

## Engagement with the private sector for sustainable tourism in the Great Barrier Reef Marine Park

### DESCRIPTION OF THE BEST PRACTICE

Sustainable tourism is important to Australia's natural and economic wealth. Much of Australia's tourism industry is based on our unique natural features, biodiversity and rich cultural landscape. Sustainable tourism has a role in presenting Australia's natural and cultural values; this necessitates effective engagement with the private sector.

The Great Barrier Reef Marine Park Authority<sup>2</sup> (GBRMPA), an Australian Government statutory authority, is responsible for the overall planning and management of the Great Barrier Reef Marine Park. The primary role of the GBRMPA is to provide for the protection of the Marine Park's natural and cultural values while allowing for wise use, understanding and enjoyment. The Marine Park is a multiple use protected area; a key aspect of management is working in partnership and cooperating with stakeholders and local communities to find common, mutually beneficial outcomes.



Image source: Tourism Queensland

The Great Barrier Reef (GBR) is the largest natural feature on earth stretching more than 2,300km along the northeast coast of Australia. The Great Barrier Reef Marine Park is the world's largest World Heritage Area and biggest tropical marine reserve.

Tourism is the largest industry within the Marine Park.

The annual economic output is estimated at over \$AUD5.8 billion, of which tourism's share is approximately \$AUD5.1 billion, equivalent to 86-87%<sup>3</sup>.

The following initiatives act to engage the private sector in Reef stewardship, compliance and aid Reef resilience.

- Established processes for private sector engagement including development of the Marine Park's zoning and plans of management. These processes result in planning and management frameworks that are informed and owned by the private sector. This provides for sustainable tourism within the Marine Park and enhances compliance to the plan.
- Established processes for private sector engagement on issues relevant to tourism and recreational use of the GBR through the Tourism Recreation and Reef Advisory Committee<sup>4</sup> (TRRAC). TRRAC is a senior level multi-sector committee that provides advice to the GBRMPA on issues such as policy development, research, monitoring, tourism trends and local issues. TRRAC also advises in the development and implementation of strategic and management plans.
- Incentives to encourage high standards of operation. For example opportunity to increase permit tenure for certified operators from 6 to 15 years<sup>5</sup>.
- Holding forums with the private sector to work out approaches to issues that may affect the tourism industry such as climate change.
- Tourism partnership programmes such as Bleach Watch<sup>6</sup>, Cots Watch<sup>7</sup>, and the Eye on the Reef programme. These initiatives provide tourism professionals with a greater understanding of the environment whilst also providing information used for research, monitoring and management of the Reef.
- The communication of information through 'Onboard'<sup>8</sup>, an online Tourism Operator's Handbook for the Great Barrier Reef. This provides comprehensive advice specific to the private sector on management issues.



Image source: GBRMPA



Image sourced: GBRMPA

### SUSTAINABILITY OF THE BEST PRACTICE

These approaches to private sector engagement collectively result in an informed and mutually beneficial sustainable tourism environment.

Positive outcomes engendered by effective engagement with the private sector include:

- Management tailored to achieve sustainable tourism.
- Tourism revenue generated to manage and protect the Reef; a tourism asset. This is administered by operators through the Environmental Management Charge (EMC). The contribution of EMC to the management of the Marine Park is about 20% of the GBRMPA income.
- Provides incentives for private sector to contribute to park management.
- A high standard, sustainable tourism industry.

Lessons that have been learnt in achieving effective engagement of the private sector for sustainable tourism in Australia include, but are not limited to:

- planning and management of tourism should be informed by the private sector;
- effective consultative mechanisms are crucial for effective engagement;
- governments need to have a flexible planning and management approach that allows for innovation and site specific outcomes;
- private sector engagement can be encouraged through incentives;
- positive outcomes arise from effective partnerships.

### REPLICATION

This approach towards achieving effective engagement with the private sector can be applied in other countries. However, successful implementation of the above stated initiatives requires the necessary enabling environment and appropriate institutional and legislative settings.

Further information on the GBRMPA initiatives on engagement with the private sector include:

Information of interest to planners and managers on GBRMPA zoning<sup>9</sup>

The Representative Areas Program process<sup>10</sup>

Financing Protected Areas – Tourism and the Great Barrier Reef<sup>11</sup>

The Cooperative Framework for the Sustainable Use and Management of Tourism and Recreation Opportunities in the Great Barrier Reef Marine Park<sup>12</sup> TRRAC 2002

<sup>1</sup> Department of Industry Tourism and Resources *Pursuing Common Goals: Opportunities for Tourism and Conservation* 2003  
[http://www.industry.gov.au/assets/documents/itrinternet/Pursuing\\_Common\\_Goals20050407143007.pdf](http://www.industry.gov.au/assets/documents/itrinternet/Pursuing_Common_Goals20050407143007.pdf)

<sup>2</sup> [www.gbrmpa.gov.au](http://www.gbrmpa.gov.au)

<sup>3</sup> Access Economics *The Economic And Financial Value Of The Great Barrier Reef Marine Park* June 2005

<sup>4</sup> [http://www.gbrmpa.gov.au/economic\\_values\\_report.pdf](http://www.gbrmpa.gov.au/economic_values_report.pdf)

<sup>5</sup> [http://www.gbrmpa.gov.au/corp\\_site/key\\_issues/tourism/advisory\\_committees.html](http://www.gbrmpa.gov.au/corp_site/key_issues/tourism/advisory_committees.html)

<sup>6</sup> [http://www.gbrmpa.gov.au/corp\\_site/key\\_issues/tourism/permits\\_policy.html](http://www.gbrmpa.gov.au/corp_site/key_issues/tourism/permits_policy.html)

<sup>7</sup> [http://www.gbrmpa.gov.au/corp\\_site/info\\_services/science/climate\\_change/bleach\\_watch.html](http://www.gbrmpa.gov.au/corp_site/info_services/science/climate_change/bleach_watch.html)

<sup>8</sup> <http://www.tourismoperators.reefhq.com.au>

<sup>9</sup> [http://www.gbrmpa.gov.au/corp\\_site/management/zoning/planners\\_info.html#General%20Aspects%20of%20Zoning](http://www.gbrmpa.gov.au/corp_site/management/zoning/planners_info.html#General%20Aspects%20of%20Zoning)

<sup>10</sup> [http://www.gbrmpa.gov.au/corp\\_site/management/zoning/documents/Rap\\_poster.pdf](http://www.gbrmpa.gov.au/corp_site/management/zoning/documents/Rap_poster.pdf)

<sup>11</sup> [http://www.gbrmpa.gov.au/corp\\_site/key\\_issues/tourism/documents/skeat\\_tourism\\_paper\\_durban\\_2003-09-8-17.pdf](http://www.gbrmpa.gov.au/corp_site/key_issues/tourism/documents/skeat_tourism_paper_durban_2003-09-8-17.pdf)

<sup>12</sup> [http://www.gbrmpa.gov.au/corp\\_site/key\\_issues/tourism/documents/rac\\_tourism\\_framework.pdf](http://www.gbrmpa.gov.au/corp_site/key_issues/tourism/documents/rac_tourism_framework.pdf)