

WORKSHOP SESSION FIVE

THE FUTURE OF REEF TOURISM AND RECOMMENDATIONS
(Chairman - Doug Nettleship, Markman International Pty Ltd)

Editor's note: At least 30 recommendations were submitted by the delegates for this final workshop session. Recommendations resolved in the affirmative are reprinted in their original form.

RESOLUTIONS BY THE DELEGATES

Marketing

1. That existing area groups from Rockhampton to Cairns join together to promote the Great Barrier Reef and the coast as a single product (as has been done for Tasmania), i.e., a "ginger group". Marketing of the product "The Great Barrier Reef"; needs to be more precisely segmented.
2. Community awareness:
 - (a) more local community awareness of importance of tourism is required; and
 - (b) an integrated approach to promotion of local attractions, e.g., Mackay sugar mills/Whitsunday Islands is required.
3. Information dissemination, promotions, marketing:
 - (a) product information needs to be clearly defined, e.g., an encyclopaedia type approach to provide more than an introduction to each tourist area;
 - (b) travel agents need to be more educated in product identification;
 - (c) a computer based information system linked to travel agents is needed;
 - (d) promotion in capital cities is important; and
 - (e) a need to develop face to face contact between the producer and seller.

4. Education was not fully discussed. A recommendation was made by Messrs Gerry Sutton (North Brisbane College of Advanced Education), and John Luscombe (Island's Management Pty Ltd) that there should be liaison by the proposed joint "ginger group", with education authorities on the education needs and requirements of the tourist industry: Mr Sutton stated: "If we believe that the Great Barrier Reef is a tourist product and I believe it is the greatest single product in Australian tourism and the greatest corporate identity for Australia, then it should be marketed as a product with all the expertise of modern marketing techniques. To do this, I would move that we approach educational institutions and work in co-operation and liaise with them on the needs and requirements of the Industry".

Financial

1. Investment Allowance:

We support the recommendations of the House of Representatives Select Committee on Tourism on grouping of items which qualify for the investment allowance. Specific examples being refrigerators, colour TVs, stainless steel sinks and shower basins, the grouping of glass-bottom boats and outboard motors needed to run them. In general, things which are used as a unit, the components should be added together.

2. Dollar for dollar co-operative support between government and industry:

We appreciate the existing practice of dollar for dollar subsidy support from the Queensland Department of Tourism for regional brochures. This should be extended to development assistance by way of contributing to area promotional activities whether that promotion originates from local organisations or private companies or individuals, and this could apply to a particular zone or the State of Queensland.

3. Funds to up-grade facilities:

We seek funds from the State Government to urgently upgrade infrastructure development. Infrastructure development relevant to tourism has been neglected. Specific examples are the jetty and parking facilities at Shute Harbour, erosion control on Green Island and four high level bridges over the trouble spots on the inland road, pending the completion of the coastal road or re-routed Highway 1.

4. Depreciation allowance:

Depreciation allowance on buildings should be allowed, recognising the special role of buildings in tourism. We are one of the few countries which do not recognise depreciation on buildings as an allowable deduction.

5. Special development loans:

Need for special development loans or guarantees for approved developments which will help develop the tourist industry. We ought to set guidelines for the new "tourist commission" by specifically requesting that the commission seek funds from the general public and lend to new and existing operators at rates more attractive than with conditions of present development bank loans.

Environment

The meeting is concerned about the environment of the Great Barrier Reef both as a biological entity and as the basic tourist resource of this region, and emphasises the need for implementation of the following recommendations:

1. That the Federal Government should undertake to implement all of the recommendations of the House of Representatives Standing Committee on Environment and Conservation (Oil Spills Inquiry) as a matter of priority to:

- (i) improve the charting of the shipping channels of the Great Barrier Reef Region;
- (ii) improve navigational aids within these channels;
- (iii) establish compulsory pilotage by local pilots between these channels; and
- (iv) ensure the mechanical safety of vessels using these channels.

2. That the tourist industry support the Great Barrier Reef Marine Park Authority in principle providing that it continues to work with the tourist industry in an open forum on a continuing basis.

3. This meeting in recognising the fact that the tourist industry is ultimately dependent on the Great Barrier Reef Region as defined by the Act, supports the need for increased research into the biological resources of the area so that they may be maintained for the future viability of the industry.

Examples:

- the ecological effects of trampling and estimations of carrying capacity;
- the ecological effects of all forms of fishing and the development of fisheries management strategies;
- effects of discharge of sewage and garbage; and
- effects of harbour development on coastal dynamics.

4. That delegates recognise the benefits to the tourist industry of this Workshop and as a result request the Commonwealth Minister for Science and the Environment to ensure that the Great Barrier Reef Marine Park Authority continue to provide such benefits to the tourist industry. In particular the Workshop requests that the expertise of the Authority be available to train interpretive staff and advise in the preparation of brochures, audio-visual programs and trails in the area.

5. This meeting is concerned with the planning of tourism in the Great Barrier Reef area. It sees the declaration of a marine park or numbers of parks as an important attraction for tourists, particularly those from overseas where the title "Park" implies an area of high natural beauty. Therefore the meeting urges the Authority to declare a marine park or parks before the end of the year.

6. More mainland attractions and facilities are required for visitors in the popular destinations. National parks in some areas lack walking trails and picnic areas. The development of such facilities would enhance the visitors' experience of the region. This meeting asks the Queensland Government to provide the staff and resources to meet these needs.

7. That the Minister for Science and the Environment supply the Great Barrier Reef Marine Park Authority with staff and resources to carry out baseline surveys on the most intensively used in-shore areas at the earliest possible time, e.g., Whitsunday Islands - navigational charts, tourist information.

8. This Workshop recommends that the appropriate authority compile a list of architects who are experienced in designing accommodation suited to the climate and environment of the Great Barrier Reef Region which can be made available to proprietors who wish to upgrade their plant and build new accommodation. Prototype designs should be prepared for the guidance of investors.

9. That considerable emphasis be placed on environmental interpretation (education) by the tourist industry and relevant government authorities and that these bodies work together in providing interpretive facilities and activities throughout the Great Barrier Reef Region.

Transportation

1. There is an urgent need for adequate international airport facilities in the Great Barrier Reef region.

2. We support the recommendation of the House of Representatives Select Committee on Tourism for the introduction of regional charters from the Pacific region and New Zealand to Barrier Reef gateway ports.

3. In view of the fact that 86% of Great Barrier Reef visitors arrive by car, it is considered a matter of great urgency that the Bruce Highway be designated a major tourist route and upgraded to an all weather highway.

4. The travel industry believe that mutual benefits would accrue from the creation of an appropriate holiday atmosphere within aircraft flying from southern ports to the Great Barrier Reef, e.g., music, supplements to uniforms, temporary decor changes, appropriate food and drink, suitably printed cold towels.

5. This meeting is concerned that the 19 cents a gallon fuel excise applied to domestic flights and not international flights, and curfew restrictions limiting aircraft usage in Australia is contributing to the high domestic airfares which continue to restrict travel to the Reef region.

Policy

1. The Workshop expresses concern at the lack of consultation by the Queensland Government with the tourist industry and representatives in the formation of the new "Queensland Tourism Corporation". Such a corporation should be broadly based through the main segments of the industry.

2. The Workshop recommends that a permanent co-ordinating group or association of tourist operators in the Great Barrier Reef Region be set up to submit the proceedings and recommendations of this Workshop to the appropriate bodies for action and to brief local, state and tourist organisations.

3. The Workshop recommends that the permanent co-ordination group report to the industry and the Workshop on the progress of the recommendations.

4. While the Workshop deprecated the absence of VIPs at the Workshop, the delegates felt it could be counter-productive to dwell tediously on their absence at this time.

5. The Workshop notes that as a matter of policy, unions should be invited to participate in future workshops.

Editor's note:

Following the presentation of all resolutions, Peg Hayles (Hayles Magnetic Island Pty Ltd) moved that a committee be set up to report on the recommendations. The Chairman, Doug Nettleship, suggested the committee be a steering committee which would operate initially for three months without a constitution, but should be properly established and elected after three months. The motion was seconded by Chris Rodgers.

Nominations were called for and the following seven were received:

John Luscombe (Island's Management Pty Ltd)
Peg Hayles (Hayles Magnetic Island Pty Ltd)
Gordon McKauge (Laroc Pty Ltd)
Yvonne Katchor (Coral Point Lodge Motel)
Eric Grimes (Day & Grimes Pty Ltd)
Bob Catto (Caravan Park Association of Queensland)
Chris Rodgers (Orpheus Island Resort)

The seven people nominated were elected as committee members. The committee elected Gordon McKauge as Chairman and resolved to meet in Townsville within two weeks.

It was agreed by the Steering Committee that the resolutions be sent to the appropriate Ministers and Authorities and the Steering Committee agreed to report back to all registered delegates on their progress.

The resolutions as they appear above were agreed to by the majority of delegates although some delegates abstained on the grounds that more consideration was required.