

Middle Island Underwater Observatory (MIUO) – A short history

CCC summary of concerns regarding the safety and condition of the Middle Island Underwater Observatory: letters, complaints and emails sent to GBRMPA, Federal Ministers for the Environment, Rockhampton Regional Council, and Tower Holdings (GKI Resort Pty Ltd)

October 2008

- MIUO Marine Parks Permit issued – ‘operation and maintenance of a facility’ in the GBRMP
- MIUO not being operated by current permit holder GKI Resort Pty Ltd (Tower Holdings)
- Marine Park Permit 21-Jan-2008 to 31 Aug-2013 (GBRMPA-DERM/QPWS)

December 2009

- CCC letters: concerns raised that the structure is deteriorating, that the cathodic protection system to prevent corrosion from electrolysis caused by the steel structure’s exposure to sea water has been turned off;
- Questioned human and environmental safety risks?
- Concern about lack of a caretaker
- Fish and marine life may be being depleted/poached

January 2010

- CCC letter to Tower Holdings urging compliance with MIUO Marine Permit conditions - no reply received.

May 2010

- GBRMPA informed that “observatory featured heavily in (Tower’s) future plans and they will address community concerns (GKI Resort revitalisation EIS was awaiting release for public consultation – *Note*: MIUO was not referred to in the GKI revitalisation EIS

October 2010

- Communication with GBRMPA re engineering survey and program of works due 25 Oct
- GBRMPA provided brief on preliminary assessment of MIUO safety

December-2010 to letters GBRMPA, RRC, Federal Minister for Environment

- Repair work due to commence in January 2011

January/February 2011

- Advised that Cathodic (corrosion) protection restored
- Structure ‘made safe’

May 2013

- Letter to GBRMPA re impending end of marine park permit; requirements for repairs maintenance, salvage if permits withdrawn or lapses.

June 2013

- Reply from GBRPMA; “...Permit remains valid if renewal requested until approved or rejected, if refused, structure is illegal and must be removed, bond (unknown amount) only released if site adequately rehabilitated”

August 2013

- Underwater video evidence of failed cathodic protection forwarded to GBRMPA with incident report

September 2013

- GBRMPA advised that approval, or refusal to reissue marine permit is pending provision of information from GKI Resorts Pty Ltd.
- Letter to GKI Resorts Pty Ltd “safety and plans for restoration” of Middle Island UWO)

January 2014

- 2nd letter (reminder) to GKI Resorts Pty Ltd “safety and plans for restoration” of Middle Island (neither letter answered)

February 2014 – July 2016

- GBRMPA still awaiting information from/negotiating with GKI Resorts Pty Ltd
- Letters sent to appropriate Federal and State Ministers, GBRMPA and State departments and Livingstone Council about continuing debacle.
- Middle Island Underwater Observatory Marine permit submitted to Australian National Audit Office as example of lack of compliance and action
- Invitations to GKI Resort Pty Ltd (from CCLMAC) to provide a briefing on plans for MIUO and GKI revitalisation – request unanswered
- CCC seeking assurance from the permit holder (GKI Resort Pty Ltd – Tower Holdings) and authorities to assure the public that the Middle Island Underwater Observatory is not a hazard to marine life or people visiting the reef.
- CCC requests appropriate management of the facility and surrounding area as required by the Marine Park permit and better supervision and monitoring of the health of fish and other marine life around the Observatory, plus the public needs to be kept informed about the future of the Observatory and measures to protect this spectacular local coral reef.

1 August 2016

- Advice received from GBRMPA:
 - A 1 year Permit to GKI Resort Pty Ltd has been issued by GBRMPA on 25th July to undertake the following:
 - The permit is to allow GKI Resort Pty Ltd to undertake maintenance on, or to remove the facility. It does not authorise operation of the facility.
 - Engineering reports indicate that maintenance is required on the structure
 - The Permit can be viewed online at <https://secure.gbrmpa.gov.au/ENQEXT> and entering the Permit Number: [G16/36813.1](#)
 - Permit commencement: 26 July 2016; Expiry: 30 November 2017

2017

- MIUO future raised at each CC LMAC Meeting – GBRMPA reply ‘still in discussion with permit holder’

2018

- May 16 letter to Chair/CEO GBRMPA seeking a briefing on the “ status of plans for removal of the MIUO (or restoration if an alternative permit holder is found and the structure is salvageable) the restoration of the Middle Island reefs and the recovery of any environmental bonds if required.”
- June 4 Reply from Bruce Elliot General Manager Reef Engagement GBRMPA “...The underwater observatory is currently an unpermitted structure in the Marine Park. The ... Authority is working to bring the structure into compliance with the GBR Marine Park Act