



## TOURISM AND RECREATION REEF ADVISORY COMMITTEE (TRRAC) 29<sup>th</sup> Meeting – 2 and 3 April 2009 – Townsville SUMMARY DOCUMENT

The twenty-ninth meeting of the TRRAC was held in Townsville on 2 and 3 April 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.

### CURRENT MARKET OUTLOOK REPORT

The Chief Executive of the Association of Marine Park Tourism Operators (AMPTO) presented to the Committee on the current market outlook for the marine tourism industry. The tone of the presentation was depressing, with the outlook for 2009 described as "grim" and 2010 "even grimmer". Operators agreed the primary source of the poor outlook was the global economic crisis which was manifesting itself in reduced visitors, reduced flights, shorter advanced booking periods, and greater price competition. Some members considered that notification of bookings now occurs within 24 hours and this was making it harder to forecast numbers.

Particular concern was raised at the impact of perceptions caused by the adverse international publicity of such events as the recent cyclone and floods. The overall message is unless a good season was forthcoming this year, a number of smaller tourism operations will close.

Members' views about the likely drop in tourism ranged from 15 to as high as 50 per cent. There was concern about the impact of declining numbers on the total funds collected under the Environmental Management Charge (EMC) and on resources for the Great Barrier Reef Marine Park Authority (GBRMPA).

The Committee agreed that the impact of the current economic downturn of the marine tourism industry should be brought to the attention of the Minister.

### CLIMATE CHANGE

Members noted and supported the actions of the Marine Tourism Climate Change Action Group and the finalisation of its Great Barrier Reef Marine Tourism Industry Climate Change Action Strategy. The Committee endorsed the Responsible Reef Practices for Climate Change Action and noted the progress of the tourism climate change projects, including that ten high standard operators gained Climate Action Certification.

The Committee generally supported the inclusion of standards addressing climate change issues into the GBRMPA's High Standard Tourism Program, noting that

two years should be allowed for the changes to the certification scheme and for existing operators to transition.

Furthermore, the Committee proposed a review of the Marine Park operators in the original pilot of the Climate Action Certification Program should take place in January 2010 to determine the effectiveness of the actions taken. This review would inform development of future climate change standards within the High Standard Tourism Program.

### GREAT BARRIER REEF MARINE PARK ACT

Members received a briefing on the current proposal to amend the *Great Barrier Reef Marine Park Regulations 1983* as a consequence of the recent amendment to the *Great Barrier Reef Marine Park Act 1975* which will provide better links with the *Environment Protection, Biodiversity and Conservation Act 1999*. Relevant elements included the environmental assessment process; new enforcement mechanisms; encouraging responsible use of the Marine Park; and offences and civil penalties.

The Committee applauded the many proposed changes. While supporting the proposal for new and stronger penalties, the Committee sought assurance that there will be adequate resources to secure enforcement of not only these new, but also existing Regulations.

### SUPER-YACHTS IN THE MARINE PARK

Members acknowledged work on the draft document as one approach to managing super-yachts and agreed the use of vessel length is an appropriate way to manage access to the Marine Park. They also agreed that activity type (e.g. cruise ship style set itinerary versus vessels roaming through under charter) should not affect allocation of access.

There was division amongst members on the issue of whether all super-yachts be deemed commercial operations and the onus to prove otherwise should rest with the owner. It was acknowledged greater flexibility exists for recreational super-yachts over 50 metres and there were potential compliance issues associated with this.

The Committee advised the Tourism and Recreation Group to develop a clear statement of the GBRMPA super-yacht management requirements based on current management arrangements and resolution of the issue around commercial operations. Some members felt this task should be given low priority and resourcing commensurate with the current size of this sector and its impact on the Marine Park.

## SITE PLANNING PRIORITIES

Members were updated on the GBRMPA's new proactive, adaptive site planning processes and the likely priorities for 2009-2010. After taking into consideration the local knowledge of members, the Committee supported the following site planning priority order: Contingency planning in the face of climate change and public moorings and No Anchoring Areas specifically in relation to the Dedicated Use Moorings Program; Keppel Bay and Islands; Capricorn Bunker Group; and the Cooktown region (if necessary).

The Committee discussed the additional 20 new moorings provided for in the Cairns Plan of Management and whether these could form part of any contingency planning for the area. This engendered a discussion of the best way to address a pressing need for a small number of new moorings in the Ribbon Reef Sector to ensure sustainable use of this pristine area. Members recommended the GBRMPA work with AMPTO and the Cod Hole and Ribbon Reef Operators Association (CHARROA) on this matter.

## GREAT BARRIER REEF OUTLOOK REPORT

The significant progress in preparing the Outlook Report was noted by the Committee.

In providing advice on the potential communication strategies associated with tabling the Report, the overall message from the Committee is to work closely with the Minister; brief industry representatives and the Chairmen of the Local Marine Advisory Committees and Reef Advisory Committees for local communications; do not ignore the negatives, particularly internationally; and, to the extent government resources are available, work with the media and opinion leaders in advance to develop a consistent message.

The Committee suggested that the Minister be briefed to the effect that members who have had media experience be consulted during the formulation of the communication strategy and perhaps be included to participate in briefing the community when the Report is released.

## RISKS TO THE HIGH STANDARD TOURISM PROGRAM

The Committee reviewed the risk analysis the GBRMPA had previously undertaken of its partnership with Ecotourism Australia which provides the ECO Certification scheme for recognising high standard operators. The outcome was a judgement that the Committee did not consider the GBRMPA is at a higher risk relative to the past and the foreseeable future. Consequently, the Committee reconfirmed previous advice to the GBRMPA not to actively seek other certification schemes. In respect to auditing of high standard operators, the Committee recognised the importance of auditing to the integrity of the High Standard Tourism Program and supports some funding to undertake increased audits by Ecotourism Australia.

## MOORINGS REGULATIONS

The Committee endorsed the proposed amendment of the Marine Park Regulations to better define 'misuse' of moorings and suggested that the definition may want to address 'rafting up' and 'lifting' of moorings. Alignment with existing Maritime Safety Queensland (MSQ) legislation should be a consideration. In relation to penalties, the Committee supported the penalty for misuse

of a mooring (currently \$550), but felt that the new regulation to prevent anchoring in a No Anchoring Area should have a penalty which appropriately reflected the more serious nature of the impact on the Marine Park, and should be equivalent to that of fishing in a green zone (currently \$1100). The Committee accepted that some discretion may be required for an enforcement officer.

## REVIEW OF THE TRRAC'S THIRD TERM

The TRRAC Work Program for 2006-2009 focused on five key areas of climate change, Reef health, industry sustainability, recreational use and Indigenous participation in tourism. The work of the Committee has delivered on its vision 'to ensure that tourism and recreational use in the Great Barrier Reef Marine Park is sustainable', especially with its work on:

- Climate change initiatives, such as the Great Barrier Reef Marine Tourism Climate Change Group
- Input into the tourism and recreation aspects of the Outlook Report
- Input into the amendments of the Plans of Management and development of policy
- Actively promoting forthright discussion of marine tourism forecasts.

The Committee undertook a review of its work and agreed the TRRAC is an effective committee with enough diverse background and experience to promote insightful discussion amongst members; the issues discussed are relevant and members feel they can openly express opinions and provide meaningful advice to the GBRMPA. Members valued the meetings for the increased rapport/shared knowledge between the GBRMPA, TRRAC members and, through members, the wider community.

## NEXT MEETING

The dates for TRRAC meetings during the remainder of 2009 are:

- TRRAC 30 – 30 and 31 July; and
- TRRAC 31 – 3 and 4 December 2009.

### 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
Ms Anne Greentree .....	Qld Environmental Protection Agency
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 .....	Dept 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
Mr David Windsor (Observer) .....	AMPTO
To be appointed .....	Dept of Resources, Energy and Tourism