



TOURISM AND RECREATION REEF ADVISORY COMMITTEE (TRRAC) 30th Meeting – 7 and 8 October 2009 – Townsville SUMMARY DOCUMENT

The thirtieth meeting of the TRRAC was held in Townsville on 7 and 8 October 2009. 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.

MARINE TOURISM INDUSTRY STATUS REPORT

The Committee was advised by the Association of Marine Park Tourism Operators (AMPTO) that the marine tourism industry remains despondent about the economic outlook. Members identified a number of factors relevant to visitation trends, including:

- the downturn that has already occurred, noting there is a lag time between international bookings and actual visits
- a change in the mix of visitors coming to the Great Barrier Reef region from primarily holiday makers to predominantly visitors for business purposes
- a relatively low occupancy rate experienced by five star hotels during the 'high' season July-September 2009 (normally these occupancy rates would be 90-95 per cent)
- Jetstar Airlines' deferral of the anticipated November recommencement of flights from Japan to Cairns, which will impact on the Cairns industry specifically.

The Committee was presented with the annual visitor numbers derived from the Environmental Management Charge (EMC). These show a 5.9 per cent decrease in visits to the Great Barrier Reef overall for 2008/09 compared to the previous year. They also reveal a consistent year-on-year, month-by-month decline over three years.

Members were advised that AMPTO had put forward a proposal to the Minister for the Department of the Environment, Heritage and the Arts, that EMC be doubled, provided that High Standard operators are provided with a 50 per cent discount. The Committee supported the proposal, in principal, but recognised more work needed to be undertaken on the detail.

INTERGOVERNMENTAL AGREEMENT

The Committee noted the formal signing of the *Great Barrier Reef Intergovernmental Agreement 2009*, and endorsed the continuation of this strong partnership between the Australian and Queensland Governments in protecting the Great Barrier Reef.

GREAT BARRIER OUTLOOK REPORT

The Committee praised the *Great Barrier Reef Outlook Report 2009* both for its well-argued content and presentation. Committee members were open in evaluating the process for the development of the Report.

In noting the Australian and Queensland Governments' interim joint response, serious concern was expressed that it did not include a clear action plan with additional resources for the GBRMPA, as the key management agency, to act on the issues identified in the Outlook Report.

RESPONSE TO CLIMATE CHANGE

The Great Barrier Reef Tourism Climate Change Action Group has delivered the *Great Barrier Reef Tourism Climate Change Action Strategy 2009-2012*. The Committee wholeheartedly endorsed this impressive Action Strategy and supported the appropriate resourcing of all the partners.

AMPTO advised the Committee they are awaiting the outcome of a TQUAL grant application to assist with implementation of industry actions. (TQUAL is a certification trade mark which Tourism Australia, on behalf of the Commonwealth, administers and promotes.)

Members were also briefed on the Climate Change Contingency Framework. The Committee recognised there was a need for a tourism-specific response plan, integrated into the overall Contingency Framework. The Committee recommended budgetary priority be given to tourism-related projects.

AMPTO has offered to be involved in workshops and lead the development of a tourism-specific response plan.

GREAT BARRIER REEF MARINE TOURISM MANAGEMENT STRATEGY

The Committee briefly reviewed the current approach to tourism management as applied by the GBRMPA since 2004. The Committee discussed the appropriateness of the vision and then split into sub-groups to workshop appropriate outcomes, the strengths and weaknesses of the current approach, strategies and ways to measure success. The Committee's overall advice was to recommend the Tourism and Recreation Group prepares a more positive and active marine tourism management strategy about sustainable tourism in the Marine Park, which includes an emphasis on presentation of this World Heritage Area.

GREAT BARRIER REEF EXPERIENCE AUDIT

The Committee was briefed on the Great Barrier Reef experience audit workshops held in September 2009 and how these will inform Tourism Queensland's submission to nominate the Great Barrier Reef as a National Landscape (an initiative by Tourism Australia to identify the best of Australia's natural and cultural landscapes).

Members confirmed an interest in providing comment out-of-session both on the executive summary for the outcomes of the experience audit workshops and the draft National Landscape submission.

The Committee saw the National Landscapes initiative as a great opportunity for collaboration between tourism marketing bodies and the protected area managers to develop an holistic approach for tourism use of a World Heritage destination. The Committee urged the GBRMPA to continue to assist with this initiative.

INTERNATIONAL REEF DIVE SITE RATINGS

Members were informed about a joint GBRMPA, AMPTO and Ecotourism Australia initiative to investigate the feasibility of an international reef dive site ratings system. The Committee split into sub-groups to workshop three areas to assist with defining the boundaries (scope of the scheme), exploring downsides of introducing a system, and what positives the scheme could achieve.

REVIEW OF SPECIAL TOURISM PERMISSIONS FOR ALLOCATION

The Committee was requested to advise on the GBRMPA's preliminary review on the allocation of special tourism permissions (those permissions that have been limited by Regulation or Plan of Management). After consideration of environmental, cultural, social, and economic sustainability issues and balancing these with the

current demand for special tourism permissions and tourism visitation trends, the Committee concluded there is sufficient evidence to advise 2009/10 is not the right time to proceed with allocation of any special tourism permissions.

In addition, the Committee advised on the level of consultation required to complete the review.

EYE ON THE REEF STAFF TRAINING COURSE

The Committee has been involved in the development of the modules for this training course and, after noting the success of the pilot program, the Committee expressed disappointment that ongoing funding is not yet resolved. The Committee was keen to comment on the report on the long-term delivery options, and a working group was established so this could be done out-of-session.

AMENDMENTS TO THE GREAT BARRIER REEF LEGISLATION

Members were provided an update on the Great Barrier Reef legislation amendments. The Committee sought clarification on how the soon-to-be-introduced Maritime Safety Queensland vessel sewage legislation would interact with similar legislation in Commonwealth waters.

NEXT MEETING

This was the final meeting in the current term of the Committee, which was to expire on 30 November 2009. Members were informed that the GBRMPA has made a commitment to continue the RAC process, and membership for the next term will be determined shortly.

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 Helen Cox (Observer)	Department of Industry, Tourism and Resources
Ms Louise Crocombe	Day Operations, Best Practice
Mr John Evetts	Ranging Operations, Game Fishing
Mr Peter Frawley	Independent Chairman
Ms Anne Greentree	Queensland Department of Environment and Resource Management
Mr Daniel Gschwind	Business Acumen, Economic
Mr Bernard Heimann	Mooring, Anchoring, Day Operations
Mr David Hutchen	History, Ferry, Association of Marine Park Tourism Operators (AMPTO)
Mr Bruce Leaver	Department of the Environment, Water, Heritage and the Arts
Ms Judy Lynne (Observer)	Recreational Fishing
Mr Col McKenzie	Diving Operations
Mr Glen Miller	Indigenous
Mr David Morgans (Observer)	Tourism Queensland
Ms Lisha Mulqueeny	Director, GBRMPA
Mr Adrian Pelt	Bareboat Charters
Mr John Rumney	Conservation, Diving Operations, Live Aboard
Mr Greg Smith (Observer)	Commercial Fishing
Mr Alan Sweeney	Aircraft Operations, Marketing