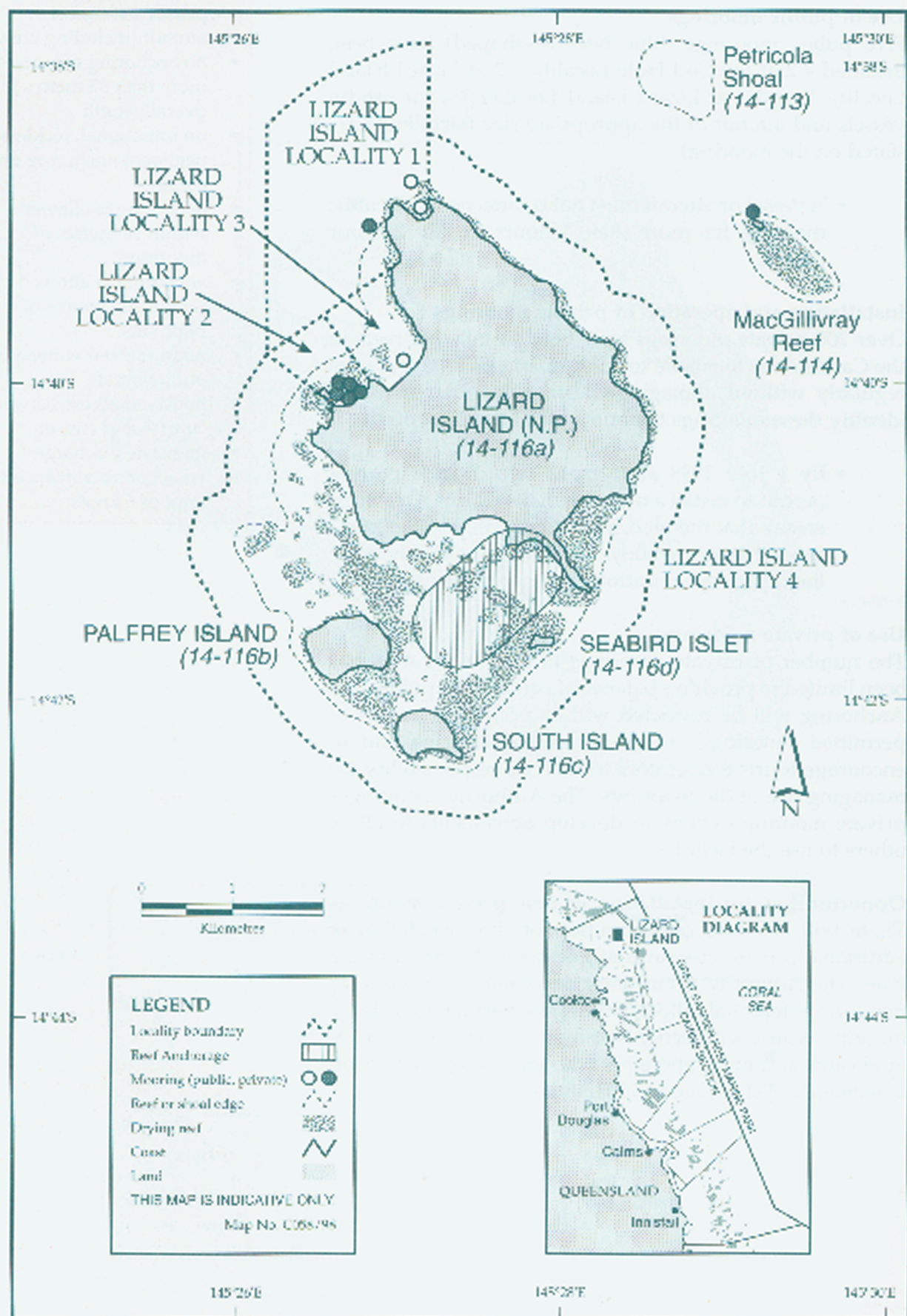
- no limit on group size
- no limit on size of vessel or aircraft that may anchor
- no intentional, reckless, negligent anchoring on coral
- anchoring is allowed within 50 metres of moorings
- no motorised watersports

### LIZARD ISLAND LOCALITY 4 – MAP 6.

- maximum group size of 15 people per vessel or aircraft (including crew)
- no anchoring of vessels more than 35 metres in overall length
- no intentional, reckless, negligent anchoring on coral
- no motorised watersports or hovercraft



MAP 6. LIZARD ISLAND LOCALITIES





## MANAGING MOORINGS

SUL MAPS 5-6

### Use of public moorings

Five public moorings (blue beehive-shaped) have been installed – 2 at the Cod Hole Locality – 2 at Lizard Island Locality 1, and 1 at Lizard Island Locality 3 – for use by vessels and aircraft of the appropriate size (size limits are stated on the mooring).

- A vessel or aircraft must not be attached to a public mooring for more than 4 hours in any 24-hour period.

### Installation and operation of private moorings

Over 200 private 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.

- By 1 July 1999 all persons who hold a current permit to install a mooring in the Cairns Area must ensure that the mooring is marked by a standard type of mooring buoy. The buoy is to visibly state the design specifications and permit number.

### Use of private moorings

The number of private moorings in the Cairns Area has been limited to provide a balance of private and public use. Anchoring will be restricted 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. The Authority encourages private mooring owners to develop agreements to allow others to use the facilities.

### Opportunities for installation of new private moorings

There will be some opportunities for the installation of additional private moorings at locations identified in the Plan. The Authority is currently developing a process for fair, but preferential allocation of new permits to install a mooring which will recognise previous access patterns of applicants and those operators who are willing to develop agreements to share mooring facilities.

### LOW ISLAND LOCALITY – MAP 7.

- maximum group size of 15 people per vessel or aircraft (including crew)
- no anchoring of vessels more than 35 metres in overall length
- no intentional, reckless, negligent anchoring on coral
- anchoring is allowed within 50 metres of moorings
- anchoring is allowed within 200 metres of pontoons
- no motorised watersports or hovercraft
- no island access between sunrise and sunset
- no waste discharge
- vessel or aircraft speed limit of 6 knots







## TOURISM MANAGEMENT

The rapid growth in use of the Cairns Area necessitates some changes to tourism management. The Plan therefore limits tourism growth within the Cairns Area of the Great Barrier Reef Marine Park except for operations using private moorings or pontoons. It also introduces a new permit structure, which will be phased in as part of implementing the Plan.

### Permit management

The new permit categories will generally limit tourism operations to 50 days a year access to the Area. All-year access to the Area will only be permitted if using a mooring or a pontoon or if operations are *eligible*.

*Note: Special provisions apply to Sensitive Locations (refer page 8)*

### Eligible operations

Those operations that are eligible for anchoring access to the Cairns Area all year will be 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), must generally book to the Area. The number of such vessels that may book to access the area will be limited to 40 vessels per day. Some tourism operations may be eligible for exemption from the booking requirement. Regular access to moorings and pontoons will be permitted without a booking.

*Marine Park tourism operators who have current permits to operate in the Cairns Area will be kept informed of the transition process to new permit types through Information Bulletins.*

### Whale watching

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

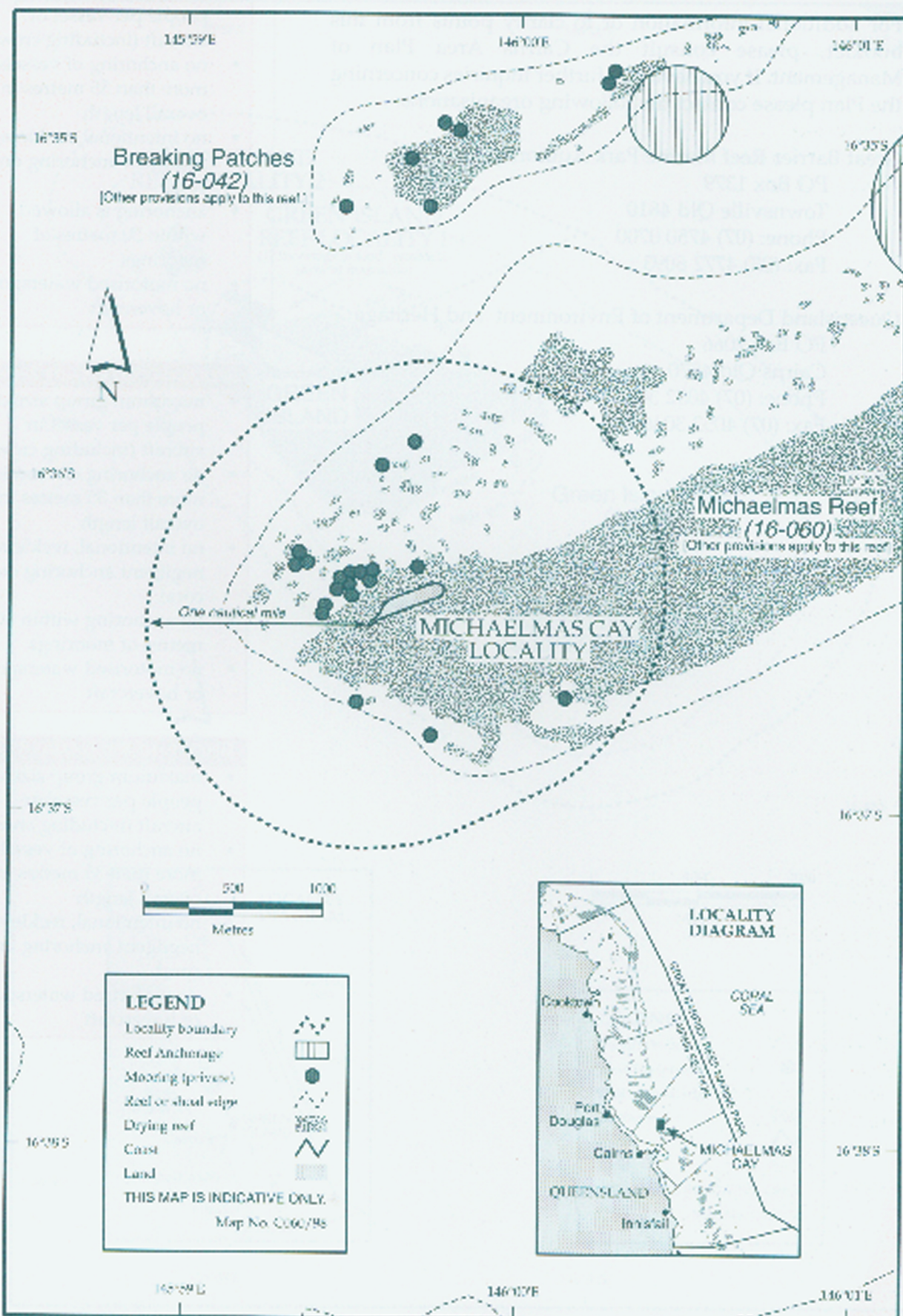
- Permits for whale watching will only be issued for legitimate research projects.
- No additional permits for tourism operations will be granted in the Area.

## MICHAELMAS CAY LOCALITY – MAP 8.

- maximum group size of 15 people per vessel or aircraft (including crew)
- no anchoring of vessels more than 35 metres in overall length
- no intentional, reckless, negligent anchoring on coral
- no anchoring within 50 metres of moorings
- vessel or aircraft speed limit of 6 knots
- no operation of horns, loud speakers or sirens
- no motorised watersports or hovercraft



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. If you have any further inquiries concerning the Plan please contact the following organisations:

Great Barrier Reef Marine Park Authority  
PO Box 1379  
Townsville Qld 4810  
Phone: (07) 4750 0700  
Fax: (07) 4772 6093

Queensland Department of Environment and Heritage  
PO Box 2066  
Cairns Qld 4870  
Phone: (07) 4052 3043  
Fax: (07) 4052 3046

### GREEN ISLAND REEF LOCALITY 1 – MAP 9

- maximum group size of 60 people per vessel or aircraft (including crew)
- no anchoring of vessels more than 35 metres in overall length
- no intentional, reckless, negligent anchoring on coral
- anchoring is allowed within 50 metres of moorings
- no motorised watersports or hovercraft

### GREEN ISLAND REEF LOCALITY 2 – MAP 9

- maximum group size of 60 people per vessel or aircraft (including crew)
- no anchoring of vessels more than 35 metres in overall length
- no intentional, reckless, negligent anchoring on coral
- no anchoring within 50 metres of moorings
- no motorised watersports or hovercraft

### GREEN ISLAND REEF LOCALITY 3 – MAP 9

- maximum group size of 15 people per vessel or aircraft (including crew)
- no anchoring of vessels more than 35 metres in overall length
- no intentional, reckless, negligent anchoring on coral
- no motorised watersports or hovercraft



MAP 9. GREEN ISLAND REEF LOCALITIES

