

# **REGIONAL MARINE PLANNING IN AUSTRALIA - AN ECOSYSTEM BASED MANAGEMENT APPROACH**

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Australia's *Oceans Policy* was launched in 1998, the International Year of the Ocean. This policy promotes ecological sustainability of ocean resources by encouraging internationally competitive marine industries while protecting marine biological diversity. The policy also establishes a framework for integrated and ecosystem-based planning and management within Australia's marine jurisdictions, where ecosystem integrity and health are primary goals. A key initiative of Australia's *Oceans Policy* is the regional marine planning process, which is based on ecosystem characteristics rather than traditional jurisdictional boundaries. The first of these Regional Marine Plans covers ecosystems in the south-eastern waters of Australia, and will be launched by the Australian government at the end of 2003. A second plan is currently being developed for marine ecosystems in northern Australia. These Regional Marine Plans aim to integrate management decisions across sectors and jurisdictions, while ensuring the continued health and integrity of the ecosystem. As healthy marine ecosystems are essential for the long-term sustainability of marine industries, Australia advocates an ecosystem-based approach to managing human activities in the oceans as a way to achieving ecological sustainability of ocean resources.