

PROTECTING THE LONG TERM HEALTH OF THE GREAT BARRIER REEF THROUGH RESTORATION AND ENHANCEMENT OF ADJACENT COASTAL ECOSYSTEMS

Donna-marie Audas

¹*Great Barrier Reef Marine Park Authority*

The health and resilience of the Great Barrier Reef are critically dependent on the catchment's coastal ecosystems and the quality of water discharged from the catchment. In the past, little regard has been given to the role coastal ecosystems in the catchment have on the health of the Great Barrier Reef. It is estimated that approximately 40% of remnant vegetation in the Great Barrier Reef catchment had been cleared by 2009, and 74% of the catchment was used for grazing. Of the 424,000km² that makes up the Great Barrier Reef catchment less than 10% is protected as National Park. Much of the ecological services of the Great Barrier Reef catchment have been lost or heavily modified and this is reflected in the declining health of the Great Barrier Reef, particularly inshore areas. Today there is an increased public appreciation for the influence the catchment has on the receiving waters of the Great Barrier Reef and its biodiversity. The Great Barrier Reef Marine Park Authority places considerable importance on a coordinated and collaborative approach to the management of the catchment and Reef. The Authority has collaboratively developed a set of principles and decision-making tools to assist natural resource managers, decision makers, landowners and managers, to enable them to restore, maintain or enhance the environmental values and ecological functions of coastal ecosystems to support the long-term health of the Great Barrier Reef.