

**Senate Standing Committee on Environment and Communications**  
**Legislation Committee**  
Answers to questions on notice  
**Sustainability, Environment, Water, Population and Communities portfolio**  
Budget Estimates, May 2013

<b>Program: Agency:</b>	GBRMPA	<b>Question No:</b>	175
<b>Topic:</b>	GBRMPA – Crown of Thorns starfish – bleaching events		
<b>Proof Hansard Page and Date</b>	24		
<b>or Written Question:</b>	(28/05/13)		

**Senator Birmingham asked:**

Senator BIRMINGHAM: .....Are you able to give any tangible assessment of how it has made a difference in terms of the particular numbers of sites or geographic areas having been improved over the two years?

Dr Reichelt: I would have to take it on notice. Those figures of where the operations have been and the numbers taken off each reef would be available, if that would help.

**Answer:**

By May 2013, the Crown of Thorns Starfish industry control program, implemented by the Association of Marine Park Tourism Operators had killed 88,110 starfish on 190 sites from 63 reefs during 240 days at sea.

The Association of Marine Park Tourism Operators divers use the Great Barrier Reef Marine Park Authority Reef Health and Impact Surveys protocol to compare starfish densities before and after a control action. In addition, they collected detailed statistics on the level of effort invested in control actions and the rate of return (expressed as catch per unit effort – CPUE – starfish kills per unit of time).

Preliminary analysis of data from reefs that were visited multiple times by the control team, shows that the density of Crown of Thorns Starfish (estimated as individuals present per meter of reef perimeter) declined by 39.2 per cent per visit. Control was particularly effective at reducing extreme densities to more moderate densities.

The Crown of Thorns Starfish control program is making a difference at key tourism sites where return visits are undertaken.

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<b>Program: Agency:</b>	GBRMPA	<b>Question No:</b>	176
<b>Topic:</b>	Reef Rescue Expenditure		
<b>Proof Hansard Page and Date or Written Question:</b>	24 (28/05/13)		

**Senator Joyce asked:**

Senator JOYCE: Could I ask one final thing? In the money you spend on reef rescue, how much of that actually goes towards salary and wages and how much of it actually goes towards capital works?

**Answer:**

The Great Barrier Reef Marine Park Authority receives money under Reef Rescue for the Marine Monitoring Program, the Indigenous Land and Sea Country Partnerships Program and crown-of-thorns starfish control measures. A portion of the funds received under the Indigenous Land and Sea Country Partnerships Program are expended on salaries.

For the 2012-13 financial year, the expected final break down of Reef Rescue funds received by the Great Barrier Reef Marine Park Authority is:

- Salaries: \$685,356.
- Operations: \$5,805,644.
- Capital: Nil.

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**Program: Agency:** GBRMPA **Question 177**  
**Topic:** GBRMPA – PBS program 1.1 MOU  
with SEWPaC **No:**  
**Proof Hansard Page and Date** 25  
**or Written Question:** (28/05/13)

**Senator IAN MACDONALD asked:**

Senator IAN MACDONALD: Dr Grimes, perhaps on notice—I do not want to spend too much time on this—could you just explain to me, on page 157, the difference in the figures there from the estimated actual for the 2012-13 year and the estimated expenses for 2013-14?

Dr Grimes: Yes, Senator, I think that would be appropriate for GBRMPA to take on notice.

**Answer:**

Table 2.1 Budgeted Expenses for Outcome 1 is replicated with notes below.

<b>Item</b>	<b>2012-13 Estimated actual \$'000</b>	<b>2013-14 Estimated expenses \$'000</b>	<b>Variation \$'000</b>	<b>Notes</b>
Administered expenses	900	900	0	No change
Net Departmental Appropriation less Special Accounts	28,240	21,274	-6,966	See below for details
Special Appropriations	4,750	4,750	0	No change. This figure represents the estimated special appropriation derived from the environmental management charge
Special Accounts	16,814	16,842	28	Small increase in jointly funded Field Management Program
Expenses not requiring appropriation in the Budget year	1,635	1,631	-4	Small reduction in depreciation
<b>Total</b>	<b>52,339</b>	<b>45,397</b>	<b>-6,942</b>	

Table 2.1 for Outcome 1 does not include \$6.5m of Reef Rescue funding anticipated for 2013-14 under agreements expected to be finalised early in this financial year, which would appear in the 'Net Departmental Appropriation less Special Accounts' line. Taking this funding into account, the variation would be \$442,000 (see table below for further details).

The remainder of the variation in expenses between 2012-13 and 2013-14 in the 'Net Departmental Appropriation less Special Accounts' line is largely due to funding of specific programs that concluded at the end of 2012-13 and a small reduction in base appropriation.

GBRMMPA's base appropriation has decreased by \$35,000 from 2012-13 to 2013-14. This is the net result of the application of the efficiency dividend, indexation, and targeted savings measures.

In addition to its base appropriation, the GBRMPA receives funding from a range of government and non-government sources. For example, 2012-13 was the fifth year of the 2008-2013 Reef Rescue program. In 2012-13 this included funding to GBRMPA for the Marine Monitoring program, the Indigenous Sea Country Partnerships program and the Targeted Crown of Thorns Starfish Control Program. Figures for the then recently announced continuation of Reef Rescue were not available for inclusion in the 2013-14 estimates.

In 2012-13, GBRMPA also received specific funding from the Regional Sustainability Planning program to fund projects to inform the Strategic Assessment of the GBR World Heritage Area and one-off funding from the National Environmental Research Program to support development of an Integrated Monitoring Program.

Funding was also received from AusAid for specific projects.

Details of the variations are set out below:

<b>Item</b>	<b>2012-13 Estimated actual \$'000</b>	<b>2013-14 Estimated Expenses (as per PBS) \$'000</b>	<b>Variation  \$'000</b>	<b>Notes</b>
Base Appropriation	14,313	14,278	-35	Efficiency dividend
Marine Monitoring Program	2,500	0	-\$2,500	2013-14 does not include \$2,500 of anticipated funding under Reef Rescue arrangements
Indigenous Partnerships	2,920	0	-2,920	2013-14 does not include \$2,000 of anticipated funding under Reef Rescue arrangements
COTS	700	0	-700	2013-14 does not include \$2,000 of anticipated funding under Reef Rescue arrangements
Regional Sustainability Planning Program	426	0	-426	One-off projects for 2012-13
National Environmental Research Program	200	0	-200	Development Integrated Monitoring project
AusAid				
- ICRI	191	0	-191	International Coral Reef Initiative. Australian – Caribbean Collaboration on Climate Change and Coral Reefs.
- Caribbean	489	616	127	
Caring for Our Country –Ensuring the resilience of the	3,531	3,479	-52	2 <sup>nd</sup> year of funding of this New Policy (The PBS table excludes the increasing capital component)

Reef				
Reef HQ Aquarium	2,630	2,630	0	Admissions, retail outlets
Cost recovery	340	271	-69	Allocation of Permit Assessment fees, miscellaneous sources
<b>Sub-Total (as per PBS)</b>	<b>28,240</b>	<b>21,274</b>	<b>-6,966</b>	
Funding anticipated under agreements expected to be finalised early in this financial year	0	\$6,500		Marine Monitoring - \$2,500 Indigenous Partnerships - \$2,000 COTS - \$2,000
<b>Sub Total</b>	<b>28,240</b>	<b>27,774</b>	<b>-466</b>	

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**Program: Division or Agency:** GBRMPA **Question 178**  
**Topic:** GBRMPA – Abbot Point draft reports **No:**  
**Proof Hansard Page and Date** 29  
**or Written Question:** (28/05/13)

**Senator WATERS asked:**

Senator WATERS: Given that you are sharing the drafts with the Ports Association, could you share with us now a flavour of the conclusions that the reports are reaching?

Dr A Smith: The simple conclusion is that dredge spoil potentially moves further than previously predicted because the new modelling is using ocean currents as well as traditional wind and waves.

Dr Reichelt: There are also three-dimensional models as opposed to two-dimensional.

Senator WATERS: Is it correct that those reports have concluded so far that the amount of suspended sediment in the Great Barrier Reef due to remobilisation from dredging is the same as the amount flowing into the reef from land based sources?

Dr A Smith: That is a complex question that we would have to take on notice. We are certainly interested in the comparison between natural versus anthropogenic impacts. Certainly in the case of Abbot Point we are looking quite closely at that as part of the assessment for the port activities there.

**Answer:**

Both dredge spoil and sediments in runoff contain fine sediments that affect water quality, they are similar in some respects but not easily comparable in either their geographic scale or potential impacts. In particular, one of the greatest risks to the Great Barrier Reef from catchment run-off is from nitrogen discharge associated with crown-of-thorns starfish outbreaks and their destructive effects on coral reefs (*refer 2013 Scientific Consensus Statement – Land use impacts on Great Barrier Reef Water Quality and ecosystem condition*).

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<b>Program: Agency:</b>	GBRMPA	<b>Question No:</b>	179
<b>Topic:</b>	GBRMPA - Queensland Assessment Report		
<b>Proof Hansard Page and Date or Written Question:</b>	31 (28/05/13)		

**Senator Waters asked:**

Senator WATERS: Dr Reichelt, you are happy to take the Queensland government's word for that? You are not undertaking, as the authority, your own studies to determine whether those claims are accurate?

Dr Reichelt: No. We have done our own assessment of the likelihood of an impact on the marine park.

Senator WATERS: That was my earlier question, which I thought you had answered 'no' to. Could you talk me through the assessment that you have done?

Dr Reichelt: I do not have the brief with me. I would be happy to provide the information on notice.

**Answer:**

The Great Barrier Reef Marine Park Authority has reviewed the Queensland report relating to the release of contaminated mine waters. Whilst there are a range of potential contaminants associated with mines in the Great Barrier Reef catchment, particularly in times of heavy rainfall and floods, the primary considerations are salinity, acid mine drainage, trace metals and oxygen depleting compounds. In general, there is not a significant impact from mines on the Great Barrier Reef Region, primarily due to the distance most mines are from the coast.

The Queensland government has established monitoring sites downstream of the mine releases to allow it to respond if any water quality issues arise and they will make the results of that monitoring available to the public at regular intervals. There have been no reported exceedences of the Australian Water Quality Guidelines for water suitable for human consumption.

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**Program: Agency:** GBRMPA **Question No:** 180  
**Topic:** GBRMPA - Great Barrier Reef Green Zones  
**Proof Hansard Page and Date or Written Question:** Written

**Senator Macdonald asked:**

In 2010/11 GBRMPA issued 18 infringement notices for fishing in the Marine Park Green Zones.

In 2011/12 GBRMPA issued 9 infringement notices for fishing in the Marine Park Green Zones.

To April 2013 – 10 months into 2012/13 – 2 infringement notices were issued.

- a. How many incidents of recreational fishing in green zones have been recorded in 2012/13?
- b. How many incidents of recreational fishing in green zones have been prosecuted in 2012/13?
- c. How many incidents of commercial fishing in green zones has been recorded and prosecuted in the same period?
- d. What was the cost of maintaining the GBRMPA compliance and enforcement unit in 2011/12, and in 2012/13?
- e. How much revenue was generated across these periods from the imposition of fines and infringement notices?

**Answer:**

The Great Barrier Reef Marine Park Authority uses a variety of compliance options in dealing with illegal fishing in the Marine Park. This includes education, cautions and advisory letters and these are the predominant options used for recreational fishing offences. They have proven to be effective among recreational fishers. Since 2004, when the new zoning plan was introduced, no person given a caution or warning notice has been detected reoffending in a green zone. The balance between education and firmer enforcement action will always depend on the level of voluntary compliance with zoning regulations.

- a. One hundred and sixty-three incidents of recreational fishing in green zones were recorded during the period 1 July 2012 to 25 June 2013. Three hundred and two possible offences were identified from these reports. More than one fisher is frequently involved in reports of illegal fishing.
- b. No incidents of recreational fishing in green zones have been prosecuted through the courts in 2012/2013. Four infringement notices were issued for recreational fishing offences.
- c. Twenty-nine incidents of commercial fishing in green zones have been recorded during the period 1 July 2012 to 25 June 2013. Forty-one possible offences were identified



from these reports. Incident reports of illegal commercial fishing frequently involve more than one offender and more than one offence.

Seven offenders were prosecuted for 43 commercial fishing offences during 2012/13. Due to the time required to bring the matters to court, matters are not always detected and prosecuted in the same year.

- d. The Great Barrier Reef Marine Park Authority spent \$3,338,128 on dedicated surveillance and enforcement in the 2011/12 financial year in the Great Barrier Reef World Heritage Area. This was funded through the joint Great Barrier Reef Field Management Program with the Queensland Government.

The Great Barrier Reef Marine Park Authority had an allocation of \$3,749,210 for dedicated surveillance and enforcement in the 2012/13 financial year in the Great Barrier Reef World Heritage Area. This was funded through the joint Great Barrier Reef Field Management Program with the Queensland Government.

In addition to the dedicated Great Barrier Reef Marine Park Authority effort, the following Commonwealth and State agencies undertake surveillance and enforcement activity within the Great Barrier Reef Region:

- Border Protection Command (Commonwealth)
- Australian Maritime Safety Authority (Commonwealth)
- Australian Federal Police (Commonwealth)
- Queensland Parks and Wildlife Service (State)
- Queensland Boating and Fisheries Patrol (State)
- Queensland Police Service (State)

The Great Barrier Reef Field Management Program contributes funding to the patrols conducted by the Queensland Boating and Fisheries Patrol and the Queensland Police Service.

- e. Enforcement actions initiated by the Great Barrier Reef Marine Park Authority for the Great Barrier Reef Marine Park saw \$245,325 in court imposed fines and \$13,860 in infringement notices issued in 2011/12.

In 2012/13 court imposed fines were \$124,000 and infringement notice penalties amounted to \$5000.

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<b>Program: Agency:</b>	GBRMPA	<b>Question No:</b>	181
<b>Topic:</b>	GBRMPA – Strategic Assessment staffing		
<b>Proof Hansard Page and Date or Written Question:</b>	Written		

**Senator Waters asked:**

Please advise how the staffing resourcing (full time equivalent) GBRMPA has working on the strategic assessment of the Great Barrier Reef.

**Answer:**

During 2012/13 there were 5.34 FTE (full time equivalent) staff working specifically on the Strategic Assessment.

Other staff within Great Barrier Reef Marine Park Authority (GBRMPA) also contribute to the work of the Strategic Assessment, however GBRMPA does not track allocation of other staff time separately so this information is not readily available. It would be a substantial diversion of resources for the agency to attempt to provide this additional information.

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**Program: Agency:** GBRMPA **Question No:** 182  
**Topic:** GBRMPA – Dredging  
**Proof Hansard Page and Date** Written  
**or Written Question:**

**Senator Waters asked:**

Is it correct that the amount of suspended sediment in the waters of the Great Barrier Reef due to remobilisation from dredging is similar to the amount of sediment coming from the GBR catchment rivers, what effect is that additional sediment load likely to be having on the GBR?

- a. Has GBRMPA assessed the extent to which this additional sediment will undermine the improvements in runoff achieved through Reef Rescue? (please detail findings and/or any relevant documents) If not, please advise why not, and when such as assessment will occur?
- b. Is the proposal for GBRMPA to charge for dumping of dredge spoil within the GBR Marine Park still being progressed in any way? If so please provide details.

**Answer:**

Both dredge spoil and sediments in runoff contain fine sediments that affect water quality, they are similar in some respects but not easily comparable in either their geographic scale or potential impacts.

Dredge activity is relatively local (refer *2013 Scientific Consensus Statement – Land use impacts on Great Barrier Reef Water Quality and ecosystem condition*) and affects the immediate surroundings. The environmental impact assessment of dredge activities should also consider impacts on sensitive receptor sites, such as coral reefs and seagrass beds, downstream of any plume of finer sediments. Catchment runoff is a diffuse source problem affecting about 2/3 of the entire coastal area of the Great Barrier Reef during the wet season.

The primary impact from dredging is suspended finer sediments whereas one of the greatest risks from catchment run-off is from nitrogen discharge associated with crown-of-thorns starfish outbreaks and their destructive effects on coral reefs (2013 Scientific Consensus Statement).

- (a) Reef Rescue aims to provide enduring improvements to the quality of water entering the Great Barrier Reef World Heritage Area through the permanent reduction in loads of nutrients, sediments and pesticides. While dredging activities adversely impact on water quality for a period of time, they don't prevent the achievement of Reef Plan targets for reduction of sediment loads.
- (b) The Great Barrier Reef Marine Park Authority has not been asked to update or give any advice on the 2012 proposal to introduce a levy on dredge spoil disposal, noting that no decision was taken to introduce such a levy at that time.

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**Program: Agency:** GBRMPA **Question No:** 183  
**Topic:** GBRMPA – EPBC assessments  
**Proof Hansard Page and Date** Written  
**or Written Question:**

**Senator Waters asked:**

With increased development on Queensland's coast, coupled with increasing threats to the Reef, is it correct that GBRMPA has been asked to advise on more developments being assessed under the EPBC Act over the last five years? Please provide details.

- a. Please also provide details of the staffing resources and other resources dedicated to providing this advice over that time (year by year).

**Answer:**

Since the *Environment Protection Biodiversity and Conservation Act 1999* (EPBC Act) came into effect the Great Barrier Reef Marine Park Authority (GBRMPA) has been required to advise the Australian Government on proposals in and around the Great Barrier Reef.

The GBRMPA does not track allocation of staff time to advise on EPBC assessments so this information is not readily available. It would be a substantial diversion of resources for the agency to attempt to answer this question.

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**Program: Agency:** GBRMPA **Question 184**  
**Topic:** GBRMPA – Abbot Point **No:**  
**Proof Hansard Page and Date** Written  
**or Written Question:**

**Senator Waters asked:**

It has been reported that some sort of offshore trestle loading facilities is being considered as an alternative to extensive dredging for the proposed port development at Abbott point – has GBRMPA done any research on the likely environmental impacts of such a development?

- a. Please outline the risks and impacts that would need to be assessed, including additional exposure to weather through offshore loading, coal dust impacts on the Reef.

**Answer:**

Consideration of alternatives and the reasons for selecting the preferred option and rejecting the alternatives was required as part of the environmental impact assessment process conducted by North Queensland Bulk Ports Pty Ltd.

For all activities that occur within the Great Barrier Reef Marine Park (Marine Park) the onus is on the applicant to establish the environmental impacts of a proposed operation. The Great Barrier Reef Marine Park Authority as managers of the Marine Park assess whether the proposed activity is acceptable in light of identified impacts.