

## NEWSLETTER – MAY 2005

Hi,

This is the first news letter for some time and while we have had our AGM and Board Meeting last March, this is the first opportunity to report back to you on all that has been going on.

### REPORT ON AGM

At the AGM our Chair, David Hutchen tabled the following report on the previous years activity:



### CHAIR'S REPORT

#### Introduction

The last year has been a busy one for your Association with several important issues being addressed. These were the CRC Reef lobbying, COTS, Sewage, GBRMPA Issues and preparation of the AMPTO Business Plan.

#### Finances

I am pleased to report that once again the Association finished the year with a surplus and that we have been able to start the year with \$31,000 in the bank. Membership income has been solid and while we spent more than budgeted on "Lobbying" we were able to keep other expenditure well in check.

The last two years are the only two years in the history of the Association that we have achieved cash positive results and our Executive Director deserves the credit for achieving this.

#### CRC Reef

Successful lobbying has resulted in funding being promised for the "Son of" CRC Reef by the Federal Government. The new organisation will be called the CERF and will be operated through the Federal Department of Environment. \$40 million has been allocated for funding and the CERF will combine the CRC Reef and the CRC Rainforest. A further \$60 million has also been promised on a competitive bid process for research across Australia.

At this time no details are available as to how the new research centre will work but as your Chair, I am one of the four people on the steering committee and the principal reason that I have re-nominated for the position of Chair is to ensure that AMPTO's contribution to the CRC is not lost or misappropriated during the changes to come.

AMPTO has already expressed its concern to the Minister that the money its members contribute via the EMC (\$1.2 million) must not be watered down by the need for rainforest research and that AMPTO feels it is entitled to a voice in how this money is spent.

### **EMC Review**

The EMC Review has not yet been completed. A draft report has been provided to the GBRMPA but it has not yet been released. We will continue to watch this develop.

### **COTS**



AMPTO has been conducting the COTS Program since 1<sup>st</sup> July 2004 taking over from the Great Barrier Reef Research Foundation and the program continues to meet the needs of industry.

The day to day management of the program has been contracted to Gempearl Pty Ltd which is our Executive Director's consulting company and as such Col McKenzie remains as the public face of the program that he has managed since it started 3 years ago.

The program is currently funded by the Federal and State Governments with the federal funding coming from the National Heritage Trust and the state funding from Dept of Premier and Cabinet.

### **Sewage**

The GBRMPA has promulgated mirror legislation to QLD's on marine sewage and it is likely that enforcement action will soon be undertaken to ensure compliance.

### **15 Year Permits**

15 year permits have become a reality. Fantasea Cruises, Quicksilver Connections, Aristos, Poseidon Cruises, Low Island Sailaway and Great Adventures have already received their new permits and another 20 operators have theirs in the pipeline.

AMPTO will actively encourage and assist any operator that wants to access 15 year permits and the Executive Director will provide advice to any member wanting to commence the process.

### **AMPTO Business Plan**

The Executive Director submitted the draft of the AMPTO Business Plan to the Board and this has now been revised and will be placed up on the web shortly.

### **RAP and the GBRMPA**

As a result of the last federal election, the RAP and the structure of the GBRMPA were at risk. Several high profile politicians called for the RAP to be overturned and for the structure of the GBRMPA to be reviewed. Our lobbying efforts have been rewarded by the Minister for the Environment reassuring AMPTO that there will be no change to the RAP and that the GBRMPA will not be made a public scapegoat to satisfy minority calls for their re-structure.

Yours truly,

**David Hutchen**  
**Chair**

### **CHAIR AND DEPUTY CHAIR ELECTIONS**

At the AGM the Chair and Deputy Chair positions became vacant.

David Hutchen re-nominated for the Chair's position and was elected unopposed.

Mike Burgess, who has filled the Deputy Chair position for many years and has been a past Chair, decided not to re-nominate in order to concentrate on other activities. He will however continue to play an active role as a Board Member.



A motion to thank Mike for his unstinting services to AMPTO was carried unanimously.

Peter Boundy nominated for the Deputy Chair's position and was elected unopposed.



### **Appointment of Directors for 2005**

The following appointments from sub groups as Directors for 2005 were noted:

- a. Steve Moon, Chair Northern Group
- b. Wayne Kirkpatrick, Chair Island Group
- c. Bernard Heimann, Chair Southern Group
- d. Peter Boundy, Dive QLD
- e. No nomination had been received from the Long Range Rovers but when they nominated a member he/she would be automatically on the Board.

The following directors continue in their appointments with their terms expiring at our 2006 AGM:

- a. Greg Boller
- b. Stuart Liebmann (since resigned)
- c. John Millwood
- d. Alan Wallish
- e. David Windsor
- a. Mike Burgess
- b. Brendan Brady
- c. Tony Baker

### **GBRMPA**

For the first time ever, AMPTO has now been given a position on the GBRMPA Consultative Committee. This is the senior advisory committee for the GBRMPA and will allow AMPTO to put forward its views at the highest level as well as on the Tourism and Recreation Reef Advisory Committee (TRRAC) where we already have a significant presence.

As a direct result of the work done by the GBRMPA on delivering the RAP and 33% protection of the GBR, the GBRMPA has been under considerable pressure from minority fishing interests. The move by Barnaby Joyce to abolish the GBRMPA and have the GBRMP run directly from Canberra will be a disaster for our industry.

AMPTO has sent the following letter to the Minister for the Environment and Heritage as well as publicly defending the GBRMPA in the media.

Dear Minister,

Today Senator Elect Barnaby Joyce once again embarked on his destructive crusade to punish the GBRMPA on behalf of fishing interests, for having delivered the most significant environmental initiative in our lifetimes.

AMPTO believes that his call on the Government to disband the GBRMPA and have your department absorb the authority's role is seriously flawed for the following reasons:

1. Your department has already demonstrated effective control and management of the GBRMPA and has a history of successful close cooperation with industry.
2. There is a critical need for the GBR to be managed by people that live and work within our communities. You have already identified and acted on this by setting up additional regional offices within our communities. A move to Canberra based management will not enhance DEH's reputation and may in fact adversely affect it when it is attacked by uniformed people supporting minority interests.
3. The GBRMP is a cooperative management effort between the federal and state governments and industry. This relationship will be seriously affected.
4. The importance in having the decision makers immediately available and accountable to the GBR users and the researchers is hard to over estimate. There is no coral in Canberra and it is

difficult to imagine public servants in Canberra, as having the same enthusiasm, professionalism, pride and determination to protect it, as is currently displayed by the GBRMPA's staff.

5. The RAP was supported by the community at large and strongly supported by the tourism industry, which is by far the largest user group. To see the GBRMPA and its personnel punished for delivering the RAP will be seen as a major disincentive to other protective area managers considering progressive environmental initiatives and by the industry and the public as lacking in fair play by making them the political scapegoats to placate minority users.

Once again Barnaby Joyce forgets that he has a direct responsibility for ALL the people in QLD and in this case Australia, not just the fishermen. If he understood this, he could not continue to attack an organisation that has been described as the World Leader in Marine Conservation.

AMPTO asks that you continue to provide strong positive support to the GBRMPA, ignore calls to move the control of the GBR to Canberra and use your resources to educate Joyce on both his responsibility to the community at large and the enormous, successful effort that the GBRMPA puts into ensuring we will have a healthy reef for our children.

### **LIVE CORAL FISHERY**



Public submissions were called for on the Live Coral Fishery Plan and AMPTO made the following submission:

AMPTO is the peak industry body for marine tourism within the GBRMP. Our members carry about 97% of tourists to the park and according to the Australian Productivity Commission our industry generates about 47,000 jobs and contributes about \$4.3 billion to QLD's economy based on 1999 figures.

AMPTO has in the past lobbied for the closure of the Coral Fishery and we fully supported Senator Hill when he tried to close the fishery on the grounds that coral

was iconic and should not be taken from a World Heritage Area!

When the Prime Minister decided not to close the fishery, we were given verbal assurances by Senator Hill that the annual quota of 200 tonnes would be reduced to the 60 tonnes that were currently being extracted. We were told that this would allow the existing industry participants to maintain their activity and livelihoods, that the lowered quota would stop the industry expanding and that their activities would be restricted to the existing areas that were currently open to the fishery. AMPTO supported the PM and the Environment Minister in their approach based on the undertakings provided and the desire not to impact the livelihoods of the existing fishermen and as a direct result stopped further lobbying action.

To now find that not only has the quota not been reduced to the 60 tonnes as promised but that the new proposal explicitly allows for an increased effort and expansion of the industry as well as opening up the whole GBR for their activities, leaves the Board of AMPTO totally amazed. It is difficult enough to understand how promises made by the then Environment Minister can so

dramatically be overturned but when the overturning of the decision results in what can only be called environmental vandalism, it simply leaves us stunned with disbelief.

There is no doubt that this fishery is unsustainable in the area it is currently allowed to operate in. The answer is not to allow a larger area, it's to close the industry when they have finally destroyed their (and our) resource. They should be told to become sustainable within their current area or close!

For the policy document to sweep aside the potential conflict with this fishery and tourism is indeed understating the case. Tourists pay \$millions to see live coral and

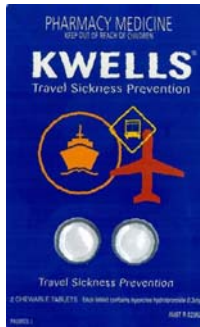
fish. Can you imagine the uproar when the fishermen are observed removing the coral in front of international visitors or from the tourism operators, when it is taken from their sites either openly or by stealth after the operators return to port of a night time? It was this activity that resulted in AMPTO lobbying against the fishery in the first place.

The fact that our industry has spent more than \$5 million of its own cash in COTS control and that this will have been matched by the State and Federal governments by the time the program finishes and that this program's principle aim is to protect the coral for tourism purposes is totally inconsistent with this decision.

Our industry is totally committed to sustainable operations and we can not support this policy in its existing form.



## **SEA SICKNESS TABLETS**



AMPTO has contracted to purchase tablets from the manufacturer for \$1.10 plus GST per card and on sell them to our members for \$1.50 plus GST. We recommend a retail price of \$3.00 per card.

The \$0.40 gross profit per card will go towards the AMPTO general account and be used to help keep the cost of membership down while increasing our lobbying efforts on behalf of industry.

These tablets are available in boxes of 200 cards or alternatively in 1000 card cartons. Boxes of 200 are also plus freight while the cartons of 1000 are free in store. We carry a limited stock on hand at our office and can generally fill orders of 200 on the same day the order is received. Larger orders are dispatched directly from the manufacturer.

To place an order phone, fax or email the order to the AMPTO office.

A strict 30 day account will be provided to members for purchases.

## **REPRESENTATION**

AMPTO has over the last few years been very successful in becoming members of boards and committees that have impact on our industry and as such, between your Directors and me we now represent AMPTO in the following areas:

1. GBRMPA's TRRAC
2. GBRMPA's LMAC
3. GBRMPA's Consultative Committee
4. CRC Reef
5. QLD Marine Board
6. QLD Tourism Strategy Working Group
7. Alliance For Sustainable Tourism
8. QTIC Associations Committee (QLD Tourism Industry Council)
9. Dive QLD
10. GIRAC (Green Island Reef Advisory Committee)
11. FNQ NRM (Far North QLD Natural Resource Management)
12. QMA (QLD Maritime Academy)
13. AMTN (Australian Marine Training Network)
14. Transport and Distribution ITAB (Industry Training Advisory Board)
15. QLD Workplace Health and Safety Dive Industry Review Committee
16. Australian Standards Committees for recreational and commercial diving
17. FNQ Community Forum

While this is a large commitment of time and effort, it does help ensure that we have a voice and that our industry is being listened to.

In addition to the above meetings AMPTO meets with the relevant Federal and State Ministers and heads of government departments with trips to Canberra and Brisbane several times per year.

Your Board is committed to ensuring that the industry is consulted and that our opinions have the weight necessary to influence outcomes.

Regards,

**Col McKenzie**  
**Executive Director**