



Association for Advancement of Cruise Tourism

Setting the Record Straight

Dissecting CPR's Biased Narrative on Cayman's Cruise Tourism:

By: The Steering Committee of The Association for the Advancement of Cruise Tourism (ACT)

GEORGE TOWN, GRAND CAYMAN — The debate over the proposed cruise berthing facility in the Cayman Islands has once again been thrust into the public eye following the government's announcement of an upcoming referendum on the issue. This has been further fueled by a survey from CPR Cayman, heavily promoted across various platforms, including the government-owned Radio Cayman. While CPR Cayman claims to be a transparent advocate for environmental and community interests, their latest survey and commentary suggest a more biased agenda: manipulating public opinion by promoting misleading and often baseless narratives about cruise tourism's impact on the islands.

Survey or Set-Up? CPR's Skewed Questions and Misleading Narratives

CPR's recent survey is a classic example of a "push poll," where questions are designed not to gather genuine opinions but to lead respondents towards a pre-determined conclusion. It is of interest that the CPR group claims honesty and transparency and yet if a respondent utilizes an alternate email address "real or not" THEY CAN VOTE MORE THAN ONCE, potentially skewing the survey results in favor of their intended outcome !

From the moment you reach question two, it becomes clear that this survey is not an objective attempt to gauge public sentiment; it's a cleverly disguised propaganda tool meant to push respondents towards opposing the cruise berthing facility at any cost.

Such tactics undermine the credibility of CPR's campaign and insult the intelligence of Caymanians, who deserve an honest, balanced discussion about the future of their tourism industry.

The survey's misleading questions fail to consider sustainable development methods, like the use of pilings for piers, which allow the sea to flow freely and protect marine environments—just as seen with the Carib Sands pier in Cayman Brac, which has been standing for over 24 years without harming the environment. In fact, it has created a thriving habitat for marine life, demonstrating that sustainable construction is not only possible but beneficial.

Misrepresenting Economic Realities

CPR and other anti-cruise groups frequently downplay the critical role that cruise tourism plays in Cayman's economy. The claim that only a small group of operators and merchants stand to benefit from the industry is not just inaccurate—it's a gross misrepresentation of the facts. Cruise tourism supports over 3,000 Caymanians, from tour operators and taxi drivers to retail workers and water sports operators, many of whom are small business owners who rely on cruise passengers for their livelihoods.

Moreover, unlike other sectors, such as the hotel industry, which is dominated by a few large entities with minimal downstream Caymanian participation, the cruise sector offers significant opportunities for local ownership and entrepreneurship. While the government invests heavily in other areas, including over \$30 million annually in airline subsidies and more than \$100 million in recent airport upgrades, cruise tourism operates without government financial support. Instead, cruise lines themselves invest millions into advertising the Cayman Islands globally, providing a promotional boost that costs the local taxpayer nothing.

Environmental Concerns: Real Issues, Real Solutions

The environmental argument is often CPR's trump card, but their narrative is riddled with exaggerations and scare tactics. Yes, any development carries environmental considerations, but the proposed piers would be built using modern, sustainable techniques that minimize disruption.

It is very misleading and fallacious for CPR and/or CNS to infer that building cruise berthing facilities in George Town Harbour "would pose significant risks of affecting sand transportation patterns and the related risk of diminishing Seven Mile Beach further." The question of any impact of a cruise berthing project in George Town (such as the one proposed in 2019) on Seven Mile Beach sand has already been studied extensively. Several authoritative scientific reports and engineering studies have resulted in the emphatic conclusion that "There is no apparent sediment transport linkage between George Town Harbour and Seven Mile Beach. Fluctuations in the beach width will continue [i.e. due to other factors], but the proposed project will not cause any changes in the erosion or deposition pattern along Seven Mile Beach." Furthermore, the scientific methodology that resulted in that conclusion was even endorsed by the Environmental Assessment Board. Additionally a proper cruise berthing facility will eliminate the daily discharge of significant amounts of carbon and sulphur currently being discharged from the exhaust of tenders into the sea in the harbour which is a significant plus for the marine environment.

Biased Reporting and Fearmongering

The opposition's narrative is fueled by fear rather than facts, portraying cruise tourism as an outdated, environmentally destructive industry that brings minimal benefits. However, this view is increasingly disconnected from reality. Regional competitors like the Bahamas and Jamaica have invested in modern port facilities, attracting the newest, most advanced cruise ships that prioritize sustainability and passenger experience. If Cayman fails to evolve, it risks being left behind as a less attractive destination, leading to further economic decline.

Executives from major cruise lines have pointed out that without modern berthing facilities, ships will eventually stop calling at Cayman. This isn't an empty threat—it's a reality in an industry that is rapidly changing, with cruise lines investing in private islands and onboard experiences. Ports that fail to keep pace will simply be left off itineraries, taking with them the economic lifeline they provide to local communities.

A Call for Balanced Discourse

Caymanians deserve better than biased surveys and fearmongering. The discussion about cruise tourism should be rooted in facts, balanced perspectives, and a genuine consideration of how to balance economic growth with environmental stewardship. It's time to stop using the cruise industry as a political football and start focusing on solutions that work for everyone. CNS article and CPR's repeated misrepresentations only serve to muddy the waters. Cayman's future is too important to be shaped by misinformation and scare tactics. Let's elevate the conversation with facts, engage in meaningful dialogue, and ensure that the voices of those who depend on this industry are not drowned out by those who refuse to see its value.

Lets ACT and VOTE YES in this extremely important referendum initiative as our Caymanian way of life truly depends on it.

Caymankind Regards,

The Steering Committee of The Association for the Advancement of Cruise Tourism (ACT)