



Conclusion

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## 29 Conclusion

Tourism investment is of critical importance to the Queensland economy. Tourism creates and sustains jobs, generates export revenue, strengthens and diversifies regional economies and provides opportunities for people to have nature based experiences.

White Horse Australia's proposal to redevelop the existing resort at Lindeman Island has been designed to protect the Outstanding Universal Values of the Great Barrier Reef World Heritage Area and set new standards in sustainable tourism. The proposal by White Horse Australia will create approximately 800 (gross) and 560 (net) (FTE) persons in the Mackay Region and will add \$480 million during construction to the Mackay Region's Gross Regional Product over a three year period. It will also generate a Net Present Value to community of between \$83 million and \$357 million. The project is consistent with key tourism policies in the *State Planning Policy, Mackay, Isaac and Whitsunday Regional Plan, Queensland Ecotourism Plan 2016 - 2020* and the *Mackay Destination Tourism Plan 2014 - 2020*.

The project has been determined to be a "Significant Project" pursuant to Section 26 of the *State Development and Public Works Organisation Act 1971* (SDPWO Act) due to the economic, social and environmental impacts associated with the project. The project has also been declared a "controlled action" under the provisions of the *Environmental Protection and Biodiversity Conservation Act 1999* due to potential impacts on matters of national environmental significance including the Great Barrier Reef World Heritage Area, the Great Barrier Reef Marine Park, Great Barrier Reef National Heritage Place, listed threatened species, threatened ecological communities and migratory species. This EIS has assessed potential impacts on these matters of national environmental significance, as well as the project's other environmental, social, economic and cultural values. It has included an assessment of baseline conditions and potential impacts or risks, including direct, indirect and cumulative impacts. The hierarchy adopted in the EIS for managing likely impacts has been avoidance, minimisation, mitigation and lastly the offset any residual impacts.

The proposed masterplan layout seeks to revitalise an existing tourism asset and represents the redevelopment of an existing tourism node that first commenced operations in 1928. The existing resort is focussed on the south-western corner of Lindeman Island with accommodation housed in 14 wings with a central facilities building adjacent to Home Beach. The existing reception facilities, Nicholson's Restaurant, conference rooms and staff accommodation are located on the plateau above the resort at Home Beach. All service areas including power generation plant, sewage treatment works, water filtration and general maintenance, fuel stores and back of house facilities are located on the plateau. A grassed unlicensed airstrip is also situated on the plateau. Sea access is currently gained from a jetty and a concrete boat ramp adjacent to the resort. All services and facilities are in need of an upgrade due to cyclonic damage the obsolete nature of the accommodation and ageing plant and equipment.

An assessment of alternative options for the resort redevelopment identified that current masterplan layout which proposes the demolition of existing buildings and three new resorts, an upgraded runway, ecotourism facilities and a new safe harbour is the preferred option, as it will provide the greatest social, economic and environmental benefits and will deliver a critical level of facilities and experiences needed to attract visitors. However, following the commencement of the Great Barrier Reef Marine Park Authority's (GBRMPA) Dredging Coral Reef Habitat Policy (2016), further impacts on Great Barrier Reef coral reef habitats from yet more bleaching, and the recent impacts from Tropical Cyclone Debbie, the proponent no longer seeks assessment and approval to construct a safe harbour at Lindeman Island. Instead the proponent seeks approval for

upgrades to the existing jetty and additional moorings in sheltered locations around the island to enable the resort's marine craft to obtain safe shelter under a range of wind and wave conditions.

The resort layout has been comprehensively ground-truthed and iteratively refined to minimise impacts on matters of national environmental significance with development prioritised in existing disturbed areas. In areas outside the current development disturbance area, the masterplan layout has been informed by detailed site surveys including an analysis of significant vegetation, coral communities, steep or visually prominent areas and areas prone to natural hazards. In some areas the siting of essential infrastructure such as the airstrip will have unavoidable impacts. The creation of an airstrip which meets air safety requirements will necessitate the clearing of 1.5 hectares of Commonwealth listed Broad Leaf Tea Tree (*Melaleuca viridiflora*) threatened ecological community and 5.14 hectares of the equivalent State listed community (RE 8.3.2). The project will also result in disturbance to 4.19 hectares of State listed native grassland (RE 8.12.13). In order to address these residual impacts environmental offsets under Commonwealth and State legislation are proposed.

**Addendum:** This EIS was initially prepared assuming that the safe harbour was to be part of the Lindeman Great Barrier Reef Resort Project. With the commencement of the Great Barrier Reef Marine Park Authority's (GBRMPA) Dredging Coral Reef Habitat Policy (2016), further impacts on Great Barrier Reef coral reef habitats from yet more bleaching, and the recent impacts from Tropical Cyclone Debbie, the proponent no longer seeks assessment and approval to construct a safe harbour at Lindeman Island. Instead the proponent seeks assessment and approval for upgrades to the existing jetty and additional moorings in sheltered locations around the island to enable the resort's marine craft to obtain safe shelter under a range of wind and wave conditions. Accordingly, remaining references to, and images of, a safe harbour on various figures and maps in the EIS are no longer current.

## 29.1 Recommendations

It is a recommendation of this EIS that the project be approved as:

- The project has been designed to minimise impacts on the outstanding universal values of the Great Barrier Reef World Heritage Area and all other matters of national and state environmental significance;
- The project has been amended to avoid impacts on coral habitat and seagrass, with a safe harbour no longer proposed to provide marine access to the resort;
- The project avoids impacts on the Littoral Rainforest and Coastal Vine Thickets of Eastern Australia threatened ecological community by locating development outside this community and ensuring appropriate buffer distances are maintained;
- The project will not have a significant impact on threatened or near threatened fauna species as none were observed during the fauna survey period;
- Environmental offsets are proposed to address the residual impacts to the native grassland community (State listed: 4.19 hectares) and the Broad Leaf Tea-Tree (*Melaleuca viridiflora*) threatened ecological community (Commonwealth: 1.5 hectares and State listed: 5.14 hectares);
- The project will result in significant economic and social benefits associated with tourism investment which is of critical importance to the Queensland economy following the downturn in the mining industry. The proposal by White Horse Australia will cost approximately \$583 million to construct and will create approximately 800 (gross) and 560 (net) (FTE) persons in the Mackay Region. It will also add \$480 million during construction to the Mackay Region's Gross Regional



Product over a three year period. It will also generate a Net Present Value to the community of between \$83 million and \$357 million;

- The proposal is consistent with key tourism policies included in the *State Planning Policy, Mackay, Isaac and Whitsunday Regional Plan, Queensland Ecotourism Plan 2016 - 2020* and the *Mackay Destination Tourism Plan 2014 – 2020*;
- The project will provide ecotourism opportunities consistent with the *Queensland Ecotourism Plan* through the provision of a National Park and Great Barrier Reef Education Centre (for guests and visitors) and glamping facilities within the National Park. It would also provide nature based experiences such as guided scuba diving;
- The project has been designed to limit impacts on aesthetic values of the Great Barrier Reef World Heritage Area by mitigating visual impacts of development through the siting of infrastructure, roads and buildings, use of appropriate building design, colour, texture, natural screening and landscaping;
- Buildings and infrastructure are sited and designed to minimise potential impacts from bushfire, storm tide inundation, erosion, flooding and dam break failure;
- The project will result in improved environmental performance associated with:
  - power generation using solar photovoltaic cells and diesel generation back up;
  - sewage treatment to Class A+ quality standard;
  - improvements to water quality through the installation of stormwater treatment devices;
  - climatically responsive design of buildings;
  - recycling/reuse of water;
  - the revegetation of some previously disturbed areas; and
  - pest species management to limit exotic species invasion and restoration of degraded habitats.
- Approval of the resort and the consequent investment will provide the financial means to ensure improvement and ongoing maintenance of water quality, pest management, bushfire and vegetation rehabilitation on Lindeman Island; and
- An over-arching Environmental Management Plan has been prepared to ensure environmental values protected and enhanced through construction and operation of the resort.