



Australian Government

Great Barrier Reef
Marine Park Authority

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NEWSLETTER - 20



From the Deck

From the Director's Desk

I write this introduction with mixed feelings following a year that has unveiled much positive progress for the Marine Park while at the same time bringing about great sadness and reflection.

October 2006 saw the culmination of several years of community consultation and deliberation with the Minister for the Environment and Heritage, Senator the Hon. Ian Campbell, releasing the review of the *Great Barrier Reef Marine Park Act 1975*. Together with the Department of the Environment and Heritage, we are working hard to implement the review outcomes and I invite those of you who have not yet read the report to view it online at www.deh.gov.au.

Recent studies of communities up and down Australia's coast showed that 33 per cent of people in Queensland coastal communities, and 42 per cent of people in the southern capitals of Australia still perceive tourism as being a major threat to the Great Barrier Reef. While we focus communication activities nationally and internationally to quell these perceptions, we urge you, the tourism operator, to start to take a more active role in ensuring your passengers and the general public know your activities are sustainable and of a world-class standard. Consider what you have done this year to improve the industry's reputation, and what you will do in the year to come.

I want to take this opportunity to formally recognise the remarkable contribution of Col McKenzie, Executive Director of the Association of Marine Park Tourism Operators (AMPTO), for his four years of dedicated service to the Marine Park tourism industry. Working together, we have achieved a more sustainable Marine Park tourism industry and Col will be greatly missed when he steps down at the end of 2006, both for his passion for the Great Barrier Reef and his many colourful shirts.

David Windsor will take up the reigns of AMPTO's "top job" in January, and the Great Barrier Reef Marine Park Authority (GBRMPA) is looking forward to continuing its strong partnership with AMPTO and the tourism industry.



Col McKenzie, Lisha Mulqueeny and C. Michael Hall at the GBRMPA-sponsored Climate Change Forum in October.

On behalf of everyone at the GBRMPA, I would like to echo the tremendous loss felt by the Marine Park tourism industry at the sudden passing of Adrian Platt, Managing Director of Ozsail, in November. His enthusiasm and energy will be greatly missed.

The GBRMPA staff have also asked me to pass along their best wishes for a speedy recovery to Deb Lewis, Whitsunday Charter Boat Industry Association Secretary and general all-round inspiration in the Marine Park tourism industry.

Finally, I'd like to wish everyone a very merry and prosperous Christmas and a happy New Year. My team and I look forward to working closely with you in 2007 and building on the great achievements of 2006.

Lisha Mulqueeny
Director Tourism and Recreation

our great barrier reef
let's keep it great





Awesome Reef experience for Camp Quality families

In October, almost 200 Camp Quality children and their families experienced the wonders of the Great Barrier Reef with the help of the Great Barrier Reef Marine Park Authority (GBRMPA) staff and Marine Park tourism operators. The trips provided the kids with plenty of "fun therapy".

The reef trips were funded by a \$15,500 donation from the GBRMPA staff, supplemented with generous contributions from Quicksilver Connections, Passions of Paradise, Sunsea Cruises, Fantasea Cruises and Freedom Fast Cats.

If the children's reactions were any indication, the trips were a great success with comments such as "awesome" and "cool" ringing out on the boats.



Participants enjoyed the Airlie Beach Camp Quality day

Public moorings

The GBRMPA takes misuse of public moorings seriously and encourages you to report all incidents. The following tips can help our compliance team with investigations:

- Submit a report using the *Eyes and Ears Incident Reporting* forms
- Provide additional information such as photographs, maps and charts
- Make sure all photographs capture the incident, the vessel, the class of mooring (by the colour coded band) and include the date and time.

Please do not approach people involved in the incident or request information from them. For more information on the *Eyes and Ears* programme click the *Onboard* icon at www.gbrmpa.gov.au and look under 'Reporting what you see'.

Climate change takes spotlight at Townsville Ecotourism forum

Themed as 'Ecotourism: Building on Natural Advantages', Ecotourism Australia's 2006 International Conference in Townsville in early November explored contemporary issues facing nature-based tourism with a strong focus on the Great Barrier Reef.

As part of the conference, the GBRMPA sponsored a Climate Change Forum on Magnetic Island to explore the challenges and opportunities for the tourism industry as a result of this global phenomenon.

Delegates at the conference declared 'Climate Change' as the key issue facing the tourism industry.

Conference outcomes can be found at: www.ecotourism.org.au

Is your bareboat briefer properly briefed?

Did you know that by law the principal / operations manager, the briefer and the radio operator of all Marine Park bareboat operations must be appropriately trained and registered with the GBRMPA?

This ensures bareboat customers are provided with the correct information to safely operate a vessel in the Marine Park.

The course covers communication, marine safety and emergency procedures, Marine Park management and best practices. Once completed, a Statement of Attainment will be provided. Courses are taught at the Barrier Reef Institute of TAFE Cannonvale Campus. For more information, visit www.barrierreef.tafe.net or phone (07) 4940 2777.

Don't be "court" out

The Office of Fair Trading continues to investigate and prosecute Marine Park tourism operators who misrepresent the Environmental Management Charge (EMC) in brochures and on websites.

The following is a summary of the latest actions:

- Matters under investigation – 8
- Successful prosecutions – 3

For all EMC information, including how to advertise, click the *Onboard* icon at www.gbrmpa.gov.au and look under 'EMC'.

EMC Update

You will soon be receiving your 2007 EMC logbooks reflecting the planned 1 April 2007 increase to \$5.00 per day per visitor.

Please ensure you are correctly identifying the reefs you visit by checking the list of reef names and reef ID numbers at the beginning of your logbooks.

The GBRMPA is pleased to introduce BPAY facilities starting with the payment of the January to March 2007 quarter. Your charging returns will be identified with a customer reference number for use in your electronic payment. A separate payment will be required for each permit. If you wish to make a single payment for more than one permit, please contact the GBRMPA to prearrange this.

Further information will be provided with your logbooks.



Green Zones flourish

Research undertaken by the Australian Institute of Marine Science (AIMS) and James Cook University has indicated Green Zones established in mid-2004 in the Great Barrier Reef Marine Park are having a positive effect, particularly on coral trout numbers, and it's happening faster than expected.

But it's not just scientists noticing the differences. Tourism crew and deck staff monitoring their own sites through the Eye on the Reef monitoring programme mentioned they too have noticed an increase in fish size and numbers at dive sites that are now protected.

Commenting on the research findings, Senator the Hon. Ian Campbell, Minister for the Environment and Heritage, said, "Fish stocks are likely to be enhanced and benefit tourism and fishing through improved health of the overall Great Barrier Reef ecosystem".

Senator Campbell said the study's results would be "reassuring to tourism operators that rely on fish size and numbers to enhance the experiences of divers and visitors to the Great Barrier Reef".

It's heating up!

Hotter summer temperatures increase the risk of coral bleaching and we'd like to remind all volunteer BleachWatch participants to look out for signs of bleaching between December 2006 and April 2007.

Anybody can report observations online by clicking the BleachWatch icon at www.gbrmpa.gov.au. Remember, we would like you to submit reports even if you don't see bleaching, as this information is crucial to our understanding of how the reef is affected.

For more information on how to participate in BleachWatch, please email bleachwatch@gbrmpa.gov.au, or contact the BleachWatch coordinator on (07) 4750 0700.



Diver assessing bleached coral

Latency dealt with – a tourism policy in action

As part of the implementation of our tourism permissions policy, the GBRMPA is now checking all permittees with special tourism permissions have achieved "reasonable use" (an average of 50 days per year per vessel) when they apply to renew their permit.

The GBRMPA is also making quarterly checks to ensure operators commence operations within the first two years of being granted a new permit. In the first quarterly review, four permits were revoked and five extensions were granted.

For more information on this policy contact Vicki Bonanno on (07) 4750 0868 or email v.bonanno@gbrmpa.gov.au.

Room for improvement in "selling" the Marine Park

Earlier this year the Tourism and Recreation Group conducted an audit of 202 Marine Park tourism operators' brochures featuring 329 products to check out how the Great Barrier Reef was being "sold" to potential visitors. The results were surprising.

- The phrase "Great Barrier Reef" was used in just 58 per cent of brochures
- Only 30 operators mentioned the Great Barrier Reef as a World Heritage Area
- The Great Barrier Reef Marine Park was referred to in only 22 per cent of brochures
- 56 per cent of brochures (114) mentioned the EMC, and fewer than 20 per cent (21) of those got the amount correct.

Why is this information important? Because tourism operators play a vital role in getting accurate and up-to-date information about the value of the Great Barrier Reef to visitors and brochures are usually the 'first line of attack' in spreading these messages. Increasing awareness of the Great Barrier Reef, the importance of protection, and the role tourism operator's play, helps ensure a sustainable tourism industry and a sustainable reef for the future.

We'll be providing a more comprehensive summary of the results on the *Onboard* website and will include ideas of what makes a brochure 'high standard'.

Bulletin board

- An update on the Whitsundays dedicated use moorings initiative is available under *Latest News* at www.gbrmpa.gov.au.
- The Draft Operational Policy on Whale and Dolphin Conservation in the Great Barrier Reef Marine Park is available for comment on the GBRMPA website under *Latest News* until 8 January 2007.
- The GBRMPA, AMPTO and Dive Queensland are working together to conduct a survey of the SCUBA dive industry on the Great Barrier Reef. It is important that **all** operators complete the survey to assist with better management of the industry. Contact AMPTO on (07) 4044 4908.
- The company appointed to manage the \$40 million Marine and Tropical Science Research Facility (MTSRF) has changed its name from the Tropical Reef Ecology Ecosystems and Forests Limited (TREEF) to Reef and Rainforest Research Centre (RRRC).
- Doon Mcoll is the GBRMPA's new Regional Liaison Manager for the Far Northern and Cape York Regions.
- A Marine Bioregional Plan will be developed by the Department of the Environment and Heritage for the East Marine Region that includes the Coral Sea (abutting the eastern side of the Great Barrier Reef Marine Park) and extends to the edge of the Exclusive Economic Zone. This will have **NO EFFECT** within the Marine Park. Email paul.garrett@deh.gov.au, or visit www.deh.gov.au/coasts/mbp/
- The GBRMPA website is being updated so don't forget to update your web links and bookmarks to get the latest information.
- Operators and crew in the southern region attended the first *Onboard* workshop in the Town of 1770 in late November. More workshops are planned for other regions in early 2007.
- In August the Tourism and Recreation Group received the *Environment and Heritage Minister's Achievement Award* for its partnership with the tourism industry.



The Tourism and Recreation Group (left to right): Nicole Robbins, Lorelle Schluter, Leanne Brown, Lisha Mulqueeny, Chris Briggs, Vicki Bonanno, Hilary Skeat, Dean Miller.

Great Barrier Reef getting the raw prawn

Imported green (uncooked) prawns should not be used for fish feeding or fishing activities in the Great Barrier Reef Marine Park as they can carry exotic viruses such as the white spot syndrome virus that has the potential to be transferred to local stocks of prawns and crabs.

The GBRMPA is contributing to the current policy review for importing green prawns, and at the same time

promoting best practice approaches to ensure everyone helps to maintain the health of the Great Barrier Reef.

If you want to make sure you're using the right raw prawns, follow the Queensland Department of Primary Industries and Fisheries guidelines, read raw seafood labels carefully, and avoid the use of imported green prawns in the Great Barrier Reef Marine Park.



Where are your prawns from?

High standard operators

Louise Crocombe (pictured) of Townsville-based Adrenalin Dive said their decision to become ECO Certified was based on the benefits they saw other ECO Certified operators receiving.

"It was a good decision, and we are extremely pleased with the positive outcomes for our business. We are also fortunate to have internal expertise that allows us to generate our own documents, such as manuals and procedures, and as such, we did not have to outsource. Though it was a voluntary decision to achieve ECO Certification, the benefits have been, and still are, well

worth the effort. For any operator considering taking the step towards gaining ECO Certification, I would recommend it highly, as it benefits not only the operator, but the tourism industry as a whole", Louise said.

To join the ranks of high standard operators contact the GBRMPA on (07) 4750 0775.



Would you like to receive this newsletter electronically and make it easier to share this information with your staff?

Please provide your details to Nicole Robbins on (07) 4750 0775 or email tourec@gbmpa.gov.au

Your contributions, ideas and feedback are welcome. Contact Dean Miller in GBRMPA's Tourism and Recreation Group by phone (07) 4750 0715 or email: d.miller@gbmpa.gov.au.