

MEDIA RELEASE



THE HEART OF THE GREAT BARRIER REEF

For immediate release
September 3, 2020

Qld Govt delivers \$2 million lifeline to Whitsunday tour boats operators

Tourism Minister Kate Jones has today announced \$2 million in fee relief for Whitsunday tour boat operators to offset the cost of private marina berthing fees.

Today's announcement comes as part of a \$15 million package announced by Premier Annastacia Palaszczuk this week.

Ms Jones said the COVID-19 Marine Tourism Support Grants would provide up to \$20,000 to the owners of tourism vessels to offset their private marina berthing fees in The Whitsundays.

"This is something Labor's candidate for the Whitsunday lobbied hard for when I met her in the region recently," Ms Jones said.

"Tourism is the backbone of The Whitsundays economy – supporting one in three local jobs. We're investing heavily in this industry to support local businesses to make it through this pandemic.

"Queensland's economic recovery plan is already under way, with the Palaszczuk Government recognising growing our regions as a top priority.

"We know there are around 100 tour boat operators in the region who are struggling to make ends meet. This will take a lot of pressure off these operators who are major employers in The Whitsundays.

"Thanks to our state's strong health response, The Whitsundays is good to go. We want to welcome more Queenslanders to holiday in this picture-perfect holiday location – boosting the local economy and supporting local jobs.

Ms Jones said The Whitsundays would also benefit from the \$3 million North Queensland Events Recovery Package also announced by the Premier this week.

"This government has a clear strategy to rebuild Queensland's economy," Ms Jones said.

"Events will be vital to the economic recovery of our tourism industry – helping to lure tourists back to our leading destinations like The Whitsundays, supporting local businesses and local jobs.

"This is a great win for local tourism operators."

AMPTO CEO Gareth Phillips said the \$2 million announced by the government today was a "lifeline" for marine operators.

"AMPTO, together with local operators and the Whitsunday Charter Boat Industry Association, has been lobbying the Queensland Government for support to help cover the fixed costs that can not be reduced or stopped. We are pleased they have listened and responded," he said.

"This \$2M fee relief for operators in privately owned marinas is one of the many lifelines desperately needed by our marine operators.

"Marine operators are a core part of The Whitsundays tourism industry.

"The Great Barrier Reef is number 1 on nature-based travellers choice to come to Australia or to travel in Australia. The marine operators are essential in supplying the service, so many visitors want - to see

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the Great Barrier Reef. Today's announcement is one more step closer to helping these businesses survive this pandemic and continue contributing to the economy.

"Without support from the Queensland Government we could see substantial losses to the marine tourism industry through business closures, and that will be crippling to the local economy in the long-term, so we are grateful for Minister Jones' efforts and the announcement today.

"AMPTO has committed to continue working with our members and the Queensland government as this pandemic unfolds."

Tourism Whitsundays Chief Executive Officer Tash Wheeler welcomed today's announcement.

"Our marine operators have been seeking support and we are thankful to the government for this assistance which will go towards helping these businesses remain in business during this challenging time," she said.

"The Whitsundays, in the Heart of the Great Barrier Reef, is one of the most tourism reliant regions in the country and accounts for 40% of the \$6.3B Great Barrier Reef visitation. It is imperative that our tourism industry receives financial support to ensure these world-class products are here to welcome guests when restrictions ease."

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About Tourism Whitsundays: *Tourism Whitsundays (TW) is the organisation responsible for destination marketing and visitor attraction for the Whitsunday region. It is the lead agency recognised by Tourism and Events Queensland and the Whitsunday Regional Council to lead the promotion of the region as a tourism destination. Tourism Whitsundays markets all aspects of the region including the Great Barrier Reef, Whitsunday Islands and Coast, accommodation, boating and sailing, fishing, touring, recreational activities, adventure, dining, shopping, weddings and honeymoons, conferencing and business events.*

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