

Dear Members of the World Heritage Committee,

We write to you as CEOs of Australia's leading non-governmental environmental organisations about UNESCO's draft decision to recommend inscribing the Great Barrier Reef on the List of World Heritage in Danger and to develop corrective measures addressing climate change and poor water quality.

Together, we represent over 4 million Australians who love the Great Barrier Reef and are grateful for UNESCO's leadership in overseeing the protection and conservation of this globally important natural wonder.

The science is clear: the Great Barrier Reef is in danger from rising sea temperatures and ocean acidification, driven by increasing greenhouse gas emissions. While parts of the Great Barrier Reef remain beautiful, we cannot understate the existential threat from climate change, with substantial coral loss in recent years from mass coral bleaching events in 2016, 2017 and 2020.

In addition, poor water quality continues to degrade inshore coral reefs and progress to achieve the Reef 2050 Plan water quality targets has been very slow.

We welcome the report's acknowledgement that a global average temperature rise of 1.5°C is a crucial threshold for coral reefs. Global leadership on climate change for the Great Barrier Reef must start with Australia - how else can we expect the world to act with the scale and urgency necessary to protect one of the world's most iconic World Heritage properties?


The Australian Government's own Great Barrier Reef Outlook Report 2019 downgraded the outlook for the Reef to very poor, predominantly from climate change. Although the Australian and Queensland Governments have made significant efforts to address local threats, more investment and faster progress needs to be made to meet the water quality targets in the Reef 2050 Plan.

The World Heritage Committee placing the Great Barrier Reef on the List of World Heritage in Danger must prompt decisive action from the Australian Government, united with the global community, to protect the Outstanding Universal Value of one of the most beautiful and biodiverse places on Earth.

Yours sincerely



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