Value Adding to the Great Barrier Reef World Heritage Area

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The Great Barrier Reef
~ 3,000 separate reefs
1050 islands
Great Barrier Reef World Heritage Area at risk?

- World Heritage Committee concerned with development within the Great Barrier Reef World Heritage Area

- Unprecedented growth in coastal development

- Pressures on the Great Barrier Reef particularly inshore biodiversity and decline in coral cover
Values underpinning Great Barrier Reef tourism

Nature is still the biggest motivator for visitors to travel to Australia, especially to see the iconic Great Barrier Reef

- Need to focus on attracting high value visitors with high quality truly sustainable tourism

The World Heritage Convention recognises the Great Barrier Reef World Heritage Area as having Outstanding Universal Value, meaning:

- Cultural and/or natural significance which is so exceptional as to transcend national boundaries and to be of common importance for present and future generations of all humanity

- As such, the permanent protection of this heritage is of the highest importance to the international community as a whole

And what does this mean for the Great Barrier Reef World Heritage Area and tourism...
Values underpinning Great Barrier Reef tourism

Outstanding example of earth's evolutionary history...

Exceptional natural beauty and aesthetics...

Outstanding example of on-going ecological/biological processes...

Significant natural habitats for biological diversity, threatened spp...
Key threats to the Reef

**Water quality**
- Coral cover decline
- Crown-of-thorns starfish outbreaks

**Coastal development**
- Urban and industrial development
- Ports and shipping

**Climate change**
- Carbon footprint
- Extreme weather
GBRMPA's role

The Great Barrier Reef Marine Park Act's main object is...

To provide for long term protection and conservation of the environment, biodiversity and heritage values of the GBR Region

So far as is consistent with the main object the Great Barrier Reef Marine Park Authority (GBRMPA):

Allows ecologically sustainable use of the GBR Region...

Encourages community engagement in the protection and management of the GBR...
GBRMPA's role

Assist in meeting Australia's responsibilities in relation to the environment and protection of world heritage (especially under the World Heritage Convention)

to protect, conserve, present and transmit the Outstanding Universal Value of the GBR World Heritage Property to future generations
Operators adding value

Marine Park tourism operators

• Rely on a healthy Great Barrier Reef that continues to be an international icon

• Present the World Heritage Area to visitors

• Are active stewards for ecologically sustainable use
Optimising sustainable ecotourism operations

Marine Park tourism operators are:

• Reducing their footprint

• Preparing for severe weather events

• Assisting to build Reef resilience

• Adding to our understanding of the Reef’s Outstanding Universal Value

• Contributing to the Strategic Assessment of the Great Barrier Reef World Heritage Area
Reducing their footprint

“We operate on a ‘Four Es’ philosophy - to look after our Environment we need to be Efficient, Economically sustainable and able to Educate effectively.” Peter Gash, Lady Elliot Island
Reducing their footprint

“I believe that environmental investment through sustainable forestry and carbon offsetting is the smart way forward which will also benefit our children’s future.”

Steve Edmondson, Low Isles Sailaway
Preparing for climate change

Taking action

• High standard operators who hold ECO Certification
• Climate Action Certification
• Online Tourism Operators Emissions Calculator

Response plans to climate change

• Great Barrier Reef Marine Tourism Climate Change Action Strategy
• Marine Tourism Coordination Framework for Environmental Incidents
• Marine Tourism Contingency Plan

Industry workshops on climate change

• Risk assessments of their operation
Reef resilience

Water quality

- Great Barrier Reef Water Quality Protection Plan and Reef Rescue
- Targeted control of crown-of-thorns starfish (COTS) in partnership with industry
- Research on more effective ways to controlling COTS outbreaks
Reef resilience

Regular monitoring of reefs by tourism crew

- Health indicators of Reef, such as water quality
- Presence and abundance of iconic, indicator and protected species
- Unusual phenomenon
Contributing to understanding of the Outstanding Universal Value

**Eye on the Reef Sightings Network**

- Images and information on all sorts of Great Barrier Reef sightings are provided by tourism operators and their crew
Working together today for a healthier Reef tomorrow…

- Developing a Strategic Assessment for the Great Barrier Reef World Heritage to address World Heritage Committee concerns. The Strategic Assessment will:
  - Set the management direction for the next 25 years
  - Underpin a long-term plan to deal with the multiple threats facing the Reef
- Fostering best practice especially in relation to climate action
- Protecting the Great Barrier Reef and the Great Barrier Reef tourism product
Looking for a great Reef experience?