



## TOURISM AND RECREATION REEF ADVISORY COMMITTEE (TRRAC) 24<sup>th</sup> Meeting 20 and 21 June 2007 – Townsville SUMMARY DOCUMENT

The twenty-fourth meeting of the TRRAC was held in Townsville, on 20 and 21 June 2007. A summary of the outcomes of the main items discussed is set out below.

### GLOBAL RECOGNITION

The Committee extended its congratulations to the GBRMPA and to the marine tourism industry for winning the prestigious 'Destination Award' at the World Travel and Tourism Council's *Tourism for Tomorrow Awards*. The Award recognises that a strong partnership between government and industry can achieve positive conservation outcomes. This was not just a GBRMPA award; it is about partnership with industry and management agencies, and members of the Committee can take pride in their part in winning the award. The efforts of Quicksilver, Sailaway Low Isles, Ragamuffin and Lady Elliot Island were acknowledged, all of whom hosted some of the judges during site visits.

### OUTLOOK REPORT FOR THE GREAT BARRIER REEF REGION

The Committee was advised that the Amendment Bill to enact key Review recommendations was before Parliament. One of those recommendations is the preparation of an Outlook Report, to be submitted to Parliament every five years, with the first one due by 30 June 2009.

The Committee broke into three groups to workshop key areas for the Report, namely:

- 1 Data sets that could serve as guides to current and future trends;
- 2 Pressures from a tourism and recreation perspective that may be relevant in preparing the Outlook Report;
- 3 Ways to effectively engage the tourism and recreation sector during the development of the Outlook Report; and
- 4 Ongoing engagement with TRRAC.

The Committee noted the presentation and the views regarding the approach that could be taken to develop the Report. The Committee felt that the Outlook Report should become a standing agenda item to be considered by the whole Committee.

### MANAGING WATER QUALITY AND COASTAL DEVELOPMENT IN THE REEF'S COASTAL ZONE

Members were updated on the GBRMPA's Water Quality and Coastal Development Group's strategies and their outcomes so far, including the Reef Guardian Councils programme. While the GBRMPA has a good monitoring programme in the Marine Park, it is likely to take a number of years before any changes manifest themselves at the mouth of the rivers and into the GBR.

The Committee reiterated its disappointment at the slow rate of progress that has been achieved through the Plan to date. The Committee was particularly supportive of the suggestions that members be vocal in supporting actions to protect the Reef, proactive with industry partners about their responsibility to protect the Reef, and supportive of catchment industries and regional Natural Resource Management (NRM) bodies to implement best management practices.

While the Committee considered that more could be done especially in the areas of sewage arrangements and developments, it was noted that the GBRMPA's Reef Guardian Councils programme did go some way to achieve a form of accreditation for local governments. The Committee also supported biosequestration using riparian zones as part of the planning for catchment areas.

### RECREATIONAL USE OF THE REEF

The TRRAC's Working Group noted that, in the year ending June 2006, nearly 51,000 vessels registered for the area of the coast north of Bundaberg to the tip of Cape York. There was also an increase in the demand for marina berths (e.g. 750 awaiting approval in the Mackay/Whitsundays area).

The Committee agreed that consideration of recreational use should be a priority, and supported the process proposed by the TRRAC Working Group to progress it. The Committee suggested that a research officer undertake a desktop study of the information available or, alternatively, that the process be given financial or resource priority in the GBRMPA's budget for 2007/08.

## INDUSTRY SUSTAINABILITY

In considering issues affecting sustainability from a tourism perspective, the TRRAC Working Group noted that many of the issues identified by the Group were topics discussed by the TRRAC in the past.

The Committee agreed that the priority issues were climate change, water quality, compliance, research into exotic pests and diseases, and action on a media plan, and acknowledged that the GBRMPA was already addressing some of these issues. The Committee also agreed that there is a need for greater compliance of rogue tourism operators as well as the use of illegal moorings.

The Committee agreed to refer back to the Working Group for consideration, the range of other issues discussed relating to sustainability which are affecting the profits of the industry. The Working Group was also tasked with investigating issues affecting sustainability such as labour shortages, fuel prices and emerging markets, which can have a significant impact on profitability and, ultimately, on sustainability of the tourism industry.

The Committee requested that, wherever possible, the GBRMPA supports initiatives (such as solar subsidies and a contingency fund to address impacts such as pest outbreaks) where they are being developed by Commonwealth and State governments.

## DUGONG, SHARK AND RAY CONSERVATION

### *Sharks and Ray Conservation*

Members were updated on the management and conservation issues relating to sharks and rays in the GBR. There is anecdotal evidence that there are fewer numbers of sharks. The Queensland Department of Primary Industries and Fisheries (DPI&F) is actively considering forming a specific shark fishery under the East Coast Inshore Finfish Fishery. Concerned members can make a submission to the DPI&F during the public consultation stage.

The Committee recommended that the GBRMPA support actions to conserve sharks and rays. A position paper on the management and conservation of sharks and rays, based on precautionary principles, should be prepared as soon as possible.

### *Dugong Conservation*

Members were advised that dugong tend to be found in inshore muddy waters so, while not often seen, they are of value to the tourism industry, highly iconic, and have a high cultural significance. There are significant concerns about the increasing Queensland human population, and the effects cumulative impacts such as poor water quality, boat strikes and disease could have.

The Committee supported the development of a position paper on the management and conservation of dugong and recommended the objective be to restore dugong population towards their former levels.

## EXPANSION OF EYE ON THE REEF

Members were updated on the expansion of the Eye on the Reef Monitoring Programme from 10 operators to over 40 along the GBR. The Minister for the Environment and Water Resources launched the expanded programme in June 2007.

The Committee congratulated the work done by the GBRMPA's Tourism and Recreation Group in expanding the Eye on the Reef Monitoring Programme. The Committee felt that the provision of one easy-to-use manual that includes all reporting forms for coral bleaching, sightings and incidents is also a positive step to engage the tourism industry and streamline these partnership programmes.

## WHITSUNDAY AND MACKAY ISLANDS VISITOR MANAGEMENT STRATEGY

Although neither of the QPWS representatives were available to attend the meeting, a paper was provided to update members on the progress of the strategy. Discussion was deferred until the next TRRAC meeting.

The Committee expressed concern about the complex capacity setting process in the Tourism in Protected Areas (TIPA) process, and the impact this may have on future joint Marine Parks processes.

## RESPONSE TO CLIMATE CHANGE

The Committee was advised that the GBRMPA has received funding over five years to implement a climate change plan. In acknowledging the importance of climate change as an issue, the GBRMPA has formed a Climate Change Critical Issue Group. The key objectives for the Group will be to deliver an Action Plan focused on targeted science, a resilient GBR, adaptation by industries and communities and reducing the carbon footprint.

The Committee supported that a submission be made to the Department of Industry, Tourism and Resource's Climate Change Action Plan for Tourism, through the Queensland Tourism Industry Council, and that initiatives such as solar subsidies and carbon sequestration in catchments should be promoted.

## NEXT MEETING

The next meeting, TRRAC 25, is proposed for October 2007.

### CURRENT MEMBERSHIP OF THE COMMITTEE

Mr Tony Baker	Pontoons, Day Operations, Resort Operations
Mr Mike Bartlett	Cruise Shipping
Mr Wayne Calder	Dept of Industry, Tourism and Resources
Mr Bruce Chapman	Recreational Yachting
Ms Louise Crocombe	Day Operations, Best Practice
Mr John Evetts	Ranging Operations, Game Fishing
Mr Peter Frawley	Independent Chairman
Mr Daniel Gschwind	Business Acumen, Economic
Mr Bernard Heimann	Mooring, Anchoring, Day Operations
Mr Ralph Henderson	Qld Parks and Wildlife Service
Mr David Hutchen	History, Ferry, Association of Marine Park Tourism Operators
Mr Bruce Leaver	Dept of the Environment and Water Resources
Mr Col McKenzie	Diving Operations
Mr Glen Miller	Indigenous
Mr David Morgans	Tourism Queensland
Ms Lisha Mulqueeny	Director, GBRMPA
Mr Adrian Pelt	Bareboat Charters
Mr John Rumney	Conservation, Diving Operations, Live Aboard
Mr Alan Sweeney	Aircraft Operations, Marketing
Mr Keith Twyford	Qld Parks and Wildlife Service
Mrs Michele Williams	Commercial Fishing
To be appointed	Recreational Fishing
To be appointed	Resort Operations