

6. RECOMMENDATIONS FOR FURTHER STUDY

Data sources relating to tourism in the G.B.R. Region were considered to be insufficient to arrive at a statistically reliable estimate of the growth of tourism or of the economic dimensions of reef related tourism. This was due to the paucity of data for the period 1946-1967, while the data which was available for the period 1968-1980, was not properly comparable because of different methodologies used.

Whilst most aspects concerned with tourism e.g. accommodation, attractions, transport, could be the subject of further specific study by the Authority, the following subject areas are considered to warrant investigation, not only because of their impact on tourism in the Region, but also because the lack of data in some areas makes the Data Base Review incomplete.

Whilst there are many means of collecting tourism data, most suffer from a lack of comprehensiveness as they rely on operator co-operation and/or sample surveys which are distributed at known tourist destinations. It has been our experience that data collection exercises for tourism cannot rely on information supplied by private groups and organisations where the collection method depends on voluntary co-operation and lacks uniformity in selecting raw data.

1. Methodologies for Tourism Studies - As data collections for tourism are influenced by such factors as accommodation used, seasonality and use of non-scheduled tourist services, it is recommended that a study be undertaken of the methodologies appropriate to tourism in the Great Barrier Reef Region. This study should be completed before any further data collection exercises are carried out in order to ensure that comparability and accuracy are achieved.

2. Day Visitors - Data on day visitors on the coast, to the islands or to the Barrier Reef does not exist in any meaningful form at present. The lack of such data imposes a severe limitation on the provision of a comprehensive picture of tourism in the GBR Region. Surveys and fieldwork would be a necessary component of the data collection exercise.

3. Economic Impact of Tourism - For Australia as a whole, economic data on tourism has only recently begun to be collected. However, the methodology employed for an Australia-wide economic study does not readily adapt to disaggregation to the State level, let alone a regional or sub-regional level. The economic dimensions of tourism is of fundamental importance in assessing the overall significance of tourism to the GBR Region.

4. Charter and Pleasure boating - Data has been obtained on the number of commercial charter and pleasure operations in the region. However, no data has been obtained on the usage of such operations nor the scope or impact of this sector of the tourism industry. From information supplied by tourist operators, it would appear that this activity is already expanding at a significant rate in the Cairns and Whitsunday areas. The growing importance of these operations would seem to necessitate a detailed study.

5. Accommodation - It is not known whether the available accommodation on the islands and on the coast is meeting the needs and desires of the various tourist market groups, both Australian and overseas. A study could be undertaken to determine the suitability of the existing and planned accommodation/resort plant for satisfying the requirements of the various market groups which will be seeking a "Barrier Reef" experience in the future.

6. Transport - A study is required of the adequacy of road, air and sea installations and facilities to gain access to the Reef area and its ability to cope satisfactorily with the increasing visitor traffic which may be expected in the future. There are already some glaring examples of inadequacy - e.g. Shute Harbour facilities. Ways and means of funding the development of the required infrastructure should also be examined.

7. Accessibility to the Reef - Knowledge of accessibility to the Reef is an area of special study in itself. There is a growing demand for experiencing the "Reef" and not merely the Region, Potential problems likely to be encountered in providing such access requires detailed examination. Accessibility could be satisfied, to some extent, by the greater availability of interpretive material. The tourist industry would benefit from an education extension service to develop its environmental consciousness.