

Valuing protection of the Great Barrier Reef with choice modelling by management policy options

John Rolfe and Jill Windle

Abstract:

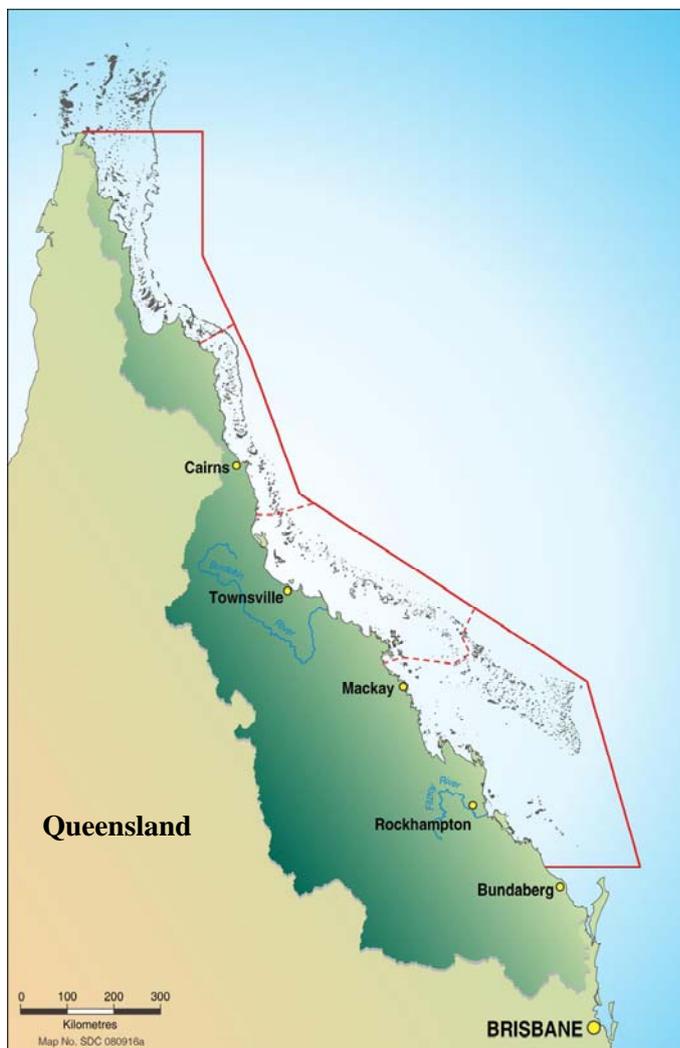
In this paper the results of a choice modelling experiment to value increased protection of the Great Barrier Reef in Australia is reported. The valuation experiment that has been conducted is novel in two important ways. First, different management policies to increase protection have been included as labels in the choice experiment to test if the mechanisms to achieve improvements are important to respondents. Second, the level of certainty associated with predicted reef health has been included as an attribute in the choice profiles, helping to distinguish between outcomes of different management policies. The results show that protection values are sensitive to whether protection will be generated by improving water quality entering the reef, increasing conservation zones or reducing greenhouse gas emissions, and the level of certainty of outcomes. The average household willingness to pay for five years for each additional 1% of protection is approximately \$26.37 when the broad management options to generate improvements were included in the choice sets. These results can be extrapolated to a total value held by Queensland households of \$132.8M to \$171.5M per 1% improvement, depending on the assumptions used about the discount rate.

Paper presented at the BioEcon conference, Venice, 27-28th of September, 2010.

1. Introduction

The protection of the Great Barrier Reef (GBR) is a major policy issue in Australia because of its iconic status and international significance. The area of approximately 35 million hectares (Figure 1) is protected by the Australian and Queensland Governments as a marine park, and has had World Heritage site status since 1981. While the GBR remains one of the most healthy coral reef ecosystems in the world, its condition has declined significantly since European settlement and the overall resilience of the reef has been reduced (GBRMPA 2009). The Australian and Queensland Governments have been investing significant effort to avoid current and future declines in condition of the GBR. Examples of increased protection measures include the increase in conservation zones to 33% of the reef in 2004, on-going measures to reduce commercial fishing in the reef, the Reef Rescue program to improve water quality entering the reef lagoon, and proposals to limit the emissions of greenhouse gases. These initiatives have public and private costs, so a key policy issue is to identify whether the benefits of increased protection measures outweigh the level of costs incurred.

Figure 1. Great Barrier Reef



Source: Great Barrier Reef Marine Park Authority

Specialist non-market valuation techniques are required to assess the community or public benefits of increased protection measures because of the non-use values involved. The choice

modelling technique is suited to the estimation of values for environmental protection where a range of potential protection scenarios can be involved and where several attributes can be used to represent complex situations (Bennett and Blamey 2001). A major challenge in the application of the choice modelling technique to reef protection measures is to condense the important issues into scenarios that are relevant to the wider community. A key factor is the amount of the GBR that will remain in good condition into the future under different protection scenarios. The choice of policy mechanisms may also be important (Johnston and Duke 2007, Czajkowski and Hanley 2009), with the level of support sometimes sensitive to measures such as controls over fishing or agricultural practices. The certainty associated with policy outcomes may also influence support levels (Roberts et al. 2008, Wielgus et al. 2009), with higher support expected for mechanisms that lead to larger, more certain and quicker improvements in reef protection.

The protection of the GBR is a major policy issue in Australia because of its iconic status and international significance. In this research project three broad policy options to improve protection were identified from the 2009 GBR outlook report (GBRMPA 2009): increasing conservation zones in marine areas, improving water quality flowing into the lagoon area, or reducing greenhouse gas emissions. As protection measures are hotly debated among different interest groups in Australia, it is likely that preservation values would be dependent on both the levels of protection involved and the mechanisms used to achieve it. The policy mechanisms involved have very different outcomes on reef protection, necessitating the inclusion of additional information about the certainty of outcomes to make the choice scenarios more realistic.

The research outlined in this paper involved a series of choice modelling applications to valuing improved protection of the GBR. A sample of households in Brisbane, the state capital, have been surveyed to generate estimates of willingness to pay (WTP) for increased protection of the GBR and to test how those values may be sensitive to different policy options and outcome certainty. This stated preference study is unique in that it involves scenarios about environmental protection being framed in terms of both policy management options and information about outcome certainty. The results show that both of these framing elements have significant influences on value estimates. There is currently very limited information about non-use values associated with the protection of the GBR (Hundloe et al. 1987, Windle and Rolfe 2005, Oxford Economics 2009), so this research also addresses an important policy gap.

The paper is structured as follows. Previous literature is reviewed in the next section, followed by a description of the design of the choice modelling experiment in section three. Results of the choice experiments are provided in section four, and discussion and conclusions follow in the final section.

2. Previous studies

2.1 Valuation studies

There is a very small pool of economic valuation studies for the GBR, most of which have focused on the value of commercial activities such as recreation and the commercial impacts that changes in condition would generate (e.g. Driml 1994, Access Economics 2005). These approaches are not suitable for inclusion in cost-benefit analysis, as they do not measure

economic values, do not include the value of non-market impacts, and are typically one year snapshots (Oxford Economics 2009). It is more appropriate to use a Total Economic Value (TEV) approach, where economic valuation methods are used to identify how much people would be willing to pay to visit and to protect the reef and to preserve it for future generations (Oxford Economics 2009).

The focus of the limited pool of valuation studies has been to estimate values for recreation activities on the GBR, and the sensitivity of those values to future changes in environmental conditions. The travel cost method has been used to estimate values for recreation use (e.g. Hundloe et al. 1987 (reported in Driml 1994), Carr and Mendelsohn 2003, Kragt et al. 2009) and recreational fishing (e.g. Blamey and Hundloe 1993, Prayaga et al. 2010). Consumer surplus estimates per visitor vary from \$166 per trip for fishing (Prayaga et al. 2010) and \$184 per trip for diving (Kragt et al. 2009) to \$600 - \$1500 for all activities (Carr and Mendelsohn 2003). Both Kragt et al. (2009) and Prayaga et al. (2010) also report contingent behaviour models where future reductions in environmental conditions and recreation experiences would significantly reduce visitation rates and recreation values.

There is a smaller pool of studies that report non-use values for protection of the GBR. Hundloe et al. (1993) report the use of a contingent valuation survey to estimate non-use protection values held by the national population at \$62.3 Million in 1986 dollars. Windle and Rolfe (2005) estimated values for a 1% improvement in the health of a local inshore area of the GBR (the Fitzroy estuary) to be an average of \$3.21 per household per year (in 2003 dollars). In the absence of any more accurate or recent studies, Oxford Economics (2009) combined and extrapolated the results of Hundloe et al. (1993) and Windle and Rolfe (2005) to estimate non-use values of \$15.2 Billion for the GBR as a whole. However this estimate is unlikely to be useful for policy purposes because of the dated source studies, the large number of assumptions involved in the extrapolation of values, and the focus on estimating the total rather than marginal value of the GBR.

2.2 Designing choice modelling experiments

A key challenge in CM experiments is to summarise policy situations into a representative set of attributes. The need to avoid complexity in the description of the status quo and improvement scenarios to respondents is one key reason why information about both management policy scope and certainty of outcomes are rarely included in choice sets. A researcher typically has some discretion over the number of choice alternatives and choice sets in a CM experiment (Bennett and Blamey 2000). Options to make choice sets more realistic by including more alternatives, attributes, levels and labels have to be balanced against the desire to minimise choice complexity (Caussade et al. 2005).

Other reasons why management policy measures are rarely included as variables in choice sets is that in many CM experiments the wider policy context is consistent across choice scenarios, and that policy options creates issues of potential interactions and causal relationships, which can complicate description, performance and analysis stages. Labelled alternatives are a more appropriate mechanism than attributes for incorporating management policy scope into choice sets. A label is different from other attributes because it is independent from all the elements of the good, with responses depending on participant perceptions (Czajkowski and Hanley 2009) or emotional connection (Blamey et al. 2000) with the label.

The use of labelled alternatives means that levels for each attribute can be tailored to the relevant label, helping to represent case study scenarios more accurately. Czajkowski and Hanley (2009) found that using management policy labels provided respondents with important information about the way in which the environmental good is provided, leading to a significant increase in the scope sensitivity of welfare measures. On the other hand, labelled alternatives may increase cognitive burden for respondents, leading to their use in a form of choice heuristic. Blamey et al. (2000) reported that the inclusion of policy labels appeared to shift respondents' attention from the attributes to the labels, but they found no significant differences in the welfare estimates.

Greater attention has begun to be paid to the potential use of information about certainty in choice experiments. Most of the focus has been on respondent uncertainty in choice situations (e.g. Hanley et al 2009, Lundhede 2009), and the subsequent impacts on model estimation. There are two main reasons why it may be important to incorporate information about outcome certainty into the design of choice experiments. First, it may generate a more accurate depiction of current situations, particularly for scenarios with different likelihoods of occurrence. Second, it may help to make some scenarios more realistic to respondents. These effects may generate very different choice responses and hence influence value estimates. It is likely that respondents will have higher values for management or preservation scenarios that have higher likelihood of success, so providing information about that likelihood can influence willingness to pay estimates.

Roberts et al. (2008) compared two CM split samples where in one sample, probabilities were attached to the environmental outcomes described in the attribute levels (eg. 10% chance of algae bloom). The results indicated lower WTP for low probability events related to water quality. Weiglus et al. (2009) used split samples of recreational anglers to determine the influence of providing framing information about the probability of occurrence of the valuation scenarios. The willingness to pay was approximately twice for the survey version where probability of occurrence was not mentioned compared to the two versions where the 60% and 90% levels were specified. The results indicate that information about certainty of outcomes has a significant impact on values.

3. The choice modelling case study

The current study is designed to address the gap in non-use values for the GBR and to avoid some of the technical issues that limited the application of the Hundloe et al. (1987) results reported in Oxford Economics (2009).

3.1 Selection of labels, attributes and levels

The main aim of the research reported in this paper was establish whether protection values for the GBR varied according to the type of management option implemented to achieve improvements. Pressures impacting on the condition of the GBR were identified as coming from three main sources (GBRMPA 2009):

- Land-based activities: Poor water quality comes mainly from agriculture, as well as from urban and industrial activities (Haynes et al. 2007; GBRMPA 2008).
- Ocean-based activities: These include the impacts of tourism, recreational use, fishing, and shipping (GBRMPA 2009).

- Natural events and climate change: This includes natural events, such as major flooding and cyclones and other events such as coral bleaching and outbreaks of the crown-of-thorns starfish. Climate change may lead to increased frequency of some events (Lough 2007, Garnaut 2008).

To reflect these pressures, three management options were included as labelled alternatives in the choice sets:

- improve water quality;
- increase conservation zones (within the GBR); and
- reduce greenhouse gas emissions.

The use of labelled alternatives allowed respondents to choose a preferred one when selecting potential protection measures for the GBR. There were a total of four policy alternatives offered in each choice set (Figure 2). The first was a constant base depicting the amount of the GBR expected to be in good condition in 25 years time under current policy settings and with no additional investment. Based on the predictions of Wolanski and De'ath (2005), Lough (2007) and Garnaut (2008) this was set at 65% of the GBR, down from approximately 90% in current times (Wolanski and De'ath 2005, GBRMPA 2009). The other labelled alternatives provided scenarios where protection of the GBR could be improved through additional investment.

Two key attributes were initially used in the choice sets to show the differences between the policy alternatives. The first described the amount of the GBR in good condition, using both percentage and area terms to convey the information. The second showed the level of cost associated with each improvement option, with the cost to be incurred annually for five years. A general payment vehicle was used where money could be paid through:

- increased taxes by Commonwealth or State governments,
- higher rate payments to local councils,
- higher prices for goods and services as farmers and businesses meet tighter environmental standards.

The inclusion of policy management options as labelled alternatives in the choice sets complicates the depiction of scenarios because the extent, timing and certainty of outcomes can be expected to vary across management options. This has been addressed in three important ways in this experiment. First, an additional attribute to represent the certainty of outcomes occurring has been added to the choice profiles to help distinguish between the policy alternatives. Inclusion of this attribute provides the additional advantage of assessing the value of improving outcome certainty. Second, respondents were provided with framing information about the time involved to generate improvements, with *Increasing Conservation Zones* delivering benefits within 3 – 5 years, *Improving Water Quality* delivering benefits within 10 – 15 years, and *Reducing Greenhouse Gas Emissions* delivering benefits after more than 25 years. Third, the levels used to describe each attribute in the choice sets were tailored to the management alternatives, (see Table 1 for details) as follows:

- improve water quality (WQ)
 - medium levels of improvement in GBR CONDITION
 - medium levels of CERTAINTY
 - medium levels of COST
- increase conservation zones (CZ)
 - lower levels of improvement in GBR CONDITION
 - higher levels of CERTAINTY

- lower levels of COST
- reduce greenhouse gases (GG)
 - higher levels of improvement in GBR CONDITION
 - lower levels of CERTAINTY
 - higher levels of COST

Designing the experiment in this way allowed the potential outcomes of the different alternatives to be summarised in a realistic way. For example, increasing conservation zones was an option that could generate improvements with high certainty at relatively low cost, but only limited gains were possible. In contrast, reducing greenhouse gas emissions has more potential to make larger improvements to the protection of the GBR, but is associated with higher cost and lower levels of certainty. The constant base option was assigned a certainty level of 80% to reflect the reality that this was only a prediction of the future outcome.

3.2 Experimental design and survey collection details

To test how the labelled alternatives might influence choice processes, a split-sample experiment was used with another unlabelled version of the survey collected at the same time. Both versions of the survey were identical apart from the labels in the choice sets. The assignment of attributes and levels across the different alternatives for both split samples is summarised in Table 1, while an example of the choice sets is shown in Figure 2.

Table 1. Attribute levels for choice alternatives

	Amount of GBR in good condition ¹²	Will it happen? Level of certainty	Cost
Option A Current trends	65% (225,000 sq km)	80%	\$0
Option B Improve water quality	68%, 72%, 76% (235,000, 249,000, 263,000 sq km)	50%, 60%, 70%	\$50, \$100, \$200, \$300
Option C Increase conservation zones	66%, 68%, 70%, (228,000, 235,000, 242,000 sq km)	75%, 80%, 85%	\$20, \$50, \$100, \$200
Option D Reduce greenhouse gases	75%, 80%, 85% (259,000, 276,000, 294,000 sq km)	10%, 20%, 40%	\$100, \$200, \$300, \$500
Unlabelled version Options B-D	70%, 75%, 80% (242,000, 259,000, 276,000 sq km)	30%, 60% 80%	\$50, \$100, \$200, \$500

¹ Amounts were presented in both percentage and absolute terms in the choice sets.

² The current situation was presented as 90% of the GBR being in good condition

Figure 2. Example choice sets

Whole GBR					
	Management	Amount of GBR in good condition	Will it happen?	Cost	Your choice
	 Option for particular focus	 Current condition: 90% in good condition (311,000 sq km) Condition in 25 years time	 Level of certainty	 How much you pay each year (5 years)	 Select one option only
Option A	Current trends	65% in good condition (225,000 sq km)	80%	\$0	<input type="checkbox"/>
Option B	Improve water quality	68% (235,000 sq km) = 3% improvement	60%	\$100	<input type="checkbox"/>
Option C	Increase conservation zones	66% (228,000 sq km) = 1% improvement	75%	\$50	<input type="checkbox"/>
Option D	Reduce greenhouse gases*	85% (294,000 sq km) = 20% improvement	40%	\$100	<input type="checkbox"/>

Whole GBR					
	Amount of GBR in good condition	Will it happen?	Cost	Your choice	
	 Current condition: 90% in good condition (311,000 sq km) Condition in 25 years time	 Level of certainty	 How much you pay each year (5 years)	 Select one option only	
Option A	65% in good condition (225,000 sq km)	80%	\$0	<input type="checkbox"/>	
Option B	70% (242,000 sq km) = 5% improvement	30%	\$100	<input type="checkbox"/>	
Option C	70% (242,000 sq km) = 5% improvement	80%	\$200	<input type="checkbox"/>	
Option D	80% (276,000 sq km) = 15% improvement	80%	\$500	<input type="checkbox"/>	

An efficient experimental design process over several stages was used in this experiment to maximise design efficiency. A test survey was initially run with focus group participants to develop a set of priors for each attribute. This was then used to create an efficient design using ©Ngene software. Once half the surveys had been collected, the data was analysed and the updated priors were then used to generate a new design for the second stage. The design for the labelled version had a D efficiency of 0.0035 and 0.00064 in the first and second rounds respectively. No improvements were required in the unlabelled survey version and the same design (D efficiency of 0.00019) was applied in both rounds.

The experimental designs required 12 choices sets to be collected. To avoid respondent fatigue, the designs were blocked into two sets so that each respondent was assigned a random block of six choice sets. The choice sets were contained within a questionnaire which included questions about the use and attitudes towards the GBR, framing information about the survey, the series of choice sets, followup questions, and requests for socio-demographic characteristics of respondents. The questionnaire and framing of the choice tradeoffs were developed with the aid of a series of focus groups held in Brisbane. The framing information reminded respondents that:

- The link to reduced impacts of climate change will depend on international reductions, not just reductions made by Australia.
- The benefits of reducing greenhouse gas emissions may be wide ranging and they should consider only the benefits for the GBR.

Both drop-off and collect and online (internet panel) collection methods were used in the main survey, with the latter method used exclusively in the last round of survey collection. The paper based surveys were collected to provide a check on the accuracy of the online responses. The survey was collected in Brisbane, the state capital, between August and December 2009.

3.3 Respondent characteristics

A total of 415 surveys were collected, including 160 online surveys and 92 drop-off and collect for the labelled split sample, and 162 online surveys for the unlabelled split sample. The paper-based survey yielded a high response rate of 91%. It was more difficult to estimate response rates for the online survey because of the two rounds of survey collection, several experiments being conducted concurrently, and the use of age and gender quotas. In the second round, emails were sent to 21,288 panelists and 2466 people (15%) responded before the target sample size was attained and the survey closed. After incomplete responses and quota effects were considered, a total of 1012 surveys were collected, giving an effective response rate of 5%. Only 16% of the online surveys were relevant to the two split sample experiments reported in this paper.

The socio-demographic characteristics of survey respondents were well aligned with those of the population (Table 2), apart from education levels which were higher for the sample than the population. There were also fewer people represented in the highest income category as well as the highest age category compared with the population.

Table 2. Respondent characteristics

		Survey sample	Population (ABS 2006 census)
Gender	Female	54%	50%
Children	Have children	68%	n/a
Age	18-29 years	20%	24%
	30-45 years	34%	31%
	46-65 years	35%	30%
	66-89 years	11%	16%
Average age	Details for online only	44 years	43 years
Education	Post school qualification	62%	56%
	Tertiary degree	35%	24%
Income	less than \$499 per week	14%	17%
	\$500 – \$799 per week	23%	18%
	\$800 – \$1199 per week	22%	21%
	\$1200 – \$1999 per week	27%	24%
	\$2000 or more per week	14%	21%

A third of respondents (35%) had never visited the GBR; with 25% having visited only once and 40% had visited it more than once. About 22% of respondents had been fishing on the GBR. The majority of respondents intended to visit the GBR in the future with 80% planning to visit the GBR in the next 5 years. About 26% thought they would visit the GBR in the next year, and 47% thought they would visit at least once in the next 5 years.

The majority of respondents (72%) thought the condition of the GBR had declined over the past 10 years and only 2% thought the condition had improved. This confirms that the framing of the choice experiment in terms of declining future condition under current policy settings is likely to be appropriate for the survey respondents.

4. Results

In this section the influence of the different management options is examined, first in terms of the outputs from the choice models and then in relation to other attitudinal data collected in the surveys.

4.1 Valuing improvements in environmental condition

The choice modelling experiment was designed to value improvements in the environmental condition of the GBR in the next 25 years and to examine the influence of changes in management policy scope on those values. Models were developed to compare the results from the labelled and the unlabelled versions of the survey. Two versions of each model were generated according to whether the attribute levels for improved GBR condition were analysed in terms of the percentage values or absolute values. Details of the model variables are presented in Table 3.

Table 3. Model variables

Main variables	Description
<i>Main attributes</i>	
COST	Annual payment for a 5-year period
GBR CONDITION	Amount of GBR in good condition (% and absolute amounts)
CERTAINTY	Level of certainty that stated outcome will occur (%)
<i>Management Options</i>	
SQ...	Prefix to denote management option: Current situation
WQ...	Prefix to denote management option: Improve water quality
CZ...	Prefix to denote management option: Increase conservation zones
GG...	Prefix to denote management option: Reduce greenhouse gases
ASC	Alternative specific constant
<i>Other variables</i>	
AGE	Age in years. Only categorical details (see Table 1 for details) were collected in the paper survey. The mid point of each category was applied.
GENDER	Male = 0; Female = 1
CHILDREN	Children = 1; no children = 2
EDUCATION	Coded from 1= primary to 5 = tertiary degree or higher
INCOME	Categories 1-5 (see Table 1 for details). The mid point of each category was used for analysis with an additional 25% added to the last category.

The choice data were analysed with mixed logit (random parameter) models (Table 4). While the effects of collection mode were tested for the labelled model, they are not included in these results to maintain consistency with the unlabelled models. Little significant difference in model results could be identified between the collection modes, supporting the results of Olsen 2009. This confirms that the online (internet panel) survey mode is generating equivalent results to the paper based survey mode¹.

¹ These tests between survey modes are detailed in a separate research report in this series.

Table 4. Mixed logit models for labelled and unlabelled survey versions

Variables	Model 1a. labelled % values		Model 1b. labelled Absolute values		Model 2a. unlabelled % values		Model 2b. unlabelled Absolute values	
	Coefficient	S.E.	Coefficient	S.E.	Coefficient	S.E.	Coefficient	S.E.
<i>Random parameters in utility functions</i>								
SQ_ASC					4.0946	3.7897	4.0946	3.7897
WQ_ASC	-4.2399***	1.0970	-4.2141***	1.0965				
CZ_ASC	-4.0749***	1.0625	-4.0514***	1.0623				
GG_ASC	-6.3322***	1.2292	-6.2747***	1.2271				
<i>Non Random parameters in utility functions</i>								
COST	-0.0062***	0.0005	-0.0062***	0.0005	-0.0040***	0.0004	-0.0040***	0.0004
GBR CONDITION	0.1639***	0.0172	0.0467***	0.0049	0.0707***	0.0160	0.0208***	0.0047
CERTAINTY	0.0150***	0.0055	0.0151***	0.0055	0.0235***	0.0032	0.0235***	0.0032
AGE	-0.0119	0.0090	-0.0119	0.0090	-0.0413	0.0370	-0.0413	0.0370
GENDER	-0.6322**	0.2613	-0.6322**	0.2613	-0.0349	1.0471	-0.0349	1.0471
CHILDREN	-0.2699	0.2241	-0.2699	0.2241	-0.3587	1.1749	-0.3587	1.1749
EDUCATION	-0.3492***	0.1204	-0.3493***	0.1204	-0.7529*	0.4142	-0.7529*	0.4142
INCOME	-0.1E-05***	0.4E-06	-0.1E-05***	0.4E-06	-0.1E-05	0.1E-05	-0.1E-05	0.1E-05
<i>Derived standard deviations of parameter distributions</i>								
SQ_ASC					5.1649***	0.6960	5.1649***	0.6960
WQ_ASC	2.2643***	0.1812	2.2636***	0.1812				
CZ_ASC	2.2761***	0.2108	2.2757***	0.2108				
GG_ASC	3.5707***	0.3799	3.5740***	0.3800				
Model statistics								
No of Observations	1500		1500		972		972	
Log L	-1580		-1580		-1003		-1003	
Halton draws	100		100		100		100	
Chi Sqrd	998		998		688		688	
McFaddon R-sqrd	0.2400		0.2400		0.2553		0.2553	

*** significant at 1%; ** significant at 5%; * significant at 10%

The ASCs associated with each labelled alternative (labelled model) and with the status quo alternative (unlabelled model) were randomised in the mixed logit models to maximise consistency across experiments. The socio-demographic variables were modelled to explain the choice of the status quo option. The results of the labelled and unlabelled models are compared in turn by the significance of the different variables and then the willingness-to-pay (WTP) estimates. Subsequently, more in-depth information is presented about the labelled version of the survey.

All models are significant (high chi squared values) and the three main attributes are all significant and signed as expected. Higher levels of GBR CONDITION and CERTAINTY and lower levels of COST are all preferred consistently across models. The significance of the derived standard deviations for CERTAINTY indicates there are high levels of preference heterogeneity. There is some difference in the significance of the socio-demographic variables in the two model versions suggesting that these variables may be more influential in the choice of different management options in the labelled version. The income variable always significant and signed as expected.

There is some difference in the significance of the socio-demographic variables across the two split-sample models, suggesting that these variables may be more influential in the choice of different management options in the labelled version. In the labelled model, females and people with higher education levels were more likely to select one of the management options. The income variable is significant and signed as expected in the labelled model, but is not significant in the unlabelled models. This might also suggest that respondents may take the valuation scenario more seriously, in terms of considering their

budgetary limitations, when provided with additional information about the way the improvements would be provided (different management options).

There is mixed evidence about the impact of labelled alternatives on choice complexity. Less frequent selection of the status quo option can be one indication of better understanding and familiarity (Boxall et al. 2009). In the labelled version of this experiment the status quo option was selected 26% of the time compared with a significantly higher rate (Pearson’s chi-squared crosstab at 1%) of 33% in the less complex unlabelled version, suggesting that complexity was lower in the labelled version. However, there is no significant difference between surveys in terms of serial nonparticipation (von Haefen et al. 2005) even though the proportion of respondents who always selected the status quo option in the labelled survey (15%) was lower than that for the unlabelled survey (20%).

Analysis of five followup questions after the choice sets suggests that the labelled survey was slightly more complex. Respondents in both surveys were generally confident about the choice they had made, understood the information, found the options credible and were not confused. However, respondents to the unlabelled survey gave more positive answer (significant chi-square tests) (Table 5), while respondents for the unlabelled survey found the choice sets slightly more confusing and required more information.

Table 5. Mean scores for choice set followup questions

Score from 1=strongly agree to 5= strongly disagree	Labelled survey	Unlabelled survey
a) I am confident that I made the correct choices	2.32	2.05
b) I understood the information in the questionnaire	2.28	1.83
c) I needed more information than was provided	3.14	3.38
d) I found the choice options to be credible	2.60	2.43
e) I found the choice options confusing	3.28	3.81

The WTP estimates for the models were calculated as the ratio of each attribute coefficient to the price coefficient with confidence intervals estimated using the Krinsky Robb (1986) procedure (Table 6). The results for the labelled model indicate the average household’s WTP for a 1% improvement in the condition of the GBR is \$26.37 (each year for five years) or \$7.53 for every 1,000 sq km of improvement. The WTP estimates are considerably lower for the unlabelled version of the model (\$17.73 for a 1% improvement). The higher values estimated when management options are included in the models suggest that people are more likely to support additional protection measures when they know how they will be implemented. However, the confidence intervals in the different models are overlapping for both the percentage and absolute value versions and a Poe et al. (2005) test confirms there is no significant difference in these WTP estimates between models at the 5% level of significance².

² The proportion of differences greater than zero was 0.024 for the percentage values.

Table 6. WTP estimates for improvements in the condition of the GBR

	Labelled version		Unlabelled version	
	Per 1%	Per 1000 sq km	Per 1%	Per 1000 sq km
mean WTP	\$26.37	\$7.53	\$17.73	\$5.22
Lower CI	\$20.16	\$5.73	\$10.95	\$3.32
Upper CI	\$33.60	\$9.54	\$23.41	\$7.00

The extrapolation of these results to the broader Queensland community requires assumptions to be made about the relevant population. In 2006 the population of Queensland was 3,904,534 people with approximately 1,501,744 households, 53% of which were in Brisbane (ABS 2006). While it is likely that people living close to the GBR will have higher protection values, a conservative approach is to assume that all Queensland households have the same values as those elicited from the survey.

The estimation of population values applies household WTP values associated with the labelled and unlabelled models across the population in a discounted net present value framework. Discount rates of 5%, 10% and 15% have been used to determine the present values of the five year benefits assessed in the surveys. The results are presented in Table 7, indicating that the public values (of Queenslanders) for each 1% improvement in the condition of the GBR vary from \$89.3 million to \$171.5 million depending on which survey format and discount rate are applied. The equivalent values for an improvement in a 1000 sq km range from \$26.3 million to \$49 million.

Values associated with the labelled model format have been selected for further discussion as these reflect the more detailed and realistic survey information to respondents. The benefit estimates generated from the labelled version at for each 1% improvement imply that for the Queensland public to receive the full benefit of the \$200 million invested in the Reef Rescue five year funding program, there would need to be between a 1.2% and 1.5% improvement in the condition of the GBR. Alternatively, an improvement over an area of between 4,090 and 5,280 sq km would be required.

Table 7. The value to the Queensland public of improving the condition of the GBR

	Average household WTP/year for five years	Annual WTP 100% of households	Present value (5% discount rate)	Present value (10% discount rate)	Present value (15% discount rate)
Each one per cent improvement		\$Million	\$Million	\$Million	\$Million
Labelled version	\$26.37	\$39.60	\$171.45	\$150.12	\$132.75
Unlabelled version	\$17.73	\$26.63	\$115.28	\$100.93	\$89.25
Each 1000 sq km improvement					
Labelled version	\$7.53	\$11.31	\$48.96	\$42.87	\$37.91
Unlabelled version	\$5.22	\$7.84	\$33.94	\$29.72	\$26.28

4.2 Values associated with different policy management options

Additional models have been developed for the labelled survey with all three attributes modelled to each specific management policy option (Table 8). This helps to identify whether the values for increased protection of the GBR varied by the policy mechanism used to achieve it.

Table 8. Mixed logit models with attributes specified for each management option

Variable	% values			WTP	Absolute values (1000sq km)			WTP
	Coefficient		S.E.		Coefficient		S.E.	
<i>Random parameters in utility functions</i>								
WQ_ASC	-19.6863	***	2.3538		-19.4946	***	2.3301	
CZ_ASC	-28.6828	***	4.0396		-28.4218	***	3.9962	
GG_ASC	-10.3062	***	2.6469		-10.2327	***	2.6184	
<i>Non Random parameters in utility functions</i>								
AGE	-0.0122		0.0092		-0.0122		0.0092	
GENDER	-0.6514	**	0.2662		-0.6514	**	0.2663	
CHILDREN	-0.2910		0.2250		-0.2911		0.2250	
EDUCATION	-0.3427	***	0.1218		-0.3427	***	0.1218	
INCOME	-0.1E-05	***	0.4E-06		-0.1E-05	***	0.4E-06	
Management option: Improve water quality								
WQ_COST	-0.0077	***	0.0008		-0.0077	***	0.0008	
WQ_GBR CONDITION	0.2201	***	0.0327	\$28.57	0.0629	***	0.0094	\$8.16
WQ_CERTAINTY	0.0089		0.0115	\$1.15	0.0089		0.0115	\$1.15
Management option: Increase conservation zones								
CZ_COST	-0.0088	***	0.0020		-0.0088	***	0.0020	
CZ_GBR CONDITION	0.3106	***	0.0583	\$35.36	0.0888	***	0.0167	\$10.10
CZ_CERTAINTY	0.0515	**	0.0227	\$5.87	0.0516	**	0.0227	\$5.87
Management option: Reduce greenhouse gases								
GG_COST	-0.0045	***	0.0007		-0.0045	***	0.0007	
GG_GBR CONDITION	0.0701	**	0.0286	\$15.57	0.0200	**	0.0081	\$4.46
GG_CERTAINTY	-0.0010		0.0077	-\$0.22	-0.0010		0.0077	-\$0.22
<i>Derived standard deviations of parameter distributions</i>								
WQ_ASC	2.4036	***	0.1955		2.4037	***	0.1955	
CZ_ASC	2.4011	***	0.2198		2.4011	***	0.2198	
GG_ASC	3.1888	***	0.3619		3.1892	***	0.3620	
Model statistics								
No of Observations	1500				1500			
Log L	-1562				-1562			
Halton draws	100				100			
Chi Sqrd	1034				1034			
McFaddon R-sqrd	0.2486				0.2486			

*** significant at 1%; ** significant at 5%; * significant at 10%;

The variations in ASC (constant) values for each labelled alternative, together with variations in the significance of the COST and GBR CONDITION attributes, indicate that respondents view the tradeoffs differently with each management option. The standard deviations for the random parameter estimates for all three ASC labels are also highly significant, indicating the

presence of considerable preference heterogeneity around the policy management labels. The different coefficient values for GBR CONDITION indicate that the management options did influence preference selection. Preferences were strongest for improvements in the condition of the GBR achieved by *Increasing Conservation Zones*. These preferences were 40% stronger than improvements gained from *Improving Water Quality* (modelled in percentage values) and four times greater than improvements made from *Reducing Greenhouse Gas Emissions*.

Calculation of part-worths by management option shows GBR protection values are highest for improvements coming from *Increasing Conservation Zones* and lowest from those coming from *Reducing Greenhouse Gas Emissions* (Table 9). However, the range in the confidence intervals is also much higher for the *Increasing Conservation Zones* option, indicating greater variation in preferences and support than for *Improving Water Quality* or *Reducing Greenhouse Gas Emissions*. A Poe et al. (2005) procedure indicates that there was no significant difference in WTP for improvements from *Improving Water Quality* and *Increasing Conservation Zones*. Values for generating improvements from both these options were significantly higher than those from *Reducing Greenhouse Gas Emissions*, but only at the 10% level. The differences in random parameter estimates and the significant difference in part-worths at the 10% level confirm that community values for increased protection are significantly different across policy management options.

Table 9. Management differences in WTP for improvement in GBR condition

	Improve water quality		Increase conservation zones		Reduce greenhouse gases	
	per 1%	per 1000 sq km	per 1%	per 1000 sq km	per 1%	per 1000 sq km
mean WTP	\$28.57	\$8.16	\$35.36	\$10.10	\$15.57	\$4.46
Lower CI	\$19.47	\$7.37	\$17.75	\$5.11	\$3.77	\$0.95
Upper CI	\$38.61	\$8.56	\$81.72	\$20.12	\$34.51	\$9.18

5. Discussion and conclusions

The results of the choice modelling application presented in this paper demonstrate that households in the Brisbane population have significant values for protection of the Great Barrier Reef. The average household willingness to pay for five years for each additional 1% of protection is approximately \$26.37 when the broad management options to generate improvements were included in the choice sets. These results can be extrapolated to a total value of \$132.8M to \$171.5M per 1% improvement, depending on the assumptions used about the discount rate.

The experiment results confirm the observations of Johnson and Duke (1997) that information about the management policies used to achieve environmental outcomes may be a significant influence on value estimates. The results of this study demonstrate that including broad management policies as labelled alternatives in the choice sets generated significant coefficients for the alternatives and increased partworths for the GBR CONSERVATION attribute by 49%. Providing the additional information about how increased protection would be achieved increased support and willingness to pay for protection measures.

The labelled format also allowed an insight into how preferences and values varied between the different management options. The value of improvements generated through *Increasing Conservation Zones* was slightly but not significantly higher than those for *Improving Water Quality*. However, there was a much wider range of values associated with *Increasing Conservation Zones*, indicating greater variation in support for this option. In contrast, the value of improvements through *Reducing Greenhouse Gas Emissions* was significantly lower, as well as generating some opposition from the sample respondents.

The methodology used in this experiment is encouraging for future applications of the choice modelling technique. The use of management policy labels to help make the choice tradeoffs more realistic to respondents appears to have had some influence on choice processes and subsequent values. Labelling the choice alternatives and providing additional information about management options did not appear to make the choice exercise too difficult (even though attribute levels varied across the different options) and did not appear to distract respondents' attention away from their consideration of the primary attribute values.

Acknowledgements

The research reported in this paper has been supported through the Environmental Economics Research Hub funded through the Commonwealth Environment Research Facility in Australia. The contribution of Jeff Bennett and staff from the Great Barrier Reef Marine Park Authority to the design of the project is gratefully acknowledged.

References

Access Economics (2005). *Measuring the Economic and Financial Value of the Great Barrier Reef Marine Park*, GBRMPA Published Report No. 84, Canberra.

Bennett, J.W. and Blamey, R.K., (Eds) (2000). *The Choice Modelling Approach to Environmental Valuation*, Edward Elgar, Cheltenham UK.

Blamey R.K., Bennett, J.W., Louviere, J.J. Morrison, M.D. and Rolfe, J. (2000). A test of policy labels in environmental choice modelling studies, *Ecological Economics* 32(2): 269-286.

Blamey, R. and Hundloe, T. (1993). *Characteristics of recreational boat fishing in the Great Barrier Reef region*, Report to the Great Barrier Reef Marine Park Authority, Canberra.

Caussade, S., Ortuzar, J., Rizzi, L., Hensher, D., (2005). Assessing the Influence of Design Dimensions on Stated Choice Experiment Estimates, *Transportation Research*, 39(7):621-640.

Carr, L. and Mendelsohn, R. (2003). Valuing Coral Reefs: A Travel Cost Analysis of the Great Barrier Reef, *Ambio*, 32(5): 353-357.

Cesar, H., Burke, L. and Pet-Soede, L. (2003). *The Economics of Worldwide Coral Reef Degradation*, WWF and ICRAN, Arnhem, The Netherlands.

- Czajkowski, M. and Hanley, N. (2009). Using labels to investigate scope effects in stated preference methods, *Environmental and Resource Economics*, 44(4): 521-535.
- De'ath, G., Lough, J. and Fabricius, K. (2009). Declining coral calcification on the Great Barrier Reef. *Science*, 323(5910): 116-119.
- Driml, S. (1994). *Protection for Profit, Economic and financial values of the Great Barrier Reef World Heritage Area and other protected areas*, Research Publication No. 35, Great Barrier Reef Marine Park Authority.
- Garnaut, R. (2008). *The Garnaut Climate Change Review*, Cambridge University Press, Cambridge UK.
- Great Barrier Reef Marine Park Authority (GBRMPA) (2006). *Overview – The current status of the Great Barrier Reef: February 2006*, Great Barrier Reef Marine Park Authority, Townsville.
- GBRMPA (2008). *Water quality guidelines for the Great Barrier Reef Marine Park Draft Report*, Great Barrier Reef Marine Park Authority, Townsville.
- GBRMPA (2009) *Great Barrier Reef Outlook Report 2009*, Great Barrier Reef Marine Park Authority, Townsville.
- Hanley, N., Kristrom, B. and Shogren, J.F. (2009). Coherent arbitrariness: on value uncertainty for environmental goods, *Land Economics*, 85(1): 41-50.
- Haynes, D., Brodie, J., Waterhouse, J., Bainbridge, Z., Bass, D. and Hunt, B. (2007). Assessment of the water quality and ecosystem health of the Great Barrier Reef (Australia): Conceptual models, *Environmental Management*, 40:993-1003.
- Hoegh-Guldberg, O. (2008). Tropical Marine Ecosystems, in Lindenmayer, D., Dovers, S., Harriss Olson, M. and Morton, S. (eds) *Ten Commitments: Reshaping the Lucky Country's Environment*, CSIRO Publishing Collingwood, Vic.
- Hundloe, T., Vanclay, F. and Carter, M. (1987). *Economic and socio-economic impacts of the crown of thorns starfish on the Great Barrier Reef*, Great Barrier Reef Marine Park Authority, Townsville.
- Johnston, R.J. and Duke, J.M. (2007). Willingness to pay and policy process attributes, *American Journal of Agricultural Economics*, 89(4):1098-1115.
- Kragt, M. E., Roebeling, P. C. and Ruijs, A. (2009). Effects of Great Barrier Reef degradation on recreational reef-trip demand: a contingent behaviour approach, *The Australian Journal of Agricultural and Resource Economics*, 53: 213-229.
- Krinsky I. and Robb A. (1986). On Approximating the Statistical Properties of Elasticities. *Review of Economics and Statistics*, 68: 715-719.
- Lough, J. (2007). 'Climate and climate change on the Great Barrier Reef', in J. Johnson and P. Marshall (eds), *Climate Change and the Great Barrier Reef: A vulnerability assessment*,

Great Barrier Reef Marine Park Authority and Australian Greenhouse Office.

Lundhede, T.H., Olsen, S.B., Jacobsen, J.B. and Thorsen, B.J. (2009). Handling respondent uncertainty in Choice Experiments: Evaluating recoding approaches against explicit modelling of uncertainty, *Journal of Choice Modelling* 2(2): 118-147.

Olsen, S.B. (2009). Choosing between internet and mail survey modes for choice experiments surveys considering non-market goods. *Environmental and Resource Economics*, 44(4): 591-610.

Oxford Economics (2009), *Valuing the effects of Great Barrier Reef bleaching*, Great Barrier Reef Foundation, Brisbane.

Poe, G.L., Giraud, K.L. and Loomis, J.B. (2005). Computational methods for measuring the differences of empirical distributions, *American Journal of Agricultural Economics*, 87(2):353-365.

Prayaga, P., Rolfe, J.C. and Stoekl, N. (2010). "The value of recreational fishing in the Great Barrier Reef, Australia: A pooled revealed preference and contingent behaviour model", *Marine Policy*, 34(2): 244-251.

Roberts, D.C., Boyer, T.A. and Lusk, J.L. (2008). Preferences for environmental quality under uncertainty, *Ecological Economics*, 66(2-3): 584-593.

Wielgus, J., Gerber, L.R., Sala, E. and Bennett, J. (2009). *Journal of Environmental Management*, 90: 3401-3409.

Windle, J. and Rolfe, J. (2005). 'Assessing non-use values for environmental protection of an estuary in a Great Barrier Reef catchment', *Australasian Journal of Environmental Management*, 12(3): 147-156.

Wolanski, E. and De'ath, G. (2005). "Predicting the impacts of present and future human land-use on the Great Barrier Reef", *Estuaries, Coastal and Shelf Science*, 64: 504-508.