



TOURISM AND RECREATION REEF ADVISORY COMMITTEE (TRRAC) 34th Meeting – 1 and 2 June 2011 – Townsville SUMMARY DOCUMENT

The thirty-fourth meeting of the TRRAC was held in Townsville on 1 and 2 June 2011.

The Chairman paid respect to the Wulgurukaba and Bindal Traditional Owners and acknowledged their traditional land and sea country in the Townsville region.

A summary of the outcomes of the main items discussed is set out below.

GREAT BARRIER REEF MARINE PARK AUTHORITY (GBRMPA) UPDATE

The Committee noted the Australian Government budget was brought down in May, and that funding for the GBRMPA appears to have been maintained. Members felt there is a continuing demand for the GBRMPA to take on additional responsibilities; however, the expectation is that this will be done with no increase in funding.

The Committee was concerned at the frequency and number of announcements of proposals for new coal and gas ports. Members urged that resources continue to be allocated for assessing the short- and long-term impacts of such developments because of the magnitude of the threats to the sustainability of the Reef. The Committee indicated the need for a strategic assessment and approach for port developments in the long-term.

MARINE TOURISM INDUSTRY STATUS REPORT

There continues to be concern about the downturn in the number of visitors to the Marine Park.

A report was provided on behalf of the representative of the Association of Marine Park Tourism Operators (AMPTO).

- March – Business was down 20 per cent compared with last year for tour operators operating out of the Cairns and Port Douglas areas. Despite this outcome, China as a source of visitors was strong, as was Japan. In the Whitsundays, which does not have a large Chinese/Japanese market, numbers were down. The domestic, New Zealand, backpacker and 'drive' markets were also down.
- April – Tourism Queensland and Tourism Australia launched a very strong domestic advertising campaign which helped drive domestic tourism. The week before Easter and the Easter long weekend showed an improvement, helped by good weather.
- May – Overall numbers were down; however, domestic numbers remain up in comparison to last year due to the domestic marketing activity. Some Whitsundays operators are only operating on alternate days.
- June – Forecasts indicate numbers could improve with the domestic school holidays; however, domestic and other international markets are likely to remain down.

Overall, the strength of the Australian dollar is having a significant impact on the visitation from both domestic and international sources, as is the competition from cheaper overseas destinations.

It was reported that past performance of one of the growth sectors of the trade, visitors on cruise ships, is not a good indicator of the future. In this context:

- Fewer passengers are taking shore tours, hence lower expenditure in Queensland.
- There are complicated and lengthy compliance requirements for international vessels compared with other countries.
- Queensland ports are expensive to visit compared to other Australian ports.
- Foreign recreational cruise vessels, including super yachts, are reportedly finding visiting Queensland difficult.

RESPONSE TO CLIMATE CHANGE

The Committee received a presentation on the progress to date in implementing the *Great Barrier Reef Tourism Climate Change Action Strategy, 2009-2012*.

There was a discussion about the draft tourism climate change case studies and what they aimed to achieve. The Committee recommended the GBRMPA continues to focus on informing Reef tourism operators regarding positive actions they can take to reduce their climate footprint.

Members were presented a third draft of the GBR Tourism Industry Response Framework for Environmental Incidents, and members undertook to individually provide feedback on the draft. In addition, the Committee agreed to regularly review the membership of the Tourism Incident Response Group as part of the implementation of the Framework.

SOCIAL AND ECONOMIC IMPACTS OF FLOODS AND CYCLONES ON GREAT BARRIER REEF TOURISM

The Committee was provided with very interesting presentations on the social and economic impacts of floods and cyclones on Great Barrier Reef marine tourism.

Members then participated in workshops to road-test the measurement of adverse impacts from cyclones and floods on tourism operations, under the headings of: Natural system impacts; Personal impacts; Social/local community impacts; Infrastructure impacts; and Impacts on business.

The Committee considered the exercise to be most valuable as it focussed attention on potential responses to climate disasters. A number of amendments to the wording of the assessments in the matrix were recommended as a result of this exercise.

TOURISM MANAGEMENT STRATEGY FOR THE GREAT BARRIER REEF MARINE PARK

The Committee received three presentations on tourism for consideration in the development of a Tourism Management Strategy for the Great Barrier Reef Marine Park. These were: 'Re-energising the Great Barrier Reef experience positioning, product, promotions and people' (Tourism Queensland); the 'Competitive comparison of the Great Barrier Reef' (AMPTO); and the 'National Tourism

Accreditation Framework' (Department of Resources, Energy and Tourism).

The Committee recommended the following points be considered for inclusion in the initial drafting of the Strategy:

- Regulations affecting marine tourism operations be reviewed to address unnecessary costs.
- Small businesses are encouraged to ensure retention of the range of tourism experiences – the product mix is important.
- Tourism Australia has identified the profile of visitors to Australia is that of an 'Experience Seeker', and one of the motivating factors for travel to Australia is Indigenous engagement.
- Promotion of a quality destination – best managed reef experience. The Great Barrier Reef tourism experience cannot compete on price, but it can compete on quality and diversity of experience.
- Consideration of special media focus on National and International markets, especially after negative events.
- Recognition of the National Tourism Accreditation Framework and the T-Qual tick for sustainable tourism operations.
- Ways to improve vessel entry for the international cruise industry, and direct flight access into regions for visitors.
- Scope to facilitate action on commission rates, and improve post-arrival distribution system.

The Strategy will be brought back for consideration by TRRAC at critical stages of its development.

DEVELOPMENT OF THE GREAT BARRIER REEF BIODIVERSITY STRATEGY, 2011

The draft Great Barrier Reef Biodiversity Strategy 2011 was provided to the Committee for its consideration. There was discussion on the value of addressing cumulative impacts of ports and coastal development in the inshore areas – in particular, the localities which are also important to the marine tourism experience.

Overall, members were satisfied with the draft, but it was emphasised the wording should maximise the engagement with industry without resorting to requirements for new regulations. The Committee noted a revised draft will be provided to members of all the Reef Advisory Committees as part of the intended release for public consultation later this year.

ENVIRONMENTAL ASSESSMENT AND MANAGEMENT POLICY

The Committee received an update on the progress to date of the review of the GBRMPA's Environmental Impact Management policy.

Members endorsed the outcomes of the TRRAC Marine Park Infrastructure Working Group, held on 19 May 2011, including:

- Generally, a facility compliance certificate should be submitted to the GBRMPA annually on a set date prior to the commencement of the cyclone season; however, for some facilities such as jetties, longer periods between submission of the certificates may be appropriate.
- An Environmental Management Plan should continue to be required for installation of structures and management of higher risk activities.
- An Environmental Management Plan should no longer be required for activities where the impacts are well known or understood (e.g. ongoing maintenance of facilities and structures). Instead, the GBRMPA intends to develop outcome-based permit conditions and, where guidance is necessary, develop industry codes or standards for the classes of activities.
- Incident response and notification procedures will be standardised as conditions across facility permits. In the

development of the conditions, there should be improved alignment with other agencies (e.g. Maritime Safety Queensland).

The TRRAC Working Group will continue out-of-session to ensure operational constraints are considered in implementing the above outcomes.

RECREATION MANAGEMENT STRATEGY FOR THE GREAT BARRIER REEF MARINE PARK

The Committee noted the Recreation Management Strategy for the Great Barrier Reef Marine Park has been submitted for approval to the Board of the Marine Park Authority.

EYE ON THE REEF AND RELATED PROGRAMS

The Committee was pleased to be advised of the expansion of the Eye on the Reef Monitoring Program and work on the integrated database, especially its management value in the assessment of the recent floods and cyclones.

HIGH STANDARD TOURISM PROGRAM

The Committee noted the successful profiling of the High Standard Tourism Program at the Australian Tourism Exchange (ATE) in Sydney in April 2011, and the ongoing work to raise awareness of the Program with booking agents.

TOURISM IN PROTECTED AREAS (TIPA)

The Committee was advised of the launch of the Tourism in Protected Areas (TIPA) initiative by the Department of Environment and Resource Management. It was noted that it is intended that TIPA will apply to National Parks in the Whitsunday islands by 2013. As the area includes intertidal areas, there will be some implications for Marine Park permits.

Members were pleased to note that the compulsory eco-accreditation of these operators does complement the GBRMPA's High Standard Tourism Program, with its focus of best practice in the three key areas of protection, presentation and partnership and 15-year permitting arrangements.

NEXT MEETING

The next meeting is scheduled to be held in October 2011.

CURRENT MEMBERSHIP OF THE COMMITTEE 2009-2012

Mr Tony Baker	Marine tourism operations and pontoons
Mr Mike Bartlett	Cruise ship industry
Mr Tony Charters	Eco-tourism and tourism in protected areas
Ms Helen Cox	Department of Resources, Energy and Tourism
Mr Peter Frawley	Independent Chairman
Ms Virginia Gerlach	Marine Park recreation
Ms Anne Greentree	Queensland Department of Environment and Resource Management
Mr Daniel Gschwind	Business acumen and economics
Mr Bernard Heimann	Sailing and day tourism operations
Mr David Hutchen	Marine tourism history
Mr Bruce Leaver	Department of Sustainability, Environment, Water, Population and Communities
Mrs Judy Lynne	Sunfish Queensland – Recreational fishing
Mr Wayne Kirkpatrick	Tourist resorts
Mr Daniel McCarthy	Game fishing operations
Mr Col McKenzie	Association of Marine Park Tourism Operators (AMPTO) – Marine tourism industry, recreational diving
Mr David Morgans	Tourism Queensland – Regional tourism development
Mr Adrian Pelt	Bareboat charters
Mr Alan Sweeney	Aircraft operations and tourism marketing
Supported by:	
Mr Jon Day	Acting General Manager, GBRMPA
Mr Chris Briggs	Director, Tourism and Recreation, GBRMPA