



Australian Government
Great Barrier Reef
Marine Park Authority

From the Deck

MARCH 2009
NEWSLETTER - 28

GBRMPA roundup

Welcome to the first edition of *From the Deck* for 2009.

This year will certainly be one of the most challenging years the tourism industry has faced for decades, with the global financial crisis likely to have far greater impacts on the inbound tourism market than either the terrorism events of 2001 or the threat of SARS in 2003.

This all comes at the same time as the drop in fuel prices, a lower Australian dollar and the increased number of airline seats into Australia which, combined, will play in tourism's favour. Although the number of international tourists is likely to decrease for the first time since 2001, these factors suggest that domestic tourism will make a comeback with increased spending by Australians in Australia. The lower dollar, the need to look for cheaper (than overseas) holidays, and the fact that Australia generally has withstood international economic downturns better than most other developed countries all point to an increase in domestic visitors to the region.

This could be a major opportunity for the tourism industry to polish its 'green'

image. The Great Barrier Reef is an iconic natural wonder, one Australians are very proud of, so it makes sense, now more than ever, to visit it the 'green' way.

To improve your green credentials, you can get involved in monitoring and research via the Great Barrier Reef Marine Park Authority's (GBRMPA) partnership programs (Sightings Network, Eye on the Reef, BleachWatch), become a High Standard operator, and participate in our climate action program and workshops.

We all know that climate change will be the next major challenge for the

industry. This is why the GBRMPA will strongly focus on developing a pragmatic strategy to respond to bleaching events this year, taking into account the identified needs of tourism operators.

On a separate note: due to strong feedback from tourism industry associations and to ensure all permittees receive the latest management information, we have decided to send out printed copies of *From the Deck* again. Please let us know if you would like to receive it electronically by emailing: tourec@gbmpa.gov.au. Thank you!

Australian Indigenous Tourism Conference

Don't forget this year's conference! It will be held at Jupiters Hotel and Casino in Townsville from 24 – 27 March. This year the focus will be on the environment, youth, business opportunities and maintaining Indigenous culture.

If you are involved in Indigenous tourism then this is your opportunity to network and start new partnerships. For more information visit www.aitc2009.com.



CLIMATE CLIPS

Act responsibly for our climate!

Jump on the web and take our new Responsible Reef Practices for Climate Change Action onboard! These are useful tips to minimise your operation's carbon emissions and mitigate the impacts of climate change.

You can find these pages along with other new pages on tourism and climate change at www.gbrmpa.gov.au/onboard under 'High Standards - Climate Action'.

Responding to Bleaching

Unusually warm sea temperatures have been putting extra stress on the Great Barrier Reef this summer.

The GBRMPA is adopting a proactive approach to bleaching. A coordinated and collaborative response strategy, the *Coral Bleaching Incident Control System*, is presently being finalised - with a major component dedicated to tourism. The Tourism Coral Bleaching Response Plan is under



development in consultation with major industry stakeholders including representatives from AMPTO, WCBIA and Tourism Queensland.

Want to know more about this initiative? Contact: christina.sinnemann@gbrmpa.gov.au.

Can you tell?

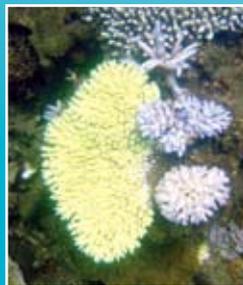
Coral doesn't bleach from one day to the next! The bleaching process is gradual, with 4 levels of bleaching identifiable:



HEALTHY REEF



Upper surface bleaching



Pale/fluoro



Totally bleached/white



Dead with algae

Make sure you report the appropriate level of bleaching when you fill in your BleachWatch form.

Not a member of BleachWatch yet?

Email bleachwatch@gbrmpa.gov.au to subscribe and receive your free BleachWatch kit.

POM amendments create new mooring opportunities in Cairns

Recent amendments to the Cairns Area Plan of Management (CAPOM) came into effect in December 2008. The CAPOM provides an opportunity for operators with an existing mooring in the Cairns Planning Area to apply for an alternative weather mooring at their designated sites.

If you wish to apply for a 'weather

alternative' mooring please contact the Permits section of the GBRMPA on (07) 4750 0700. Applications will be dealt with on a 'first in, first served' basis.

The Plan also offers 20 new mooring opportunities in the Cairns Planning Area, however these moorings will not be allocated this financial year. If you wish to register your interest for a mooring in the Cairns Planning Area please contact Anne Caillaud on (07) 4750 0861.

For more information visit www.gbrmpa.gov.au.

Workshop it!

Renewable energy workshops are back! Mark these dates on your calendar to learn how you can use renewables in your deliverables and save your consumables! Workshop dates are 24-25 March, 28-29 April, 26-27 May, 23-24 June and 28-29 July.

Workshops are hosted by Hidden Valley Cabins and run by Tropical Energy Solutions. To register call (07) 4770 8088.

Compliance matters

Offences reported between 1 October and 30 December 2008

Offence	Far Northern	Cairns/ Cooktown	Townsville/ Whitsunday	Mackay/ Capricorn	TOTAL
Foreign fishing vessel	0	2	0	0	2
Illegal fishing (commercial)	39	0	3	5	47
Illegal fishing (recreational)	0	18	28	14	60
Indigenous hunting/fishing	0	5	0	2	7
Moorings* (commercial)	0	5	2	0	7
Moorings (recreational)	0	0	36	0	36
Offences by tourism vessels**	0	2	22	2	26
Other offences (recreational)***	0	0	21	0	21
Permit breaches (research)	0	0	2	0	2
Shipping (pollution)	0	0	0	2	2
Vulnerable species****	0	2	0	4	6
TOTAL	39	34	114	29	216

* moorings include unpermitted moorings/mooring reference numbers not displayed

** includes fishing in green zones, unpermitted activity, breach of permit, POM offences, groundings, State offences and other agency offences

*** includes POM offences, grounding, State offences and other agency offences

**** includes strandings, bycatch and unpermitted take

Ready for EMC?

Are you filling in your EMC logbooks properly, lodging your payments on time, and keeping accurate EMC records? Not sure? Now is the time to double check your data and proof-read your logbooks.

Here are three good reasons why you should dust off your calculator:

1. GBRMPA is turning up the heat on tourism operators who continue to pay EMC after the due date. Changes to the GBRMPA Act in late 2008, which take effect from November 2009, mean that the Late Payment Penalty will be either 20% of the collected amount or \$250, whichever is the greater. A failure to pay the Late Payment Penalty by the due date may result in the relevant permit being suspended.
2. EMC audits are planned for this year – auditors will check your records are accurate, up to date and the correct payment has been made.
3. There will be an EMC increase next year (see boxed text below).

If you have any questions about your EMC obligations contact the GBRMPA on **(07) 4750 0700**.



Fishing in green zones

There have been recent instances of tourism operators fishing in green zones. Just a reminder that these are serious offences. We would like to take this opportunity to remind all operators that:

- a fishing endorsement in a tourism permit NEVER gives the right to fish in green zones, wherever you are in the Marine Park.

- fishing in yellow zones is not allowed in the Whitsunday Planning Area, unless a special endorsement specifically allowing this activity is provided in a permit.

Please keep an eye open to make sure marine wildlife and iconic species such as sharks are protected! If you spot someone fishing in a green zone, please submit an *Eyes and Ears* incident report form, which can be found in your three-way folder. Haven't got your folder yet? Email fiona.merida@gbmpa.gov.au or call the GBRMPA on **(07) 4750 0775**.

EMC on the rise

An increase of the full day and part day Environmental Management Charge (EMC) from \$5.00 to \$5.50, and from \$2.50 to \$2.75 respectively, will take effect on 1 April 2010.

This increase is linked to the movements in the Consumer Price Index (CPI) for Brisbane, and takes effect on 1 April in the 2nd charge year after the indexed amount exceeds \$0.40. The GBRMPA has no discretion in this matter.

The money collected via the EMC plays a vital role in protecting the Great Barrier Reef Marine Park and is used for research, education and Marine Park management.

Going Green

Magnetic Island Sea Kayaks are not going green *per se* – they always have been.

The very nature of the business is to tie in with nature, and the operation's environmental footprint is close to non-existent. "The only footprints we leave are in the sand" said Steve Rowland, Owner Operator of Magnetic Island Sea Kayaks. "We haven't had to alter any component of our tour to become green; it's been run the same way for nearly fourteen years."

Passengers discover the island and corals from the quiet of their kayak, while learning about the area's history and ecology thanks to the operation's remarkable interpretation program. As one of the region's only truly 'environmentally-friendly' tours, the business has received many



accreditations and awards, including the Advanced Ecotourism and Climate Action Australia accreditations, the 2005 Sustainability in Business Award, and the 2004 Queensland Tourism Award for Adventure Tourism.

With a carbon footprint of only 35kg CO₂-e per year, Magnetic Island Sea Kayaks is close to being a carbon neutral business. "As a 'bush' boy, I cherish and value nature and the outdoors, and this is why I continue to look after the environment" continues Steve. With great success!

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**



The increasing awareness of the impacts of climate change was a motivating factor for long-term Whitsundays crewed charter operator Prosail Queensland to gain EcoCertification.

"It seemed a small task to achieve for our business to show our sustainability as a tourism operator in the World Heritage-listed Great Barrier Reef" said Prosail's Ali Molloy. "As travellers realise the importance of climate change we hope they will choose holidays and trips that offer a chance to see Australia in



a natural state. I hope we can pass on good practices to those that travel on a Prosail boat and help teach people to care about the environment and be aware of all that nature has to offer".

Prosail Queensland found, through the process of applying to become EcoCertified, they were already eco-friendly, and the certification process gave them a clear focus on areas that needed a little tightening up.

To join the ranks of our High Standard Tourism Operators contact the GBRMPA on (07) 4750 0775.

BULLETIN BOARD

- New amendments to Plans of Management (POMs) for Cairns and the Whitsundays are now in force. Please familiarise yourself with these new POMs, available on our website www.gbmpa.gov.au.
- Tourism operators in the Whitsundays will be presented with proposed sites for dedicated use moorings in the next few weeks. If you wish to attend the presentation please contact anne.caillaud@gbmpa.gov.au.
- Did you receive your copy of the Reef Facts edition on Climate Change? If not, or if you wish to receive additional copies, please contact christina.sinneman@gbmpa.gov.au.
- Eye on the Reef web pages have recently been updated. Check them out at www.eyeonthereef.com.au.
- Coral Bleaching Status Reports are available at www.gbmpa.gov.au.
- Amendments to the *Trade Practices Act 1974* adopted in November last year will compel tourism operators to advertise a 'single price' for their product, inclusive of EMC. The amendments will take effect on 25 May 2009. For more information on how to advertise EMC visit www.gbmpa.gov.au/onboard.
- New recreational fishing rules became effective on 1 March this year. You can find the latest rules and regulations, including bag and size limits on the Queensland Department of Primary Industries and Fisheries' website www.dpi.qld.gov.au.
- Old analogue EPIRBs (Emergency Position Indicating Radio Beacons) are no longer detected by satellites. If you haven't done so yet, make sure your analogue beacon is appropriately disabled and disposed of – Battery World shops will take your old model for free. For any queries contact the AMSA help line on **1800 406 406**.



Your contributions, ideas and feedback are welcome. Please email the GBRMPA at: tourec@gbmpa.gov.au

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