



Reef 2050 Plan

INDEPENDENT EXPERT PANEL - MINUTES

Date	Tuesday, 24 October 2017
Venue	QUT Council Room, Level 2 U Block, QUT Garden Point Campus, Brisbane
Opened	9:00am
Closed	5:00pm

ATTENDEES

Members

Prof Ian Chubb AC, Chair	Dr Britta Schaffelke
Dr Andrew Ash	Adj Prof Natalie Stoeckl
Prof Damien Burrows	Ms Jane Waterhouse
Prof Bill Dennison (<i>videoconference</i>)	Dr Stuart Whitten
Dr Russell Reichelt	

Other

Ms Rachel Parry	A/g First Assistant Secretary, Department of the Environment and Energy
Mr Craig Moore	A/g Assistant Secretary, Department of the Environment and Energy
Ms Angela Cameron	Director, Department of the Environment and Energy
Ms Amy Mulcahy	Secretariat, Department of the Environment and Energy
Ms Louise Smyth	Director, Office of the Great Barrier Reef, EHP
Ms Margaret Johnson	General Manager, Great Barrier Reef Marine Park Authority
Ms Josh Gibson	Director, Great Barrier Reef Marine Park Authority
Dr David Wachenfeld	Director, Great Barrier Reef Marine Park Authority
Dr Mel Cowlshaw	Manager, Great Barrier Reef Marine Park Authority
Dr Will Howard	Assistant Director, Office of the Chief Scientist
Prof Kerrie Wilson	ARC Future Fellow, The University of Queensland
Ms Carolyn Cameron	Director, Cameron Strategies (9:15am-2:00pm)
Dr Christian Roth	Project Leader, CSIRO (9:50am-10:20am)
Dr Roger Shaw	Chair, Independent Science Panel (3:30pm-4:00pm)

APOLOGIES

Members

Dr Eva Abal	Prof Helene Marsh
Prof Ove Hoegh-Guldberg	Adj Assoc Prof Stephan Schnierer
Prof Terry Hughes	



DISCUSSION

1 Acknowledgement of Country

The Chair acknowledged the Turrbal and Yaggera Peoples as the traditional custodians of the area. He acknowledged their continuing culture and the contribution they make to the region and paid respects to Elders both past and present.

2 Welcome to Members

The Chair welcomed members and presenters to the meeting, noting Dr Eva Abal, Prof Helene Marsh, Prof Terry Hughes, Adj Assoc Prof Stephan Schnierer and Prof Ove Hoegh-Guldberg as apologies.

The Chair welcomed Ms Jane Waterhouse as attending her first meeting as a member and Prof Kerrie Wilson as an observer.

3 Conflicts of interest

The Chair noted the summary of conflict of interests and addressed updates.

4 Reef 2050 Plan mid-term review

4A Overview

Ms Rachel Parry and Ms Angela Cameron presented an overview of the scope of the Reef 2050 Plan mid-term review, process undertaken to date by the Joint Team to consolidate existing actions, the scope for Panel discussion and the timeframes for the mid-term review. The mid-term review is being completed in advance of a full review in 2020.

The Panel noted the parameters of discussion and acknowledged that the Reef 2050 Plan is not the appropriate policy document for broader climate change policy.

4B Reef 2050 Plan Review Options

Mr Christian Roth presented on the consortium's review report *Reef 2050 Plan Review Options*. The report was commissioned by the Reef 2050 Plan Joint Team to provide advice on review options. Key recommendations included:

- Incorporation of 'no regrets' climate change adaptation actions into the Reef 2050 Plan
- Consideration of additional approaches to accelerate progress in water quality improvements towards targets
- Exploring options to reflect the importance of human dimensions in Reef 2050 Plan actions (building on the recently revised Reef 2050 Water Quality Improvement Plan 2017-2022); and
- Commitment to develop more substantial adaptation strategies and actions to be incorporated in the 2020 review.

The Panel commended the report provided by the consortium.

DISCUSSION

4C and 4D Discussion

The Chair led the follow-on discussion. The Panel advised that the mid-term review needs to acknowledge that global warming remains the primary threat to the Reef. The Panel advised the mid-term review should identify work that needs to commence now so that we are in a position in 2020 to undertake a comprehensive review of the plan.

The Panel stressed the need for consolidation of the existing actions and demonstrating linkages to completed and foundational actions – as the building blocks for what has been achieved to date. Demonstration of completed actions is required to shift to new actions targeted towards building local climate resilience. The Panel stressed the need for the removal of actions seen as redundant or superseded, and mapping action implementation to positive outcomes for the Reef.

The Panel called for a transparent prioritisation and sequencing exercise to give focus to key actions, especially in the face of climate change. The Panel considered the review should acknowledge where priorities have shifted, including research priorities, as a result of current challenges facing the Reef, and that resourcing should be shifted in line with prioritisation. The Panel emphasised the need to be pragmatic and the necessity of clear criteria, especially for the prioritisation and sequencing of actions.

The Panel reiterated their earlier advice that the Reef, both the ecosystem and the ecosystem services it provides to communities, will be different in the future. The Panel emphasised that a functional ecosystem can be a range of states, and that the perception of value will be different with different uses. The Panel acknowledged that describing what it will look like is challenging as the trajectory we are on is uncertain and we need to prepare the Reef and communities for changed services and values. The Panel advised that further work is needed on exploring possible trajectories for the Reef. Members discussed shifting baselines around the management of the Reef and the changing context in which we are trying to manage the Reef, as a result of climate change. The Panel supported establishing a resilience network. There was agreement that research should underpin this network, and the Panel stressed the need for transparency and evidence based decisions. The Panel recommended the development of a broader research and development strategy for the Reef.

The Panel advised that implementation of the *Reef 2050 cumulative impact management policy* is a priority. The development of implementation tools is required for all sectors and the community. The effectiveness of these tools should be reported back to inform the 2020 review. The Panel advised that data to inform management of cumulative impacts needs to be transparent and online.

The Panel stressed that local climate resilience actions should focus on what can be implemented now, rather than future research options. The Panel advised future local climate resilience actions should fall in broad focus areas:

- Helping communities and businesses to adapt – providing tools on what they can do to build resilience and reconnect with the Reef
- Focusing on the connectivity and linkages of the system – from the Reef to the people and to the catchments
- Identifying hotspot areas for protection and having the information by 2020 to inform a 'pathway to impact'.

DISCUSSION

The Panel advised the revised Plan resulting from the mid-term review should be more accessible and understandable to the broader public. The Panel agreed that communication can be improved.

The Panel proposed a range of actions for consideration in the mid-term review::

- Continuing to pursue the objectives of the Reef Fund under the Clean Energy Finance Corporation
- Implementation of the *Reef 2050 cumulative impact management policy* and *Reef 2050 net benefit policy*, including identification and development of implementation tools and pathways
- Reporting on the effectiveness of the *Reef 2050 cumulative impact management policy* and *Reef 2050 net benefit policy*
- Understanding social and economic return on investment
- Developing a research and development strategy for the Reef that focuses on the application of data to inform management decisions
- Developing a framework for assessing Reef intervention works
- Establishing an overarching formal evaluation process for actions in the Reef 2050 Plan
- Establishing a resilience network of reefs and communities underpinned by research and development, and implementation of appropriate management tools
- Establishing a voluntary community based Reef Response team
- Storing data from publically funded research in a publically available database.

4E Plenary discussion: action towards obtaining social acceptance of active restoration

Dr Britta Schaffelke and Dr Russell Reichelt presented an overview of the concepts of intervention, social licence and social acceptability. Their presentation raised several questions and provided potential frameworks to address those questions, including intervention decisions based on cost versus benefit.

The Panel discussed social acceptability of potential interventions. They considered that obtaining social acceptability would be different for each proposed intervention. There was agreement that the development of a process to consider the social acceptability of potential interventions was needed.

The Panel agreed that the human and community elements of the Reef 2050 Plan must be strengthened. There was agreement that support should be provided for proactive restoration activities, but cost-benefit information should inform decision making. The Panel encouraged talking to the impacted community about active restoration options to increase their knowledge and awareness, and that this would be bolstered by celebrating successes. The Panel advised the importance of managing expectations around the meaning and understanding of restoration.

DISCUSSION

5 – 6 Reef Trust Phase VI investments, Prioritising future investment in water quality

Mr Craig Moore presented on Reef Trust Phase VI investments.

The Panel endorsed the inclusion of marine debris and island rehabilitation projects in the development of Reef Trust Phase VI investments. The Panel's advice was focused on using prioritisation to inform project design, building on existing data and knowledge from previous related projects, and ensuring that the source of pressures are being addressed. The Panel supported partnership approaches to delivery wherever possible. A discussion was held on alternate funding options, such as a tax on fertiliser and a Great Barrier Reef levy.

Mr Moore also presented on water quality proposals through the Reef Trust.

The Panel noted that the 2017 World Heritage Committee decision and the 2017 Scientific Consensus Statement, prepared to support the review of the Reef Water Quality Protection Plan 2013, have encouraged a stronger focus on achieving water quality targets.

The Panel endorsed the proposed approach for identifying and prioritising areas of focus for new water quality proposals through the Reef Trust. The Panel advised that understanding the effectiveness of past investments is critical to making decisions on spatial and temporal scales of new projects.

The Panel was provided with an update on the Reef Havens proposal, and acknowledged that a time critical decision would need to be made in the near future if the proposal were to be in place prior to this summer. The Panel reiterated its position that innovative solutions are needed to help address the issues facing the Reef. More information was sought on the proposal and outcomes of the feasibility study before full advice could be provided.

7 Update from Independent Science Panel

Dr Roger Shaw presented an update from the Independent Science Panel. The update recommended a review of Queensland's Water Quality Improvement guidelines and their integration with the Great Barrier Reef Marine Park Authority guidelines.

The Panel supported a proposal to be put forward on reviewing the QLD water quality guidelines, but stressed that understanding their purpose and use was imperative before any decision was taken on the need to review.

8 Update on Innovation Challenge

The Panel acknowledged the update on the Innovation Challenge from Mr Craig Moore and looked forward to continued involvement in an advisory capacity where appropriate.

9 Administration

The Panel endorsed the minutes from the eighth meeting on 1 August 2017.

The Panel drafted a communiqué and agreed to its release on the Department of the Environment and Energy's website.

The Panel is scheduled to next meet on 14 February 2018 in Brisbane.