



From the Deck

From the Director's desk

The Great Barrier Reef Marine Park Authority (GBRMPA) is working to ensure a well-managed Reef that will be as resilient as possible to future stress.

The Tourism and Recreation Group, together with the Climate Change Group, is working on a range of climate projects to help Marine Park tourism operators better understand climate change and to reduce their operations' climate change footprint (see article inside this edition).

In addition, we have been working on updating and improving our Plans of Management, with the amended plans to be released late this year. We are amending some of our regulations, including amalgamating the list of cruise ship anchorages into a single place in the regulations and expanding our ability to use an expression of interest process for allocating limited opportunity moorings from the Cairns Area Plan of Management to all areas of the Marine Park.

The GBRMPA's on-line permit management system, PCAMS (Permits, Compliance And Management System), is currently being built and will be trialled later this year. It will allow tourism operators to apply for permits, make bookings to planning areas and anchorages, submit EMC, and access comprehensive information such as permit data online.

We are also contributing to the draft Outlook Report, ensuring input from key groups such as the Tourism and Recreation Reef Advisory Committee (TRRAC) is taken into account in the final document, which is to be presented to Parliament in June 2009.

We would like to thank all the Marine Park tourism operators who have taken the time to help us with these initiatives, through participating in research, trialling new systems and processes, or simply talking to us about our management arrangements. We know your time is valuable, and we appreciate your support and input to help us manage this amazing World Heritage Area.

Lorelle Schluter

A/Director Tourism
and Recreation



**Want to
know your
climate change
footprint?**

You can help us develop our online emissions calculator and increase your awareness of your operating footprint at the same time. For more details contact Jill Brown on email: jill.brown@gbmpa.gov.au.



Combating climate change

It can't be denied anymore: climate change is happening, and it is already having an impact on the world as we know it.

The Tourism and Recreation Group, in partnership with the Climate Change Group, has adopted a proactive approach to help the tourism industry adapt and respond to this new challenge.

As part of this approach, 15 operators have agreed to participate in the trial of Ecotourism Australia's (EA) Climate Action Certification Program, sponsored by the GBRMPA and the South Australian Tourism Commission.

The module will provide a basis for operators to assess their climate change footprint and put in place strategies to reduce their impact on the environment, following a similar format to the current eco-certification program run by EA.

Other projects include development of a Reef Facts for Tour Guides on climate change, an online emissions calculator specifically for Marine Park tourism operators, and the collection of baseline data from tourism operators regarding their knowledge of climate change.

For further information about these projects contact Jill Brown, Manager Climate Change, on email: jill.brown@gbmpa.gov.au.

New ID cards to keep a good Eye on the Reef

New underwater pocket ID cards have been developed for Eye on the Reef monitoring crew. These cards will help crew identify different types of algae and make filling in the logsheets much easier.

Haven't got yours yet? Just ask Fiona Merida at fiona.merida@gbmpa.gov.au.



USE IT OR LOSE IT - a tourism policy in action

Tourism operators are reminded that as part of our tourism permissions policy, the GBRMPA routinely checks that 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 also makes quarterly checks to ensure operators commence operations within the first two years of being granted a new permit, whether it is a special tourism permission or a regular permission.

For more information on this policy contact Ben Palmer on (07) 4750 0868 or email tourec@gbmpa.gov.au.

Be whale-wise this winter!

For most tourists visiting the Great Barrier Reef, seeing a whale is an amazing, once in a lifetime experience, so it's important to know what to do during an encounter.

The simplest way to know you're getting a whale encounter right is to conform

to the Responsible Reef Practices for whale watching – you can find a list on our Onboard website on www.gbrmpa.gov.au/onboard/home. This can be included in crew orientation information.

The species most commonly seen in the Great Barrier Reef are dwarf minke whales (from May to August) and humpback whales (from June to September).



Help research a whale

Did you know that as a tourism operator you can actively contribute to whale research?

Here's how:

- If it's a humpback whale: fill in a **Sightings Network log sheet**, available in the GBRMPA three-way folder. Haven't got your folder yet? Contact Fiona Merida at fiona.merida@gbmpa.gov.au.
- If it's a dwarf minke whale: fill in a **Whale Sighting Sheet** developed by the Minke Whale Project team. This sheet allows the collection of data about whale behaviours and migration patterns. You can download a Whale Sighting Sheet from www.minkewhaleproject.org/



On TRRAC

The twenty-sixth meeting of the Tourism and Recreation Reef Advisory Committee (TRRAC) was held in Townsville on 9 and 10 April 2008.

The TRRAC discussed a number of issues including coastal development, the Outlook Report, tourism compliance, compliance matters relating to EMC, responses to climate change, special tourism permissions and dedicated use moorings.

The GBRMPA Chairman, Russell Reichelt, presented a draft organisational plan currently under consideration, and articulated the short and long-term vision for the GBRMPA.



Improved design for moorings in the Whitsundays

Queensland Parks and Wildlife (QPW) have been trialling a new design for public moorings in the Whitsundays, using a stainless steel saddle assembly.

The results so far show this new design improves the strength and resistance of moorings and will help prevent mooring damage, thereby reducing maintenance costs.

For more information call QPW on (07) 4767 7355.

Compliance matters

Offences reported between 1 January and 31 March 2008

Offence	Far Northern	Cairns/ Cooktown	Townsville/ Whitsunday	Mackay/ Capricorn	TOTAL
Breach Permit Condition	0	1	10	2	13
Foreign Fishing Vessels	1	0	0	0	1
Illegal Discharge	0	2	4	3	9
Illegal Fishing (Commercial)	5	0	1	8	14
Illegal Fishing (Recreational)	0	10	45	9	64
POM Offences	0	0	2	0	2
Unpermitted Purpose	0	4	12	2	18
Other	0	0	9	1	10
State Offences	17	2	11	5	35
TOTAL	23	19	94	30	166

Cooktown/Bloomfield special tourism permissions

The GBRMPA and QPW recently issued three Cooktown/Bloomfield special tourism permissions following a public expression of interest allocation process conducted at the end of 2007.

The allocation process was a commitment made by the GBRMPA after consultation with the Cooktown Local Marine Advisory Committee and the broader Cooktown/Bloomfield community.

These special tourism permissions

were provided under the Cairns Area Plan of Management after community consultation identified the need to improve access to the Cairns Planning Area for Cooktown/Bloomfield tourism operators. The permits allow daily access to the Planning Area without a booking for tourism operators running predominantly from the Cooktown/Bloomfield area.

If you would like to hear about future special tourism permission allocation processes run by the GBRMPA, please contact: Ben Palmer on 07 4750 0729 or by email ben.palmer@gbrmpa.gov.au.

Reef Operators put smiles on little faces

Great Adventures in Cairns, **Sunferries** in Townsville, **Fantasea Cruises** in the Whitsundays and **Freedom Fast Cats** in Yeppoon worked with GBRMPA and Camp Quality to create a special family experience for more than 150 Camp Quality kids and their families on Sunday 18 May.

Camp Quality's North Queensland Area Manager Lorraine Duve said the

children and their families had enjoyed the reef trips and they were thankful for the support of the GBRMPA staff.

"Everyone was very excited about the weekend reef trips with many experiencing the reef for the first time. It's wonderful that this has all been made possible with the support of the GBRMPA and the tourism operators," she said.

Thanks for helping put smiles back on little faces!



Going Green

In March this year Earth Hour gave Marine Park tourism operators the opportunity to raise awareness of climate change and its impact on the reef.

It was inspiring to hear from operators such as Cruise Whitsundays and Queensland Yacht Charters who switched off their lights for the second year in a row!

Hamilton Island Holiday Resorts asked their guests to turn off their lights and air-conditioning, and to think twice about having their towels changed. Staff led the way by switching off their own lights and air-conditioning.

Nimrod Explorer (Explorer Ventures) spent Earth Hour at the Cod Hole. After the night dive, they switched off their lights and generator. The guests and crew spent the hour telling stories, and dive

instructor Demi played the didgeridoo.

Alan Wallish, Managing Director of Passions of Paradise, was one of 10 Australians featured on a video discussing climate change and Earth Hour, which was shown at VIP events on the evening of Earth Hour. Alan was filmed at Michaelmas Cay, a significant bird site in the Reef particularly vulnerable to climate change.

In Townsville, GBRMPA staff took this initiative home and held a number of candlelit parties.

Congratulations to all operators who made an effort for Earth Hour! It was a powerful way to deliver a visible message on the need for action on climate change.

Are you doing something innovative to make your operation more green? We'd love to hear from you? Email: tourec@gbmpa.gov.au

High standard operators

Queensland Charter Yachts say their sense of responsibility to the marine environment and the ability to gain an extended Marine Parks permit were the motivating factors for the Whitsunday-based bareboat operator to gain ECO Certification through Ecotourism Australia.

"We have always been conscious of the responsibility to make sure our clients have the minimum impact on the Great Barrier Reef, and for the most part our clients feel the same," Queensland Charter Yachts' Suzette Pelt said. "We would like to think that people would chose an eco-accredited business over one that was not."

Suzette said the benefits of becoming ECO Certified extended to her staff as well. Staff became involved in the process of certification "and have not only incorporated eco-friendly practices into their day-to-day work activities, but also into what they do at home", Suzette said. "Staff benefit from being proud to be part of an eco-accredited business."

To find more about the High Standard Tourism Program, contact the GBRMPA on 07 4750 0729.



BULLETIN BOARD

- Researchers are keen to know if you've seen a whale shark recently, as these animals are unusual visitors in the Great Barrier Reef. You can report sightings through our Sightings Network and log the details online at www.whaleshark.org.
- Do your bit to look after it by reminding your passengers about our free Zoning Maps, available at Reef Retail outlets or by calling 1800 990 177.
- A summary report on public comments received on the dedicated use mooring initiative is now available on our website at: http://www.gbmpa.gov.au/corp_site/key_issues/tourism/management/moorings#Dedicated-use.
- Plans of Management for Cairns and the Whitsundays are currently in the process of being amended and are expected to come into effect by the end of the year.
- Maps showing cruise ship anchorages are now available on the Onboard website at: http://www.gbmpa.gov.au/onboard/home/what_you_do/cruise_ships/cruise_ship_anchorages.
- Results of the Pilot Study for QPW's Whitsunday Visitor Monitoring project, an initiative recommended by the Tourism and Recreation Reef Advisory Committee, revealed that a significant proportion of visitors felt that the number of large boats at one location were "too much". The next round of surveys will be in July and September.

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

Please provide your details to Karen Stephen in GBRMPA's Tourism and Recreation Group on (07) 4750 0775 or email: tourec@gbmpa.gov.au

Your contributions, ideas and feedback are also welcome.

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