

A summary document is prepared after each meeting of the Reef Advisory Committee (RAC) 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)

23rd Meeting

22 and 23 February 2007 – Port Douglas

SUMMARY DOCUMENT

The twenty-third meeting of the TRRAC was held in Port Douglas, on 22 and 23 March 2007. A summary of the outcomes of the main items discussed is set out below.

TRRAC WORK PROGRAMME

Following on from the last meeting, the TRRAC considered a detailed analysis of the GBRMPA's projects and possible TRRAC involvement in relation to the identified five priority issues for the Committee, namely:

- 1 Climate change;
- 2 Reef health;
- 3 Industry sustainability;
- 4 Recreational use; and
- 5 Indigenous participation in tourism.

A broad work programme for the Committee was endorsed, confirming these issues as those that the TRRAC should address on a continuing basis. This decision was made in the knowledge that many of the points identified under each issue are already being addressed in our normal meeting activities. Members agreed to undertake further work on two matters in particular:

- Provide advice on emerging industry sustainability issues and potential responses; and
- Provide advice on emerging recreation issues and potential responses.

Two small Working Groups were formed to develop a short analysis of matters 3 and 4 for the next Committee meeting.

DEDICATED USE MOORINGS

The Committee considered the draft implementation proposal and supported its release for public comment. Members congratulated the GBRMPA on the document and accepted all of its recommendations. There was some concern regarding compliance and how the time allocations would be enforced. The Committee suggested that the document could be restructured slightly to elicit public comment on this issue.

CURRENT STATE OF THE REEF

The Committee was provided with a comprehensive outline of the current state of the Reef with regard to coral bleaching. The Committee recommended that the GBRMPA consider issuing a media release highlighting the good news that there has been almost no deterioration of the Reef this summer. This message should not, of course, cut across the long-term threat posed to the Reef by climate change.

RESPONSE TO CLIMATE CHANGE

The Committee heard a comprehensive report of the activities of the Climate Change Action Group, in particular the development of a GBR Marine Tourism Climate Change Action Strategy.

Members complimented the Action Group on the development of the Strategy, and were pleased to note that the industry representatives will now take the lead in this initiative. The Committee recognised the important role that the GBRMPA has played in catalysing development of this document and encourages the GBRMPA to stay engaged with industry on climate change issues in general and, in particular, continue to support development of the Strategy.

PUBLIC LIABILITY INSURANCE FOR PERMIT HOLDERS

The Committee supported the move to a \$10 million requirement for Public Liability insurance. It was acknowledged that smaller operators may have difficulty securing such cover, however, the Committee considered that this level of insurance should be generally available. It was noted that the Queensland Tourism Industry Council had identified appropriate brokers who may be able to assist operators. In the event that there were operators who were not able to achieve this level of insurance, the Committee noted the GBRMPA's commitment to consider these operations on a case-by-case basis.

AMENDMENTS TO THE CAIRNS AREA AND WHITSUNDAYS MANAGEMENT ARRANGEMENTS

Members noted that the public consultation process had begun for the Plan of Management amendments, Setting 5 Site Plans in the Whitsundays and the No Structures Subzone in the Cairns Area. The Committee held a lengthy discussion on a number of the proposed changes but ultimately decided it would not be possible to reach a balanced judgement. Too many of the members considered the issues involved required localised knowledge and were reluctant to express firm attitudes. Members were, however, urged to make individual submissions on the proposed amendments and, to facilitate this, the GBRMPA undertook to provide all TRRAC members with an electronic version of the submission document.

WHITSUNDAY AND MACKAY ISLANDS VISITOR MANAGEMENT STRATEGY

The Committee noted the opportunity for individual members to make comment on the Visitor Management Strategy that was developed by the Queensland Parks and Wildlife Service (QPWS). In terms of the advice that the GBRMPA may wish to provide on the Strategy, the Committee recommends that the GBRMPA considers inclusion of the following points:

- Industry members have advised that they are keen to ensure seamless management of the marine and island area in the Whitsundays.
- There appears to be confusion whether the draft Strategy sets group size limits and these limits appear to be inconsistent with some Marine Park management arrangements.

- The QPWS gave an assurance that the intention is not to set limits through the Strategy; rather, that the Tourism in Protected Areas (TIPA) process will be the mechanism to deal with setting limits.
- The QPWS should engage and work with the GBRMPA to ensure joint permitting continues.
- It is important that, as the QPWS works to finalise the Strategy, they ensure that the consultation process continues and is comprehensive, including the GBRMPA and the marine tourism industry.

ENSURING SUSTAINABLE TOURISM IN THE WHITSUNDAYS

Following on from the discussions on dedicated use moorings, Plan amendments, Setting 5 Site Plans and the island management strategy, the Committee considered the need for further initiatives with regard to management of the Whitsundays. After noting all the actions being undertaken now (such as management of amenity, protection of fringing reefs, a cap on vessels, controls on vessel conversion, management of latency, no allocation of special tourism permissions and site management arrangements) plus those under development, the Committee decided that it would be inappropriate to commence any actions in advance of at least partial completion of the work in progress.

GBRMPA’S HIGH STANDARD TOURISM PROGRAMME

With regard to the High Standard Tourism Programme, members noted the further detail provided on the Risk Assessment. The Committee considered that, given the arrangements already in place and the fact that the “very high” risk events were only rated as “Possible” (number 3 in a scale of 5), there was no need for further action. However, the Committee did recommend that the GBRMPA continue to support the use of accreditation as a means of recognising quality by being an advocate for the high standards concept and the certification scheme to other protected area agencies, Regional Tourism Organisations and State Tourism Organisations, whenever opportunities arise.

CRUISE SHIPPING POLICY DEVELOPMENT

The Committee noted the initial draft of the Cruise Shipping Policy and that the significant changes to current management arrangements are who pays for anchorage and transit corridor assessments, and streamlining of the Environmental Management Charge arrangements for cruise ship passengers. The Committee supported these in their current form, and agreed that they should form part of the Policy. A number of points in relation to some specific clauses were raised, and some recommendations made concerning implementation, importantly the need to recognise “force majeure” in booking systems.

PERMITS COMPLIANCE AND MANAGEMENT SYSTEM (PCAMS)

Members were brought up-to-date with the project to improve permit data management and compliance. The Committee welcomes the PCaMS project and looks forward to its implementation.

ALLOCATION OF SPECIAL TOURISM PERMISSIONS

The Committee noted the GBRMPA’s intention to begin allocation of the five Cooktown/Bloomfield special tourism permissions. After expressing initial concern about the requirement to limit the initial permit term to one year, the Committee recommended that the GBRMPA keep going with the current allocation process for the permits, but consider amendments to this clause in the Plan of Management in the next round of amendments.

ACTIVITIES OF THE DOUGLAS LMAC

Members were very pleased to learn of the valuable work of that Committee. In particular, the members discussed in detail the

local issues in the commercial grey mackerel fishery. The Committee was sympathetic to the views expressed and considered it has the potential to harm tourism and recreation in the area. The Committee urged the GBRMPA, through the LMAC, to give every assistance possible to resolve the issue.

REPORT FROM THE TOURISM AND RECREATION GROUP

Members were updated on a range of activities, and congratulated the GBRMPA for being in the top three nominations for the prestigious World Tourism and Travel Council’s “Tourism for Tomorrow” Award.

The Committee was also advised that funding for the current Crown of Thorns Starfish (COTS) Control Programme is due to cease in May 2007. This prospect raised concerns for many members on the grounds that COTS remain active in southern areas. The Committee hopes that the GBRMPA is able to assist by bringing appropriate pressure to bear to ensure that the Government contributions continued.

Members expressed satisfaction at the implementation of the latency management arrangements. The Committee is pleased that these initiatives are being undertaken and that results are being achieved.

The Committee was brought up-to-date with progress in Indigenous tourism. The tourism industry was encouraged to promote itself as a real employment alternative for Indigenous people, and to use the aboriginal newspaper the “Koori Mail” when advertising jobs.

ENFORCEMENT OF GREEN ZONES

The Committee considered the recent issue of the prosecution of fishers in a Green Zone. Members were extremely disappointed in the court outcome and consider it has serious implications for the Marine Park and specifically the tourism industry. For their part, representatives of the Queensland Tourism Industry Council and the Association of Marine Park Tourism Operators undertook to speak out publicly against the decision and in support of Green Zone enforcement. In addition, a number of individual members undertook to do the same in their communities.

NEXT MEETING

The next meeting, TRRAC 24, is proposed for 20 and 21 June 2007.

CURRENT MEMBERSHIP OF THE COMMITTEE	
Mr Tony Baker	Pontoons, Day Operations, Resort Operations
Mr Mike Bartlett	Cruise Shipping
Mr Wayne Calder	Dept of Industry, Tourism and Resources
Mr Bruce Chapman	Recreational Yachting
Ms Louise Crocombe	Day Operations, Best Practice
Mr John Evetts	Ranging Operations, Game Fishing
Mr Peter Frawley	Independent Chairman
Mr Daniel Gschwind	Business Acumen, Economic
Mr Bernard Heimann	Mooring, Anchoring, Day Operations
Mr Ralph Henderson	Qld Parks and Wildlife Service
Mr David Hutchen	History, Ferry, Association of Marine Park Tourism Operators
Mr Bruce Leaver	Dept of the Environment and Water Resources
Mr Col McKenzie	Diving Operations
Mr Glen Miller	Indigenous
Mr David Morgans	Tourism Queensland
Ms Lisha Mulqueeny	Director, GBRMPA
Mr Adrian Pelt	Bareboat Charters
Mr John Rumney	Conservation, Diving Operations, Live Aboard
Mr Alan Sweeney	Aircraft Operations, Marketing
Mr Keith Twyford	Qld Parks and Wildlife Service
Mrs Michele Williams	Commercial Fishing
To be appointed	Recreational Fishing
To be appointed	Resort Operations