

17th September 2005

Dr Diana Wright
Executive Policy Advisor
Department of the Environment and Heritage
GPO Box 787
CANBERRA ACT 2601

Dear Dr Wright,

On behalf of the Association of Marine Park Tourism Operators (AMPTO) I wish to take this opportunity to comment on the Review of the Great Barrier Reef Marine Park Act.

AMPTO is the peak industry body for marine tourism within the GBR. Our members carry approximately 95% of the 2 million tourists that visit the GBR each year and all the major businesses are members of the Association. More details can be found on our web site.

The tourism industry in the catchment of the GBR is the largest employer (63,000 people) and the second largest dollar earner at \$5.8 billion per year. The industry contributes \$8 million or approximately 25% of the budget for the GBRMPA. By comparison the other users of the reef are quite small.

There is absolutely no doubt that the industry is based on sustainable environmental tourism and the biggest draw card is the Great Barrier Reef and hence, my concern at the possible outcomes of this review.

The GBRMPA is to be congratulated for delivering the Representative Areas Plan (RAP) that has provided protection for 33% of the GBR. This is the most significant environmental protection of an eco system ever achieved in Australia and possibly the world. Unfortunately, it may not be enough but combined with the GBR Water Quality Protection Plan we can only hope that the GBR will recover its resilience and be able to adapt to climate change. No changes to the RAP or its boundaries should be tolerated!

The GBRMPA should continue to answer to the Marine Park Authority (MPA) and the MPA should continue to be empowered to make decisions. It is vital that marine tourism expertise be incorporated into the MPA for strategic planning of this vital industry.

Decision making for the GBR should remain with the GBRMPA and the MPA, not with the government in isolation in Canberra. It is vital that the senior decision makers understand the impacts of their decisions and are available to the local communities and this can only occur if they live within our communities and beside our industries.

Bodies such as the Tourism and Recreation Reef Advisory Committee (TRRAC) should be mandatory consultative bodies within the GBRMPA operational guidelines. At the moment they are only formed at the discretion of the Chair and considering the vital industry feedback they provide, I feel they should not be a discretionary item.

There should be some cross pollination between the Reef Advisory Committees (RACs). Fishing has representation on the Tourism RAC but we have no representation on the Fishing RAC, Water Quality RAC or Conservation RAC. Cross pollination will allow the various RACs to better understand the other user's viewpoint and simplify communication and problem solving.

The effective management of the GBR by the GBRMPA is absolutely vital to the future of the GBR and the sustainable growth of our industry. AMPTO is totally committed to the existing partnership between us and the GBRMPA and it is strongly urged that this partnership be strengthened by any changes, not weakened.

Yours truly,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Col McKenzie". The signature is written in a cursive, slightly slanted style.

Col McKenzie
Executive Director