



TOURISM REEF ADVISORY COMMITTEE COMMUNIQUE Meeting 8, 2 and 3 November 2017 – Townsville

The Tourism Reef Advisory Committee (the Committee) was established in 2014 to provide advice to the Great Barrier Reef Marine Park Authority (the Authority) on tourism matters relating to implementation of the Great Barrier Reef Outlook Report 2014, the Great Barrier Reef Region Strategic Assessment and Program Report and the Reef 2050 Long-term Sustainability Plan. The Committee is competency-based with members providing a cross-section of stakeholder expertise and interests in areas relevant to tourism and recreational use of the Great Barrier Reef. The Committee is appointed for a three-year period and Ms Glenys Schuntner is the independent Chair. Membership details and earlier communiques are available on the agency's [website](#).

Ms Glenys Schuntner acknowledged the Great Barrier Reef Traditional Owners of the Townsville region and their Elders, both past and present.

Great Barrier Reef Marine Park Authority Update

The Committee noted the update provided by the Authority. It was noted that the Authority's corporate plan has been finalised and is available from the [website](#). The Committee also noted that the Authority's operational review is being implemented.

Members Update

The Committee noted the report from members, including the current status of the Great Barrier Reef marine tourism industry and the Great Barrier Reef Marine Park visitation information.

Based on the Environmental Management Charge (EMC) data, Reef-wide visitation to the Marine Park remains high at 2.3 million for 2016/17. Industry indicated that compared with the national average Queensland is losing market share and since the EMC data was compiled, marine tours are experiencing some downturn.

Crown-of-thorns Starfish (COTS) Control Program

The Committee noted the current success of the crown-of-thorns starfish (COTS) control program and endorsed the expansion to three vessels until June 2020.

Improving recreational fishing compliance

The Committee noted the increase in detection achieved with the Field Management Program's work to improve recreational fishing compliance. The Committee asked members to support the focus on the Townsville region during December 2017 and January 2018.

Reef Guides Program

The Committee noted the industry support for the Reef Guides program. This support is appreciated and necessary if there is to be a successful pilot of the field-school components of the program. Members provided a range of locations that may be suitable for a five day field-school pilot.

Best of Queensland

The Committee praised the Best of Queensland initiative, seeing it as an exciting space for ensuring the delivery of quality Great Barrier Reef experiences.

Responsible Reef Practices

The Committee endorsed the visual messages for Responsible Reef Practices, suggesting minor changes to broaden their application and uptake by the tourism industry.

Whitsunday Plan of Management (WPOM) Implementation

The Committee noted the post public consultation changes to the Whitsundays Plan of Management prior to the amendments taking effect on 2 August 2017. The Committee expressed concerns about impacts of Cyclone Debbie still being assessed while the plan was being finalised. The Committee had a robust discussion about tourism in the Whitsundays post cyclone Debbie, acknowledging that there is no quick road to recovery for the corals and that alternative experiences are necessary and that ideally new sites be found for coral viewing. The Committee identified the importance of changing the message around tourism in the Whitsundays so visitor expectations will better match the experience.



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Queensland Parks and Wildlife Service (QPWS) - Whitsundays Recovery Actions

The Committee praised the good work of QPWS and the Authority to engage the industry and wider community post cyclone Debbie. The Committee is looking forward to construction of tracks and new tourism infrastructure improvements planned to occur in the Whitsundays. The Committee endorsed the idea of revisiting the Whitsundays dedicated-use moorings program.

Whitsunday Tourism Recovery Funds - Investment Update

The Committee noted the progress to date achieved through the Whitsundays Tourism Recovery Fund. The Tourism Recovery Fund Working Group is made up of government and industry representatives, working together to identify projects that will have the greatest and most immediate economic benefit to the Cyclone Debbie affected Whitsunday region.

Reef 2050 Mid-year Review

The Committee noted the upcoming mid-term review of the Reef 2050 Plan. The Committee is concerned there is insufficient funds to implement Reef 2050 actions and is wanting to explore ways the industry can collaborate across stakeholders for future funding to support the Australian and Queensland governments' in achieving the Reef 2050 actions. It is important that this is achieved before Australia reports to the World Heritage Committee on the state of the Great Barrier Reef in 2020.

Blueprint for Resilience

The Committee noted the progress in developing the Great Barrier Reef Blueprint for Resilience. The [Blueprint](#) outlines the key initiatives we will pursue with our partners to improve the outlook for the Reef and sustain the diverse benefits the Reef provides to many Australians. It complements our current programs and all of the work of the Australian and Queensland governments' Great Barrier Reef 2050 Plan.

Operational Review and Tourism

The Committee welcomed the Authority's operational review and noted that tourism functions are now located across the new organisational structure. The Committee recognised the large role and importance of tourism, especially tourism industry engagement which sits under the Education, Stewardship and Partnerships section.

The Committee strongly recommended that resource allocation would need to be monitored carefully to ensure the intended outcome of increased levels of engagement. There was some thought amongst committee members that additional resources would be required.

Reef Integrated Monitoring and Reporting Program and Cultural Data Sharing Agreements

The Committee noted the update of the Reef Integrated Monitoring and Reporting Program and the work by Traditional Owners. The Committee praised the image which encapsulated the journey for Traditional Owners in sharing their knowledge.

Coral Sea Marine Park

The Committee noted the update on management and planning for the Coral Sea Marine Park.

Strengthening the Permissions System

The Committee congratulated the Authority on its progress towards strengthening the permission system, understanding the Committee advice on five-year terms for non-high standard operators was not taken on board due to considerations across all submissions and efficiencies in resourcing. The Committee endorsed the Permits Online as a great tool for operators to manage their interactions with the Authority relating to new and existing Marine Park permits and endorsed the Authority's approach to permission compliance.

Other business

The Committee recognised the urgency of the issues raised by Whitsunday marine tourism operators and notes the Authority is prioritising permit application assessments to support recovery projects, post cyclone Debbie.

