



## TOURISM AND RECREATION REEF ADVISORY COMMITTEE (TRRAC)

### 19<sup>th</sup> Meeting

16 and 17 June 2005 – Townsville

### SUMMARY DOCUMENT

The nineteenth meeting of the TRRAC was held in Townsville on 16 and 17 June 2005. A summary of the outcomes of the main items discussed is set out below.

#### LOCAL ENGAGEMENT ON MARINE PARK ISSUES

The Committee noted the rationale and proposals for improving community engagement along the Great Barrier Reef coast. Members recognised the value of a high level of local community engagement, following all the consultations associated with the re-zoning. However, some concerns were raised, including:

- The establishment and staffing of four regional offices may divert valuable resources from other key GBRMPA projects.
- The roles and responsibilities of the regional GBRMPA staff and how this relates to the work of Townsville staff, especially the industry liaison officers. The activities of the regional officers should complement that of the critical issues groups.
- In receiving advice from these regional offices, the GBRMPA should bear in mind that the regional perspective may well be different from a 'total coast' perspective.

#### ENVIRONMENTAL MANAGEMENT CHARGE – HANDLING FEES

Members were pleased to note the advisory and communication work undertaken by the Tourism and Recreation Group to improve the representation of the Environmental Management Charge (EMC) and any associated handling fees, and in particular that their activities resulted in some operators correcting their advertising. It was noted that the Office of Fair Trading considers that there may be practices that do not comply with Fair Trading legislation and the Office will be further considering the issue.

The Association of Marine Park Tourism Operators (AMPTO) has strongly supported the action taken by the GBRMPA. Using text similar to that contained in the recent GBRMPA 'Tourism

Bulletin', AMPTO undertook to advise its members about correct representation of the EMC.

#### ENVIRONMENTAL MANAGEMENT CHARGE – AUDIT PROGRAMME

The Committee noted the GBRMPA's arrangements for auditing the EMC payment system. In general discussion it was agreed by the Committee that the GBRMPA should take a firmer line with respect to ensuring compliance with the EMC requirements. Some preliminary suggestions were made, including:

- The frequencies of field audits should be substantially increased.
- Penalty fee arrangements should be implemented for late payments, following notification to all operators.
- The follow-up of late payments should be consistent and more strictly applied.
- The consequences of continual late payment should be greater.

The Committee considered that initiatives such as these could individually make a considerable difference to compliance with EMC requirements. Therefore it is suggested that, in considering ways to enhance EMC compliance, the GBRMPA should not postpone simple individual initiatives while waiting for an overarching strategy to be agreed.

#### ALLOCATION OF SPECIAL TOURISM PERMISSIONS

The Committee carefully considered the issues put before it with regard to the allocation of special tourism permissions. The allocation of new general special tourism permissions in the Cairns Area and the Whitsundays was discussed, recognising that the process cannot commence until the two Plans of Management and the Regulations are amended. Some members noted signs of change in the structure of the tourism market, and there was debate about the extent of growth in the industry.

However, it was recognised that there was a substantial number of existing and potential operators who had expressed an interest in the permits and that these permits may be a way to introduce new entrants with fresh ideas.

The Committee advised that the allocation of the new permits in the Hinchinbrook Area should not proceed until existing permittees have been notified of the process. Early advice to permittees was considered necessary, as there may be some currently permitted operators who have not yet been assessed for eligibility under the Hinchinbrook Plan of Management. For operators who are yet to have their Hinchinbrook eligibility determined, the Committee considered that there should be an opportunity for this assessment to be undertaken before the allocation process begins.

The Committee supported the draft Call for Applications documentation provided for comment. Some minor suggestions were noted.

With regard to the ability to convert Whitsundays bareboat permits to crewed vessel permits, members expressed serious concern about this 'one-way gate' remaining open. Despite the absence of the Committee member with expertise in bareboat operations, the Committee was sufficiently concerned about this situation to develop some broad advice. Because the size, passenger capacity and frequency of use of the permitted vessel is likely to increase once it is converted to a crewed operation, members had serious concerns about the impact of conversions on the industry and the overall visitor experience in the Whitsundays.

The Committee recommended that the ability to convert bareboats in the Whitsundays should be withdrawn or amended as soon as possible. Some potential courses of action were suggested.

## MOORINGS MANAGEMENT

The Committee was advised of the outcomes of the Moorings Workshops held in Cairns and the Whitsundays during May 2005, and discussed some of these in detail during the meeting. Members were pleased to learn that a system of dedicated use moorings in the Whitsundays will be further explored, noting that maintenance and liability will be key matters to be resolved. The Committee also accepted the analysis provided on buoyage colour and the format of Unique Reference Numbers, as well as supporting the work being undertaken to address illegal moorings.

## BEST PRACTICE AND CERTIFICATION

The Committee was very pleased to hear of the work that is being undertaken to showcase the

certified high standard operations of the Marine Park and to see some of the products that have been developed. The steady growth in certified operators was viewed as very encouraging. However, members were very disappointed to learn of the difficulties being encountered in issuing joint 15-year permits. The Committee urged the GBRMPA and the Queensland Parks and Wildlife Service to work cooperatively to rapidly resolve the outstanding issues (especially in relation to the application of the Queensland Tourism in Protected Areas initiative) so that the policy of rewarding high standard operations by providing longer permit tenure can be properly implemented.

On another matter, the Committee expressed their continuing concern about Commonwealth Government changes to the national coordination of tourism accreditation. The Committee supports the need for improved, better-coordinated tourism accreditation, especially given the role that certification plays in identifying high standard operations in the Marine Park, and encouraged the GBRMPA to maintain its interest in this area.

## INDIGENOUS PARTICIPATION IN TOURISM AND ITS MANAGEMENT

Members were pleased to learn of the continuing joint progress that is being made towards improving Indigenous participation in tourism and its management, and commended the people involved.

## NEXT MEETING

The next meeting, TRRAC 20, was proposed for November 2005.

### CURRENT MEMBERSHIP OF THE COMMITTEE

Ms Bryony Barnett .....	Research, Extension, Best Practice
Mr Mike Bartlett .....	Cruise Shipping
Mr Mike Burgess .....	Business Acumen, Economic, Marketing
Mr John Doohan .....	Recreational Fishing
Mr John Evetts .....	Ranging Operations, Game Fishing
Mr Peter Frawley .....	Independent Chairperson
Mr Daniel Gschwind .....	Business Acumen, Economic, Marketing
Mr Bernard Heimann .....	Mooring, Anchoring
Mr Ralph Henderson .....	Tourism and National Parks Management
Mr David Hutchen .....	Association of Marine Park Tourism Operators
Mr Terry Kemp .....	Bareboat Charter
Mr Wayne Kirkpatrick .....	Resort Operations
Mr Glen Miller .....	Indigenous Community
Mr John Millward .....	Dive, Pontoon, Aircraft
Mr David Morgans .....	Tourism Queensland
Ms Lisha Mulqueeny .....	Director, GBRMPA
Ms Kerry Rooney .....	Dept of Industry, Tourism and Resources
Mr John Rumney .....	Conservation, Dive, Anchoring, Mooring and Ranging
To be appointed .....	Dept of the Environment and Heritage
To be appointed .....	Commercial Fishing