



# Policy for the management of the Coral Fishery 2016

## 1 Policy statement

The purpose of this policy is to assist in the management of the Queensland Coral Fishery (QCF) in accordance with the main purpose of the *Fisheries Act 1994* (the Act; refer to Appendix 1 for the main purpose of the Act).

The policy aims to:

- ensure that Queensland's coral resources are harvested in an ecologically sustainable manner by insuring the QCF against unsustainable effects of:-
  - localised concentrations of fishing effort; and
  - targeted take of particular types of coral;
- reduce impediments to economic development in the QCF;
- enable adequate monitoring and review of the performance of the QCF; and
- ensure that operations of the QCF do not reduce the community benefit provided by coral resources in Queensland.
- ensure the QCF maintains approvals to export CITES listed coral species under the EPBC Act 1999
- ensure the QCF mitigates sustainability risks to collected coral species

The policy will achieve its purpose and aims by providing a fisheries management framework for the QCF that sits beneath the legislative provisions of the Act and the *Fisheries Regulation 2008* (the Regulation). The main provisions contained within this policy will be given enforceability through conditions attached to Department of Agriculture and Fisheries (DAF) Commercial Harvest Fishery Licences endorsed to operate in the QCF ("coral authorities") and the directions for completing the Queensland Coral Fishery Logbook. Processes for monitoring performance of the fishery against its management objectives will be contained within the QCF Performance Measurement System.

The provisions of this policy are to take effect on 1 July 2016.

## 2 Background and context

### 2.1 QCF provisions under the Regulation and other policy instruments

The Regulation specifies the area of the QCF as all Queensland tidal waters and foreshores south of latitude 10°41' South and east of longitude 142°31'49" East. However the available area for coral harvesting is further restricted through coral authority conditions and Marine Park zoning arrangements.

The Regulation stipulates that only the following may be taken in the QCF:

- (a) *coral of the class Anthozoa or Hydrozoa, including its uncompact skeletal skeletons;*
- (b) *any marine organism living in or on coral mentioned in paragraph (a), other than a marine organism that is a regulated fish;*
- (c) *coral sand consisting of fine remnants of coral.*

The QCF is subject to the Limited Entry Policy guidelines, which have been in place since 1997. Under the guidelines no additional authorities are to be issued for this fishery except where provided for in a Regulation or Management Plan or at the discretion of the Chief Executive administering the Act, where special circumstances exist. These guidelines ensure that management of fisheries resources in Queensland is consistent with the main purpose and principles of ecologically sustainable development as set out in the Act.

## 2.2 QCF provisions under coral authority conditions and logbook directions

Conditions attached to coral authorities include:

- Individual quota allocations;
- Identification of the authorised boat and collectors;
- Authorised area of operation; and
- Quota reporting requirements;
- Other miscellaneous provisions.

Directions for completing the Queensland Coral Fishery Logbook include:

- Catch & effort reporting requirements.

## 2.3 QCF provisions under marine park legislation

In waters north of latitude 24°30' south (the southern boundary of the GBRMP), the GBRMPA and the QPWS have additional responsibility for management of resource use. Where relevant those agencies require that coral fishery operators also hold a Marine Parks permit. Marine Park zoning restricts coral collecting to General Use Zones, Habitat Protection Zones and most areas of the Conservation Park Zones within the Marine Park.

Issues relating to restricted coral collection from sensitive locations in the GBRMP (e.g. in the Whitsundays Plan of Management area and the Palm Islands Group), are dealt with by GBRMPA and are not addressed by this policy.

This policy has been developed in collaboration with GBRMPA and QPWS and performance and management of the QCF is monitored and reviewed in coordination by the three government bodies.

## 2.4 Fishery characteristics

The QCF is based on the collection of a range of taxa, the extent of which is set out in section 4.1 of this policy.

The different types of coral taken in the fishery are defined below:

- Specialty coral - a wide variety of Hard corals and anemones generally taken for live display in coral reef aquaria. Hard corals taken in Queensland for the live aquarium trade are usually small pieces or colonies less than 15 cm in diameter. Some hard coral species are also traded as cleaned and dried non-living ornamental décor pieces. This policy considers all Hard corals (except for Acroporidae or Pocilloporidae coral) and all sea anemones to be 'Specialty coral' for quota monitoring purposes.
- Acroporidae and Pocilloporidae coral - corals from the families Acroporidae and Pocilloporidae, initially taken live and traded as either cleaned and dried non-living ornamental décor pieces or live aquarium corals. This policy considers all Acroporidae and Pocilloporidae corals to be 'Other coral' for quota monitoring purposes.
- Soft coral - a wide variety of soft corals and related (cnidarian) species taken for live display in coral reef aquaria. This policy considers all soft corals (not including sea anemones) to be 'Other coral' for quota monitoring purposes.
- Live rock – dead pieces of coral/limestone, often with organisms such as algae, bryozoans, sponges and small corals living on them, taken for use as substrate and for textural and aesthetic purposes in aquaria. This policy considers all live rock to be 'Other coral' for quota monitoring purposes.
- Coral rubble – coarsely broken up non-living fragments of coral. This policy considers all coral rubble to be 'Other coral' for quota monitoring purposes.

- Coral sand - finely broken up remnants of coral taken in small quantities as a consequence of live rock and coral rubble collection. No targeted collection of this component is allowable within the GBRMP.

## 2.5 Consultation

Following significant consultation with the QCF industry and other stakeholders the Queensland government adopted the first version of the Policy for the Management of the Coral Fishery on 6 December 2005. The policy was reviewed in February 2008 by the Coral Policy Review Working Group established by the Management Advisory Committee and comprising representatives from government agencies, the research sector and the QCF industry. A revised version the Policy for the Management of the Coral Fishery implemented on 29 January 2009.

The latest version of the policy was developed following consultation with key stakeholders from 2013 through to 2016.

## 3 Scope

### 3.1 Key issues within the QCF

The scope of this policy is to address key issues impacting upon the QCF.

A review of the fishery against the requirements of the EPBC Act in 2012 and a review of the ecological risk assessment of the fishery in 2013 identified areas where QCF management improvements could be improved to address sustainability risks. These are outlined below.

#### *Ensuring the QCF maintains approvals to export CITES listed coral species under the EPBC Act 1999*

The QCF is heavily reliant on the collection and trade of CITES listed hard coral species. The management framework for the fishery must demonstrate it is capable of meeting the high sustainability benchmarks required by CITES, or risk losing permission to export.

Accurate and transparent reporting of the weight of collected CITES listed (hard) coral in the fishery allows better monitoring of sustainability risks and is critical to retaining continued export approval.

The quota reporting system described under the previous policy (2009) may have resulted in reporting inaccuracies and under-reporting of quota. This is not acceptable for managing trade in CITES listed coral species. This policy rectifies these issues by adjusting the quota reporting system for hard corals from a category based system to weighing corals in the form that they are removed from the substrate and the actual weight used for quota drawdown purposes.

#### *Ensuring the QCF mitigates sustainability risks to collected coral species*

The review of the ecological risk assessment of the QCF in 2013 identified a number of low and moderate risks to the sustainability of collected coral species. Many of these risks are being mitigated through revisions to collection standards (eg. size limits) in the industry developed Stewardship Action Plan (2014), however clear and accurate reporting of collected corals cannot be addressed through these voluntary standards. Changes to the reporting system outlined in this policy provides an improved framework on which to base a more accurate and transparent reporting of harvest.

Climate-induced events such as coral bleaching are acknowledged as a key consideration for the management of the fishery, however their event-specific and often location-specific nature make them unsuitable for management through set provisions within this policy. Mechanisms established outside of the policy, such as the Coral Stress Response Plan, provide for adaptive, managed responses to event-specific localised issues, including climate-induced events.

## 4 Abbreviations, acronyms and definitions

### 4.1 Acronyms

CITES = Convention on International Trade in Endangered Species of Wild Fauna or Flora

EPBC Act = Environment Protection and Biodiversity Conservation Act 1999 (Cwlth)

GBRMP = Great Barrier Reef Marine Park

GBRMPA = Great Barrier Reef Marine Park Authority

QCF = Queensland Coral Fishery

QPWS = Queensland Parks and Wildlife Service

### 4.2 Definitions

*Relevant tribunal* = the Queensland Civil and Administrative Tribunal.

*Hard coral* = Any coral species (not sea anemones) from the Class Anthozoa or Class Hydrozoa that is listed under Appendix I, II or III by the Convention on International Trade in Endangered Species of Wild Fauna or Flora (CITES).

*Soft coral* = Any coral species (not sea anemones) from the Order Alcyonacea or Order Corallimorpharia that is not included under the definition for hard coral under the policy.

## 5 Key principles

The following management principles are adopted through this policy, with key provisions gaining enforceability through their replication on coral authority conditions from 1 July 2015.

### 5.1 Component based quota

The annual Total Allowable Catch (TAC) for the QCF is 200 t, comprising:

- a “Specialty coral” component, limited to a take of 60 t; and
- an “Other coral” component, limited to a take of 140 t.

## 5.2 Units of measure and quota usage calculation

The various types of coral taken in the QCF are separated into distinct categories with different quota debiting mechanisms as outlined below (refer to Appendix 2 for full details).

### Specialty coral

- Hard coral
  - Combined weight (actual) of all Hard coral pieces. This quota category does not include corals from the Families Acroporidae and Pocilloporidae which are reported under Other coral.  
Note that a percentage of the total reported weight will be automatically applied to account for the weight of the substrate attached to Hard coral pieces which is generally discarded. The percentage applied in this Policy to the season commencing 1 July 2016 is set at 75% Specialty coral: 25% Other coral. However, the percentage applied to subsequent seasons is subject to an independent review of actual collection practices in the first season of operation under this policy (ie., 2016–17). Appendix 4 contains the schedule for the automatic proportional allocation of quota usage for collected Hard coral and discarded substrate.
- Sea anemones
  - Number of pieces and a weight conversion factor applied per piece

### Other coral

- Acroporidae/Pocilloporidae coral
  - Combined weight (actual) of all Acroporidae and Pocilloporidae coral pieces.
- Soft coral
  - Option 1: Container volume, with a weight conversion factor per Litre
  - Option 2: Number of pieces and a weight conversion factor applied per piece
  - Option 3: Soft coral pieces > 500g to be reported using the Container volume method, with a weight conversion factor per Litre
- Live rock & coral rubble
  - Container volume, with a weight conversion factor per Litre
- Coral sand
  - No quota debit (incidental take limit of 5 Litres per trip)

## 5.3 Collection locations and depths

Operators will generally be authorised to collect coral in Queensland waters (without a depth limitation) north of latitude 24°30' S (the southern boundary of the GBRMP). At the discretion of the Chief Executive, access to two collection areas south of 24°30' S by two authorities for supply to local public aquaria will continue until such time that the special circumstances underlying the arrangement can no longer be demonstrated. No depth limits apply under this policy.

## 5.4 Managing localised concentrations of effort

Catches within the Cairns and Keppel boundaries (Appendix 3) are to be monitored against benchmarks established under the QCF Performance Measurement System, which includes a management response process. Similar monitoring and management mechanisms are to be introduced in the same manner for any other high-use coral collection areas identified in the future.

## 5.5 Reporting requirements

Coral authority holders are required to keep and provide logbook information and submit reports of quota usage for purposes of compliance and monitoring of the fishery.

- Logbook – QCF operators are required to report catch and effort through daily logbooks. This includes reporting catch to family level in most cases and to species or genera level for certain target species or at-risk species taken in the fishery. Spatial reporting and fishing effort is recorded as GPS coordinates of highest catch for each reef and diver effort (hours). A revised logbook, accounting for fishery performance and outputs of the QCF ecological risk assessment, is to be implemented in conjunction with the provisions of this policy.
- Prior notice – QCF operators are required to lodge a prior notice report before the conclusion of each fishing trip, notifying the DAF of the quantities of coral and coral products taken and providing an estimated time and location of arrival at the landing location. The details provided in a prior notice report determine the quota debit for Sea anemones, Soft corals and Live Rock & Coral Rubble for each authority.
- Unload notice – QCF operators are required to report the actual weight of all collected Hard corals and corals from the Families Acroporidae and Pocilloporidae before departing from the landing location. The details provided in an unload notice determine the quota debit for these categories for each authority.

## 6 Responsibilities and accountabilities

This policy applies generally and is to be read and applied in conjunction with all other relevant policies of the DAF under the Act. It replaces the Policy for the Management of the Coral Fishery, dated 29 January 2009. The policy applies to management decisions of the DAF in relation to the QCF.

Pursuant to section 63 of the Act the Chief Executive has the power to amend a coral authority, including its conditions. The amendments to authority conditions that are sought by the Chief Executive are necessary to effectively implement new management arrangements. The amendments to the authority conditions are to be initiated through a written 'show cause' process in accordance with section 63 of the Act. The new authority conditions are to commence on 1 July 2016.

This policy will be implemented having regard to the circumstances of each individual coral authority holder. If a QCF authority holder is dissatisfied with the Chief Executive's decision in relation to the authority holder's authority and/or particular activities under the authority, the authority holder is entitled to lodge an application for review to the **relevant tribunal**.

## 7 Source documentation

For the current list of species listed under Appendix I, II and III by CITES see: <http://www.cites.org/eng/app/appendices.php>

## 8 Related and reference documents

Cartwright, I., Thalassa Consulting., Harriott, V.J., CRC Reef Research Centre, Willcock, A. and TRAFFIC Oceania (2002) *'A Report to the Chair Great Barrier Reef Marine Park Authority on the Coral Collection Fishery'*.

Harriott, V.J. (2001) *'The sustainability of Queensland's coral harvest fishery'*. CRC Reef Research Centre Technical Report No. 40. CRC Reef Research Centre, Townsville. 33pp.

## **Appendix 1 – Main purpose of the Act**

### **Section 3 Main purpose of the Act**

- (1) “to provide for the use, conservation and enhancement of the community’s fisheries resources and fish habitats in a way that seeks to –
  - (a) apply and balance the principles of ecologically sustainable development; and
  - (b) promote ecologically sustainable development.
- (2) In balancing the principles, each principle is to be given the relative emphasis appropriate in the circumstances.
- (3) In this section –

**“ecologically sustainable development”** means using, conserving and enhancing the community’s fisheries resources and fish habitats so that –

- (a) the ecological processes on which life depends are maintained; and
- (b) the total quality of life, both now and in the future, can be improved.

**“principles of ecologically sustainable development”** means the following principles –

- (a) enhancing individual and community well being through economic development that safeguards the well being of future generations;
- (b) providing fairness within and between generations;
- (c) protecting biological diversity, ecological processes and life-support systems;
- (d) in making decisions, effectively integrating fairness and short and long-term economic, environmental and social considerations;
- (e) considering the global dimension of environmental impacts of actions and policies;
- (f) considering the need to maintain and enhance competition, in an environmentally sound way;
- (g) considering the need to develop a strong, growing and diversified economy that can enhance the capacity for environmental protection;
- (h) that decisions and actions should provide for broad community involvement on issues affecting them;
- (i) the precautionary principle.

**“precautionary principle”** means the principle that, if there is a threat of serious or irreversible environmental damage, lack of scientific certainty should not be used as a reason to postpone measures to prevent environmental degradation, or possible environmental degradation, because of the threat.”



## **Appendix 2 – Units of measure**

### **Description of reporting categories used for Prior and Unload notices and quota monitoring purposes.**

Note: the total combined weight of pieces of coral is to be reported in the Unload notice for the Hard coral and Acroporidae/Pocilloporidae coral categories.

#### **Specialty coral (2 sub-groups)**

##### ***Hard corals***

Prior notice: Number and type of containers with Hard coral pieces (not including corals from the Families Acroporidae and Pocilloporidae) reported before landing of product. Coral pieces unable to be containerized to be reported as Large/Fragile.

Unload notice: Actual weight in grams of Hard coral pieces (not including corals from the Families Acroporidae and Pocilloporidae) weighed and reported when the product is landed. Quota is deducted from the Unload notice. A proportion of the reported weight will be automatically allocated to Specialty coral and Other coral according to the schedule detailed in Appendix 4.

This category replaces the LC2, LC3, LC4 and LC6 reporting categories of the previous Policy.

##### ***Sea anemones***

Prior notice only: This category applies to all sea anemones species. Number of pieces reported. A weight conversion factor of 25 pieces per kg (or 1 piece = 40g) is applied for quota monitoring purposes. Quota is deducted from the Prior notice.

#### **Other coral (4 sub-groups)**

##### ***Acroporidae/Pocilloporidae corals***

Prior notice: Number and type of containers with coral pieces from the Families Acroporidae and Pocilloporidae reported before landing of product. Coral pieces unable to be containerized to be reported as Large/Fragile.

Unload notice: Actual weight in grams of corals from the Families Acroporidae and Pocilloporidae weighed and reported when the product is landed. Quota is deducted from the Unload notice.

##### ***Soft corals***

Prior notice only: Soft coral pieces (not including sea anemones) up to 500g. A weight conversion factor of 25 pieces per kg (or 1 piece = 40g) or a volume conversion factor of 1 litre = 0.35 kg is applied for quota monitoring purposes. For Soft coral pieces greater than 500g, the volume conversion factor must be applied. Quota is deducted from the Prior notice. This category replaces the LC5 reporting category of the previous Policy.

##### ***Live Rock & Coral Rubble***

Prior notice only: Dead pieces or fragments (rubble) of coral, often colonized with organisms such as algae, bryozoans, sponges and small corals, are reported in this category. Product from this category is reported volumetrically and a conversion factor of 440g per litre is applied (using the total volume of the container used) for quota monitoring purposes. Quota is deducted from the Prior notice.

##### ***Coral Sand***

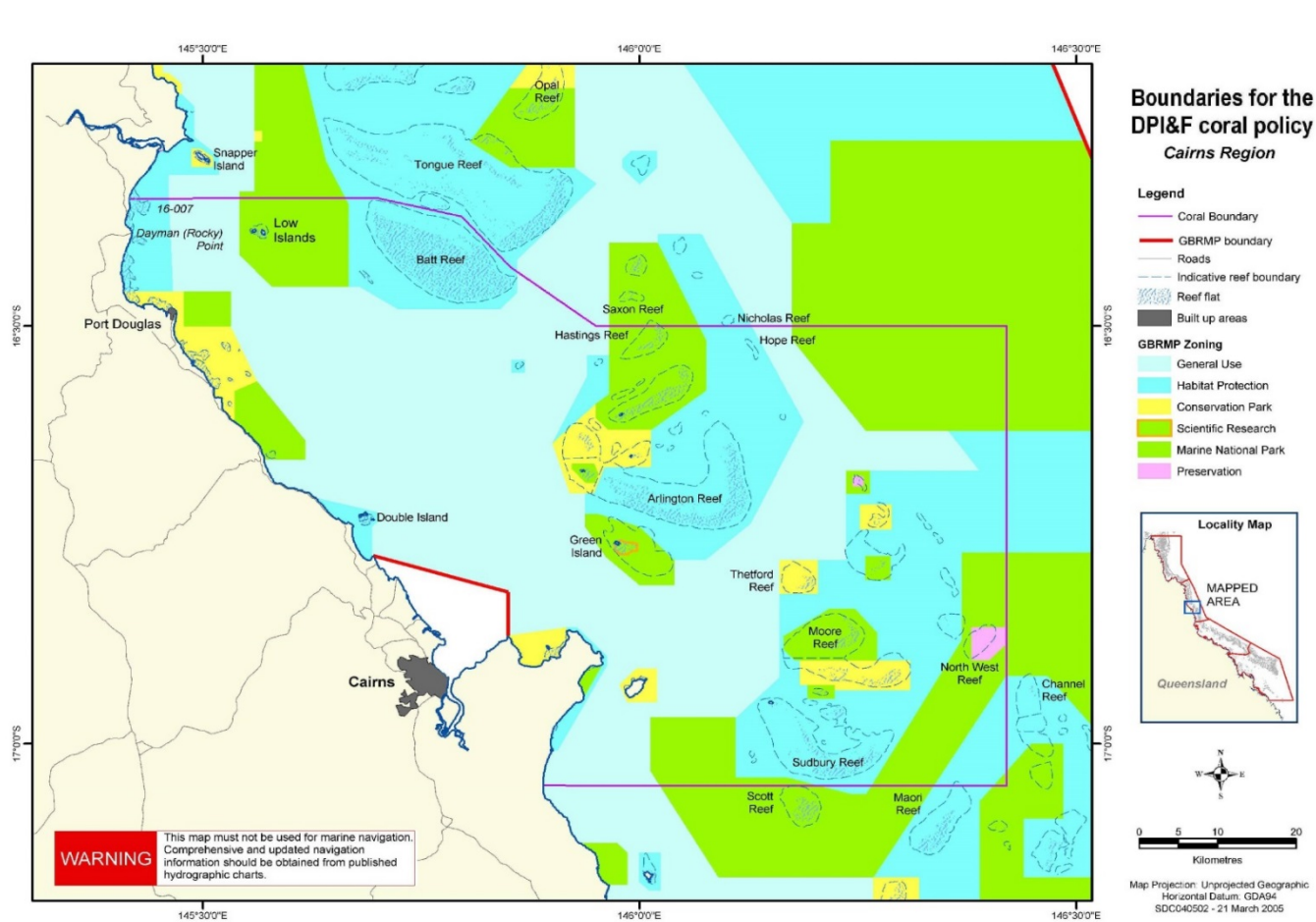
A trip limit of 5L applies for coral sand. This is not deducted from quota.

**NOTE:** Units of measure and their attributed conversion factors were developed through a combination of field-based sampling, consultation with the QCF industry and scientists.

### Appendix 3 – Cairns and Keppel area boundaries

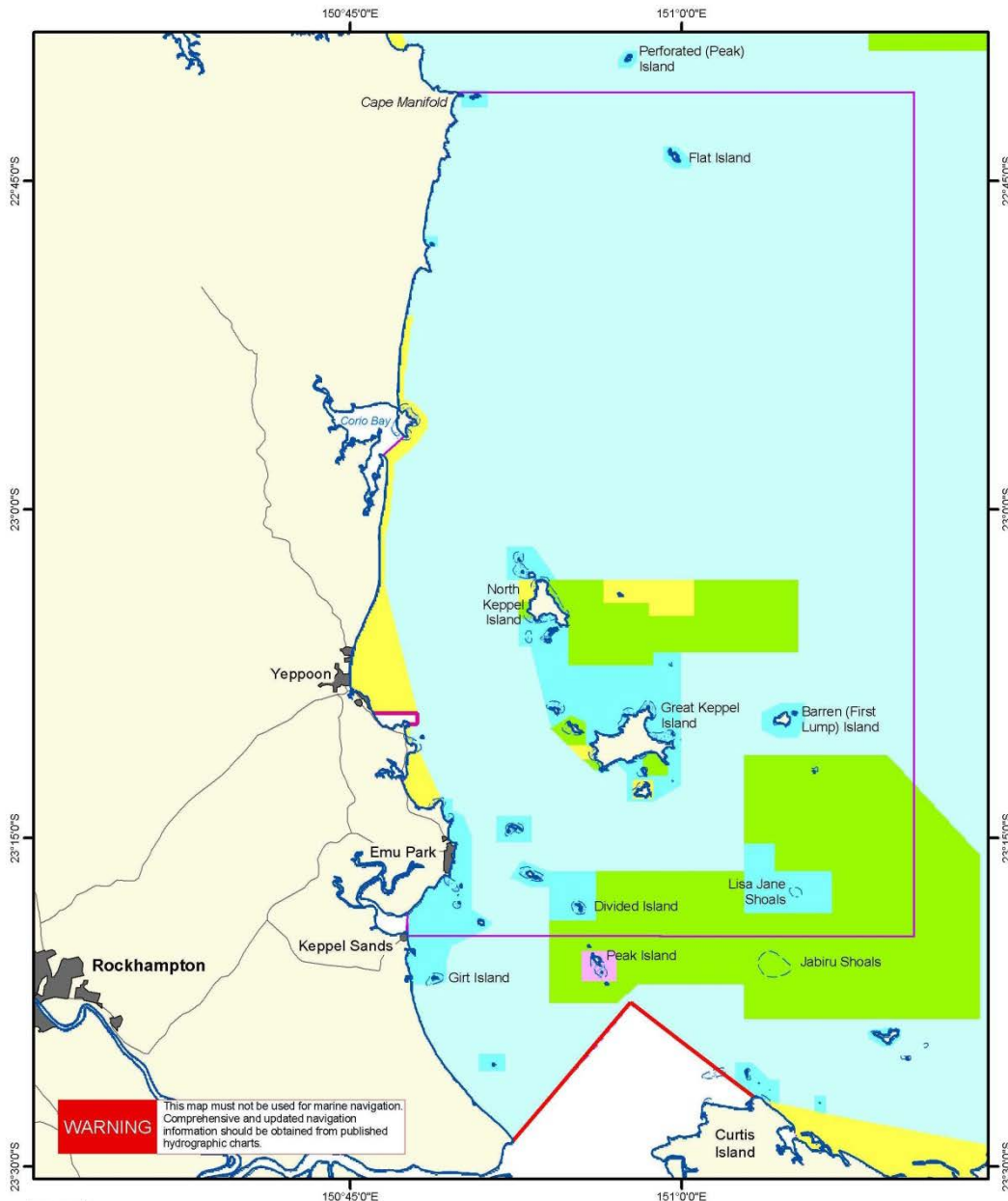
**Cairns area:** The area bounded by a line commencing at the intersection of the mainland coastline at mean low water and the parallel 16° 20.800' S (at or about 16° 20.800' S, 145° 24.939' E) then running progressively:

1. easterly along the geodesic to 16° 20.802' S, 145° 42.000' E;
2. easterly along the geodesic to 16° 22.100' S, 145° 47.750' E;
3. south-easterly along the geodesic to 16° 25.750' S, 145° 51.099' E;
4. south-easterly along the geodesic to 16° 30.000' S, 145° 57.000' E;
5. east along the parallel to its intersection with longitude 146° 25.200' E;
6. south along the meridian to its intersection with latitude 17° 03.000' S;
7. west along the parallel to its intersection with the mainland coastline at mean low water (at or about 17° 03.000' S, 145° 53.360' E);
8. along the mainland coastline at mean low water to the point of commencement.



**Keppel area:** The area bounded by a line commencing at the intersection of the mainland coastline at mean low water and the parallel 22° 40.950' S (at or about 22° 40.950' S, 150° 49.867' E) then running progressively:

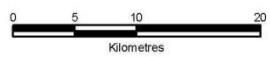
1. east along the parallel to its intersection with longitude 151° 10.500' E;
2. south along the meridian to its intersection with latitude 23° 19.500' S;
3. west along the parallel to its intersection with the mainland coastline at mean low water (at or about 23° 19.500' S, 150° 47.601' E);
4. along the mainland coastline at mean low water to the point of commencement.



- Legend**
- Coral Boundary
  - GBRMP boundary
  - Coastline
  - Roads
  - Indicative reef boundary
  - Reef flat
  - Built up areas

- GBRMP Zoning**
- General Use
  - Habitat Protection
  - Conservation Park
  - Marine National Park
  - Preservation

**Boundaries for the  
DPI&F coral policy  
Keppel Region**



Map Projection: Unprojected Geographic  
Horizontal Datum: Geocentric Datum of Australia, 1994  
SDC040502 - 21 March 2005



Figures provided courtesy of the Great Barrier Reef

**Appendix 4 – Schedule for proportional allocation of Specialty coral and Other coral quota deductions based on weights of hard corals reported in the Unload notice.**

A proportion of the reported weight of Hard corals provided in the Unload notice will be automatically allocated to Specialty coral and Other coral according to the schedule detailed in the table below.

<b>Quota season</b>	<b>Specialty coral</b>	<b>Other coral</b>
1 July 2016 to 30 June 2017	75% of reported weight of hard corals	25% of reported weight of hard corals
1 July 2017 to 30 June 2018 – allocation is dependent on the following: 1. Proportion of offcuts is established through independent scientific study, or 2. Proportion not scientifically validated.	1. % to be confirmed  2. 100%	1. % to be confirmed  2. 0%
Subsequent quota seasons	% will be based on allocation for 2017–18	% will be based on allocation for 2017–18

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