



Reef 2050 Plan

INDEPENDENT EXPERT PANEL – COMMUNIQUÉ 5 APRIL 2016

The third meeting of the Reef 2050 Plan Independent Expert Panel was held today in Brisbane, chaired by Professor Ian Chubb AC, former Chief Scientist of Australia.

The current Great Barrier Reef coral bleaching event was a key topic of discussion. The Panel received advice on the severity and geographical extent of bleaching including preliminary findings of coral surveys. Discussion focussed on potential action in the short, medium and long term. Efforts to address water quality and direct impacts must be combined with sustained global efforts to sharply reduce greenhouse gas emissions to ensure long term health of the Reef. The Panel will develop a summary paper on the bleaching event and proposed actions in the coming weeks to provide advice to ministers on this issue.

The Panel also discussed the management of gully and stream bank erosion and sediment, a known water quality key threat. The Panel considered opportunities for effective on-ground actions to reduce the impacts of gully erosion. Members endorsed a Reef Trust Phase IV investment proposal which would focus on implementing targeted actions that reduce sediment losses caused by gully and stream bank erosion.

Further projects proposed for investment under Phase IV of the Reef Trust were presented to members who provided advice on their merit. The Panel endorsed the proposals noting that they were designed to address the more immediate threats to the Reef including maintaining water quality improvement momentum and mitigating crown-of-thorns starfish outbreaks.

In addition to updates on progress regarding whole-of-government reef policy development, Panel members were briefed on the work of related advisory bodies including the Reef 2050 Integrated Monitoring and Reporting Program Steering Group, the Reef Water Quality Protection Plan Independent Science Panel working group and the Queensland Great Barrier Reef Water Science Taskforce. Specifically, the Panel provided advice on potential approaches to integrate and align proposed Reef Trust investments with the work of the Taskforce and related Queensland Government investments.

Members agreed the development of strategic advice on high priority topics will be critical to the successful implementation of the Reef 2050 Plan. The Panel will hold a workshop in August 2016 to consolidate advice on high priority topics.

The Chair of the Independent Expert Panel will report to the Great Barrier Reef Ministerial Forum at their next meeting.



Panel members

Professor Ian Chubb AC (Chair)

Australia's former Chief Scientist.

Associate Professor Eva Abal

Program Director of the Global Change Institute's Sustainable Water Program.
Chief Scientific Officer of the Great Barrier Reef Foundation.

Dr Andrew Ash

Chief Research Scientist.
CSIRO Agriculture.

Professor Mike Bell

Chair of Tropical Agronomy.
University of Queensland.

Dr Damien Burrows

Director of TropWATER.
James Cook University.

Professor Bill Dennison

Professor of Marine Science and Vice President for Science Applications.
University of Maryland Center for Environmental Science.

Dr Geoff Garrett AO*

Queensland Chief Scientist.

Dr Stefan Hajkowicz*

Natural resource policy and economic analyst.
CSIRO's Sustainable Regional Development.

Professor Ove Hoegh-Guldberg

Director of the Global Change Institute and Professor of Marine Science.
The University of Queensland.

Professor Terry Hughes

Director of the Australian Research Council Centre of Excellence for Coral Reef Studies.
James Cook University.

Professor Helene Marsh

Dean of Graduate Research Studies and Professor of Environmental Science.
James Cook University.

Dr Russell Reichelt

Chairman and Chief Executive.
Great Barrier Reef Marine Park Authority.

Dr Britta Schaffelke

Research Program Leader.
A Healthy and Resilient Great Barrier Reef, Australian Institute of Marine Science.

Adjunct Associate Professor Stephan Schnierer

Southern Cross University.

Dr Roger Shaw

Independent consultant.
Chair of Reef Water Quality Protection Plan Independent Science Panel.

Professor Natalie Stoeckl

College of Business, Law & Governance.
James Cook University.

* Apologies, Tuesday 5th April 2016.