

GREAT BARRIER REEF MINISTERIAL FORUM

Communiqué

6 December 2013

Australian and Queensland government ministers responsible for the Great Barrier Reef met in Brisbane today for the 37th meeting of the Great Barrier Reef Ministerial Forum.

At the meeting, ministers welcomed the recent announcement of additional Commonwealth funding of \$1.1million to further protect the Great Barrier Reef from the destructive crown-of-thorns starfish.

Ministers agreed to work together on a joint proposal to control predation of turtle nests by feral pigs. This has the potential to significantly reduce destruction of turtle nests and habitats. Indigenous communities will be closely consulted in the development of the proposal.

Ministers also welcomed the Commonwealth's commitment to the Queensland Government's Gladstone Healthy Harbour Partnership initiative.

Ministers noted that both governments had made significant progress towards implementing the UNESCO World Heritage Committee recommendations to protect the outstanding universal value of the Great Barrier Reef.

The draft Great Barrier Reef strategic assessment reports, which were released for public consultation on 1 November 2013, outline a number of strengthened measures and new initiatives over the next 25 years to protect and improve the health of the outstanding universal value of the Great Barrier Reef World Heritage Area.

Ministers agreed to the draft scope for the Reef Plan 2050-Long-Term Sustainability Plan for the Great Barrier Reef World Heritage Area. This jointly-developed plan will draw together the outcomes of the comprehensive strategic assessment and provide an over-arching framework to guide the protection and management of reef from 2015 to 2050.

The plan will comprise a \$40 million Reef Trust with the focus on taking a strategic approach to improving water quality and coastal habitat along the Great Barrier Reef, a \$2 million crown-of-thorns starfish control plan, and a \$5 million Turtle and Dugong Protection Plan.

Ministers agreed that both governments will continue to align and coordinate their efforts to protect the Great Barrier Reef and to facilitate the efficient, effective and collaborative implementation of the Reef Trust.

Ministers noted the continued good progress of the Reef Plan 2013 and the Australian Government also formally reaffirmed commitment to this joint initiative to improving water quality in the Great Barrier Reef area. Ministers also noted that the combined 2012 and 2013 Reef Plan report card, which is due to be released next year, will detail further improvement in water quality.

Ministers noted the draft content for the 2014 State of Conservation report for the Great Barrier Reef World Heritage Area. Ministers made particular note that the Queensland Ports Strategy, the independent review of the port of Gladstone and the comprehensive strategic assessment of the Great Barrier Reef will combine to deliver a greater level of protection for the reef.

Ministers noted the completion of the independent review into the environmental management and governance of the Port of Gladstone which was requested by the World Heritage

Committee in 2012. At the meeting, ministers discussed the findings and recommendations with the Chair of the review panel, Anthea Tinney. Both governments agreed to consider the review's proposed principles for port optimisation on the planning for future port development and operations in the Great Barrier Reef World Heritage Area.

At the end of the meeting ministers noted that the invitation to comment on the draft bilateral agreement between the Australian and Queensland governments relating to environmental assessments under national environment law was due to close that afternoon.

Ministers agreed that significant progress was being made in the arrangements for the one stop shop policy for Queensland and that the next step was to incorporate the public's comments and work to finalise the assessment bilateral agreement.

The meeting was chaired by the Hon Greg Hunt MP, Australian Government Minister for the Environment. In attendance were Queensland Government Ministers the Hon Andrew Powell MP, Minister for Environment and Heritage Protection, the Hon Andrew Cripps MP, Minister for Natural Resources and the Hon Steve Dickson MP, Minister for National Parks.

About the Great Barrier Reef Ministerial Forum

The role of the Great Barrier Reef Ministerial Forum is to facilitate and oversee the implementation and achievement of the objectives of the *Great Barrier Reef Intergovernmental Agreement 2009*. The agreement aims to ensure an integrated and collaborative approach to manage marine and land environments within the Great Barrier Reef World Heritage Area.