



TOURISM AND RECREATION REEF ADVISORY COMMITTEE (TRRAC) 31st Meeting – 22 and 23 April 2010 – Townsville SUMMARY DOCUMENT

The thirty-first meeting of the TRRAC was held in Townsville on 22 and 23 April 2010. This was the first meeting of the fourth TRRAC and the Committee was pleased to welcome some new members.

The Chairman paid respect to the Wulgurukaba and Bindal Traditional Owners and acknowledged their traditional land and sea country in the Townsville region.

A summary of the outcomes of the main items discussed is set out below.

GREAT BARRIER REEF MARINE PARK AUTHORITY UPDATE

The Committee was concerned about the magnitude and near timing of major industrial developments along the coast and the likely impacts of both the developments and the increase in shipping traffic on the Great Barrier Reef and the coastal habitats that support it. The Committee requested the GBRMPA seek to be involved in the decision making processes as much as possible and that all parties be constantly reminded of the importance of the Reef and supporting its long-term resilience.

The TRRAC was pleased to be advised that its meeting schedule would now be returning to three meetings each year. Members considered that the advice provided to the GBRMPA would be significantly more current and relevant as a result of this increased frequency.

MARINE TOURISM INDUSTRY STATUS REPORT

There continues to be concern about a downturn in visitor numbers, especially in the Whitsundays following the cyclone in March 2010. Some members estimated there has been a 10-20 percent decline in visitation with a poor outlook for at least the next three months. Such a strong decline is not yet reflected in the Environmental Management Charge (EMC) returns and the Committee encouraged further investigation and validation of that information.

TRRAC WORK PROGRAM DURING TERM 4

Members were reminded of the Terms of Reference for the Committee, including the list of areas where advice is likely to be required. The Committee did not identify any major gaps in this list and looks forward to providing advice to the GBRMPA on the range of areas identified.

RECREATION MANAGEMENT STRATEGY FOR THE GREAT BARRIER REEF MARINE PARK

The management of recreation use in the Great Barrier Reef Marine Park, including development of a Recreation Management Strategy, was a focus of the meeting. The Committee was pleased to learn of the increasing emphasis placed on the topic as a result of the findings of the 2009 Outlook Report. Some of the key issues raised were improving the education of recreational users, the likely increasing importance of addressing increasing use and conflicts of use, the need for improved coordination and consistency between managing agencies, the poor information base about recreation use, and the need for better engagement with the recreation sector.

A working group was established to provide out-of-session advice.

IMPLEMENTATION OF REEF PERMITS

Implementation of the integrated permit management database (Reef Permits) was outlined, including the staged release to permittees and the public. The Committee supported the implementation program, noting that operators would value an early opportunity to validate their current permits and any supporting information.

UPDATE OF RESPONSIBLE REEF PRACTICES

Members expressed strong support for the GBRMPA's set of Responsible Reef Practices, commenting that they were thorough, easy to read and well laid out. They continue to provide a strong basis for describing best practice in the Marine Park

and are likely to require only minor changes during the current update.

A Working Group was established to provide more detailed advice during the revision process.

MARINE VESSEL SEWAGE REGULATIONS

With regard to vessel-based sewage, many of the Committee members strongly objected to the introduction of Commonwealth Regulations complementary to the current Queensland Regulations and the Committee requested that no final GBRMPA position be decided without further detailed consultation with industry. Members did appreciate that, in order to maintain its international reputation as one of the best managed reef tourism destinations, some changes have to be made in the longer term.

SCIENTIFIC INFORMATION NEEDS FOR THE MANAGEMENT OF THE GREAT BARRIER REEF MARINE PARK

The Committee was interested to learn of the progress that has been made in describing the scientific information needs of the GBRMPA, both in the context of management issues to be addressed and information required in the lead up to the 2014 Outlook Report. Members especially noted that there was little or no information needs identified for both commercial marine tourism and recreation (other than fishing) with respect to the biodiversity and ecosystem health components, reflecting the reduced environmental impacts of these activities. The Committee advised that, in addition to the priorities identified in the Scientific Information Needs report, there was a need for continuing and improved economic and social information about tourism and recreation use.

EYE ON THE REEF UPDATE

Members were most impressed with the work that is being undertaken in the Eye on the Reef Program (including the training component), recognising it as a true, cost-effective, partnership between the GBRMPA and industry. The Committee encouraged the wider dissemination of the information gained in both the Eye on the Reef Program and the Sightings Network.

The Committee strongly supported the integration of a range of monitoring programs under the Eye on the Reef umbrella. It recognised that the proposal would provide a more holistic and efficient approach to collecting, storing, reporting and managing monitoring data, as well as streamlining reporting, better informing management decisions and providing the Marine Park tourism industry with broader information on their sites.

RESPONSE TO CLIMATE CHANGE

The Committee was informed of progress in implementing the Great Barrier Reef Tourism Climate Change Action Strategy, both by the GBRMPA and other Strategy partners. Members will be interested to learn the results of the upcoming survey of operators and other stakeholders as there is a general concern that, despite the range of information and products available, the climate change messages may not have penetrated the industry.

INFORMATION ITEMS

Members were interested to learn of the arrangements for implementing the National Long-Term Tourism Strategy, noting that a number of TRRAC members are involved in the implementation working groups.

The Committee was bought up-to-date with progress in the process of recognising the Great Barrier Reef as a 'National Landscape' and the further work that is being undertaken.

Members were also advised of the related work that is being undertaken within Tourism Queensland to maintain the profile and reputation of the Great Barrier Reef as a tourism destination.

NEXT MEETING

The next meeting is scheduled to be held in September 2010.

CURRENT MEMBERSHIP OF THE COMMITTEE 2009-2012

Mr Tony Baker	.....	Marine tourism operations and pontoons
Mr Mike Bartlett	.....	Cruise ship industry
Mr Tony Charters	.....	Eco-tourism and tourism in protected areas
Ms Helen Cox (Observer)	.....	Department of Resources, Energy and Tourism
Mr Peter Frawley	.....	Independent Chairman
Ms Anne Greentree	.....	Queensland Department of Environment and Resource Management
Mr Daniel Gschwind	.....	Business acumen and economics
Mr Bernard Heimann	.....	Sailing and day tourism operations
Mr David Hutchen	.....	Marine tourism history
Mr Bruce Leaver	.....	Department of the Environment, Water, Heritage and the Arts
Mrs Judy Lynne	.....	Sunfish Queensland – Recreational fishing
Mr Wayne Kirkpatrick	.....	Tourist resorts
Mr Daniel McCarthy	.....	Game fishing operations
Mr Col McKenzie	.....	Association of Marine Park Tourism Operators (AMPTO) – Marine tourism industry, recreational diving
Mr Glen Miller	.....	Indigenous tourism
Mr David Morgans	.....	Tourism Queensland – Regional tourism development
Mr Adrian Pelt	.....	Bareboat charters
Mr Alan Sweeney	.....	Aircraft operations and tourism marketing
Supported by:		
Mr Andrew Skeat	.....	General Manager, GBRMPA
Mr Chris Briggs	.....	Acting Director, Tourism and Recreation, GBRMPA