



## Reef 2050 Advisory Committee - Communiqué 9 March, 2023

The Reef 2050 Advisory Committee (RAC) held its twenty-fourth meeting today, chaired by the Honourable Penelope Wensley AC. The RAC is one of two advisory bodies for the Reef 2050 Plan, established in 2015, to facilitate engagement with industry and the broader community on the implementation and review of the Reef 2050 Plan and provide strategic advice to the Australian and Queensland governments on reef policy, management and investment prioritisation.

The RAC paid tribute to Dr Richard Kenchington who died on 1 March 2023. Richard was a world-renowned leader in ocean and conservation management, playing a foundational role in the drafting of the Great Barrier Reef Marine Park Act. Richard also played a significant role internationally, contributing to the establishment of the International Coral Reef Initiative and preparations for the UNESCO nomination which led to the Great Barrier Reef being listed as a World Heritage Area. The Chairman reflected that the agreement on 5 March, 2023 at the United Nations on the High Seas Treaty to protect marine biodiversity in international waters, after nearly two decades of negotiations, seemed a fitting celebration of Richard's life-long commitment to the ocean.

The RAC welcomed the Queensland Government Minister for the Environment and Science, and Minister for the Great Barrier Reef and Youth Affairs, the Honourable Meaghan Scanlon MP to the meeting and expressed appreciation for her continued commitment to engaging directly with the RAC. The Minister invited comment from the RAC about reporting processes and which products are most useful to stakeholders.

The RAC received a presentation on the current state of the Reef from the Chief Scientist of the Great Barrier Reef Marine Park Authority. RAC members emphasised the need for greater communication efforts to help ensure accurate messages about the state of the Reef are communicated to the wider community and agreed that the Reef 2050 Communications Network could play a more effective role in this regard.

The Department of Climate Change, Energy, Environment and Water (DCCEEW) provided an update on its active engagement with the UNESCO World Heritage Centre following the release of the Great Barrier Reef World Heritage Area Reactive Monitoring Mission Report in November, 2022, and with the open-ended working group reviewing the Policy Document on Climate Action for World Heritage.

The Department of Environment and Science provided an update on the rollout of the Queensland Reef Water Quality Program funding. RAC members emphasised that effective integration between funding agencies to ensure investments are complementary and build on past successes is important as part of further program design.

DCCEEW invited RAC comment on the results of an independent evaluation of the Reef Trust Water Quality program and prioritisation for future water quality investments. Members recognised the substantial work undertaken to develop the report but added a cautionary note regarding some data gaps and the importance of aligning with other significant reviews and bodies of work. In addition, the RAC commented that despite the significant additional investments, the funding still falls short of the amount estimated as necessary to meet the water quality targets.



DCCEEW also gave an overview of the roundtable process developed in response to a request to the Independent Expert Panel from the Minister for Environment and Water, the Hon Tanya Plibersek MP, to provide scientific advice on what is known about the impacts of climate change on species, habitats and ecosystems across the entirety of the Reef. The roundtables will be run by the Australian Academy of Science to develop scientific findings to provide to the Independent Expert Panel. RAC members emphasised the need to take account of other science processes and bodies of work including the update of the Scientific Consensus Statement on land-based impacts on Reef water quality and ecosystem condition. While acknowledging the process could deliver new ideas, RAC members emphasised strongly the importance of RAC advice and stakeholder perspectives also being taken into account when policy and final investment prioritisation decisions are made.

In response to a recommendation from Minister Plibersek at the November, 2022 RAC meeting, Assoc Prof Emma Jackson, Central Queensland University provided a presentation on the Coastal Marine Ecosystems Research Centre. RAC members expressed appreciation for the informative presentation and commended the partnership approaches with industry, Traditional Owners and investors.

The RAC also received with appreciation thoughtful presentations by two RAC members on current activities, key achievements and future priorities for their organisations, reaffirming their strong commitment to the objectives of the Reef 2050 Plan:

- Association of Marine Park Tourism Operators
- Local Government Association QLD.

RAC Members are: The Association of Marine Park Tourism Operators (AMPTO), the Queensland Seafood Industry Association (QSIA), Traditional Owner groups in the GBR, Queensland Resources Council (QRC), Queensland Farmers Federation (QFF), AgForce, CANEGROWERS, Natural Resource Management Regions Queensland, Local Government Association of Queensland (LGAQ), the Australian Committee of the International Union of the Conservation of Nature (ACIUCN), the Australian Institute of Marine Science (AIMS), CAREFISH, CSIRO, the Great Barrier Reef Foundation (GBRF), Local Marine Advisory Committees, Queensland Conservation Council (QCC), Queensland Ports Association and the Worldwide Fund for Nature (WWF).