

## QRAMA calls for code of conduct for committee members

QRAMA has called for a Code of Conduct for body corporate chairpersons and committee members in its major submission to the Body Corporate Community Management (BCCM) discussion paper.

Strong submissions were made by QRAMA for a review and reconsideration of the current transfer fees, termination of schemes and the conflict issues in mixed schemes.

QRAMA Executive Officer John Anderson said two thirds of the 66 questions in the discussion paper were answered in its 40-page submission.

"QRAMA's response to the discussion paper focused on four major points from the 66 questions and was just one of over 100 submissions that Cabinet received," Mr Anderson said.

"The four major items submitted by QRAMA relate to transfer fees, a code of conduct for committee members and methods of operation and termination for tourist accommodation schemes.

"We are pleased that the current discussion paper has looked forward to identify both items that need attention and those items that will provide a basis for the industry over the next ten years," he said.

Mr Anderson said the objective must be to provide a social environment for members of community title schemes to operate in harmony.

"We believe that it is important for each new sector within the industry to assist in any community living education programme for new owners, occupants and stakeholders so that all parties can better understand the issues," Mr Anderson said.

"Further, there are some key specific industry issues that require defining so that real commercial outcomes can be achieved.

"We have been inundated with day to day issues that occur in both the holiday letting and permanent letting areas of the industry and then case studies have been put forward in our submission."

QRAMA members have been very positive in identifying issues which are real life service and business matters which can be better resolved.

The submission identifies small and large problems and points to the need to have new legislation or regulations flag the issues and provide a mechanism for resolution.

The Government recognises there is consistent growth in community living and that to maintain harmony within buildings and neighbourhoods – issues need to be spelt out.

The future for the industry revolves around clear rules and regulations and early mediation processes to ensure issues do not grow out of control because of division.

Community living requires all parties to understand the need for courtesy and understanding about the rights and restrictions to maintain harmony.

The discussion paper is examining in some detail levels of mediation to make it easier for all parties to be heard and for quick and cost effective mediation.

It sees as a major outcome the genuine need for greater understanding of community living and in the future we will see a greater and more efficient emphasis on education, knowledge and understanding by all parties.

It is incumbent upon all QRAMA members that they play their role in this future direction by making sure they fully understand the legislation and regulations.

QRAMA members as managers have a lawful responsibility to have knowledge of the legislation and we must be committed to professionally doing our best for our clients and to the success of the investment that we have all needs to the scheme.

This program for the future is extensively important for all managers to strengthen their businesses.

"QRAMA would like to congratulate the government on undertaking this important consultation programme," he said.

QRAMA participated in the development and review of the 1997 BCCM Act and the 2003 amendments.

According to Margaret Keech, Minister for Tourism, policy and legislation is needed to take the industry through the coming decade and ensure the industry's viability, as well as to address new and emerging issues.

The aim of the discussion paper is to provide Queensland with the nation's best body corporate laws by encouraging all unit and apartment owners to have their say.

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### QRAMA has provided members with a 1300 phone number to reach the State Secretary.

Members throughout Queensland can now phone the State Secretary from a fixed phone for the cost of a local call. Many matters are best put into an email, where some consideration is needed in a reply. There are also times when a phone call is more appropriate and now all members can call for the same cost.

To use this additional member benefit, members can call the State Secretary on

**1300 367 202.**

# Electrical Safety – Appliances – “To Tag or Not To Tag”

## A larger lesson in Workplace Health and Safety Issues

by Alan McKernan

A Brisbane QRAMA Committee member recently asked the question:

*“Under what circumstances does electrical equipment in holiday units have to be tagged?”*

There are actually 2 answers to this question: one relates to workplaces and one relates to the sale and letting of units.

That leads (excuse the pun) to a wider consideration of a resident managers' obligations under the Electrical Safety Act (ESA) and Workplace Health and Safety (WH&S). Under the ESA and its Regulations (the ESR), a resident manager's obligations (relevant to this article), fall into several categories: general obligations for electrical safety; obligations in relation to workplaces (which could include the manager's office, the common property and owners' units at certain times); and obligations in relation to the sale or hire of electrical equipment.

### Scope of this Article

This article is not a substitute for specific legal or workplace health and safety advice. It is not intended to completely cover the requirements in this area. Mahoney Lawyers recommends that resident managers arrange for specific WH&S compliance advice from qualified consultants. This would normally be paid for by the body corporate.

Resident managers should also be aware of the requirements for the installation of Electrical Safety Switches – this is dealt with in another article available from the QRAMA members' library. Please note – there is some confusion about what a safety switch is. A normal circuit breaker is NOT a safety switch. If there is no test button, it is probably not a safety switch.

For more information go to [www.eso.qld.gov.au/publicat/safety\\_work.pdf](http://www.eso.qld.gov.au/publicat/safety_work.pdf).

### So what does “tagging” mean?

There are 2 types of “tagging”. Tagging in the normal sense is tagging of an electrical item where “the item is **inspected, tested and tagged by a competent person**” – i.e. an electrician. Another type of tagging, is actually a **mark** - a “regulatory compliance mark”, which means a mark for an item of electrical equipment complying with AS/NZS 4417 (Marking of electrical products to indicate compliance with regulations) that is used to indicate that the item complies with the ESR. If a resident manager is buying electrical equipment for an owner, they should make sure it has a compliance mark.

### General Obligations for electrical safety

These obligations are contained in the ESA. Different classes of people have responsibilities for electrical safety. For example – employers, and persons in charge of premises.

There can be little doubt that resident managers of permanent and short term (holiday) accommodation would fall into one of the classes. Basically, the responsibility under the ESA is to **ensure that electrical equipment is electrically safe**.

### Requirements about workplaces

“Workplace” is defined very widely. It would include a resident manager's office, common property and also could include holiday let or permanent units, at least while the resident manager or their staff are working in the unit (eg cleaning / inspecting).

### To answer the specific question – regarding workplaces

Managers should acquaint themselves thoroughly with the ESR, however a **rule of thumb** is that for **cleaning and office work** it is **sufficient for the equipment to be connected to a safety switch**. Your WH&S Consultant (or lawyer) can advise on the specific requirements for different types of work.

For office and cleaning work, if there is no safety switch, all electrical equipment would have to be tagged and regularly tested. ESR 93 makes this clear. For repair work, both a safety switch and mandatory testing and tagging apply (ESR 90 and 91).

As far as the requirements are mandatory for workplaces, the employer (i.e. the resident manager) would have the primary obligation for electrical safety. Sensible owners and bodies corporate would see the larger lesson and fund any electrical changes.

### Sale or Hire of Specified Electrical Equipment

This is a more difficult issue.

The way the ESR reads, whenever a unit is sold or rented out, and it includes electrical equipment, the rules relating to sale or rental of electrical equipment must be complied with! The rules do not assume the equipment will be connected to a safety switch which is why the testing and tagging regime is in place.

We understand from the relevant department, that these rules are not strictly enforced, and that the rules may be **changed** so that **incidental** hiring or sale of electrical equipment is not regulated in the same way as for example, a hire service. Despite this, we can be sure that if anyone is injured, then on current law, a resident manager would be investigated for non-compliance!

### To answer the specific question – sale or hire of electrical equipment

From material that we have been supplied, it is likely that rental accommodation will shortly have a mandatory requirement for a safety switch.

The following is a summary of the **current** rules –

- **all** specified equipment which is hired out must have a “Queensland Approval” or an “External Approval” (i.e. from an Australian state or New Zealand). In general the approval has to be marked on the item. This would include equipment normally found in a holiday or permanently let unit for example, range hoods, refrigerators, TV's etc. (ESR 100)
- **new** equipment which is sold (but **not** second hand equipment) must also be marked as above (ESR 100). This probably would not apply to most resident managers
- A person who offers for sale to another person (the “proposed purchaser”) an item of second-hand electrical equipment must also give the proposed purchaser information about whether or not the item has been tested and found to be electrically safe (ESR 123).
- In certain circumstances (mentioned below), if electrical equipment is hired out, it must be –
  - inspected and tested by a competent person **before each hiring**, OR **the item** has an electrical safety switch which cannot be disconnected; AND
  - inspected, tested and tagged by a competent person at least once every 6 months

The circumstances are: “where an employer or self-employed person hires out to another person an item of electrical equipment **belonging to the employer or self-employed person**” (ESR 126). If, for example, a DVD Player or VCR owned by the manager is hired out, it must comply with the above (i.e. be tagged etc), but a permanently located DVD, VCR, range hood, refrigerator, TV etc **owned by the unit owner** need not. There is no distinction in the ESR between portable and fixed items.

Unit owners (not being self employed persons) are therefore **not** under a **specific** obligation either to have a safety switch or to test and tag their equipment.

A general obligation for electrical safety remains, which could easily be satisfied by the installation of safety switches.

### What should resident managers do? (The Larger Lesson)

- Plainly these requirements are not good news for over-regulated resident managers.
- Resident managers owe a duty to their owners and guests to prevent, notify and / or rectify any safety issues. There is a general obligation for electrical safety irrespective of the lack of specific requirements in many cases for safety switches or testing and tagging.
- **At the very least**, it is **sensible** (even when not required specifically by the ESR for non-workplaces), for resident managers to ensure that all units and common property have safety switches. In the near future, it is possible the government will make safety switches mandatory in rental properties. Normal fixed safety switches need to be tested every 6 months – no special qualification is needed for this type of testing if a test button is part of the switch. In addition, regular testing and tagging of all equipment (even though that is not a specific requirement of the ESR) would fulfil resident managers' duties to their owners and tenants / guests. There would be scope to charge owners for this work under an appropriate form 20a.  
  
If the owner / body corporate won't attend to this, the resident manager still has obligations when the unit / common property is a workplace, for testing and tagging, and if repair work is done, for a safety switch.
- Resident managers who fail to take reasonable steps to provide for the safety of workers, tenants, guests and their property, over which the resident manager has any control, could be committing a criminal offence and also be exposed to damages claims from persons who suffer any damage or injury.

# President Talks

*President Talks* by *Kim Cox, President,* *Kim Cox*  
**Queensland Resident Accommodation Managers Association**

The work of QRAMA on behalf of members never seems to cease and at the end of another busy year, it is important that we recognise what we have achieved and what still remains before us.

It has been a busy time culminating in the monumental review of the BCCM Act issues paper.

It seems that in the 21st century, conducting a business continues to be even more challenging as we respond positively to the expectations of the community, and their desire for the highest standards of service delivery and business governance.

People want value for money from all businesses and fortunately we in QRAMA have been working solidly over the past 15 years making sure that we as providers understand our obligations and deliver our services competitively and with continuous improvement programs.

It therefore has been important that this year we spent a considerable amount of time reviewing the issues posed by the State Government in the BCCM paper because the outcomes will form the next layer of regulatory and later legislative change and hopefully further improvements for our industry. The paper captured issues that QRAMA and other stakeholders had identified as needing attention.

I am pleased that a number of individual members added separate submissions to our association contribution, as it reflects the depth of interest and the positive nature in which QRAMA wishes to go forward.

It has been important throughout the past year that members from all over Queensland have been involved in the activities of QRAMA in attending meetings and supporting each other with regional issues to present them effectively for resolution.

Members should be aware that in QRAMA the Queensland permanent and holiday letting industry has something unique.

The branch and member network is not operating in other States, although a number of managers in regions are coming together to discuss common interest issues.

I foresee that in the near future, there will need to be a gathering of the forces to tackle these common interests, especially with emerging Federal issues which arise from time to time.

While QRAMA now has 650 members, there is still a significant number of people who would be eligible for membership.

On a national basis, it is important that we recognise that inevitably, like groups will recognise the need to provide a concerted approach and voice to common issues as our industry further develops and grows.

Whilst Queensland is seen as the holiday State, the major issues for resident managers are consistent across the board for permanent as well as holiday letting and the business issues are certainly common to all.

QRAMA is currently supporting a member issue which has the potential to impact on many of our members not just in Queensland but across the nation. QRAMA has been prepared to take on these battles as a member service with positive results and for the benefit of the industry and its business future.

In recent public statements, I have made the point that the corporate element in our industry, together with the State Government's announced policy of encouraging more dense development to take advantage of existing infrastructure, will further add challenges for our industry.

Managers will be at the coalface of delivering services to a whole new generation of community and strata title owners over the next few years.

We are in a lifestyle industry, whether we are a permanent or holiday letting agent in one of the nation's most rapidly expanding industries.

I urge members to understand that this forthcoming period of industry growth will continue to bring our role into even greater prominence and we must be prepared to best manage our position within the industry.

There will be great opportunities for individuals and their businesses as well as a further maturity of our role in the overall industry.

We have the opportunity now as an active organisation, to provide leadership and direction to the lawmakers and the regulators of the industry, to ensure that they have legislation and regulations which allow them to better understand the practicalities and requirements that will provide benefits for occupiers and owners.

If QRAMA and its members do not remain vigilant and active in being involved in the diversity of industry challenges, then we will lose control of our own businesses as well as cease being a key stakeholder in the industry.

At present QRAMA and our branch leaders and their executive members are alert in identifying areas of concerns and we use our resources to work with all levels of Government and industry leaders.

But in reality, we are in an industry that has a significant turnover of managers.

This will change as the industry continues to mature.

It means that we do not want to lose experienced team members but it also means that we want to have interested members come on board the various industry task forces.

Quoting the John Kennedy message, ask not what your organisation can do for you, but what you can do for QRAMA, as in reality, it will be assisting the industry in which you are a vital part.

The challenge is still ahead of us, and with determination, we can help better define our industry.

## State President continues his commitment to QRAMA

The State President of the Queensland Resident Accommodation Managers Association, Mr Kim Cox, has been re-elected for his sixth term.

Mr Cox told the annual general meeting that the Association's strong regional branch network had played an important front line role in putting forward the practical issues associated with both permanent and holiday letting.

Mr Cox said that the state executive had been well served with many practical day-to-day issues detailed in a series of submissions to government and industry forums.

"We are involved in a major lifestyle growth industry in the changing face of Australian living and lifestyle," Mr Cox said.

"The Queensland Government has recognised that there is a need for legislation and regulations to be more current in this growth environ-

ment and QRAMA has sought to provide current information and recommendations for sound, practical, ongoing management.

"We are pleased that many grass roots issues are now being addressed strategically and we in QRAMA believe that the structures in place benefit all sectors including investors, owners, tenants, holiday makers and managers.

"QRAMA members recognise that they have a real role in making early assessments of potential issues so that they can be resolved before they become industry wide problems," he said.

To meet requirements under the Association Incorporation Act, John Anderson's position is now Executive Officer. The other elected members of the executive are: State Vice President is Geoff Allen, President of the Brisbane branch; State Secretary is Brydon Halliday and Treasurer is John Anderson.

# The QRAMA Submission Issues

The QRAMA Submission to the BCCM review (BCCM into the 21st Century) addressed a range of issues with significant details on day to day issues facing managers. The submission also detailed the areas of concern about the viability of businesses to remain profitable and meet the diversity of demands by owners and stakeholders.

Outlined below are the four key issues that QRAMA raised in the response that we consider major items. Two of these major items are "unfinished business" from the recent review including transfer fees and a code of conduct for committee members; these issues continue to generate problems within many complexes. We also identified the operation and termination of schemes as two other items we felt required further research and consideration and that must be resolved. All four issues are outlined in detail below while the file submission is on the member's section of the website.

## Transfer Fees

QRAMA continues to demonstrate the unfair situation of the imposition of its strong objection to the way transfer fees were introduced and the adverse impact that has resulted in the industry as a result of the impost.

The QRAMA submission details for the record, the compromise haste that resulted in the transfer fees being introduced and the impact that they have had within the industry.

The transfer fees have created an unsavoury issue within the bodies corporate and are not in the best interests of community living.

Our submission claims that the BCCMA Section 122 (3) was an ill-conceived piece of political compromise that has probably caused more disputes and mistrust between RLA's and owners than any other issue. The transfer fee argument is flawed as it is based on prejudice and ignorance of the commercial reality of how management rights are financed. The former UOAG president convinced the Member for Gladstone that resident managers bought management rights so they could obtain a contract extension and then sell the contract at a profit.

Since their conception, transfer fees have continued to breed mistrust and suspicion because with each change of manager the body corporate has an argument that the incoming manager sees as being unfair and unreasonable. The body corporate that takes the option of charging the transfer fee sends a clear message to the incoming manager that extracting every dollar is the prime objective of the body corporate, irrespective of the quality of work or of unpaid efforts of the RLA. The welcome to the new RLA is based on these unpleasant experiences, which is hardly the basis for the positive relationship upon which the success of the scheme depends.

The real point of conflict occurs when the contract is extended to satisfy the requirements of the financial institutions and the body corporate applies a fee. QRAMA proposed that the fee should apply only from the initial time of engagement and not be reapplied at each renewal of extension. Hence if a RLA has been the incumbent RLA for more than three years, no transfer fee should be applied. Further, QRAMA proposes that if the management rights are transferred within the first year of incumbency, the fee should be compulsorily applied except in cases covered in Regulation 85 [SM].

Another unreasonable aspect of the fee is that it is charged on the total business value every time and so is effectively a tax on a tax. The body corporate that cannot retain an RLA for whatever reason will keep charging the fee on the same amount, which could be an incentive for some bodies corporate to make the RLA's time unpleasant. QRAMA accepts that Ministers are reluctant to repeal legislation unless all stakeholders are in full agreement.

## Code of Conduct

QRAMA has always sought to work on governance issues to enhance the reputation and integrity of Queensland Resident Accommodation Management industry.

Our industry has matured during the past two decades to a level of positive acceptance by all levels of Government.

Our Code of Conduct is enshrined within the regulations and our industry remains open and accountable to all stakeholders.

In our submission to the BCCM Review, we outline the position and the need for a Code of Conduct, accountable and governance for other key stakeholders.

Unfortunately the lack of committee accountability and the absence of a Code of Conduct for committee members permeate too many issues raised in the discussion paper. Until a suitable Code of Conduct is provided to set standards for the behaviour of a committee member, problems will continue to occur.

The self-management concept in the BCCM legislation requires knowledge. Most body corporate members don't know, don't care or don't question information provided by the Chairman, body corporate managers or other owners. While the Information Service provides some answers, there are no effective mechanisms in place when the information is ignored, not understood or not sought.

The current Code of Conduct regulating body corporate manager conduct is sufficiently extensive; however the challenge is to handle the vexatious owner who wastes body corporate resources pursuing details that do not matter. Until the committee must also comply with such a Code, the BCM and RLA will continue to be the subject of such abuses.

One of the most common concerns relates to the chairman using executive power to make decisions. The legislation needs to be amended to clarify that the chairman has no executive authority and that all decisions must be committee decisions or body corporate decisions.

In addition, a Code of Conduct for chairpersons and committee members should be introduced to ensure at least minimum standards of governance. An appropriate Code of Conduct for committee members is more likely to attract responsible committee members, comfortable in the knowledge that their fellow committee members must attain the standards of behaviour set out in the Code. The existence of a Code of Conduct on the BCCM Commissioner's website will be part of the education programme for all owners and investors and will help to remove the uncertainty that currently exists in the industry.

A Code of Conduct for committee members is the most urgent item needed to address conflicts. We must have mechanisms that provide comfort for owners that ensure processes are fair and reasonable. There must be a spirit of trust and cooperation and the committee must earn the trust by its behaviour. As in any group of people, if the leaders can be trusted to act honestly and fairly, they can take the true leadership role.

## Operation of schemes

QRAMA has detailed the reality issues which occur on the ground in schemes throughout the State.

The discussion paper has sought to gather issues and recommendations for early solutions to their issues.

To achieve satisfactory outcomes through early mediation methods, through having all parties better educated on the legislation regulations and by laws of a building, and through positive understanding of modern community living.

Conflicts often occur where a building has a mixed purpose and mixed occupancy. It is clear that the successful schemes are those where all occupiers have the same objectives. Units may be all occupied by owner-occupiers or long-term tenants, or all units may be used for holiday accommodation. It is where a building mixes the roles that the number of conflicts increases and unresolved problems divide owners.

The long term solution would seem to be that a building should have a clear objective set in its Community Management Statement and the Regulation Module under which it operates must be consistent with this objective.

Those purchasing a property in a tourism scheme must expect more frequent refurbishment and other expenses. First time buyers of strata titled property buy into a building operated primarily for tourism, only to be disappointed by the noise and expenses they must endure.

The legislative framework hinders the tourism operation because it must then contend with owner-occupiers who are hostile and frustrated by their purchase. The wide choice that was intended to please all parties and particularly the UIDA and selling agents has now become the fuel for conflicts and disputes.

The benefits of the BCCM structure can be retained for buildings providing tourist accommodation provided legislation is prepared that designated the building to be managed for the purpose of tourist accommodation. It is envisaged that the developer would provide such designation at the development stage so that every purchaser knew the intentions of the scheme before buying. The objectives would be included in the Community Management Statement and when a building is sold, the potential buyers would see from the CMS how the building operates.

## Termination of schemes

QRAMA has raised the issue of aging buildings in key population centres and believes that the State Government's new planning initiatives for the South East corner of Queensland will have significant impacts on property values and usage for community living.

The key issue to be addressed is the current legislation which allows for one owner to control the process.

In our submission QRAMA reported that:

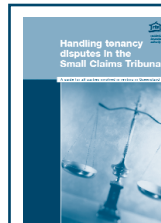
Many schemes are falling into disrepair and creating social problems for the owners, tenants and neighbours because the legislation lacks a practical means for terminating a scheme.

The maintenance programmes for buildings need clearer long-term planning. The BCCM requirement about sinking funds and 10-year plans, introduced in the 1997 legislation, was a very positive first step in the process of forward planning. Unfortunately we are all aware of too many buildings where an adequate sinking fund has not been maintained.

This problem relates to the lack of accountability of committees and a lack of any Code of Conduct for committee members. While the legislation continues to allow committees to ignore the requirements of the BCCM legislation, we will continue to see these abuses.

Our present sequence seems to be that when a scheme is no longer viable for tourism accommodation, it can be let for long-term tenancies. This almost guarantees that the building will be progressively downgraded until it is no longer viable.

The currently available options would seem to suit smaller schemes where owner-occupiers have given way to long-term tenants. Where we have a scheme of 40 or 50 lots whether involving investors or owner-occupiers, one owner should not be able to hold the remainder to ransom by recording a dissenting vote. QRAMA suggests that at least 10 per cent of those entitled to vote should vote against termination for the termination to be rejected.



### New release of Small Claims Tribunal booklet

Queensland's resident accommodation managers are set to benefit from the release of the Residential Tenancies Authority's (RTA) newly updated publication, *Handling tenancy disputes in the Small Claims Tribunal – a guide for all parties involved in renting in Queensland*.

This booklet was first published in 2000 and since then has proven to be a valuable resource for people making applications to have disputes resolved in the Small Claims Tribunal under the *Residential Tenancies Act 1994*.

The RTA General Manager, Carolyn Mason, said the RTA recommends attempting self-resolution first with parties talking about the dispute to try to resolve the problem themselves. If that fails, the RTA recommends parties apply to the RTA's free dispute resolution service and work with an RTA conciliator to resolve the dispute. If the dispute can still not be

resolved, then a person can apply to the Small Claims Tribunal for a decision about the dispute. The updated publication will help guide parties through the process of applying to the Tribunal.

"The new version of this booklet contains clear, user-friendly guidelines and step-by-step information, covering the entire process of an SCT hearing, from making an application right through to attending the hearing and dealing with the outcomes," Ms Mason said.

"New features to assist readers include sample copies and explanations of relevant forms, handy checklists to help people preparing for a case and example running sheets to document the course of pre-trial events."

The *Handling tenancy disputes in the Small Claims Tribunal* booklet can be downloaded from [www.rta.qld.gov.au](http://www.rta.qld.gov.au) or ordered via the RTA's form distribution service by phoning 1300 136 939.

## TOM TAGGART TALKS

Newly elected President of the Gold Coast branch, Tom Taggart, talks about the vision of the newly elected Gold Coast branch committee:

The Gold Coast branch of QRAMA has had a number of problems over the last few years including:

- It was perceived to be representative of the holiday letting complexes only, with little or no concern for the owners and operators of permanent complexes
- It was perceived to be centred on complexes within the Surfers Paradise area
- Its membership numbers were less than 20% of the potential membership base
- A number of the existing committee members were retiring from the industry.

These problems diluted the capacity of the branch to maintain its credibility and strength both within the industry and outside the industry. This lack of credibility and strength then drove membership numbers down and seriously affected the branch capacity to attract new members.

The low membership numbers have been the major obstacle to the formation of a strong Gold Coast branch which could support the other regional branches and the State Executive on all issues that affect the management rights industry.

After much discussion and forward planning the previous committee developed a management structure for the new committee which achieved the following results –

1. The Gold Coast Branch of QRAMA has been divided into five geographical regions. Those regions are –
  - Northern – The general area from Southport Bridge, North through to Pacific Pines and Coomera.
  - Central Surfers – The greater areas of Main Beach, Surfers and south to midway between Surfers and Broadbeach.
  - Broadbeach and Mermaid Beach.
  - Burleigh, Miami and Palm Beach.
  - Coolangatta and Kirra beach

2. Each geographical region has two committee positions; these ten committee positions provide the three executive positions of President, Vice President and Secretary/Treasurer.

The major definite purpose of the branch restructure is to create a logical yet simple and efficient system that allows information to flow back and forth between all QRAMA members throughout the State.

Obviously, the type, nature, importance and urgency of this information will vary greatly and this will determine what action is taken, at what level and by whom.

The State Executive recognised the need to address these problems as a matter of urgency and set the Gold Coast branch committee the objective of reinventing itself to establish a committee structure that could best address and solve these problems.

The new branch structure will enable the new Gold Coast branch committee to achieve its strategic objectives through its major definite purpose – to proactively address the strengths, weaknesses, opportunities and threats to the management rights industry.

QRAMA was formed quite some time ago now and, like the management rights industry, grew out of nothing; it evolved out of necessity. A small number of current and former owners and operators of management rights could see that they were at stake as policies, procedures, practises and the law changed relative to the industry. These people had the pioneering vision that created QRAMA and which gave QRAMA its original objectives.

These objectives have not changed and quite clearly are inclusive of all management rights owners, operators and unit owners. The objectives promote high standards in the seven centres of business management attention and conduct. There never was and never will be an attitude of exclusion to anyone who has a direct interest in the management rights industry.

Subsequently, the vision of the new Gold Coast Branch committee is to maximise the return on energy, the return on equity and the return on life that each one of its members puts into the management rights industry. This will in turn benefit our unit owners, their families and our bodies corporate.

The new Gold Coast Branch committee will achieve this vision through its strategic objective of maintaining QRAMA's original objectives.

## Queensland flights could boost tourism

Queensland's regional airports and economies are also booming.

Mrs Keech said Queensland experienced a massive 33 per cent increase in domestic seat capacity for September 2004, compared to September 2003.

"Last September Queensland recorded 664,202 inbound seats. This figure rose 216,534 to 880,736 for September 2004," Mrs Keech said.

"Gold Coast Airport has had a tremendous increase of 61 per cent. Last September their total domestic inbound capacity was 87,072. Just twelve months later this has increased to 140,486.

"Airports in regional Queensland are having a very successful year.

"Proserpine recorded a capacity increase of 68 per cent. The Sunshine Coast is up 48 per cent, Hamilton Island 38 per cent,

and there have been significant increases of over 20 per cent for Cairns, Brisbane, Mackay, Rockhampton and Townsville."

Mrs Keech said the debut of Jetstar has been great news for Queensland regions.

"Virgin Blue has also increased services and capacities, and the tourism industry is the big winner.

"There is also plenty of good news in international air services.

"Brisbane Airport recorded a 31 per cent increase in international passenger arrivals in the first eight months of 2004.

"Cairns Airport is up 22 per cent for the first eight months of the year."

## Community group established to help plan Schoolies Week

The new Gold Coast Schoolies Week Community Reference Group recently met with the Minister for Communities, Warren Pitt to discuss the planning and staging of this year's Schoolies Week.

The Community Reference Group will provide an avenue for the local community to inform the state government and event organisers of ideas and concerns relating to the delivery of a safe and enjoyable Schoolies Week, which will run this year from 19–28 November.

It will be chaired by Gold Coast City Councillor Susie Douglas, who will act as the Council's representative.

The group will also have representation from local traders, nightclubs and other businesses, as well as residents, accommodation providers and volunteer groups.

Issues of concern to Surfers Paradise businesses and residents will be identified and used to further the proposed plans and strategies for Schoolies Week. They will also have access to current planning information for the event in order to provide feedback on matters of importance to their organisations and the local community.

The formation of this group is intended to ensure that the event is safe and enjoyable both for school leavers and for local accommodation providers.

## Share that Problem with QRAMA

QRAMA was essentially formed to provide a grass roots conduit for resident managers to have a forum in which they could share issues and collectively work together to solve problems.

A recent QRAMA email interchange helped solve a problem for a Gold Coast member who had a tenant break a lease, four months ahead of the agreement from the permanent letting pool and following the installation of a new tenant, was advised by the owner that he was now not selling his unit, but in fact planned to return prior to the end of the original lease to live in the unit.

Executive Officer John Anderson as the gatekeeper asked State Secretary Brydon Halliday to apply his experience and expertise to the issue with the RTA and PAMDA legislation to provide advice on the matter.

Brydon's advice was put into a draft letter by the member and forwarded to him for review before sending.

"Nothing wrong with the letter except it is a little confrontational and needs to be specific with facts and dates," Brydon responded.

Our member's comment: "Another expert opinion is absolutely necessary when responding to situations such as this-you are my Olympic Gold medalist."

As John Anderson points out, "The outcome shows how the QRAMA team can work when the member is prepared to work with us."

"These are the benefits that we can provide and it shows how QRAMA can help members who are prepared to provide sufficient details for us to understand and address the problem.

"All these issues also help us to better understand what's happening out on the front line and provide us with real life case studies to support our submission for reform and upgrading of legislation, regulations and policy in general," he said.

## Visitors spend up big

Tourism Minister Margaret Keech has reported that visitors to Queensland spent a massive \$18.3 billion in the latest financial year and that visitor spending had increased dramatically since the last estimates.

The Minister also reported on booming domestic flights into Queensland to allow tourist based industries throughout the State to benefit from the industry boom.

Quoting from Queensland Treasury (QT) estimates, Mrs Keech said QT estimates put the expenditure of domestic and international visitors to Queensland in the year to June 1999 at \$14.6 billion.

"Treasury estimated that domestic overnight visitors spent \$9.1 billion, international visitors \$3.5 billion and day visitors \$2 billion," Mrs Keech said.

"Tourism Queensland's preliminary estimates for visitor spending for the year ending June 30 2004 is \$18.3 billion – an increase of \$3.7 billion in just five years.

"That money's spent right across Queensland, the most decentralised tourism state, creating jobs and boosting local economies the length and breadth of Queensland."

Mrs Keech said domestic visitors spent an estimated \$10.7 billion – up \$1.6 billion on 1999.

"International tourists splashed out an estimated \$5 billion – \$1.5 billion more than in 1999," she said.

"Spending by day trippers increased from \$2 billion in 1999 to \$2.5 billion in the year to June 30."

"Queensland hosted 16,495,000 domestic overnight visitors in the year ended June 30, 2004 – 22.2% of domestic overnight visitors to Australia," she said.

"We also hosted 31 million day visitors – 22.5% of the total domestic day visitors to Australia.

"The drive market accounted for just over 61% of all domestic visitors to Queensland. This underlines the worth of the Beattie Government's two-stage multimillion-dollar Drive Tourism Strategy.

"The number of domestic overnight drive market visitors to Queensland increased by 9.4% to 10.1 million over the three years to June 30 this year. These visitors spent 42.1 million nights here."

Mrs Keech said Queensland welcomed just under half of all international visitors to Australia in the year to June 30.

"The number of international visitors to Queensland increased by 8.2% between the year ended June 2003 and the year ended June 2004," she said.

"Japan with 454,157 remained our largest international source market, ahead of New Zealand with 324,608, the United Kingdom (280,218), other Europe and the USA.

"The big mover was China, with 103,821 visitors despite us having no direct flights into Queensland.

"In the year ended June 30, 284,912 international backpackers visited Queensland – up 2.8% on the previous year. Over half of all international backpacker visitors to Australia came to Queensland."

## How good is your web site?

by Di O'Shea – Quality Matters Pty Ltd

The most important issues that make your web site a good one are:

- Speed in loading
- Easy (and obvious) navigation
- Relevant information
- Up-to-date information

### Speed:

Flashy graphics and technically clever features may look good but consider the person who is calling-up your site – they are in a hurry. They are looking for suitable accommodation – not looking to critique your web site. They will probably want to look at a lot of web sites before deciding which complexes will go onto the short list. And they may not have fast internet access – will your “clever” features annoy them while they wait for it to display?

### Navigation:

Navigation of your site is critical. It must be clear and obvious. The use of “drop down” boxes has become very popular but in my opinion, should be avoided.

Another problem I have noticed with some newer web sites is that they have been designed for large screens. If an Internet user has an 800 x 600 screen resolution, these sites can be unfriendly and/or some options may not be visible at all.

### Relevant information:

What is relevant information? No doubt your site has the obvious information. That is: apartment configuration, tariffs, features, facilities and location. Also consider showing your booking conditions and cancellation policy. The more relevant information relates to the many questions that you have heard over and over again. Maybe the answers to these questions are already on your web site but not in a prominent position or easily found.

One of the most frustrating things for a traveller looking for accommodation is a web site that shows tariffs for Low, Mid and Peak seasons but doesn't provide dates for those seasons.

### Up-to-date information:

If you do include these dates and other variable information, ensure that they are updated as soon as they become out-of-date.

Don't avoid having information like upcoming events etc just because it will change. If it is helpful or interesting, display it. Sometimes you can overcome the “variable” problem by having a link to other web sites e.g. your local tourism authority, major attractions etc where this information will be kept up-to-date.

In summary, your web site is a reflection of you. Review it. Ask yourself “Is it neat, friendly, up-to-date and helpful?”

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