

# SeaRead

Marine Park news from catchment to coral



Australian Government  
Great Barrier Reef  
Marine Park Authority



Issue 11 • July/August 2006

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## More boaties heading out on the water



*The GBRMPA calls on boaties to pick up their free zoning maps as recreational vessel registrations continue to rise*

Recreational vessel registrations in the Great Barrier Reef region are on the increase and the Great Barrier Reef Marine Park Authority (GBRMPA) is calling on all boaties to pick up their free Marine Park zoning map.

GBRMPA Operations Director Mick Bishop said Queensland Transport figures confirmed recreational vessel registrations covering the Great Barrier Reef Coastal Local Government Areas from Bundaberg City to Cook Shire were on the increase.

"There has been a 15.79 per cent increase in recreational vessel registrations in just over four years and an increase of 8.17 per cent since mid-2004.

"This means we are seeing more people out on the water than ever before."

Mick said early 2006 saw less than ideal fishing opportunities in the far northern part of the Marine Park brought about by cyclone Larry, cyclone Monica and prolonged heavy rain.

"We are expecting a busy time on the water over winter which often brings ideal boating conditions and urge boaties and anglers to consult zoning maps prior to heading out on the water and ensure they take their free map with them," he said.

"We want everyone to have a great time so make sure you know where you can go and what you can do and take care when out on the water."

It is important for boaties and anglers to familiarise themselves with the legislation and the different guidelines governing Green, Yellow and Blue Zones.

The zones help to protect the biodiversity and ecology of the Great Barrier Reef and surrounding marine ecosystems. Strong penalties apply for breaches to Marine Park legislation.

Mick said there were a range of free zoning guides and maps widely available from bait and tackle shops, visitor information centres, ship chandlers and Queensland Parks and Wildlife Service and Queensland Boating and Fisheries Patrol offices. Alternatively boaties can contact the GBRMPA on 1800 990 177 for a free map.



Important environmental and heritage values of the Great Barrier Reef Marine Park were recently recognised, highlighting how essential it is to manage and protect the area.

The heritage values of the Marine Park were recognised with the Minister for the Environment and Heritage approving the new heritage strategy, a requirement under the *Environmental Protection and Biodiversity Conservation Act 1999*.

The strategy lists a range of actions for identifying, assessing and monitoring heritage values, developing a heritage register and preparing management plans.

The Great Barrier Reef Marine Park Authority also welcomed \$2 million from the Federal Budget for a new fast response vessel and other compliance activities to address foreign fishing vessels.

This will help monitor and safeguard the unique and delicate marine environment, underscoring our goal of ensuring the Marine Park is used wisely so it can be enjoyed by future generations.

With regional shows taking place along the coast the Great Barrier Reef Marine Park Authority continues to uphold its commitment to getting out into the community by attending these local events.

The shows provide an invaluable opportunity to get feedback from the public, discuss management arrangements, promote best practice and encourage people to think about the everyday things they can do to help conserve the Marine Park.

Regards

Virginia Chadwick  
Chairman  
Great Barrier Reef  
Marine Park Authority

END

## Workshops key to saving Queensland marine animals

***Joint workshops by leading environmental agencies have been held at various locations within Queensland recently to assist in saving marine animals along the Great Barrier Reef coast.***

Field officers from across the state have learnt the latest methods for dealing with marine animal strandings.

Great Barrier Reef Marine Park Authority (GBRMPA) Field Operations

Manager Malcolm Turner said many marine animal strandings were reported by the public each year because of boat strikes and entanglements in plastic bags, fishing line and nets.

"These workshops assist staff across key agencies in dealing with injured or stranded dugongs, dolphins, whales and turtles," he said.

"They were a great opportunity to bring all staff up-to-date on the latest methods in dealing with strandings."

The GBRMPA, along with Queensland Parks and Wildlife Service and the Queensland Department of Primary Industries and Fisheries have joined forces for the workshops, bringing together specialists from across the groups to share knowledge.

Malcolm said staff who attended the workshops not only rescued injured animals, but also conducted post-mortems on deceased marine animals to determine the cause of death.

"The information drawn from these investigations provides the basis for developing new procedures and actions for dealing with marine animals."

Workshops were run in Brisbane, Bundaberg, Gladstone, Townsville and Cairns and were attended by key staff from all three organisations.

Marine animal strandings can be reported at anytime by calling the EPA Hotline on 1300 130 372.

END



Workshops assist in saving marine animals along the Great Barrier Reef coast

# Funding helps protect Marine Park

**The Great Barrier Reef Marine Park will be better protected from illegal foreign fishing thanks to a \$2 million boost from the Australian Government.**

It is part of more than \$300 million earmarked to combat illegal foreign fishing vessels in northern Australian waters.

The funding rolled out over three years will enhance existing compliance patrols and see the purchase, staffing and operation of a new fast response vessel.

Great Barrier Reef Marine Park Authority (GBRMPA) Operations Director Mick Bishop said it was an important step towards broadening patrols in the northern tip of the Marine Park.

"The funding enables the GBRMPA to expand the range and frequency of existing patrols to intercept foreign fishing vessels," he said.

Mick said the new vessel was just one element of a wider programme that stemmed from the latest funding.



The pristine environment in the Marine Park will be better protected from foreign fishing vessels

"The new vessel will be similar to an existing GBRMPA compliance vessel that effectively supported field operations and compliance monitoring including intercepting foreign fishing vessels," he said.

"The funding will also be used to provide a three-person crew and cover the vessel's operational costs."

Compliance and monitoring in the Marine Park is coordinated by several Australian and Queensland Government agencies.

These include the Queensland Parks and Wildlife Service, Queensland Boating and Fisheries Patrol, Customs National Marine Unit and the GBRMPA.

Coastwatch also provide surveillance along the entire length of the Marine Park by chartering

vessels and aircraft from ports in the area.

The latest funding complements operations involved in maritime surveillance and enforcement undertaken by the Joint Offshore Protection Command, a joint initiative by the Australian Defence Force and Australian Government agencies.



A foreign fishing vessel intercepted in northern Australian waters

END

## Environmental management charge review

**The Great Barrier Reef Marine Park Authority (GBRMPA) recently conducted a review of compliance with the Environmental Management Charge (EMC). Operators selected for review were contacted to enable an inspection by Inspectors authorised under the Great Barrier Reef Marine Park Act 1975.**

The objective of the EMC review, in addition to ensuring compliance with the Act and regulations governing use of the Marine Park, was to ensure equity of EMC payment across the industry. The EMC is a vital component of Marine Park management and protection.

**Know where you are**  
GBRMPA continues to urge users not only to check zoning maps before they venture out on the water but also to take maps with them. Knowing where you are at all times will help to avoid possible fines. Some examples of recent court results are shown below:

Location	Offence	Fine
Noggin Reef	Unpermitted Fishing (Unattached Commercial Dory)	\$3500
Milln Reef	Unpermitted Fishing (Recreational Fishing)	3 x \$1500 1 x \$2000

**Remember you can do your bit to keep the Reef great by reporting any incidents you see by emailing [compliance@gbmpa.gov.au](mailto:compliance@gbmpa.gov.au) or phoning (07) 4726 0510 or (07) 3830 8246.**

END

# Waste worries watered down at Low Isles

**Concern over the sustainability of waste management systems at Low Isles have been overcome with an innovative joint project involving the University of Queensland and the Great Barrier Reef Marine Park Authority (GBRMPA).**

Due to the need to protect the fragile cay and reef ecosystem, it was considered that a new waste treatment system was required to achieve a high standard of environmental management. Therefore, during 2005 a new alternative was sourced.

This alternative came in the form of a tertiary water treatment plant that not only provides an

environmentally sustainable method of waste disposal, but also irrigates out to the north-west side of the island.

It does this by pumping the waste through a number of tanks, electro-chlorinating it and then using the water in a sprinkler irrigation system on the western end of the island.

Manager of Commonwealth Islands for the GBRMPA Kathleen Swalling said this treatment plant was a great example of environmentally sustainable waste disposal.

"Working together, the University of Queensland and the GBRMPA have found a practical solution to waste issues that will have ongoing benefits to the health of the island."

The system came online late last year and during the first 12 months water quality will be monitored to ensure it meets the required standards.

Low Isles Caretaker Steve Sharp said the system was working well.

"Indications are that the system is exceeding our expectations."



The new tertiary water treatment plant at Low Isles is exceeding expectations

END

## Marine animals benefit from Ghost Net programme

**A programme designed to engage Indigenous people within the Gulf of Carpentaria is assisting in saving endangered marine animals from the Great Barrier Reef Marine Park and avoiding damage to vessels.**

The Carpentaria Ghost Net Programme is an initiative of the Northern Gulf Resource Management Group in conjunction with local Indigenous sea rangers.

The Gulf of Carpentaria is one of the most isolated and remote regions of Australia, home to only small Indigenous communities and some mining operations, yet it is this region that is most exposed to the serious effects of Ghost Nets.

Ghost Nets are defined by the Gulf Resource Management Group as "fishing nets that have been lost accidentally, deliberately discarded or simply abandoned at sea."

The sea currents experienced in the Gulf make it a prime location for these nets to end up. Both the monsoon season (November to March) and the south-east trade winds (May to September) wash the nets into the Gulf from Asia, creating a significant threat to marine animals.

These nets have the ability to impact on both the environment

and human activities. Animals such as turtles can be caught in the nets, and they pose a risk to vessels as the netting is easily caught in propellers and rudders.

As they originate from different regions of south-east Asia, the nets can vary in size from a few metres to numerous kilometres in length.

In order to combat the problem, Indigenous sea rangers from across the Gulf are assisting in the monitoring and removal of these Ghost Nets. The role of the rangers is to clear existing nets and gain data to assist in preventing future discards.

The programme is also building skills and knowledge amongst sea rangers to enable them to continue to tackle the problem long into the future.

For the animals of the Great Barrier Reef Marine Park, including turtles and dugongs, the benefits are ongoing. Reduction in the number of Ghost Nets will continue to lessen the chances of these animals being caught and injured unnecessarily.

For more information on the Carpentaria Ghost Net Programme, visit [www.ghostnets.com.au](http://www.ghostnets.com.au).



The Carpentaria Ghost Net programme is helping to save precious marine animals

END

# What does World Heritage mean?

**Most of us know the Great Barrier Reef is World Heritage listed. However do you know what this actually means? The following facts may help you understand a complex topic:**

- The Great Barrier Reef World Heritage Area (GBRWHA) is the largest World Heritage property in the world. It is slightly larger than the Great Barrier Reef Marine Park (unlike the Great Barrier Reef Marine Park, the GBRWHA includes all islands and Queensland waters within its outer boundaries).
- To become World Heritage listed for its 'natural' values, the Great Barrier Reef had to be an outstanding universal example of at least one or more of the four 'natural' criteria summarised below:
  1. A major stage of the earth's evolutionary history
  2. Significant ongoing geological processes and biological evolution
  3. Unique, rare and superlative natural phenomena
  4. Habitats where rare and endangered species of plants and animals still survive.
- When the Great Barrier Reef was nominated as a World Heritage property in 1981, it was one of only a few areas in the world that met all four 'natural' World Heritage criteria.
- Periodically revised, today's 'natural' World Heritage criteria differ from those for which the GBRWHA was listed in 1981.
- The protection of World Heritage values and attributes for the GBRWHA is a major responsibility of the Australian Government. Maintenance of those values and attributes is therefore an important consideration in the decision-making and management practices of the Great Barrier Reef Marine Park Authority (GBRMPA).
- In 1995, the *Great Barrier Reef Marine Park Act* was amended to reflect the World Heritage listing, stating that the GBRMPA, in preparing management plans, "must have regard to the protection of world heritage values of the Marine Park".
- The Commonwealth's *EPBC Act 1999* has strong provisions for the protection of all Australian World Heritage properties.
- Examples of the World Heritage values for each of the four natural criteria against which the GBRWHA was listed are available at [www.deh.gov.au/heritage/world\\_heritage/sites/gbr/values.html](http://www.deh.gov.au/heritage/world_heritage/sites/gbr/values.html).
- For a copy of the 'Nomination document for the GBR for inclusion on the World Heritage List', go to [www.gbrmpa.gov.au/corp\\_site/info\\_services/publications/misc\\_pub/misc\\_009/mp\\_009\\_full.pdf](http://www.gbrmpa.gov.au/corp_site/info_services/publications/misc_pub/misc_009/mp_009_full.pdf).



To become World Heritage listed the Great Barrier Reef had to be a unique, rare and superlative natural phenomena

END

## Heritage strategy given green light by Minister

**A heritage strategy for the Great Barrier Reef Marine Park was recently approved by the Australian Minister for the Environment and Heritage, Senator Ian Campbell.**

The Great Barrier Reef Marine Park Authority (GBRMPA) was required to prepare the strategy under the regulations linked to the *Environmental Protection and Biodiversity Conservation Act 1999*.

GBRMPA Conservation, Heritage and Indigenous Partnerships Director Jon Day said the strategy aimed to help protect important Indigenous, historic and natural heritage.

"The strategy outlines actions for the identification, assessment and monitoring of the Marine Park's heritage values, the development of a heritage register, and preparation of heritage management plans," he said.

"The Commonwealth heritage values include places Indigenous, historic and natural heritage throughout the Marine Park including the historic values associated with Commonwealth islands such as Lady Elliot Island and Low Isles.

"We will ensure relevant community members and organisations with interests in the Marine Park's heritage values are consulted, especially when developing management plans."

Of the 58 actions identified in the strategy, six have been completed already and seven are currently underway as part of GBRMPA's existing work programme.

Some 28 actions are considered ongoing requirements that only occur when a specific situation arises, and 17 are future actions that will need to be addressed over the next two to five years.

The identification and assessment of Commonwealth heritage values in the Marine Park is set to be completed by December 2008.

The heritage value register and management plans are due for completion by March 2009 and December 2009 respectively.

A copy of the strategy will soon be available online at [www.gbrmpa.gov.au](http://www.gbrmpa.gov.au).

END



## Introducing **Walter Palm Island** a Manbarra Traditional Owner (Pronounced Mun-buh-ra)



**As part of the Great Barrier Reef Marine Park Authority's (GBRMPA) sea country management programme, GBRMPA's Melissa Sweeney spoke with Walter Palm Island about Traditional Owner sea country issues in the Palm Island group.**

Walter grew up on Palm Island where as a boy he learned to hunt and fish, however he is now concerned about increasing development on the island and the effects it can have on sea country and the surrounding reefs in particular.

"In the past, red soil from an excavation site has run off onto the reef and rubbish pollution has affected nearby mangrove crabs," he said.

The Manbarra Traditional Owners hold an intimate knowledge of the islands and sea country. This includes environmental knowledge of where deep reefs are and cultural knowledge of Dreaming sites and stories.

"In the Dreamtime, the rainbow serpent Gubal moved through the Palm Island group and surrounding areas leaving a track as he went. When the sea levels rose, a giant stingray came and found a place to stay. This makes the boundaries between Manbarra, Nywaigi and Wulgurukaba," Walter said.

Even though a lot of heritage work has taken place over the past 15 years in Manbarra country, Walter says

there is a lot more to be done to record and monitor sites and areas in sea country.

"I hope that one day the Manbarra people will be able to look after country by monitoring sea country and sea current movements. The currents that run through the groups of islands remind me of the Dreaming tracks the rainbow serpent made long ago."

Walter explains that being on country enables a feeling of being as one with country.

"You get a sense of peace and serenity that you can never find

anywhere else. You become part of nature," he said.

"My country, the Dreaming stories and language give me my sense of identity.

"It is who I am, how I am related to country".

Director of GBRMPA's Conservation, Heritage and Indigenous Partnerships group Jon Day said the GBRMPA was committed to working with Traditional Owners to achieve heritage management goals, and the Indigenous Heritage Strategy provided a framework for developing actions to do so.

END

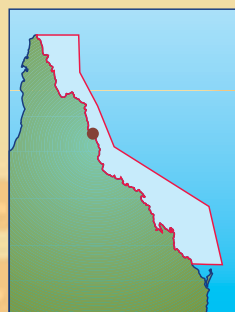
### Sea Country Snippets

*Introducing Traditional Owner groups along the Great Barrier Reef coast*



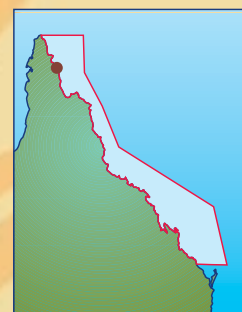
#### Gungandji (Pronounced Goon-gand-jee)

- Due to their long history, Gungandji Traditional Owners talk about the Great Barrier Reef and lagoon as a more recent development
- Many cultural heritage sites from before the last ice age are now under water in their sea country
- Gungandji Traditional Owners are keen to be involved in the tourism industry on their land and sea country.



#### Kuku Yau (Pronounced Cook-ou-yow)

- Kuku Yau Traditional Owners were historically referred to as the Sandbeach people
- They are known for their fishing, hunting and seafaring skills and today are involved with the Putchiwuu Fishing Company
- Kuku Yau is also the name of the language spoken by Indigenous people from this area.



END

# Having a whale of a time in the Great Barrier Reef Marine Park

***Humpback whales have started their annual migration to the warm waters of the Great Barrier Reef Marine Park.***

With humpback whale populations increasing at about 10 per cent each year, you are now more likely to encounter whales when on the water between May and September.

Great Barrier Reef Marine Park Authority Species Conservation Project Officer Sarah Salmon said humpback whales relied on the Great Barrier Reef Marine Park as a safe place to breed.

"It is important people go slow, watch out for these majestic animals and adhere to approach distances when boating or fishing in the Marine Park."

"While whales can be social animals and may approach boats or people in the water, it is important for both the whales and your own safety, not to approach them. An adult humpback whale is between 12 to 15 metres long and can weigh up to 40 tonnes."

If in the vicinity of whales, vessels must stay at least 100 metres away from the animal and 300 metres away in the Whitsunday Whale Protection Area. In all areas jet skis must stay at least 300 metres away from the animal.

For more information go to [www.gbrmpa.gov.au/corp\\_site/key\\_issues/conservation/threatened\\_species/whales\\_dolphins.html](http://www.gbrmpa.gov.au/corp_site/key_issues/conservation/threatened_species/whales_dolphins.html).



Whales are expected to be in the Great Barrier Reef Marine Park until September

END

## Permits vital for Marine Park moorings

***Permits from the Great Barrier Reef Marine Park Authority (GBRMPA) are essential for all boaties with a mooring in the Marine Park.***

It follows new legislation introduced on 1 January 2006 making it mandatory for permitted moorings to have a unique mooring reference number permanently and legibly displayed on the mooring buoy.

This helps the GBRMPA and other management agencies identify legal, permitted moorings.

It also allows recreational users and tourism operators to share moorings using an online moorings register that can be searched using the mooring reference number.

Moorings also approved by Marine Safety Queensland (MSQ) require that the unique MSQ reference number be displayed consistent with MSQ buoy mooring standards.

The MSQ reference number can be displayed instead of the mooring reference number from the GBRMPA.

If you are unsure of your mooring reference number, contact the Permits Unit on (07) 4750 0700 or email [permits@gbmpa.gov.au](mailto:permits@gbmpa.gov.au).

For further information about the new regulations and displaying your mooring reference number, contact Leanne Brown on (07) 4750 0788 or email [l.brown@gbmpa.gov.au](mailto:l.brown@gbmpa.gov.au).

END

## Stop Press

New Great Barrier Reef Marine Park regulations for whale and dolphin watching came into effect on 17 June 2006. These regulations follow the Australian National Guidelines for Whale and Dolphin Watching, passed by the Natural Resource Management Ministerial Council in October 2005. The regulations are available at [www.gbrmpa.gov.au](http://www.gbrmpa.gov.au) under 'Latest News.'

## Regional shows in full swing

***Great Barrier Reef Marine Park Authority (GBRMPA) staff from Townsville, and regional offices in Cairns, Rockhampton and Mackay were out and about along the Queensland coast last month attending regional shows and exhibitions.***

Kicking off the programme for this year was the Sanctuary Cove Boat Show, where staff spent time talking to recreational fishermen and members of the general public.

GBRMPA Community Partnerships Senior Project Manager Belinda Jago said the most frequently asked questions were on specific zoning rules and navigational products available for zoning.

"Generally comments were positive and feedback suggested people understand the importance of looking after the Marine Park and are interested in knowing what they can do personally to look after the Reef," Belinda said.

"Most questions were regarding specific zoning rules and many people used the opportunity to obtain maps and other Marine Park information for their next fishing trip."

Over the past number of weeks, the team have exhibited in Brisbane at the Queensland Caravan and Camping Show as well as at shows in Rockhampton, Mackay, Gladstone and Townsville.

The final northern section of the show circuit will be completed in September.

END



## Willows State School students celebrate the environment with a 'sea of green'

*Students at Willows State School recently created a 'sea of green' when they dressed in their best green clothes to celebrate World Environment Day with their very own Willows Environment Day and Recycling Expo.*

The year three classes organised a special parade featuring a presentation by the Great Barrier Reef Marine Park Authority (GBRMPA) of a Plastic Free Tuckshop stamp and a presentation by the Thuringowa City Council of the school's first recycling bins.

Funds raised from the free dress day went towards the Indo-Pacific Sea Turtle Conservation Group who

will continue to research the effect human impact has on the survival of all seven species of sea turtle in the world.

World Environment Day is celebrated on 5 June each year to create awareness and understanding on environmental issues and encourage communities to get involved in living sustainably.

Grade three teacher at Willows State School and organiser of the day Jodie Millard said promoting an understanding of living sustainably would benefit today's children.

"Willows State School is proudly involved in the Reef Guardian Schools programme, initiated by the GBRMPA, that encourages students and teachers to make a difference to help keep both the Great Barrier Reef Marine Park and the environment great for the future," Jodie said.

"We hope the students not only had a fun day but learned to appreciate the environment and had a think about what it means to them and why they want to protect it."



Willows State School students say no to plastic bags

END

## Rebuilding after cyclone Larry – Mena Creek State School

***Mena Creek State School is a small school making a big difference.***

As one of the Reef Guardian Schools programme's smaller schools, with just over 50 students, they are doing all they can to protect the beautiful environment around them.

Located adjacent to the majestic Paronella Park the school was hard hit by cyclone Larry and the community had to band together to rebuild their small community.

Mena Creek Reef Guardian co-ordinating teacher Sally Koch said it would start with small steps.

"The intermediate class is doing a unit called Spring Gardens. Some of their projects include setting up a worm farm and planting a vegetable garden in the hopes the produce can be sold at the school," Sally said.

"Before Larry we also had a fruit stall however it was badly damaged during the cyclone. Thanks to one of the parents fixing this up, we now have it back up and running again."

Mena Creek is just one of many Reef Guardian Schools that are doing their bit to help protect their environment and the Great Barrier Reef Marine Park.



Mena Creek State School students with their worm farm

END

# Inshore reefs – a colourful topic

**Scientists from the Australian Institute of Marine Science (AIMS) have developed new ways to track the health of inshore reefs.**

AIMS Team Leader Katharina Fabricius said there were many ecological changes associated with water quality.

"One of the most visible effects is that coral colour changes measurably in response to the quality of the water.

"What we have seen in the wet tropics region is that corals growing in more turbid inshore waters, closer to terrestrial nutrient sources, are darker in colour than the same coral species growing in clean inshore waters.

"The darker corals also appeared to be more susceptible to overheating, with their surface warming up more quickly than the lighter corals.

"In some cases there was a difference of up to 2°C in bright sunlight, this is considered a big temperature difference for corals and increases the risk of coral bleaching."

AIMS scientists continue to monitor water quality and believe satellite images of ocean colour may provide the answer to monitoring marine nutrients on a grand scale.

AIMS scientists are using remote sensing to estimate levels of chlorophyll concentrated in plankton as an indication of nutrient availability in the water.



Dr Miles Furnas said in shallow coastal waters, the accuracy of chlorophyll estimates based on satellite imagery was affected by suspended sediment and other particles in the water.

"We are working to improve the accuracy of our estimates by taking simultaneous shipboard measurements of ocean colour, chlorophyll, and suspended sediment concentrations for comparison with remotely sensed imagery."

The results are encouraging and may help to reduce the high costs of regular water quality monitoring over such a huge area.



Above: Differences in colour in the coral are measured with the Coral Health Chart (University of Qld). The light corals (right) are from a clear-water offshore reef and the dark corals from a turbid inshore reef (K. Fabricius 2006)

Left: CRC Ph.D. student Matt Slivkoff, with AIMS-built ocean colour spectrometer, compares at-sea data with satellite data

This work is part of the joint CRC Reef/Rainforest CRC Catchment to Reef Research Programme which will result in new guidelines for monitoring the health of tropical rivers and inshore reefs, as the two CRCs wind up in mid-2006.



Australian Government



AUSTRALIAN INSTITUTE OF MARINE SCIENCE

END

## Managers, operators and crew talk tourism

**Tourism operators in the Whitsundays, Cairns and Port Douglas brushed up on responsible tourism at free workshops conducted by the Great Barrier Reef Marine Park Authority (GBRMPA).**

The *Get Onboard Industry Training Workshop* aimed to keep tourism managers and crew up-to-date with best environmental practice and operational requirements.

GBRMPA Tourism and Recreation Group Director Lisha Mulqueeny said the workshops covered everything from Marine Parks permits to best practice interpretation.



GBRMPA is committed to working with industry to ensure the Marine Park remains sustainable

"These workshops are part of the GBRMPA's commitment to working with industry for the sustainable use and preservation of the Marine Park for generations to come," she said.

"The overall aim is to help keep the tourism industry up-to-date with all they need to know about operating in the Marine Park."

Tourism is the largest commercial activity in the Great Barrier Reef

region, contributing over \$5.1 billion per annum to the local and Australian economy and attracting approximately 1.9 million visitors each year.

In 2005 there were approximately 820 operators and 1500 vessels and aircraft permitted to operate in the Marine Park.

END

## Reef HQ hits the road

**Reef HQ aquarium, along with three other local Townsville tourism operators, hit the road last month to promote educational opportunities for students in Townsville.**

Billabong Sanctuary, Sunferries and Queensland Rail all joined the show, which called in on the western Queensland region.

Heading out from Townsville to Mt Isa the sales team spent four days on the road, stopping at various towns along the way including Charters Towers, Richmond and Cloncurry.

Staff attending confirmed that visiting local schools in each area proved a valuable process.

Reef HQ Sales Officer Michelle Hood said schools were very receptive to the presentations and interested in the different activities available for school camps and excursions in Townsville.

"Many of the smaller schools do not receive many visitors and were happy to spend time learning about Reef HQ aquarium and the other attractions."

Special guests on the trip were two snakes, provided and supervised by Billabong Sanctuary staff.

"The snakes were certainly a drawcard for students, who were very keen to get up close!" Michelle said.

The group also provided information kits to each school and conducted a meet and greet event in Mt Isa allowing teachers the opportunity to network.

The roadshow aimed to increase teacher knowledge of Townsville and the educational facilities available within the region. This information will assist schools in planning upcoming excursions and camps within the area.



Lucky T hangs out in Charters Towers

END

## Port of Hay Point receives makeover

**Work began in May this year on the largest dredging and spoil disposal project to occur in Queensland and the Great Barrier Reef Marine Park Authority's (GBRMPA) Environmental Impact Management team were on-hand to manage the project.**

The port of Hay Point is 40 kilometres south of Mackay and is Queensland's largest coal export port, exporting some 85 million tonnes in 2005.

GBRMPA's Dr Adam Smith, who is part of the Management Response Group for the Hay Point dredging, says ships are currently restricted by draft and export efficiency is being affected.

"What Ports Corporation of Queensland are doing is deepening the existing apron and departure areas to increase port efficiency," Adam said.

"They will be deepening the berthing apron and creating a nine kilometre departure path, which is within the Great Barrier Reef Marine Park, from 13.1 metres to 14.9 metres.

"The nine million tonnes of dredging is expected to take six months and the GBRMPA will provide environmental advice throughout the project."

"The WD Fairway is the world's largest hopper suction dredger at a length of 233.35 metres. It has a



The second week of dredging gets underway at Hay Point

hopper overflow system (with a designed environmental valve) to minimise turbidity."

Adam said there were many environmental impacts to consider before the project could take place including water quality and habitat change to seagrass and coral.

"There has been extensive community consultation through an Environmental Impact Statement process that included newsletters, receiving submissions and holding public meetings. There will also be ongoing monthly agency management meetings throughout the dredging."

For more information on GBRMPA's Environmental Impact Management Team and management of major projects contact Adam Smith on (07) 4750 0734 or see [www.gbrmpa.gov.au/corp\\_site/management/eim/eia/index.html](http://www.gbrmpa.gov.au/corp_site/management/eim/eia/index.html).

END

## New wetlands exhibit officially unveiled

**The new wetlands exhibit at the Reef HQ aquarium was officially unveiled recently by Member for Herbert Peter Lindsay.**

Local Councillors, sponsors, special guests and staff were on-hand to celebrate the occasion.



GBRMPA's Hugh and Virginia along with Peter checkout the wetlands exhibit at Reef HQ



Peter and Hugh officially unveil the wetland exhibit

END

# Marine Park Partnerships

## Profile of Regional Liaison Manager – Central



### Michael O'Keeffe

Michael O'Keeffe is the Regional Liaison Manager – Central, based in Mackay and covering the area from Bowen to St Lawrence.

Michael has worked with the Authority since 1997 when he began as the Director of Legal Services in the Townsville office before moving and taking up the position of Director of GBRMPA's Canberra Office.

Michael spent many years as a solicitor, working for government and in private practice. Before that, he spent 12 years with the Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade, working in Australia and overseas.

Michael is new in his current position yet he already sees his role as assisting communities, industry, non-government organisations and government agencies to continue to work together to preserve the Great Barrier Reef Marine Park and enjoy it.

"I have a very broad interest in the Marine Park. I guess you could say that I am interested in everything to do with the Marine Park and its surrounds.

"I have been fortunate enough to have worked for many years with people who have been associated closely with nearly all the critical issues affecting the Marine Park and have learnt a lot from them."

"This is a magical part of Australia. The people here are warm and friendly, the region is an engine room of industry in Queensland, there is great community spirit and it offers probably the best climate in Australia."

Michael is happily married to Jill and has two children and five grandchildren. He says his family are his proudest achievement.

He spent his early childhood growing up in the bush, is a former rugby player (both codes) and says in his own words...

"I have a drink, I have a fish and I have a punt."

### Creature Feature

#### Dugongs

- Dugongs live for approximately 70 years. Female dugongs first breed between the ages of six and 17 years old. They produce one calf after a 14-month pregnancy every two and a half to five years.
- Dugongs can grow up to three metres long and weigh up to 400kg. Their nostrils are near the top of the head allowing them to breathe with most of body remaining under water. Unlike other marine mammals, dugongs cannot hold their breath under water for very long.
- Dugongs are herbivorous. They feed mainly on seagrass, but can also supplement their diet with algae and invertebrate animals.
- In Australia, dugongs are found from Shark Bay in Western Australia around all northern parts of Australia down to Moreton Bay in Queensland.



### Doing your bit to look after it!

***One of the many thrills that a Reef visit brings comes from discovering its remarkable, unique animal and plant life. Many visitors want to keep a memento of their Reef experience but they could be pocketing a creature's home or, in worse cases, taking a live animal from its neighbourhood. Help to ensure these natural treasures are left behind for others to enjoy by following these responsible reef practices:***

- ➔ Look but don't touch
- ➔ Take only what you need and collect dead shells only
  - Check the shells for live animals that may be living on or inside them and if there are any, return the shells to where they were found
- ➔ Abide by the collecting requirements in the Zoning Plan
  - Collecting is allowed in General Use, Habitat Protection and Conservation Park zones. Limits on number and frequency apply (generally no more than five specimens at a time)
- ➔ Collecting is not allowed in the Buffer, Scientific Research, Marine National Park or Preservation zones
  - Do not damage, collect or otherwise 'take' coral, including dead coral and protected shell species in the Great Barrier Reef Marine Park unless you have a Marine Parks permit. 'Take' includes removing, gathering, killing or interfering with, or attempting to take.



*Help ensure natural treasures are left behind for others to enjoy*

## Community Links

### A profile of **Rod Cunningham**

Chair of the Mackay LMAC



Rod Cunningham's travel to developing countries and witnessing first-hand what people can do to destroy their environment has him committed to preserving his own backyard.

The newly elected Chair of the Mackay Local Marine Advisory Committee (LMAC) believes the LMAC plays an important role in the management and protection of the Marine Park as it provides a real mechanism for community consultation and engagement with representative management.

"My underlying goal as LMAC Chair is to ensure that the business community is engaged, consulted and represented to complement the interest groups already represented on the Mackay LMAC.

"To achieve this the LMAC needs to gain a much higher profile."

In his role as LMAC Chair Rod is particularly interested in ensuring the Mackay area is protected from any fallout from ballast water from shipping into coal ports.

"As our coal ports are among the busiest in Australia, the potential for an environmental disaster from ballast water is real and we need to know that the management and monitoring of ballast disposal will ensure protection of our waters and the Reef.

"I am also very interested in refuelling management practices within marine precincts, as by my observations there is really none that I find consistent and appropriate.

"Although I am an independent, I am a sailor who frequently uses the waterways and have business that promotes the use of our waterways."

Rod is the Chairman of the board of The Cruising Club Australia and says he enjoys getting involved in his local community.

He was previously the Chairman of the Mackay Tourism and Development Bureau, has sat on the Central Queensland University Mackay Campus Advisory Board and was the president of the Port of Mackay Rotary Club and past District Governor of District 9570.

Rod is also very proud of his family and their achievements.

"My wife Evonne and I will be married 40 years in December and we have one son Cliff who is the General Manager of The Cruising Club Australia. He is a keen yachty who has done tens of thousands of miles of sailing and racing including at an international level."

"I am blessed that they both share my passions."

## Calendar of events

02 – 09 July 2006

NAIDOC Week

07 July 2006

NAIDOC Day

28 July 2006

School's Tree Day

30 July 2006

National Tree Day

17 August 2006

Capricorn Coast LMAC meeting

23 August 2006

Gladstone LMAC meeting

24 August 2006

Burnett LMAC meeting

12 – 20 August 2006

National Science Week

28 August – 03 September

Keep Australia Beautiful Week

## GBRMPA contacts

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