



TOURISM AND RECREATION REEF ADVISORY COMMITTEE (TRRAC)

16th Meeting

13 and 14 July 2004 – Townsville

SUMMARY DOCUMENT

The sixteenth meeting of the TRRAC was held in Townsville on 13 and 14 July 2004. A summary of the outcomes of the main items discussed is set out below.

BEST PRACTICE AND CERTIFICATION

The Committee was advised the Eco Certification Program of Ecotourism Australia was approved in March 2004. A formal agreement between Ecotourism Australia and the GBRMPA is currently being finalised.

The Committee was also advised that the Department of Industry, Tourism and Resources (DITR) will be providing \$2m to support a national voluntary tourism accreditation framework, to be managed by a restructured industry body – Tourism Accreditation Australia Limited. The Minister will be launching this initiative at the Tourism Futures Conference in Townsville in early August 2004.

Communication Strategies for Best Practices

The Committee was provided with an overview of the GBRMPA's communication strategies for encouraging best practices, including:

- The GBRMPA's current major task was to share information regarding the new zoning with a broad group of people with various interests in the Marine Park.
- The aim was to have information in every area and, as a result, over 200 community access points have been established along the coastline.
- One of the challenges is engaging people who are at very different stages of knowledge, understanding and motivation.
- One focus is children, particularly through Reef Guardian Schools, encouraging them to build a sustainable future for themselves.
- Best environmental practice information is displayed on all of the GBRMPA zoning products; however, the challenge is engaging people enough to make them look at the message and act upon it.

Representative Areas Program

The Committee congratulated the GBRMPA on the successful management and implementation of the rezoning process. Members were particularly impressed by the communication and education programs that are currently being undertaken and by the quality and applicability of the zoning maps and printed information.

Members expressed a strong interest in the forthcoming compliance and enforcement strategies, especially as the approach taken during on-water enforcement can substantially affect a client's image of the tourism industry.

ALLOCATION, LATENCY AND TENURE

Allocation

The Committee was brought up-to-date with progress in implementing the GBRMPA's policy on managing tourism permissions, and was asked to provide advice on early documentation for the allocation process.

In discussion, members expressed concern regarding the constraint that the new permissions available under the Cairns Area and Whitsundays Plans of Management (including the Indigenous permits) may only be operated to any location a maximum of 2 days in any 7-day period. Members considered such a permit requirement would not foster innovation and flexibility in the tourism industry and could very well threaten the commercial viability of the resultant operations. The Committee advised that the 2 in 7 requirement should be removed prior to the permissions being advertised, recognising that this would require amendment to the Plans, including a round of public comment.

In addition, members felt that wherever possible, tourism operations in the Cairns Area should be encouraged to operate to moorings and that the provision of new moorings would be a more appropriate way to foster growth in sustainable tourism.

In considering the allocation process, members provided advice that:

- Individual operators should have the opportunity of being granted more than one permit in an allocation process;
- There may be instances where the GBRMPA would not wish to grant all available permits on the grounds that there were too few applications of sufficient standard; and
- All available permissions for a particular limited tourism opportunity should be advertised at the same time.

Latency

The Committee noted progress in implementing latency management arrangements and was made aware of the issue of a number of operators that operate an average of less than 91 days but more than 50 days per year. If the 25 percent reasonable use policy was applied, these operators would lose ‘first option’ for their special tourism permission.

The Committee considered that, given it was not intended that the policy unduly affect active operators, it would be appropriate to lower the reasonable use requirement from 25% of permitted use (91 days/year) to an average of 50 days/year. From the preliminary figures presented to the meeting, it appeared that the intent of the policy would still be achieved at the lower level for reasonable use.

INDIGENOUS ISSUES

The Committee was brought up to date on the progress of developing Traditional Use of Marine Resources Agreements (TUMRAs), and was provided with background to two recently developed Commonwealth programs – “Steps to Sustainable Tourism”, and the Indigenous capacity building program “Stepping Stones”.

Members noted that the TUMRAs were originally designed to assist communities to get involved in the management of traditional hunting; however, this process inherently involves discussion on a broad range of issues.

The Committee recognised the GBRMPA’s commitment to Indigenous tourism issues, agreeing that its role should be focussed on removing any impediments to Indigenous involvement in tourism, fostering such Indigenous involvement, and protecting cultural heritage values. At the same time, however, members again expressed their concern regarding the limited resources that the GBRMPA allocates to this area, especially in the Indigenous Policy and Liaison Unit.

TOURISM PARTNERSHIPS

Communication and Information

The Committee considered the most effective way to provide up-to-date management information to tourism operators and advised that the material contained in the Tourism Operator’s Handbook is worthwhile and should

continue to be made available, but not in hard copy format; perhaps a similar product could be made available on the web or in a CD format.

Opportunities to Contribute to Reef Water Quality Monitoring

The Committee was provided with an outline of the monitoring strategy for the Reef Water Quality Protection Plan, focussing on the monitoring of Reef water quality.

The Committee supported the proposal that individual tourism operators assist with chlorophyll sampling as aspects such as water quality have a direct bearing on the health of the Reef.

ENVIRONMENTAL MANAGEMENT CHARGE (EMC)

The proposal for a more efficient and responsive system of EMC administration and data management (EMC Online) was outlined to members. Members strongly supported the proposal, noting that the right to pay quarterly should remain unchanged; and that the implementation timeline for EMC Online should be shortened as much as possible.

The Committee discussed the practice of some tourism operators charging a ‘handling fee’ as part of their EMC collection, and it was agreed that the matter was best dealt with by the industry itself. Relevant members agreed to discuss the issue with their associations, and report to the next meeting on any feedback received.

NEXT MEETING

The next meeting, TRRAC 17, is proposed for 26 and 27 October 2004.

CURRENT MEMBERSHIP OF THE COMMITTEE

Ms Bryony Barnett	Research, Extension, Best Practice
Mr Mike Bartlett	Cruise Shipping
Mr Mike Burgess	Business Acumen Economic/Marketing
Mr John Doohan	Recreational Fishing
Mr Barry Ehrke	Commercial Fishing
Mr John Evetts	Ranging Operations/Game Fishing
Mr Peter Frawley (Chairperson)	Management
Mr Daniel Gschwind	Business Acumen Economic/Marketing
Mr Bernard Heimann	Mooring, Anchoring
Mr Ralph Henderson	Tourism and National Parks Management
Mr David Hutchen	Association of Marine Park Tourism Operators
Mr Terry Kemp	Bareboat Charter
Mr Wayne Kirkpatrick	Resort Operations
Mr Glen Miller	Indigenous Community
Mr John Millward	Dive, Pontoon, Aircraft
Mr David Morgans	Tourism Queensland
Ms Lisha Mulqueeny	Director, GBRMPA
Ms Kerry Rooney	Dept of Industry, Tourism and Resources
Mr John Rumney	Conservation, Dive, Anchoring, Mooring and Ranging
Ms Meg Switzer	Dept of the Environment and Heritage