

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)

27th Meeting

24 and 25 July 2008 – Cardwell

SUMMARY DOCUMENT

The twenty-seventh meeting of the TRRAC was held in Cardwell, on 24 and 25 July 2008. The Chairman paid respect to the Giringun Traditional Owners and acknowledged their traditional land and sea country in the Cardwell region.

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

OUTLOOK REPORT FOR THE GREAT BARRIER REEF REGION

The Committee supports the progress made on the Outlook Report and is very interested in the process and the potential outcomes.

Committee members reviewed the Outlook Report's Assessment Criteria and the draft background information on the management effectiveness for tourism and recreation issues. There was a consensus that tourism was well managed in the Great Barrier Reef Marine Park, noting in particular a greatly improved respect for, and understanding of, management (by both operators and visitors), and a greater sense of respect for operators by managers.

In contrast, recreation (not including fishing) was viewed as not as effectively managed, with general concern about an increase in numbers of recreational visits, a lack of knowledge and information about recreational use and the potential for increased environmental and social impacts.

When members were asked to rate the outlook for the Great Barrier Reef these ratings were increasingly pessimistic over time due to the slow action on improving water quality, the reduced resilience of the Reef and, in the longer term, the serious impacts of climate change effects such as acidification and bleaching.

It was noted that it is possible to be optimistic about the Reef at a local level but, when considering the broader scale and national and international factors, the outlook for the Reef is likely to be much more pessimistic.

SUPER-YACHTS

The Committee was given a presentation on the *Queensland Superyacht Strategy 2008-2013* and its five-year plan with four themes of marketing, capacity and

capability, regulatory framework and marine infrastructure.

Members discussed the draft terms of reference for a Department of Tourism, Regional Development and Industry (DTRDI)-funded consultancy to match the requirements of the super-yacht industry with the current management opportunities within the World Heritage Area. It was noted by members that the terms of reference identified positive aspects of the management, but lacked a partnership approach, and a discussion of ecologically sustainable development.

The Committee supported continued co-operation between DTRDI, the GBRMPA, the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) and Maritime Safety Queensland (MSQ) to ensure that current management arrangements were understood by super-yacht owners and skippers.

RESPONSE TO CLIMATE CHANGE

The Committee was given a presentation on the progress of work currently underway on the responses to climate change being developed for industry. Members were very impressed with the potential of the Emissions Calculator as a user-friendly tool for operators to measure their carbon footprint. The web address is <http://emissionscalculator.gbrmpa.gov.au/resourcedb>.

It was noted the Climate Change Certification Module, being developed in partnership with Ecotourism Australia and the South Australian Tourism Commission, was currently on trial with 15 Marine Park operators, and was likely to be a world-first integrated online program.

The Committee suggested the GBRMPA and industry use these initiatives for addressing climate change to generate positive publicity for the Great Barrier Reef.

HIGH STANDARD TOURISM PROGRAM

The Committee was updated on the High Standard Tourism Program. Forty-three per cent of visitors to the Marine Park are carried by high standard operators. It was noted a balance was required between the numbers involved in the Program and the effort to get them involved, and it was suggested that the GBRMPA should aim for 70 per cent of all visitors to the Marine Park to travel on high standard operations. This would equate to

enlisting all of the top 50 operators, as ranked by Environmental Management Charge (EMC) visitation figures.

The Committee considered a range of additional benefits to encourage greater uptake.

MARINE TOURISM FORECAST

The Committee was given a presentation on the forecast for the marine tourism industry, from a member's personal perspective. It was suggested that the recent loss in international seating capacity to Cairns from Japan, the decrease of domestic airline capacity to the Whitsundays, and the overall impact on the self-drive market due to rising fuel costs, will impact significantly on an industry which is seeing little or no return on investment and may result in a reduction of the number of operators on the Great Barrier Reef. A number of options were presented to help address this situation including a proposal to rate Great Barrier Reef sites to ensure visitor satisfaction with the quality of their experience.

In addition, the GBRMPA updated the Committee on the EMC visitation figures for the January to March quarter 2008, which indicated a decline in visitation from previous years.

The Committee was keen to draw the GBRMPA's attention to the decline in visitation and the seriousness of the situation facing marine operators, and that the GBRMPA should consider this in relation to the management arrangements for the Great Barrier Reef Marine Park and the likely impact on the EMC returns.

EAST COAST INSHORE FINFISH FISHERY

The Committee was updated on the developments for the East Coast Inshore Finfish Fishery including the likelihood the Queensland Department of Primary Industries and Fisheries (QDPI&F) will have a draft set of management arrangements before the Queensland Cabinet for approval in September 2008.

The Committee was encouraged to hear the expected outcomes are that effort will be capped, shark specifically will be capped, and that protected species should benefit from the introduction of strict net attendance requirements and the general strengthening of net rules particularly in Dugong Protected Areas.

RESEARCH ON USE OF THE REEF

The Committee was pleased to hear of progress on a range of research including Reef Recollections oral history, the shifting baselines in non-scientific literature about climate change and landowner best practices for water quality. The Committee was particularly interested in the recreational projects underway to determine market segmentation, a geographical study of place-based recreation and an environmental and social impact study of the impact of recreational visitors on water quality.

The Committee was briefed on initial findings from a report on the economic contribution from the dive tourism industry in the Great Barrier Reef. The industry

members were not surprised the number of dives and snorkels undertaken in 2007 was estimated at 2.6 million, the direct and indirect economic contribution was between \$570 to \$810 million to the Australian economy and a significant source of direct and indirect employment within the Great Barrier Reef Catchment, Queensland and across Australia. It was noted that where financial data was provided, pre-tax profits were rarely greater than five per cent of turnover, and the risks to the industry were softening demand and rising costs.

Members discussed the recommendation to better inform consumers (e.g. a report card for dive sites) to gain competitive advantages for the Great Barrier Reef dive industry. In discussion, another option raised was to increase presentation of the Great Barrier Reef experience and thereby support the marine industry.

The Committee strongly supported the idea of generating information to enable tourists to make informed decisions regarding the dive experiences of the Great Barrier Reef.

SHALE OIL CONCERNS

On the basis of what is known now, the Committee expressed grave concern at the possibility of shale oil being mined along the coast adjacent to the Great Barrier Reef. The Committee understands there is limited scope for direct action by the GBRMPA at this time, but urges that developments be closely monitored and the community, companies involved and governments be frequently reminded of the potential damage to the Reef if mining is allowed to proceed.

NEXT MEETING

The next meeting, TRRAC 28, is proposed for 5 and 6 November 2008.

CURRENT MEMBERSHIP OF THE COMMITTEE

Mr Tony Baker	Pontoons, Day Operations, Resort Operations
Mr Mike Bartlett	Cruise Shipping
Mr Darren Cann	Resort Operations
Mr Bruce Chapman	Recreational Yachting
Mr Tony Charters	Eco-tourism
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 Greg Howe	Tourism Queensland
Mr David Hutchen	History, Ferry, Association of Marine Park Tourism Operators (AMPTO)
Mr Bruce Leaver	Dept of the Environment and Water Resources
Mr Col McKenzie	Diving Operations
Mr Glen Miller	Indigenous
Mr Adrian Pelt	Bareboat Charters
Mr John Rumney	Conservation, Diving Operations, Live Aboard
Ms Lorelle Schluter	Acting/Director, GBRMPA
Mr Alan Sweeney	Aircraft Operations, Marketing
Mr David Windsor (Observer)	AMPTO
To be appointed	Commercial Fishing
To be appointed	Dept of Resources, Energy and Tourism
To be appointed	Recreational Fishing
To be appointed	Qld Environmental Protection Agency