

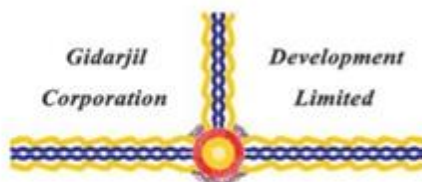
SOUTHERN PLAN OF MANAGEMENT STAGE 1 – PUBLIC CONSULTATION 2024 IN BRIEF



Woppaburra
TUMRA



Darumbal



Gidarjil
Corporation

Development
Limited

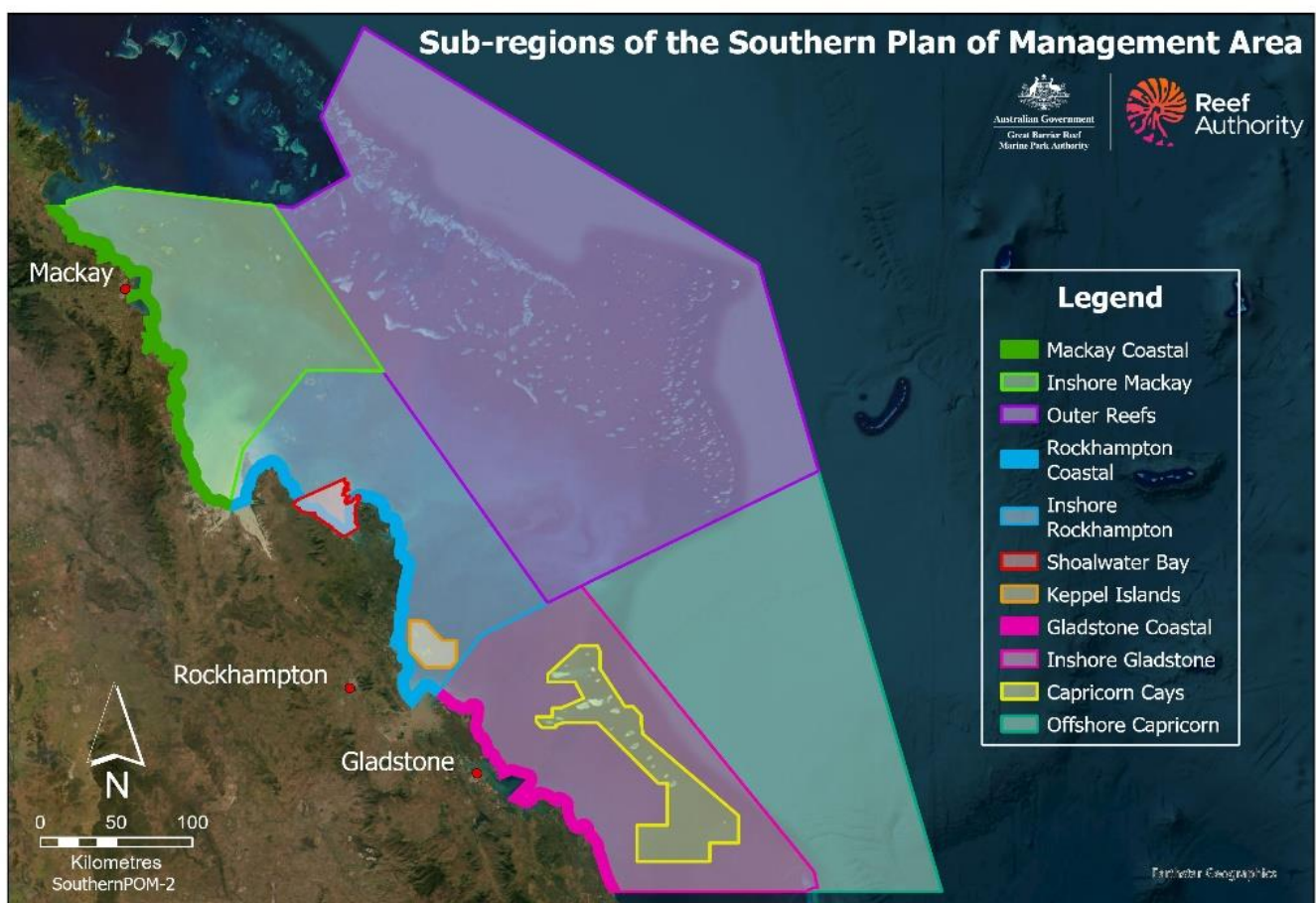


YUWI

Together with Yuwibara, Darumbal, Woppaburra and Port Curtis Coral Coast Traditional Owners, the Reef Authority is developing a new Plan of Management (POM). The Southern Plan of Management will extend from approximately Midge Point just north of Mackay to the southern boundary of the Great Barrier Reef Marine Park (Marine Park).

The Great Barrier Reef Marine Park Act 1975 (the Act) sets out the process for developing a plan of management as a tool for conserving all Marine Park values while providing for sustainable use and managing user conflicts. A POM is a statutory document that applies enforceable provisions to all users in the Commonwealth waters of the Marine Park.

The Reef Authority and the Department of Environment, Science and Innovation (DESI) through the Queensland Parks and Wildlife Service and Partnerships (QPWS&P) are working collaboratively on the development of the Southern POM.



Consultation process

Two stages of public consultation are required for the development of a POM. The first stage of public consultation for the Southern POM was held from 19 March to 19 June 2024. It focused on how the Marine Park is used, what aspects are valued, what threats are perceived and management ideas in the proposed planning area.

Submitters could provide their contributions in the form of an online submission, email submission, or in-person verbal submission collected during community drop-in information sessions that were held in Mackay, Yeppoon, Rockhampton, Gladstone, Agnes Water and Bundaberg in May 2024.

Submissions

A total of 193 submissions were received, comprising 135 online submissions, 34 email submissions and 24 verbal submissions. Please note that the submissions do not form a representative view of all Marine Park users or groups; rather, the input received reflects the views only of those who made a submission

Important locations

The locations mentioned by online submitters spanned across the [Southern Planning Area](#). The most noted locations included Heron Island, the Percy Isles, Middle Percy Island, the Keppel Island Group, Lady Musgrave Island and Curtis Island.

The locations mentioned in email and verbal submissions were very similar to those mentioned by online submitters. The most noted locations were in the Capricorn Bunker Group and mainland coastal areas in the Gladstone region. Inshore islands within the Mackay and Isaac regions and the Keppel Island Group within the Yeppoon region were also a focus.

Use and access

The region identified most by the online submitters was Gladstone. The most common vessel types used to access areas were private motorised vessels and private sailing vessels. Most submitters indicated they had only visited the region either once or twice in the past year, not at all, or every few months.

The majority of email and verbal submissions relate to the Gladstone region and to the wider Great Barrier Reef region.

As most submissions were relevant to more than one location and raised multiple issues, it is important to note that almost half the issues raised were relevant to the wider Great Barrier Reef, followed by Gladstone Coastal and the Capricorn Bunker Group.

Activities

Most activities mentioned by online submitters were recreational, as well as research and education. Of the recreational activities, the three most popular were swimming followed by wildlife watching and snorkelling.

Most email and verbal submissions were in relation to recreational use of the Marine Park followed by commercial marine tourism and research and education. A small number of submitters included activities relating to Department of Defence activities, ports and shipping, and traditional use. The most mentioned recreational activities were SCUBA diving and snorkelling, spearfishing and boating and sailing. Regarding facilities, anchorages dominated the written and verbal submissions.

Values

Appreciating the natural features of the Marine Park was the most prominent social value identified in the online submissions. This includes seeing wildlife and enjoying the natural beauty of the Marine Park.

Biodiversity and ecosystems were reported as the most valued components of the Marine Park in email and verbal submissions, which included features such as coral reef ecosystems, marine turtles, seabirds and shorebirds. This was followed by non-commercial values such as enjoying uncrowded areas and having a safe location to anchor.

Threats

For the Gladstone region, the top perceived threat is climate change, and in the Isaac region the potential loss of introduced species with heritage lineage was highlighted. In the Mackay and Yeppoon regions, the primary concern was that access to a location might be prevented.

For written and verbal submissions, marine debris was the most reported perceived threat to the wider Great Barrier Reef and to all submission regions except the Isaac Region. The top perceived threats in the Isaac region were illegal fishing, overfishing and the potential loss of introduced species. In relation to direct use of the Marine Park, 'overuse (localised)' was a common perceived threat that included overcrowding and ecological implications from overuse of an area. Submitters from all regions also mentioned climate change as a concern in the form of sea level rise, increased sea surface temperatures and major weather events.

In the Isaac region, importance of current land-management activities and increased funding were highlighted. In Mackay and Yeppoon, mixed responses were submitted regarding the management of introduced species.



Management strategies

Online submitters were asked how satisfied they were with the way a location was currently being managed to protect values, increase resilience of the Reef, and provide for sustainable use. The majority of submitters indicated they were either very or moderately satisfied. Submitters were also asked if they had any suggestions for the future management of the location they identified. The number of responses to this question was very low and were open-ended.

The most common suggestions for the Gladstone region identified by email and verbal submitters were further education and awareness programs, and the installation of more moorings or buoys to reduce anchor damage.

Next steps

The information, comments and ideas provided in submissions will be analysed to inform the development of the Southern POM. The Reef Authority and its partners will continue to inform and collaborate with stakeholders throughout the process.

A second stage of public consultation which will include proposed management arrangements and strategies will be held once the Southern POM is drafted.