

#ReefReels

BACKGROUND FOR FILMMAKERS

OVERVIEW

GetUp is a member driven, grassroots organisation campaigning for a more progressive Australia.

GetUp members decide the issues the movement campaigns on and one of their top priorities is the Great Barrier Reef.

GetUp members have continued to step up their action to save the Reef:

- 265,115 Australians have signed a petition calling on the Federal Environment Minister to protect the Great Barrier Reef.
- They successfully lobbied the previous government to conduct an independent inquiry into the damage done to the World Heritage site at Gladstone.
- When dredging and dumping at Abbot Point on the Great Barrier Reef was approved, the response was like nothing we'd ever seen. 17,500 GetUp members chipped in their own money and funded two separate legal cases, both are currently in court.
- 30,000 people have written to Federal Environment Minister Greg Hunt, hundreds more calling his office and talkback radio.
- They ran a full-page ad in the Financial Times across Europe, targeting Deutsche Bank, the international bank considered most likely to fund Abbot Point, until they committed not to fund the project.
- Then they turned to social media and lobbied the Royal Bank of Scotland, Barclays and HSBC who also committed not to fund the projects.

BACKGROUND OF THE CAMPAIGN

The Great Barrier Reef is the world's largest coral reef system, wonder of the world, listed World Heritage site and a globally iconic environment.

The Reef is being seriously damaged right now and faces a major new threat from industrial developments. Given the damage and threat the World Heritage Commission, comprising 25 nations, has issued serious warnings to Australia and in June 2015 will vote on whether or not to list it as 'in danger'. The main threats to the Reef are climate change, coral bleaching, pollution, overfishing and industrialization.

With the emergence of a major new threat, the industrialisation of the Reef for fossil fuel exports, environment groups are running major campaigns. The fossil fuel developments are seen as a major imminent threat, specifically:

- 5 new mega-ports are planned for construction along the Great Barrier Reef coastline, including the construction of the world's largest coal port at Abbot Point - just 50km from the popular tourist destination the Whitsunday Islands.
- These developments will require the dredging and dumping of millions of tonnes of seabed and rock inside the Great Barrier Reef World Heritage Area.
- Destroying and degrading the breeding and feeding grounds of some of the world's most threatened marine species, including whales, dolphins, turtles and dugongs.

CAMPAIGN OBJECTIVES

If we don't stop them now they will lock in the fate of the Reef given that they pose both a direct impact in terms of shipping threats, pollution and development but also because of the enormous scale of the fossil fuel developments which would worsen climate change. The majority of the public want to see governments move to:

- Prohibit industrialisation in undeveloped and sensitive coastal areas.
- Ensure no new ports and best practice for existing ports.
- Deliver large investment in Reef restoration and management programs.
- Achieve best practice shipping.
- Ensure the finance sector globally doesn't fund these coal ports and mines.

PUBLIC UNDERSTANDING

There is typically high recognition of World Heritage listing / branding and this is something people think should be respected. People don't think industrialisation should be occurring in World Heritage Areas.

While people demand protection for the Reef, they're torn, with strong views about the importance of the economic value of mining.

While climate change is a key risk for the Reef, many Australians remain unconvinced and in relation to the Reef, climate change raises confusion and questions about how it's caused, who is to blame and what should be done.

- In general people are surprised about the scale of existing industrialisation and shipping that occurs on and through the Reef.
- When informed of the speed, scale and impact of proposed fossil fuel developments along the Reef, people are shocked.

- People expect the government to protect the Reef but have little confidence they will.
- The mining industries have made their interest synonymous with the national interest. However, the tourism industry is a major economic driver and employs tens of thousands of people.

The polling and focus group research leads us to a clear frame for messaging: *A strong economy depends on a healthy environment.*

This approach reinforces that protecting the environment is a winner economically and cuts through the wedge of jobs versus environment.

In addition to environment groups, people with a professional interest in the environment are recognised as credible spokespeople i.e. scientists, tourism operators.

FRAMING THE PROBLEM

- People love the Great Barrier Reef but many are unaware of the great threats it faces from industrialisation to support the mining industry.
- The Queensland Government has removed the environmental protection put in place over generations, and is fast-tracking these fossil fuel developments without proper checks for the damage they can do to a **\$6 billion tourism industry which employs over 70,000 people** and a way of life for many Queenslanders.
- The Australian Government has a responsibility to protect the Reef, and if the Queensland Government can't manage it, the Federal Government must step in, take control and stop the port developments.

IMMEDIATE CHALLENGES

In June 2015 the World Heritage Committee meets to decide whether or not to list the Great Barrier Reef as endanger. In the lead up to that decision investors will be asked to fund the mines and ports that threaten the Reef and the government will need to act to save the Reef. If they don't the Reef will be listed as endangered. The immediate impact will be on the tourism industry, which employs 60,000 people and generates \$7B in economic activity for Australian every year, ongoingly. Not to mention what it means for the environment.

There are two immediate challenges. Firstly, to ensure that Australian's understand the full implications of the threats and their urgency, as well as what can be done about it. Secondly, to ensure that the Reef becomes a global issue as it is the global community who will decide its fate, whether it is the 25 nations who currently make up the World Heritage Committee or the banks and investors who are being asked to funds the projects that threaten the Reef.