

Reef 2050 Plan Independent Expert Panel

Terms of Reference

November 2022

1. Background

The Great Barrier Reef World Heritage Area is special to all Australians and has been recognised globally for its Outstanding Universal Value. The Australian and Queensland governments are committed to its protection and management.

The Reef 2050 Long-Term Sustainability Plan (Reef 2050 Plan) is the overarching framework for protecting and managing the Great Barrier Reef from 2015 to 2050. The Plan is a key component of the Australian Government's response to the recommendations of the UNESCO World Heritage Committee. It is reviewed and updated every five years in response to the findings of the Great Barrier Reef Marine Park Authority's five-yearly Outlook Reports.

The Reef 2050 Plan's vision is that the Great Barrier Reef is sustained as a living natural and cultural wonder of the world. The Plan draws together a number of key Australian and Queensland Government initiatives, including the Reef 2050 Water Quality Improvement Plan and Reef Trust.

The Great Barrier Reef Intergovernmental Agreement, signed by the Prime Minister of Australia and the Premier of Queensland, allows for an integrated and collaborative approach by the Commonwealth and Queensland to the management of marine and land environments within and adjacent to the Great Barrier Reef World Heritage Area. The Commonwealth Minister responsible for administering the *Great Barrier Reef Marine Park Act 1975* and the Queensland Minister responsible for the Great Barrier Reef (Ministers) provide oversight of the implementation of the Intergovernmental Agreement. The Ministers actively seek advice from stakeholder groups and the science community on management of the Great Barrier Reef.

2. Purpose

The purpose of the Reef 2050 Plan Independent Expert Panel is to provide scientific and expert advice related to the Great Barrier Reef, including to support implementation and review of the Reef 2050 Plan, Reef 2050 Water Quality Improvement Plan, and other matters as requested.

3. Role

The Reef 2050 Plan Independent Expert Panel will provide advice to the Ministers on Reef science matters as outlined below.

3.1 Reef 2050 Long-Term Sustainability Plan

The Reef 2050 Plan Independent Expert Panel will advise the Australian and Queensland Governments on implementation and review of the Reef 2050 Plan, including its objectives and goals, knowledge gaps and science priorities for delivery. This will include:

- Providing expert advice on the achievement and review of objectives and goals
- Providing strategic scientific input into development and implementation of the Reef 2050 Plan, including priorities for delivery and investment (including but not limited to investments under the Australian Government's Reef Trust)
- Conducting scientific reviews where requested by Ministers or the Reef 2050 Executive Steering Committee (senior executives from the Australian and Queensland government agencies with jurisdictional responsibility for the Great Barrier Reef)
- Providing advice on research and monitoring priorities

- Providing advice on science communication activities to be delivered to ensure appropriate communication of reef science matters and implementation of the Reef 2050 Plan to both technical and non-technical audiences
- Providing advice on integrated monitoring and reporting to ensure outcomes of investment can be measured and reported over time
- Providing advice on emerging scientific matters related to the Great Barrier Reef, where requested by the Ministers or the Reef 2050 Executive Steering Committee
- Providing input into reviews of the Reef 2050 Plan.

4. Membership

4.1 Chair

The Chair is independent and is appointed jointly by the Ministers.

The Chair will be appointed for a term of five years and can be re-appointed for a further term of up to five years, with a maximum of ten years total (i.e. two standard terms of five years) unless otherwise agreed in writing by the Ministers.

The Chair will convene meetings and report on behalf of the committee to the Ministers.

The Chair will report directly to the Ministers on scientific and technical matters related to implementation of the Reef 2050 Plan.

4.2 Members

The Reef 2050 Plan Independent Expert Panel will have a skills-based membership which will provide a cross-section of expertise in areas relevant to managing the impacts on the Great Barrier Reef.

The Independent Expert Panel may include members with expertise in the following areas:

- Agronomic and landscape processes;
- Marine and freshwater biochemistry, ecology and modelling;
- Ecosystem health and biodiversity;
- Water quality
- Target-setting and monitoring;
- Information integration, synthesis, reporting and communication;
- Coastal ecosystems and connectivity
- Traditional knowledge;
- Social and economic methodologies;
- Heritage;
- Climate change;
- Oceans;
- Blue economy.

Other expertise may be co-opted as required. Officials from the Australian and Queensland governments will be observers to the Reef 2050 Plan Independent Expert Panel.

4.3 Appointment

Members of the Reef 2050 Plan Independent Expert Panel will be appointed jointly by the Ministers.

A member will be appointed for a term of five years and can be re-appointed for a further term of up to five years, with a maximum of ten years total (i.e. two standard terms of five years) unless otherwise agreed in writing by the Ministers.

5. Operation

The Reef 2050 Plan Independent Expert Panel will meet as required, but at least twice a year. The Reef 2050 Plan Independent Expert Panel is encouraged to hold a joint meeting with the Reef 2050 Advisory Committee once a year to share experiences and knowledge and discuss issues of mutual interest.

Alternates or proxies will not be permitted. Additional observers with particular expertise may be invited as needed.

The Chair and members of the Reef 2050 Plan Independent Expert Panel will declare actual or perceived conflicts of interest; apply good analytical skills, objectivity and judgment; express opinions frankly; and ask questions that go to the fundamental core of an issue.

Reasonable costs associated with travel and accommodation will be paid on behalf of members. Non-government members (including the Chair) will be eligible for sitting fees in accordance with the Australian Government's Remuneration Tribunal recommendation for members of the Scientific Advisory Group (Biosecurity).

Meeting agendas will be prepared by the Secretariat in consultation with the Chair and circulated to members in advance of meetings. Any business transacted in the meetings including findings, conclusions and proposed recommendations prior to its release for public review or prior to endorsement by the Ministers is strictly confidential unless otherwise stated.

5.1.1 Establishment of working groups

Working groups may be established for particular matters where approved by the Reef 2050 Executive Steering Committee in consultation with the Reef 2050 Plan Independent Expert Panel Chair. The Reef 2050 Executive Steering Committee must consider:

- a clear scope outlining the requirement, potential benefits and duration
- whether a separate Terms of Reference is needed
- the ability to co-opt additional skills and expertise from outside the Panel (i.e. to address a specific topic)
- costs of establishing a working group, including additional remuneration requirements.

The Reef 2050 Plan Independent Expert Panel will nominate members to working groups (unless other arrangements apply) and the Chair of a working group will be agreed by the Reef 2050 Executive Steering Committee, in consultation with the Chair of the Reef 2050 Plan Independent Expert Panel.

Standing working group – Reef 2050 Water Quality Improvement Plan Independent Science Panel

A standing working group exists for the Reef 2050 Water Quality Improvement Plan.

The Reef 2050 Water Quality Improvement Plan Independent Science Panel (Reef ISP) is a working group of the Reef 2050 Plan Independent Expert Panel and will support the Reef 2050 Plan Independent Expert Panel in relation to providing updates and advice on the Reef 2050 Water Quality Improvement Plan. To help facilitate a nested approach to monitoring and reporting within the Great Barrier Reef, the Reef ISP will also provide advice to regional waterway health partnerships.

All requests for advice to other partnerships must be accompanied by a separate Terms of Reference that includes provision for remuneration of non-government members. These requests must be approved by the Reef 2050 Executive Steering Committee, who will have regard for:

- the potential benefits of providing advice for integrating water quality monitoring and reporting processes and products
- any other potential benefits for Reef 2050 Water Quality Improvement Plan outcomes.

Appointment of members to the Reef ISP are made by the heads of agencies (or as delegated) from the departments of the Environment Ministers and the Great Barrier Reef Marine Park Authority. Changes to membership are to be endorsed by the Reef 2050 Independent Expert Panel prior to approval. The Independent Science Panel is chaired by an Independent Chair, appointed jointly by the Australian and Queensland Environment Ministers.

6. Reporting

The Reef 2050 Plan Independent Expert Panel will report, through the independent Chair, to the Ministers at least twice a year on those matters relating to the implementation of the Reef 2050 Plan and other matters discussed by the Panel as required.

It may provide advice on other matters including membership and terms of reference for working groups or undertake other tasks as requested by the Reef 2050 Executive Steering Committee.

Working groups will be required to report back to the Reef 2050 Plan Independent Expert Panel.

7. Secretariat

Secretariat support will be provided by a joint Secretariat from the Australian and Queensland Government departments with jurisdictional responsibility for the Great Barrier Reef. Those matters relating to the Reef Trust will be supported by the Australian Government department with jurisdictional responsibility for the Great Barrier Reef.

Costs for the Secretariat and the Reef 2050 Plan Independent Expert Panel will be shared by the Australian and Queensland governments.

The Joint Secretariat will maintain records for the committee and its working groups, including agendas, papers and minutes.

8. Periodic review

The Reef 2050 Plan Independent Expert Panel Terms of Reference will be reviewed every five years, or more frequently as required. Updates to the Terms of Reference will be approved by the Ministers.