



## MEDIA RELEASE

### **\$10 million boost to create island climate refuges for Great Barrier Reef turtles, seabirds and other residents**

Business and government have announced their support for a Great Barrier Reef Foundation initiative to establish a network of climate change refuges to protect critical habitats and species across five Great Barrier Reef islands.

Leading property and infrastructure company Lendlease will invest \$5 million over 10 years and the Australian Government will match that investment dollar for dollar to complete the ambitious \$14 million program that began with a significant philanthropic donation and matched funding support from the Queensland Government.

The announcement is being made at a special meeting with His Royal Highness The Prince of Wales who is visiting the Great Barrier Reef today to learn firsthand how Australian corporate and government leaders are rallying to address the threats facing coral reefs.

Lendlease Group Chief Executive and Managing Director Steve McCann today reaffirmed Lendlease's commitment to sustainability via a \$5 million 10-year partnership with Great Barrier Reef Foundation for its Reef Islands Initiative.

"As one of our planet's greatest natural wonders, the Great Barrier Reef, and the biodiversity it supports, occupy a unique place in the hearts and minds of Australians and people around the world.

"Preserving this iconic natural wonder for future generations requires a high degree of collaboration between government and the private sector – and we stand ready to contribute our skills and resources to assist. The new partnership is a natural extension of our long-held philosophy of leaving something positive behind for future generations.

Great Barrier Reef Foundation Managing Director Anna Marsden said protecting and restoring the Great Barrier Reef's most precious land and sea scapes in the face of climate change is a priority, especially in light of the current pressures facing the Reef.

"Islands are a critical part of the whole Great Barrier Reef ecosystem and play a key role in the life cycle of so many species of flora and fauna, from turtles, dugongs and fish, to seabirds, corals and so many more," Ms Marsden said.

"Both global climate change and local threats are impacting Great Barrier Reef islands and the animals that depends on them, and these impacts are only projected to increase into the future. We have to act now to ensure the most critical climate refuges are maintained and indeed future proofed against whatever might come their way," she said.

"By working to restore and protect these island refuges, we're essentially creating a series of 'arks' to help our precious Reef wildlife and plants to survive in an increasingly challenging environment.

"Lady Elliot Island, the site of today's announcement, is home to the most amazing array of seabirds, turtles, manta rays, dolphins, sharks and coral reefs. It's one of five Great Barrier Reef islands we've prioritised for urgent action based on an assessment of biodiversity, conservation value, and threat level to these values carried out by Queensland Parks and Wildlife and the Great Barrier Reef Marine Park Authority.

"We are absolutely delighted to have Lendlease and the Australian Government join us in supporting this quest which means that we can now accelerate the project and extend the on-ground restoration and conservation to other island habitats across the Great Barrier Reef.

“We will work closely with the Great Barrier Reef Marine Park, Queensland Parks and Wildlife and others to identify the next priority islands and will announce these in coming months once the assessments are completed.

“Climate change is the number one threat facing the Great Barrier Reef today and the Reef Islands Initiative will improve the ability of some of the most important places on the Reef to withstand and survive our changing climate.”

Minister for the Environment and Energy Josh Frydenberg welcomed the initiative.

“This is a great example of how government and non-government organisations are coming together to ensure we remain world leaders in Reef management and, more importantly, to protect the future health of this World Heritage listed treasure and vital economic driver for Australia,” Minister Frydenberg said.

UK-based Australian philanthropist Stephen Fitzgerald donated \$AUD 1 million to establish the Reef Islands Initiative along with a further \$AUD 3 million commitment from the Queensland Government.

The Reef Islands Initiative will build on the success of the Raine Island Recovery Project, which is restoring the world’s largest green turtle hatchery, through a program of on-ground restoration and conservation actions that will boost the resilience of these ‘must-have’ island ecosystems and provide critical alternative habitat for seabirds, turtles, corals and other terrestrial and marine species.

A tailored program will be developed for each island habitat in consultation with experts. Individual project elements could include developing detailed resilience and habitat maps for the island and its adjoining coral reefs, climate change impact modelling, piloting novel monitoring technologies such as acoustics, drones, under and above water automated vehicles, thermal imaging, and machine learning, on-ground adaptation and restoration activities, and carbon mitigation.

Reef Islands is an initiative of the Great Barrier Reef Foundation, supported by funding from Lendlease, the Australian Government, the Queensland Government and the Fitzgerald Family Foundation.

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**Great Barrier Reef Foundation** – the lead charity dedicated exclusively to protecting the Great Barrier Reef through funding projects grounded in science, technology engineering and on-ground action to ensure its long-term conservation. The Foundation is uniquely positioned to lead the collaboration of business, science, government and philanthropy to deliver projects that fill gaps and accelerate the results needed to make a positive impact for the Great Barrier Reef and reefs globally.