

A summary document is prepared after each meeting of the Reef Advisory Committee to inform other advisory committees serving the Authority, and persons generally (including the public), of business of the RAC. The document forms part of the records of the meeting and so its content is limited to matters raised in the meeting, and, where necessary, background details given to the meeting. Any inquiries should be referred to the Great Barrier Reef Marine Park Authority's (GBRMPA) Secretariat, or to the appropriate Member.



Australian Government

Great Barrier Reef
Marine Park Authority

TOURISM AND RECREATION REEF ADVISORY COMMITTEE (TRRAC)

18th Meeting

28 February and 1 March 2005 – Hamilton Island

SUMMARY DOCUMENT

The eighteenth meeting of the TRRAC was held on Hamilton Island on 28 February and 1 March 2005. A field trip was included to sites within the Whitsunday Islands. A summary of the outcomes of the main items discussed is set out below.

ENVIRONMENTAL MANAGEMENT CHARGE (EMC)

Following on from the Committee's discussions at TRRAC 17, the issue of tourism operators charging a handling fee for collection of the EMC and representing it as part of the EMC was further considered. Some members will explore the potential for the Queensland Office of Fair Trading to address this issue.

Members were concerned that some operators may be escaping their obligations to collect, record and forward the EMC payments. There was also concern that the current auditing arrangements may not be adequate and the Committee urged the GBRMPA to have adequate auditing in place so that the fees are being properly paid. The Committee also suggested that the GBRMPA remind all operators of their obligations with regard to the EMC, how it should be collected, recorded and represented. In the longer term, the Committee considered that any shortcomings identified in the audit process should be reviewed in partnership with industry, and avenues to improve the system identified.

SITE MANAGEMENT ARRANGEMENTS

The Committee was provided with a proposed list of priority sites for documenting site management arrangements. This list was supported by the Committee with the addition of the Snapper Island area offshore from Port Douglas, and Great Keppel Island near Yeppoon. Members advised that the priority sites for the Whitsundays area were Whitehaven Beach, Hill Inlet/Tongue Bay, Mantaray Bay and Luncheon Bay. For the Cairns region, it was considered that the priority task is mapping and registering the moorings at the individual reefs.

The field trip around the Whitsundays was very valuable in providing members with an opportunity to see first-hand some of the site issues in that area.

INDIGENOUS PARTICIPATION IN TOURISM AND ITS MANAGEMENT

The Committee noted the very positive outcomes of the Indigenous Tourism Working Group meeting of 9 February

2005. The schedule of work developed by the Working Group was endorsed by the Committee, along with the partner institutions identified. Some concerns were raised about resources and timeframes for undertaking the projects identified.

TOURISM OPERATOR'S HANDBOOK

The Committee noted the extensive work being undertaken to create a website, booklet and CD for the Tourism Operator's Handbook. Members were very pleased with progress to date, and offered to review a draft website once it was uploaded. It was suggested that an additional best practices section could be created to address Service Standards, as members regarded this as an important part of creating and maintaining a high standard industry in the Marine Park.

ALLOCATION

The Committee noted progress on developing regulations to allow allocation by expression of interest and on amending the Plans of Management to remove the 2in7 requirement for new special tourism permissions.

The Committee was asked for advice on the proper GBRMPA response to applicant initiated delays. The Committee did not feel it desirable to set a defined maximum length of time for which an application can be on hold at the request of the applicant. In many cases, the duration of the delay was likely to be beyond the control of the applicant. Accordingly, the Committee recommended that this issue be dealt with on a case-by-case basis, recognising that both the GBRMPA and the applicant should clearly establish expected timeframes for the assessment process and should work to bring the application to fruition in a reasonable time period.

WHITSUNDAYS PLAN OF MANAGEMENT EXCEPTIONS

The Committee noted the outcomes of the Working Group meeting held on 10 February 2005 to discuss the Whitsundays Plan of Management exceptions. The Committee endorsed the Working Group recommendation that the GBRMPA should have the ability to review and potentially remove exceptions on spare special tourism permissions prior to their reallocation (e.g., permits that are surrendered, revoked or returned through the latency assessment process). Members also noted that this should not preclude the need for stronger management

arrangements for existing capped activities (such as reef walking) if these were considered necessary. The need for greater public access to information about exceptions to the Plan was also recognised.

ARTIFICIAL REEFS

The Committee was informed of the programme of work that has been undertaken on artificial reefs by various sections of the GBRMPA, and of the progress that the TRRAC Working Group made during its meeting on 16 December 2004.

The Committee confirmed its support for the concept of artificial reefs, and requested that the GBRMPA note the following comments:

- There are many sites already in the Marine Park where artificial reefs are located. Should the GBRMPA be anxious to assess the likely impacts of such reefs, these existing sites could provide useful information; although the lack of base data was recognised.
- The Committee urged the GBRMPA to note that artificial reefs could come in all sizes; to date the tendency had been to think in terms of 'large' (such as ship wrecks). The Committee considered that such a focus would inhibit the development of acceptable policies.
- There was discussion of the sunken barge off Hamilton Island. Two members from the local area offered to undertake an assessment of both the deterioration of the barge and the growth of new reefs on the structure. The information will be shared with the Committee and the GBRMPA.

In developing draft guidelines on artificial reefs, it was recommended that the GBRMPA take into account the considerations of the Working Group.

Members concluded that it would be beneficial to keep the Working Group in place so that its members were available to provide further comments to the GBRMPA, as the guidelines on artificial reefs were drafted and made available for public comment.

CORAL COLLECTING

Members noted that the Queensland Department of Primary Industries and Fisheries was planning to release a new management policy on coral harvesting, including tighter restrictions and reporting arrangements. Members considered it very important that the TRRAC be provided a copy of the draft policy as soon as it was available so that advice could be provided on any implications for the tourism and recreation sectors. Members were particularly concerned that coral harvesting areas should not be expanded to the extent that they include established tourism sites.

MOORINGS MANAGEMENT

Members were brought up-to-date with progress in the moorings management project. Some confusion existed about the logic for colour coding of moorings buoys, and some suggestions were made to help clarify the arrangements.

BEST PRACTICE AND CERTIFICATION

The Committee noted continued progress towards encouraging best practice in the Marine Park, including the very successful Best Practices workshop in November 2004.

With regard to certification, members were concerned about recent advice that the Commonwealth Government had withdrawn support for the newly-established accreditation coordinating body, Tourism Accreditation Australia Ltd. The Committee considered that this change of policy may threaten the viability and credibility of accreditation schemes throughout Australia, including the EcoCertification Programme recognised by the GBRMPA. It was requested that the GBRMPA maintain a strong interest in this emerging issue.

CRUISE SHIPPING

Members were pleased to note substantial progress to clarify the EMC arrangements for cruise ship passengers, designate transit corridors and assess additional cruise ship anchorages; along with the continuing improved relationship between the cruise ship industry and the GBRMPA.

The Committee used the field trip through the Whitsundays to discuss the cruise ship industry and current management arrangements in more detail, including visiting two of the designated cruise ship anchorages in the area.

COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT

The Committee strongly endorsed the GBRMPA's intention for stronger community engagement, building on the Representative Areas Programme and the Reef Water Quality Protection Plan, noting that the public consultation components of these programmes had been to a very high standard. The Committee discussed the current ongoing engagement arrangements including the Local Marine Advisory Committees and the Community Access Points and welcomed the opportunity to provide continuing advice to the GBRMPA on avenues to improve community engagement.

NEXT MEETING

The next meeting, TRRAC 19, was proposed for June 2005.

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 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