

## 4.0 DATA COLLECTION

The original intention in the research design was to have two periods of data collection: a 'peak' and a 'low' visitation time. However, it was not possible to achieve this goal. During the 'low' visitation time chosen originally, there were no campers on the island and the daytrip operators were running very infrequently. It became impossible to achieve a good sample within the constraints of the field logistics, i.e. difficult access, the need to transport interviewers to the data collection site, the need for management agency personnel to be on site helping with the data collection and the costs of it all.

Data were still collected in three different periods in 1991: one around Easter time (20/3/91 to 4/4/91), one during June–July (20/6/91 to 7/7/91) and the last one, interviewing campers only, during September–October (26/9/91 to 2/10/91). Table 1 indicates how many interviews from each of the data collection periods were completed and used in the study. Data was collected from the three recreational user groups: daytrippers, campers and yachties.

**Table 1.** Number of completed interviews per data collection period

Period	Count	Per cent
03/91	86	41
04/91	19	9
06/91	49	24
07/91	32	15
09/91	21	10
10/91	1	1

The first daytripper data collection was conducted during six trips. Four of these were with the larger tourist operation—Lady Musgrave Cruises, maximum number of passengers 150; and two were with the smaller tourist operation—MV 1770, maximum number of passengers 40. The weather varied in terms of wind strength, which sometimes made travelling uncomfortable resulting in some people getting seasick, but in general it was sunny. The four Lady Musgrave trips carried 87, 67, 110 and 71 passengers. Nearly all of the passengers were interviewed during the two MV 1770 trips, since there were only a small number of people on board (17 and 19 in each trip).

The second data collection period also had samples from both tour operations. Data were collected during six trips of Lady Musgrave Cruises and five of MV 1770. On the six Lady Musgrave Cruises, numbers of passengers were 111, 102, 50, 50, 49 and 104. Numbers of people on the MV 1770 trips were 33, 15, 40, 38 and 20.

The third data collection aimed at interviewing campers only. There was a need to get a better cross-group representation (i.e. sampling from both small and larger groups with varied group composition) than what had been achieved with the two previous data collection periods. On average, over both data collection periods, there were 80 passengers on Lady Musgrave Cruises and 26 on MV 1770.

During both trips the interviewers (a minimum of four and a maximum of six, and always a mixture of both sexes) were dressed in T-shirts with GBRMPA badges or in QDEH uniform. They had clipboards with the GBRMPA logo. The coordinator for data collection (in most cases this was the first author) was introduced by the skipper at the commencement of the return trip.

The research data collection coordinator explained the research on the PA system in the following way:

The Great Barrier Reef Marine Park Authority and the Queensland National Parks and Wildlife Service are conducting a study about people's experiences at Lady Musgrave Island and Reef. The Management Plan for Lady Musgrave Island and Reef is currently under review and we want

to get information from visitors on their experiences and perceptions of management that could help this management plan and the management of the Great Barrier Reef Marine Park and islands in general.

After introduction, a list of numbers was announced through the PA system. Interviewers had already distributed numbered cards to passengers towards the end of their stay and at the commencement of the return trip without mentioning the survey—saying that the reason for distributing the numbers would be announced on the PA system. Numbers called were randomly selected. Passengers with the announced numbers had to approach the interviewers on both the upper and the lower deck of the boat.

Interviewers also camped on the island to talk to campers and visitors on yachts anchored around the island (yachts were approached with a small boat and interviews were conducted on board the visitor's vessel). For these groups, interviews were conducted towards the end of the visitor's period of stay. To achieve this, a first approach was usually made to arrange a suitable time for the interviews. Interviews with campers and yachties were conducted during the same periods of 1991 as the ones conducted with daytrippers. No daytrippers or yachties were interviewed during the third (i.e. last) data collection period.

In total, 270 interviews were conducted, and the response rate was very good. There were no refusals from campers, and only two yachties approached and lined up for interviews were not interviewed (they left early in the morning before the interviews could be conducted). From all of the numbers called for interviews during the daytrips, 80% came forward with their numbers. The remaining 20% of interviews was achieved by approaching passengers on board the boat and asking whether they minded being interviewed, or by interviewing passengers whose numbers were not announced on the PA system but who came forward saying they would like to be interviewed. Selection of passengers who did not come forward with their numbers was on the basis of trying to achieve a good mixture of passenger characteristics (i.e. if many older females were being interviewed already during that trip then young males might have been chosen).

Of the 270 interviews conducted 208 were used in the final sample. Interviews which were incomplete, difficult to transcribe, or judged as poor quality by the interviewers were not used (interviewers were asked to rate the quality of each interview). The data collection strategy, for daytrips in particular, aimed for more interviews than were needed for the final sample. This was to safeguard against problems of interview quality given noise of motors and bad weather conditions. At the end there were more useable daytrip interviews than were needed. The sample analysed ( $N = 208$ ) comprised 114 daytripper, 54 camper and 40 yachtie interviews.