



# CONSERVATION, HERITAGE AND INDIGENOUS PARTNERSHIPS REEF ADVISORY COMMITTEE (CRAC) 19<sup>th</sup> Meeting 30 and 31 August 2006 – Townsville SUMMARY DOCUMENT

The 19<sup>th</sup> CRAC meeting was held on 30 and 31 August 2006 in Townsville. Following is a summary of the main items discussed at the meeting.

## INDIGENOUS PARTNERSHIPS ISSUES

Members were updated by staff from the Indigenous Partnerships Liaison Unit (IPLU).

Under the Indigenous Partnerships Programme, the following items were discussed:

- The sustainable traditional use of marine resources;
- Indigenous participation in tourism and its management;
- Cultural and heritage values and cooperative arrangements for Sea Country management; and
- The Sea Country research and education programme.

The Sustainable Traditional Use of Marine Resources Programme addressed:

- The accredited Girringun Traditional Use of Marine Resources Agreement (TUMRA) and its provisions;
- Implications in a National Policy Context: how the Girringun TUMRA provides a significant milestone in implementing Australia's 'Oceans Policy' objective;
- Progress with other TUMRAs; and
- The possible incorporation of TUMRAs into Shared Responsibility Agreements (SRAs), leading to a whole-of-government service delivery approach in regional GBRMP locations.

Members commented that some Indigenous people have difficulty with reading and writing. This should be considered in any discussions. It is important correct pronunciation of traditional language words is also used.

The issue of Defence activities at Shoalwater Bay and the possible effects on access to Sea Country was raised. The CRAC was informed that there are currently talks with Traditional Owners in the area. Access and use issues have yet to be worked through but the Department of Defence needs to be involved in those discussions.

The CRAC noted:

- The excellent progress with the Indigenous Partnerships Programme and the milestone achievement of the accredited Girringun TUMRA;
- The hard work and dedication of the IPLU staff along with the efforts of a wide range of GBRMPA staff; and
- The key contribution of the Queensland Government in the Girringun TUMRA outcome.

The Chairman advised new members of the important role that the CRAC had played in the development of the

Indigenous Partnerships Programme which was now central to the work of both the CHIP and the CRAC. This has been reflected in the increased Indigenous membership of the Committee.

## GBR MARINE PARK HERITAGE STRATEGY

The Committee was provided with an update on the Commonwealth islands within the Marine Park. An overview of the GBRMP Heritage Strategy, as approved by the Minister, was also provided.

Principle points raised were:

- The Heritage Strategy refers only to the Marine Park including Commonwealth Islands;
- Four sites within the GBR Marine Park have been listed as Commonwealth Heritage Places;
- The Indigenous Heritage Strategy covers intangible considerations such as cultural protocols, travel routes and song lines; and
- The Heritage Strategy is a new planning tool for the GBRMPA. The draft management plan is currently being prepared and members are encouraged to provide feedback.

Members commented:

- When the heritage legislation contained in the *Environment Protection and Biodiversity Conservation (EPBC) Act* passed through parliament it was primarily to establish a new framework for environmental protection. Protection of Commonwealth Heritage was a late consideration.
- A site on the Commonwealth Heritage List requires that a management plan be developed for the location.
- Community contribution and the acknowledgement of the role of individual citizens and community groups in the campaign to establish protection of the GBR should be reflected in the publication 'A Brief History of the Great Barrier Reef Marine Park – Major Milestones'.
- Clarification is needed on what aspects of natural systems could meet national heritage criteria as well as how cultural issues are dealt with.

The CRAC noted the development of the GBRMP Heritage Strategy and suggested the inclusion of the important role of community action in the establishment and management of the Park. Also, consideration should be given to the inclusion of natural systems as part of the heritage.

## COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT

The Committee was addressed on the overview and trends to date concerning community engagement. Members were informed that:

- The role of the Community Partnerships Group (CPG) within the GBRMPA is to build a bridge between the whole of the organisation and the community.
- The CPG staff should be a conduit for the GBRMPA to local/regional communities. Staff in regional offices need to maintain connections with access points and still be accessible without giving the impression they are constantly present at the office locations.

Following the update, members had the following comments:

- Having representation in the regional cities has assisted greatly with the LMAs. This has been a far more effective and economical way for the GBRMPA to do business.
- It was suggested there should be CPG representation on Cape York, perhaps based in Cooktown.

## SPECIES CONSERVATION

### (1) Whale and Dolphin Conservation Policy Review

The following points were made:

- Copies of the existing policy are on the website.
- It is anticipated there will be amendments to both the Cairns and Whitsundays Plans of Management as well as regulatory changes.
- Some changes have already been identified.
- Regarding whale protection, there is a possibility both the Cairns and Whitsundays Plans of Management may be revised to remove the limits on the number of commercial whale-watching permits. This is being considered because of the significant recovery in the humpback whale population along the east coast of Australia. Also, areas where no whale watching can occur will be identified as information becomes available.

Members commented:

- Whales will be conditioned to close encounters with boats by the time they get to the GBR, having already passed through waters around the Gold Coast/northern New South Wales where there is no policing or compliance.
- With increasing numbers of whales the potential for infringement of regulations will increase.
- If whale numbers are going to increase the need for capping of permits for whale watching is even more important. There should be a trigger mechanism in place to ensure that the management strategy pre-empts the need. It is vital this is noted in the new plan/policy.
- How should monitoring occur, especially in the experimental early phase? A baseline is needed to manage changing environmental conditions.

The Chairman urged members to provide comment at some stage between now and when the draft policy is produced (end of October 2006).

The CRAC noted the proposed changes to whale watching guidelines for both incidental and dedicated whale watching operations and that the issue could become a major management problem in future years.

### (2) Dugong Aerial Surveys

The Committee received a presentation on the 'Status of the dugong on the urban coast of Queensland 2005: implications for management by GBRMPA'. Key findings from the presentation were:

- It is important to recognise that the Great Barrier Reef World Heritage Area (GBRWHA) is a special place for dugongs. This is one of the reasons for the listing as a World Heritage Area.
- Dugong have high cultural and political value, are seagrass specialists and are long-lived and slow-breeding. They move across jurisdictions and numbers are already seriously depleted. There are multiple threats involved.
- To be effective, dugong management must:
  - 1) Address issues regarding conserving the quality of critical habitats and minimising dugong mortality; and
  - 2) Be coordinated across jurisdictions.
- Cross-jurisdictional initiatives are essential, as is the need to reconcile ecologically and culturally-relevant spatial scales.
- The proportion of significant dugong habitat protected by green zones and other management arrangements is very good.
- Judging whether management is successful depends on what the objective is (e.g., maintenance or recovery of populations). Clear management objectives must be determined.

Members added the following comments:

- In considering management objectives for recovery of dugong, should objectives be about recovery of depleted populations or conditions of the environment? When considering recovery, what timelines might apply?
- Determining objectives for maintenance or recovery of populations may be difficult given the mobility of populations.

The Chairman advised members that dugong must be high on the list for discussion as this is central to the issues which must be addressed by the CRAC.

## NEXT MEETING

The next meeting will be held on 22 and 23 November 2006.

### CURRENT MEMBERSHIP OF THE COMMITTEE

Mr Doug Baird .....	Tourism and Recreation
Ms Kate Davey .....	Non-Government Organisation, Conservation
Mr Jon Day .....	GBRMPA
Mrs Christine Doherty .....	Indigenous
Dr Pat Hutchings .....	Non-Government Organisation, Ecologist
Mr Bruce Leaver .....	Dept of the Environment and Heritage
Dr Ghislaine Llewellyn .....	Non-Government Organisation, Conservation
Mr Justin McCaul .....	Non-Government Organisation, Conservation
Prof Helene Marsh .....	Scientific Community
Mr Peter Ogilvie .....	Qld Environmental Protection Agency
Assoc Prof Stephan Schnierer .....	Indigenous
Mr Bernie Singleton .....	Indigenous
Ms Cathy Skippington .....	Qld Environmental Protection Agency
Dr Andrew Tobin .....	Commercial Fishing
Assoc Prof Peter Valentine .....	Conservation, World Heritage, Protected Area Management
Mr Simon Woodley .....	Independent Chairman