



State Development, Infrastructure and
Industry Committee
Parliament House
George Street
BRISBANE QLD 4000

Dear Committee

Thank you for the opportunity to provide comment on the Regional Planning Interests Regulation 2014 (the Regulation). The Great Barrier Reef Marine Park Authority provided feedback on the Regional Planning Interests Bill 2013 in January 2014. Our feedback highlighted the need to recognise the important role the Great Barrier Reef catchment and its associated coastal ecosystems play for the health of the Great Barrier Reef World Heritage Area and therefore Queensland's economic, social and environmental prosperity. The Great Barrier Reef Marine Park Authority (the Authority) is concerned that, as currently drafted, the Regulation undermines the heritage and long-term health of the Great Barrier Reef World Heritage Area.

The Authority commends the Regulation for listing the importance of natural unrestricted flows, overland and river networks onto the floodplain, connected wetlands and waterholes and groundwater. The Authority further commends the recognition in Part 3 of the importance of the natural hydrological processes, water quality and beneficial flooding of lands that support the ecological processes in the Strategic environmental areas as listed in Schedule 1. However, the Authority is concerned that Schedule 1 of the Regulation does not identify the Great Barrier Reef catchment as a Strategic environmental area.

Areas of Queensland regional interest must be shown on a map in a Regional Plan or prescribed under the Regulation. The Regulation fails to identify the Great Barrier Reef catchment as a mapped area of Queensland regional interest and relies on the existing six Regional Plans to identify these areas. In reviewing the supporting online maps and Regional Plans, it is clear that these documents have been developed independently over the last 5 years with little regard to the importance of natural hydrological processes and their role in supporting ecological processes and health of the Great Barrier Reef World Heritage Area, and do not map the catchment's regionally important ecological connections to the Great Barrier Reef World Heritage Area.

As the Queensland population and economy grow, there will be increasing levels of use and development in and adjacent to the Great Barrier Reef World Heritage Area. Our management challenge is to highlight areas of hydrological importance in the Great Barrier Reef catchment and implement appropriate regulation to ensure that use and development do not lead to further long-term decline in the environmental quality of the Great Barrier Reef World Heritage Area.

There is a growing need to better understand the interconnected ecological relationship between the Great Barrier Reef and its catchment. In response, the Authority has developed maps and tools highlighting hydrologically connected value and service areas for the Great Barrier Reef. These maps and associated tools compare past and present ecological function of coastal ecosystems in the Great Barrier Reef catchment, and forecast the benefits of improvements to land management practice. The Authority is working closely with Natural Resource Management groups to incorporate these maps and tools into Water Quality Improvement Plans to protect and repair system processes and connectivity.

It is suggested that the Regulation should recognise these hydrologically important areas in the Great Barrier Reef catchment as mapped areas of interest to ensure Queensland's economic, social and environmental prosperity. These maps are available from the Authority on request.

If you would like to discuss this submission further, or request access to our maps and tools, please contact Donna-marie Aúdas directly by [REDACTED]

Yours sincerely



Bruce Elliot
General Manager
Biodiversity Conservation and Sustainable Use

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