

CHAPTER 3

THE NORTHERN PLANNING AREA

Planning is now underway in the Northern Planning Area (figure 2). The Northern Planning Area covers about 800 000 km² of water off the Northern Territory and Queensland coasts, and includes the Torres Strait, the Gulf of Carpentaria and eastern Arafura Sea (to a line 133°23' east, which coincides with the Goulburn Islands). Maps in this Atlas are of the Northern Planning Area. The Northern Planning Area covers a significant proportion of the Northern Marine Region.

The Northern Planning Area is a region of great diversity in its land and sea scapes, its biodiversity and its people. It is an area of rich Indigenous cultural diversity but with a sparse population, located chiefly in isolated communities. Its main industries are fishing and mining, but compared with much of Australia's marine domain, it is economically largely undeveloped.

Marine planning in the Torres Strait is being considered as part of a separate process and was not covered by the arrangements agreed between the Queensland and Australian Governments for scoping the northern marine planning process. This is in recognition of the distinct ecological, cultural and institutional arrangements that characterise the Torres Strait.

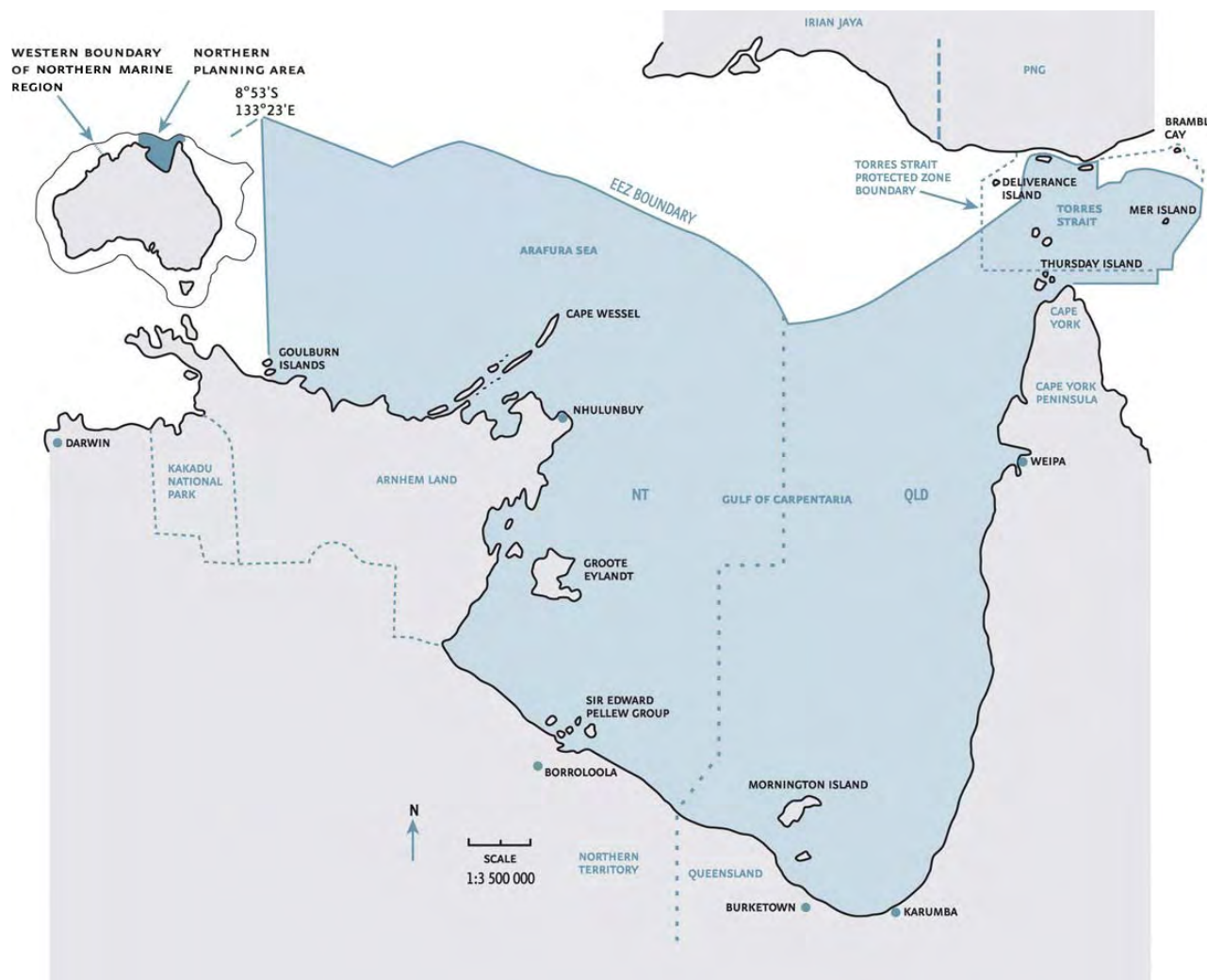
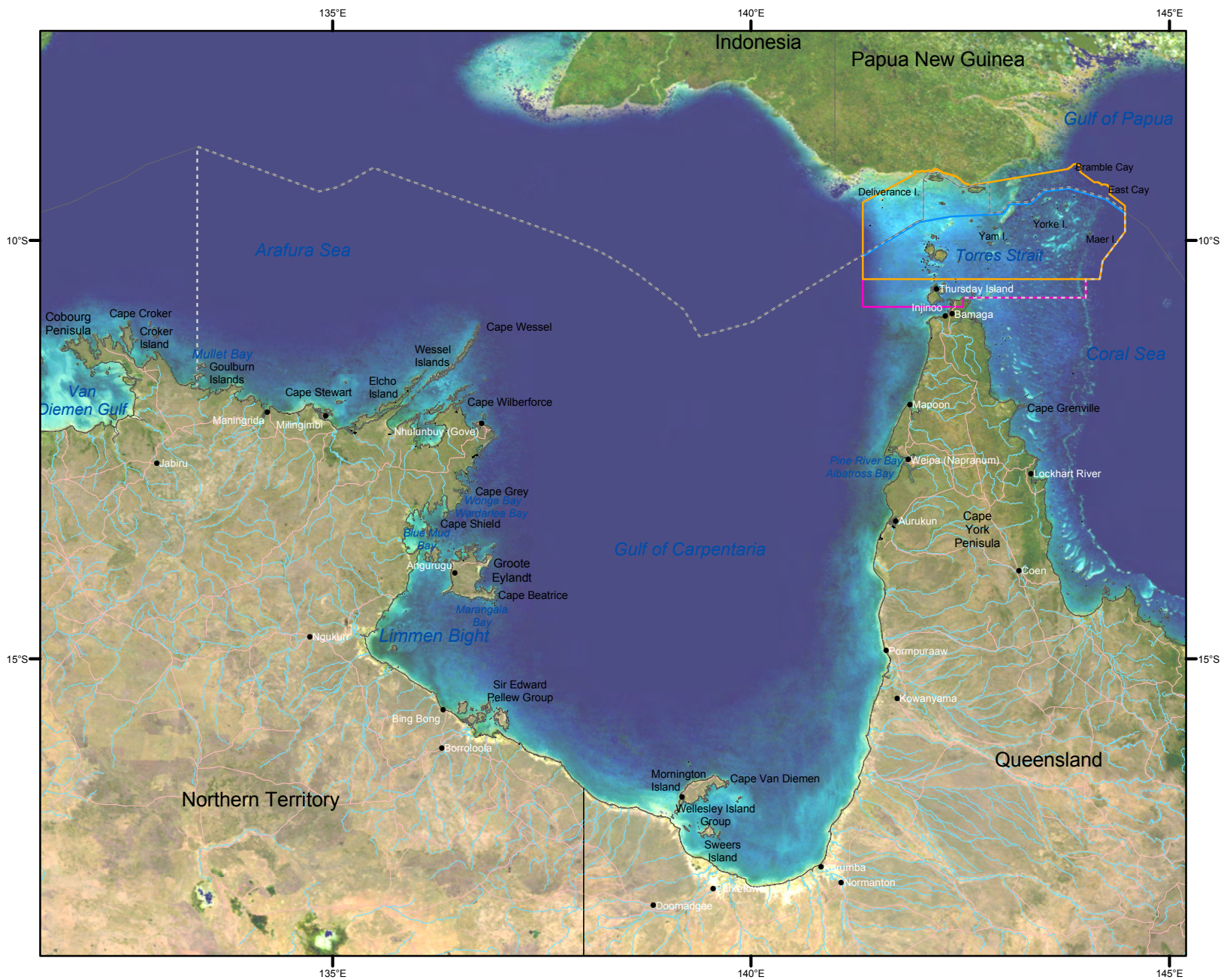


Figure 2: Indicative map of the Northern Planning Area

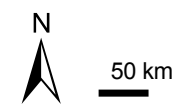


Map 1A - The Northern Planning Area Satellite Overview
MODIS satellite imagery mosaic. NASA Earth Observatory.



This map uses a mosaic of data from the MODIS (Moderate Resolution Imaging Spectroradiometer) sensor aboard the Earth Observer System satellites operated by NASA. The imagery is in the visible wavelengths and has quite good water penetration. The generally shallow nature of the Area can be seen, with coral reefs in eastern Torres Strait, mud and sand bottoms visible far offshore and some evidence of paleo river channels in the south eastern Gulf. This environment is a major determinant of the types of fisheries that are prevalent in the Area.

- Torres Strait Protected Zone
- Outside but near Area
- Australian Seabed Jurisdiction
- Northern Planning Area
- rivers
- roads



Data Sources:
Satellite: Modis mosaic, NASA, Earth Observatory.
Terrestrial features: Australian Land Information Group.

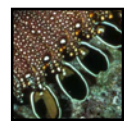
Cartography and digital compilation:
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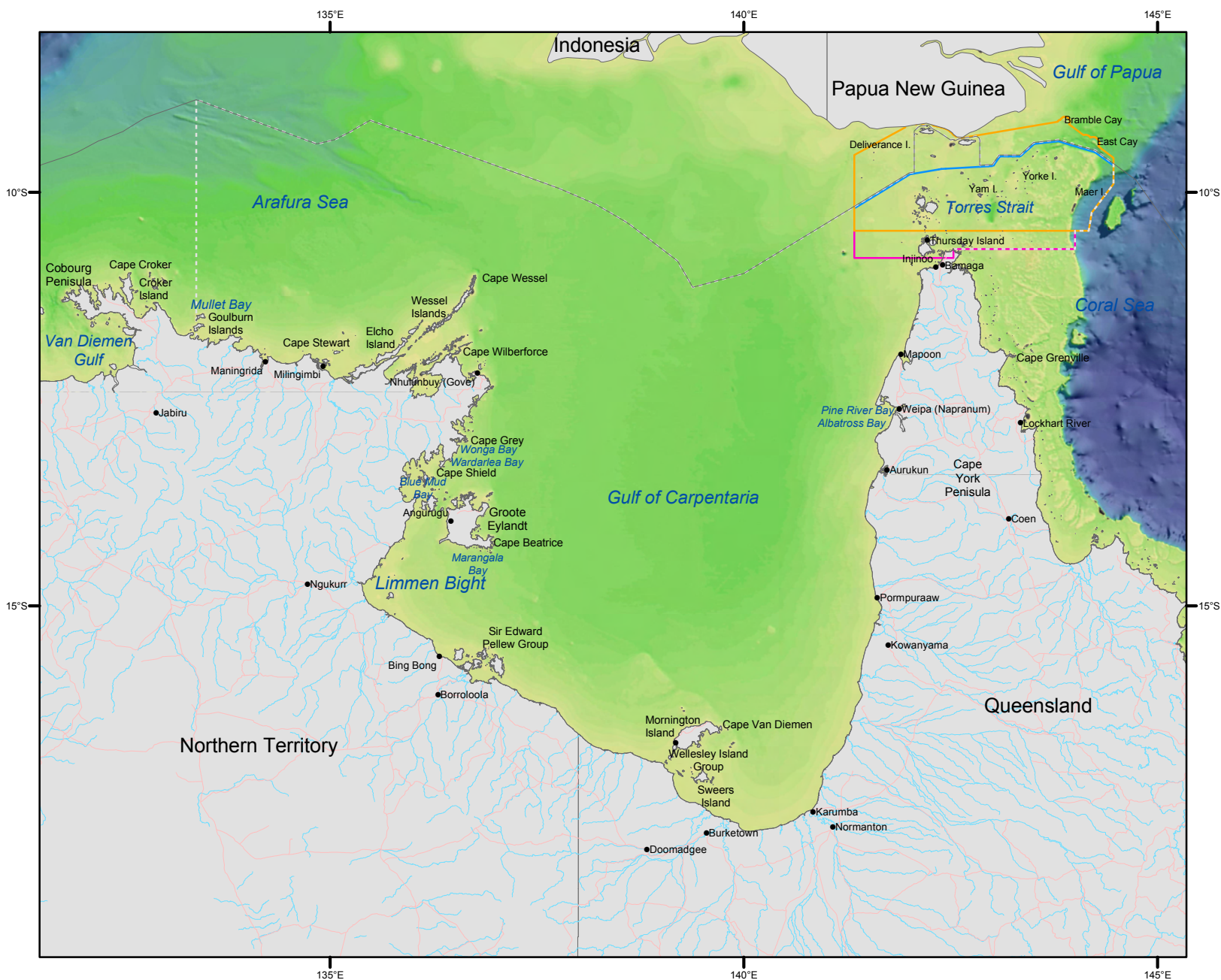
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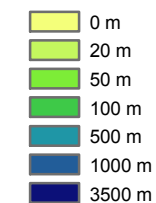


Map 1B - The Northern Planning Area Bathymetry

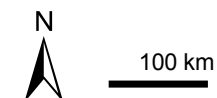
One kilometre bathymetric mapping.



This map illustrates the bathymetry or water depth across the Northern Planning Area. The great majority of the Area is continental shelf waters of less than 100 meters depth (yellow to green). The only exceptions are in the north west Arafura Sea that shoals down to 200 metres, and the continental slope in eastern Torres Strait where depths exceed 1000 meters.



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Terrestrial features: Australian Land Information Group.

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