



Australian Government

Great Barrier Reef
Marine Park Authority

Tourism and Recreation Group

NEWSLETTER NO 13

The Tourism and Recreation Group's quarterly newsletters provide an update on some of the current issues and initiatives that may affect tourism and recreation stakeholders.

From the Director

Hello and welcome to the November edition of the T&R news. The last quarter, I know, has been a tremendously busy but also very rewarding time for tourism and recreation in the GBR, and I am delighted to bring you an update of some key GBRMPA activities.

Our focus has been to pursue initiatives that harness the common goals of the industry and the GBRMPA, and to turn them into benefits for both. But what does this mean? It means a formally signed agreement with Ecotourism Australia to recognise best practice and encourage high standard operators; it means 15 year permits are available and being granted, it means getting the first Vessel Identification Numbers out to operators to make vessel changing easier; it means implementing our policy on latency and developing public guidelines on coral transplantation; it means running our Tourism and Recreation Reef Advisory Committee to ensure industry views are incorporated in decision making about the Reef; it means focussing on site specific issues and developing the first online information system for a GBR sensitive site. All of this could not have been achieved without *all of us* - Industry and Government - focusing on presenting a healthy reef.

I feel privileged to be working with such a committed team at the GBRMPA and with the support of

an industry whose bottom line is dependent on keeping the Great Barrier Reef Great! I would like to especially thank all our industry partners who have assisted the Tourism and Recreation Group to make progress this year and look forward to working with you in the year ahead.

- Lisha Mulqueeny

Certification and 15-year Permits

At the Tourism Futures Conference on 5 August 2004, Virginia Chadwick, Chair of the GBRMPA, formally signed an agreement with Clare MacFarlane, President of Ecotourism Australia, recognising the **EcoCertification Program** as an approved certification scheme at the **Ecotourism** and **Advanced Ecotourism** levels.



Formal approval of the EcoCertification Program by Virginia Chadwick (R) with Clare MacFarlane (L)

The Minister for the Environment and Heritage, Senator Ian Campbell, hailed it as a 'landmark agreement designed to encourage best practice Marine Tourism on the Great Barrier Reef'.

As an incentive for operators to become certified with an approved certification scheme the GBRMPA is offering the opportunity for 15-year Marine Parks permits.

The GBRMPA has already granted five of these 15-year permits and is currently considering a further 7 applications. Congratulations go to Fantasea Cruises, Poseidon, Low Isles Sailaway, and Quicksilver Connections (2), who are the first, of hopefully many, tourism operators to secure 15 year permits for their high standard of operation. T&R is currently developing up a suite of other benefits for high standard operators and we'd be delighted to get your input into this. Contact: Vicki Bonanno on (07) 4750 0868 or email v.bonanno@gbrrmpa.gov.au.

Work Out 15 year Permits at November Workshops

You can find out more about EcoCertification and 15-year permits at workshops being run jointly by the GBRMPA and Ecotourism Australia.

- Airlie Beach - Monday
22 November 2004
- Cairns - Tuesday
23 November 2004.

All local operators are encouraged to attend. Contact: Simone Harvey on (07) 3229 5550 or email info@ecotourism.org.au.

our great barrier reef
let's keep it great



Making Best Practice Better

As part of our ongoing commitment to best practice, T&R have invited industry experts in marine tourism to partake in a GBRMPA Best Practices Workshop in Townsville on 16 and 17 November 2004. Information from these two days will be provided directly to operators and will be incorporated in the revamped Tourism Operator's Handbook when it is released in interactive format on our website and CD ROM early next year. Contact: *Vicki Bonanno* on (07)4750 0868 or email v.bonanno@gbrmpa.gov.au.

Site Specific Management

Working with operators at Low Isles, QPWS and the Local Port Douglas LMAL, GBRMPA has developed an online information system for use and protection of the Low Isles Sensitive Location in the Cairns POM. Operators and recreational users alike now have increased access to information on bookings, reef protection markers, moorings and general GBRMPA and QPWS requirements. By enabling greater access and transparency of information, those people who use Low Isles, now have an even greater ability to do the right thing and help keep the Great Barrier Reef Great.

Engaging Industry and Communities

A successful **Tourism and Recreation Reef Advisory Committee** (TRRAC) meeting was held in October, with some good discussion on a range of issues including moorings, allocation mechanisms, benefits for high standard operators, indigenous tourism, research programs for a healthy reef, and guidelines for artificial reefs and coral transplantation.

In early October, GBRMPA convened a weekend meeting of all chairs of the **Local Marine Advisory Committees** (LMACs). Discussion focused on review of work achieved, water quality initiatives and monitoring, compliance with new zoning arrangements and strategies for continued community engagement.

Bulletin Board

- GBRMPA proudly sponsored the NQ Tourism awards on 22 October 2004. Congratulations go to **Dive Townsville** and **Sunferries** for receiving awards.
- The new Australian Government **Minister for Small Business and Tourism** is the Hon Fran Bailey, MP.
- The Queensland Government new **Great Barrier Reef Coast Marine Park Zoning Plan** came into effect on 5 November 2004.
- Thanks to operators who provided input into the Wet Tropics Natural Resource Management (NRM) Plan.
- If you are unsure about how the GBRMPA latency policy works, please see our latest information bulletin on making use of **special tourism permissions** available on our website.
- The **Marine Tourism Contingency Plan** is now in place. An application form can be downloaded from the GBRMPA website.
- We are delighted to welcome Stefanie Myers as Project Officer in our Policy team.

Would You Like this Newsletter Electronically?

Please provide your details to *Kirsten Walpole* on (07) 4750 0775 or email k.walpole@gbrmpa.gov.au.

BleachWatch - Observe to Conserve...

We would like to thank all those operators who made BleachWatch such a success last year. You can be part of BleachWatch this summer if a staff member can spend 10 minutes a week completing a monitoring form for reef sites that are visited on a regular basis (monitoring kit provided). In return, the GBRMPA will send you a monthly report throughout summer on the coral condition at the sites where you provide regular data.

Contact: BleachWatch Coordinator, *Katrina Goudkamp* on (07) 4750 0895 or email bleachwatch@gbrmpa.gov.au.



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