



MEDIA RELEASE

The Hon Peter Garrett MP

Minister for the Environment, Heritage and the Arts

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GREAT KEPPEL ISLAND RESORT IMPACTS NOT ACCEPTABLE

Environment Minister Peter Garrett has deemed a proposal for a tourist resort and facilities on Great Keppel Island *clearly unacceptable* under national environment law.

A decision that a project is *clearly unacceptable* is made when it is determined the proposal will have unacceptable impacts on nationally protected matters.

"I've looked closely at what's being proposed for the island and considered my department's recommendation, and I've concluded that a project of this size and density would lead to unacceptable impacts on the World Heritage and National Heritage values of the area including the Great Barrier Reef.

"The impacts on inshore coral communities, coastal wetlands, marine species, island flora and geological formations of a development of this huge scale would be simply too great—these are the very values that earned the area's world heritage status," Mr Garrett said.

"I believe these impacts could not be lessened or managed to an acceptable level and would permanently damage and degrade these values.

"The Great Barrier Reef is one of the world's most precious environments and brings billions of dollars to our economy each year.

"Just last month the Government released the Great Barrier Reef Outlook Report which clearly identifies climate change, catchment runoff, loss of coastal habitats and fisheries management as key challenges facing the Reef.

"That report specifically identified coastal development and the pressures placed on the wider Great Barrier Reef ecosystem as challenges that have to be carefully and rigorously managed.

"I'm certainly not opposed to appropriate development of our tourist icons, but I am responsible for ensuring that development proceeds in a manner that is consistent with our obligations to protect the World Heritage area for present and future generations to enjoy. These responsibilities are enshrined in our national environmental law, and in applying that law I have determined that this proposal would have unacceptable impacts on the very natural and heritage values that make this region so unique.

"In making my decision I also took into account a study carried last year by the Queensland EPA which recommended that the area in question be retained in an undeveloped state and designated as a Protected Area under Queensland legislation."

"The proponent is welcome to submit an alternative proposal in the future which does not have this level of impact on those values and I would certainly welcome that."

The GKI Resort Pty Ltd proposal includes a 300-room hotel and day spa, 1700 resort villas, 300 Resort Apartments, a 560 Berth marina and yacht club, ferry terminal, retail village, golf course and sporting oval.

It was referred to the department on 22 September 2009 to determine whether it needed to undergo the federal environmental assessment and approval process.

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