



MANAGING LATENCY OF TOURISM PERMITS IN THE GREAT BARRIER REEF MARINE PARK

- Issues Raised in Responses to Questionnaires

JULY 2002

Is latency an issue?

Although this question was not specifically asked in the questionnaire, some respondents commented on the seriousness of latency. Comments included:

- latent permits harm no-one and minimise impact because they are not being operated;
- latency was already examined through the 'Blue Forms' process;
- it may be an issue in Cairns Area and Whitsundays, but this should not override management reef-wide;
- there are plenty of opportunities for expansion.

Is Use It or Lose It a good approach?

Many of the written comments supplied on the forms addressed the applicability of Use It or Lose It to latency management. Comments included:

- no overall approach is appropriate;
- this proposal will seriously affect/ruin my business;
- many operators will be affected because of factors beyond their control such as a drop in tourism numbers, seasonal fluctuations, weather and a low tourism base in isolated areas;
- it favours the larger operators and has the potential to squeeze out smaller operators;
- it would force people to operate which would increase pressure on other operators and the Marine Park;
- there was no warning of this when the permit and deed were granted;
- it would give a chance for new operators to establish and existing operators to expand;
- it is an attempt to raise money.

Some other approaches were suggested, such as:

- let market forces decide;
- operate booking systems for some sectors (as with cruise ships);
- create different classes of permits; and
- base the decision on whether the operator is seriously in business (has a vessel, advertising, brochures etc.).

Should Use it or Lose It apply to the vessel or the permit?

Most supported use it or lose it for permits, but not for each vessel.

Should individual activities, endorsements or passenger capacity of a tourism permit be subject to 'use it or lose it'?

Most respondents did not support examining latency in individual activities, endorsements or passenger capacity.

Is 50 days a reasonable amount of use to expect?

Respondents were relatively evenly divided on the question of whether 50 days was a reasonable amount of use to expect, however there was a strong opinion that a blanket 50 days would not fit all operations as many operations legitimately use less than 50 days. Some examples included itinerant and seasonal operations; luxury 'white boats'; gamefishing vessels; long range rovers; cruise ships; and developing businesses. Many respondents thought it would be necessary to have special circumstances if the level of use was set at 50 days.

Of the respondents who supplied an address, the majority who supported the 50 day limit were from the Cairns Area and the Whitsundays, although there were also many respondents from these areas who indicated they did not support 50 days.

Suggested alternative approaches to the 50 day limit included:

- removing only those permits that showed nil use;
- examining use over a longer time period.

Should operators be able to sell or relinquish their unused permits instead?

There was strong support for operators being able to sell or relinquish any latent permits. However, some respondents pointed out that there was no real difference between relinquishing a permit and having it resumed through latency arrangements.

Should there be exemptions for vessel construction?

There was very strong support for a 2 year exemption for an operator who can demonstrate that a vessel or tourist facility is under construction or refit/repair.

How should use be assessed?

The majority of support was for using EMC records (with consent) to assess use.

Should tourist facilities be subject to 'use it or lose it'?

There was an even split for and against making permits for the installation of tourist facilities subject to 'use it or lose it'. Some respondents suggested considering that facilities were best considered as a component of the overall tourist program.

How much lead time should there be prior to implementation?

Most respondents favoured a long lead time, 12 months, 2 years or even longer.

Role of AMPTO

A number of respondents questioned whether AMPTO was representative of the whole marine tourism industry or specifically advised that the organisation did not speak for them.

Although it was not a specific question a couple of respondents indicated they did not support AMPTO sitting on a review committee.

Feedback on responses to questionnaires

It was suggested that all permittees should be advised of the outcomes of the questionnaires and some of the relevant comments.