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# Reef 2050 Plan

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## INDEPENDENT EXPERT PANEL – COMMUNIQUÉ 30 October 2023

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The twenty-sixth meeting of the Reef 2050 Plan Independent Expert Panel was held on 30 October 2023 in Brisbane.

The Panel reflected on their advice to Ministers in July 2023 and discussed several key themes: scientific partnerships with Traditional Owners, data systems (modelling and monitoring), communication of reef survey data and the state of the Reef and discussed reef restoration as a case study for developing management strategies and policies that are responsive to rapid changes on the Reef as global warming intensifies.

The Panel's July 2023 advice to Ministers focused on the impacts of climate change on Great Barrier Reef biodiversity and is available online on the Department of Climate Change, Energy, the Environment and Water (DCCEEW) website.

Panel discussions were supported by presentations from: the Australian Institute of Marine Science on Indigenous partnership, Reef Status communication and coral reef restoration approaches under climate change; the Great Barrier Reef Marine Park Authority on summer preparations and their integrated monitoring and reporting systems; and researchers at CSIRO on climate refugia and James Cook University on principles for coral restoration.

The Panel emphasised the need to develop explicit conceptual frameworks for understanding the Reef system as a whole and for assessing possible conservation and restoration measures. Such frameworks can then be supported by robust modelling to inform conservation and environmental protection decisions for the best Reef outcomes.

Researchers leading the Reef Restoration and Adaptation Program joined the Panel for the discussion on potential future actions to implement coral protection and restoration strategies. They discussed developments in assisted evolution techniques, agreeing that caution is important for avoiding risks to areas of the Reef that continue to be resilient, and the importance of clear communication and engagement with the public, especially the Traditional owners to maintain trust and social licence.

The Panel also received updates from:

- The Reef Water Quality Independent Science Panel on outcomes of its meetings over 18-19<sup>th</sup> July 2023
- The Hon Penelope Wensley AC, Chairman of the Reef 2050 Plan Advisory Committee on its advice to Ministers (also available on the DCCEEW website).
- DCCEEW on:
  - Progress on commitments to World Heritage Centre & Committee
  - Initial approach to implement findings from the Panel's July 2023 advice to Ministers.

- The Great Barrier Reef Marine Park Authority on its draft Climate Change Position Statement.

Following the meeting, Panel Members attended a joint dinner with members of the Reef 2050 Advisory Committee, Senator Nita Green, Special Envoy for the Great Barrier Reef and the Queensland Minister for the Environment and Great Barrier Reef, the Hon Leanne Linard MP.

The next meeting of the Panel is proposed for February/March 2024.

## Panel members

### **Dr Russell Reichelt AO FTSE (Interim Chair)**

Environmental science and sustainable use

### **\*Dr Richard Brinkman**

Research Program Director

Sustainable Coastal Ecosystems and Industries  
in Tropical Australia, Australian Institute of  
Marine Science

### **Professor Damien Burrows**

Director of TropWATER

James Cook University

### **Professor Terry Hughes**

The Australian Research Council Centre of  
Excellence for Coral Reef Studies

James Cook University

### **Professor Catherine Lovelock**

School of Biological Sciences

The University of Queensland

### **Professor Helene Marsh AO FAA FTSE**

Emeritus Professor

James Cook University

### **Dr Rebecca Bartley**

Research Scientist

CSIRO Land and Water

\* Apologies

### **Adjunct Associate Professor Stephan Schnierer**

Southern Cross University

University of Canberra

### **\*Ms Jane Waterhouse**

Senior Partner, C2O Consulting

Senior Research Officer, TropWATER, James  
Cook University

### **Dr Stuart Whitten**

Institutional and Environmental Economist

CSIRO Land and Water

### **\*Professor Matthew England**

Scientia Professor

Climate Change Research Centre

University of New South Wales

### **Professor Tiffany Morrison**

The Australian Research Council Centre of  
Excellence for Coral Reef Studies

James Cook University

University of Melbourne

### **\* Dr Mitchell Gibbs**

School of Geosciences

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