



Association of Marine Park Tourism Operators

Submission to the

**Standing Committee on Employment,
Workplace Relations and Workforce
Participation**

***Inquiry into Workforce Challenges in the
Australian Tourism Sector***

From the

**Association of Marine Park Operators
Limited**

November 2006

INTRODUCTION

This submission is in part a summary of those submitted by individual members of AMPTO and seeks to provide an overview of the employment concerns of those members and the other operators in the Marine Tourism Industry (MTI) in brief detail.

GENERAL

AMPTO represents the great majority of Tourism Companies operating within the Great Barrier Reef Marine Park (GBRMP). These operators range from Island Resort owners through large tourism day boats, charter vessels, to smaller companies who operate vessels carrying as few as 10 passengers. Our members carry 90% of the 2 million visitors to the Great Barrier Reef annually.

The Marine Tourism Industry in Queensland generates \$5.8 Billion in revenue and employs 63,000 people¹. It generates \$337 million in revenue through taxes and charges for the Federal Government² of which \$124 million is allocated to the Queensland Government through GST. The Queensland Government collects a further \$19 million in other charges.

Through the Environmental Management Charge (EMC) Industry contributes \$8 million to the management of the Great Barrier Reef Marine Park Authority and a further \$1.2 million to the research costs of the CRC Reef³.

The Industry has an investment in excess of \$2.5 billion in infrastructure throughout the GBRMP⁴.

From this it will be noted that the Marine Tourism Industry is a major contributor to, and a vital sector of, the Australian economy and is second only to the Mining Industry in its total value⁵.

EMPLOYMENT CATEGORIES

1. Hospitality – all aspects
2. Child care
3. Retail
4. Finance
5. Administration
6. Watersports
7. Vessel Crews – Masters to deckhands
8. Convention & special events
9. Horticulture
10. Trades and Labour
11. IT
12. Security
13. Photography

¹ Access Economics

² Hassals & Associates

³ GBRMPA EMC Returns

⁴ Ernst & Young

⁵ Productivity Commission

MAJOR AREAS OF CONCERN

1. HIGH STAFF TURNOVER

Traditionally tourism operators and particularly Island Resorts have a higher than average turnover of staff, (between 150% and 250% per annum). The average length of employment is 120 to 180 days

2. SHRINKING LABOUR MARKET

Queensland currently enjoys an unemployment rate of 4.5% with the National average being somewhat higher which results in less job seekers in the employment pool. In addition a high proportion of unskilled labour is being attracted to the higher paying mining and resource employers as a result of booming conditions in these industries.

3. SEASONAL BUSINESS

The MTI year is broken into two main seasons when occupancy is very high and employment requirements at their peak. Outside these times occupancy levels fall as do the employment requirements. It will be seen therefore that there is a requirement for a high level of skilled and semi-skilled part time employees. These are currently not available.

4. DIFFICULTY WITH INTERVIEWS

This applies mainly to Island Resorts but also to a lesser extent to some tour operators. Because of the travel difficulties many interviews have to be conducted by telephone and this has proved to be unsatisfactory in many instances.

5. SKILLS SHORTAGES

There is a chronic shortage of skilled staff in many areas of employment and a lack of suitable training facilities for hospitality and vessel staff.

6. DELAYS IN IMMIGRATION PROCEDURES

Where there are immigration processes in place the delays in processing applications preclude the operator's ability to rapidly fill vacancies and quite often when the application is completed the applicant has found employment elsewhere.

7. SKILLS NOT COVERED BY DEPARTMENT OF IMMIGRATION GUIDELINES

There are many skill sets that are needed by the MTI that are not covered by any Immigration agreement. Experience shows that these skill sets cannot be filled from the Australian job market.

8. SHORTAGE OF SUPPORT INFRASTRUCTURE FOR ISLAND RESORTS

Many island operators (particularly remote resorts such as Lizard Island) provide accommodation for their staff but on many others available land for the construction of is limited resulting staff having to commute from the mainland which is costly and time consuming.