



Australian Government

Reef 2050 Plan

Independent Expert Panel



Queensland
Government

MINUTES

Date	Thursday, 29 October 2015
Venue	Level 8, 215 Adelaide St, Brisbane, QLD
Opened	9:30am
Closed	4:30pm

ATTENDEES

Members

Prof Ian Chubb AC, Chair	Prof Natalie Stoeckl
Dr Andrew Ash	Prof Ove Hoegh-Guldberg
Prof Bill Dennison (<i>videoconference</i>)	Dr Roger Shaw
Dr Britta Schaffelke	Dr Russell Reichelt
Dr Damien Burrows	Adj Assoc Prof Stephan Schnierer
Assoc Prof Eva Abal	Prof Terry Hughes
Prof Mike Bell	Prof Helene Marsh

Other

Ms Rachel Parry	Assistant Secretary, Department of the Environment
Ms Celeste Powell	Director, Department of the Environment
Ms Ami McGrath	Director, Department of the Environment
Dr Kevin Gale	Assistant Director, Department of the Environment
Ms Naomi Wynd	Secretariat Officer, Department of the Environment
Ms Elisa Nichols	Executive Director, Office of the Great Barrier Reef, Department of Environment and Heritage Protection
Ms Rachel D'Arcy	Manager, Office of the Great Barrier Reef, Department of Environment and Heritage Protection
Mr Matthew Fullerton	A/g Manager, Office of the Great Barrier Reef, Department of Environment and Heritage Protection
Ms Margaret Johnson	General Manager, Great Barrier Reef Marine Park Authority
Ms Josh Gibson	Director, Great Barrier Reef Marine Park Authority
Dr Will Howard	Assistant Director, Office of the Chief Scientist
Ms Jenny Riches	Principal Project Officer, Office of the Queensland Chief Scientist

APOLOGIES

Members

Dr Geoff Garrett AO
Dr Stefan Hajkowicz

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 Secretariat Administration

The Chair welcomed members to the meeting and noted apologies.

The Chair called for and addressed new conflicts of interest raised by Panel members.

The Secretariat outlined relevant housekeeping issues for the day.

The Panel endorsed the minutes from the first Panel meeting held 10 August 2015 and noted progress of associated actions. The Panel agreed to discuss action 6-01 (Secretariat to develop a consolidated list of funded projects) under 'Other Business'.

3 Reef 2050 Plan – Prioritised Actions

Ms Celeste Powell provided an overview of the qualitative process undertaken to prioritise Reef 2050 Plan actions including the criteria used during the Reef 2050 Advisory Committee's prioritisation workshop.

The Panel endorsed the criteria used by the Reef 2050 Advisory Committee to prioritise actions and agreed the process undertaken was robust.

While discussing the outcomes of the priority actions and groupings, the Panel noted:

- the need to undertake a future gap analysis to ensure the list of Reef 2050 Plan actions is comprehensive;
- the importance of identifying a single lead (government or otherwise) for all actions and groupings if possible;
- the importance of a broad approach to 'Communications and Outreach' to support and connect with a large range of audiences;
- the need to sequence action implementation within groupings and review implementation capacity; and
- the importance of highlighting funding opportunities and constraints in the Reef 2050 Plan implementation strategy and any specific implementation plans.

While noting the final outcomes of the prioritisation process and related advice from the Reef 2050 Advisory Committee, the Panel acknowledged and agreed with the following recommendations from the Committee:

- additional funding is required to implement the Reef 2050 Plan and achieve its outcomes and targets, acknowledging that this investment would need to come from a variety of sources;
- an adaptive approach to prioritisation will be required to respond to emerging priorities and issues; and
- ongoing consideration of actions classified as medium/future priorities is required, especially in the context of delivery and sequencing of related actions.

The Panel noted that whilst additional resources are likely to be required, the magnitude of investment required has not been calculated and is not a simple figure to estimate at this point.

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4 Reef 2050 Plan – Investment Framework

Ms Rachel Parry noted the importance of developing the Reef 2050 Plan investment framework and provided an overview of the phased approach to its development. Ms Parry confirmed the framework would be developed in mid-late 2016 and would consider final recommendations from the Queensland Great Barrier Reef Water Science Taskforce.

The Panel noted the key stages of development of the Reef 2050 Plan investment framework and its timeframe for delivery.

The Panel discussed the possibility that the World Heritage Committee might only be satisfied if the framework highlighted new funding commitments from government.

While discussing the investment framework, the Panel also noted:

- it would support the Chair reporting to the Great Barrier Reef Ministerial Forum that additional government funding is required to implement the Plan and achieve its outcomes and targets;
- it supported consideration of innovative financing mechanisms including opportunities for corporate partnerships to augment government funds, not diminish them;
- it did not see value in estimating, at this early stage, a single sum that would be required to implement the Reef 2050 Plan;
- it saw the importance of government creating an environment within which to catalyse innovation and investment; and
- the Integrated Monitoring and Reporting Program will help to track progress in Reef health and guide focus on where investment is required in the future.

5 Reef Trust – Phase 3 Investment Strategy

Dr Kevin Gale presented an overview of the process undertaken to develop the proposed Reef Trust Phase 3 programmes.

The Panel endorsed the three proposed programmes and agreed they were at sufficient scale however noted the timeframes (up to 3.5 years) may be too short to achieve and measure outcomes. The Australian Government confirmed the limitations of government funding cycles.

Regarding the proposed programmes, the Panel also noted:

- the significant and effective consultation efforts undertaken by the Department of the Environment in developing the proposed programmes;
- the need to ensure key performance indicators regarding farmer participation are included in contracts with service providers;
- it supported an open-ended approach to seeking innovative project ideas from potential providers;
- it encouraged the identification of hot spots for each programme and subsequent focus of investment in those areas;
- the need for social science to inform the approaches taken to engage farmers and influence behavior change;
- the need to consider rainfall prediction and irrigation scheduling in the proposed cane programme rather than irrigation efficiency solely; and
- the need to focus more on nutrient budgeting in the proposed grains, dairy and horticulture programme.

The Panel noted that the development of a fourth proposed programme, 'Trialing of enhanced

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efficiency fertilisers in cane and potentially other intensive agricultural production systems', has been delayed pending further design work with the Queensland Government and other key stakeholders, and the outcomes of a related National Environmental Science Programme research proposal.

The Panel also noted that the Australian and Queensland governments have been working closely to ensure consistent and collaborative design and delivery of each government's water quality programmes and that this will continue as advice from the Great Barrier Reef Water Science Taskforce is finalised and implemented.

The Panel broadly discussed the need to incentivise restocking at an appropriate rate after droughts to allow ecosystem renewal. Consideration of episodic events and opportunities when designing new programmes should also be encouraged. In addition, increased monitoring in dry areas along the Reef's catchments is required.

Finally, the Panel recommended the scope of the Reef Trust be reviewed in the future in the context of the Reef 2050 Plan.

Action 1: Department of the Environment to circulate the Reef Trust determination to Panel members.

6 Reef Trust – Diversifying funding sources

Ms Rachel Parry provided an overview of progress made to date to diversify funding sources to support delivery of the Reef 2050 Plan, and more specifically Reef Trust outcomes. This included an overview of the different funding approaches currently being explored and a summary of a draft Reef Trust Investment Prospectus.

The Panel noted progress made to date and discussed the role of government in developing and releasing a prospectus, noting that government involvement can both attract and deter different kinds of investors. The Panel suggested the Clean Energy Finance Corporation was a good model from which to learn.

The Panel supported development of a high level co-investment prospectus that offers flexibility to adjust financing strategies and projects depending on interest from investors.

The Panel provided some detailed feedback on technical elements of the projects in the draft prospectus, noting that the projects were a starting point and not intended to be comprehensive. It noted that since the target audience was potential investors, it was not best placed to provide advice on what projects should be included. However, it agreed that successful projects should be aligned with Reef 2050 Plan priorities.

The Panel recommended the Department of the Environment seek financial expertise to guide innovation and diversification of funding.

The Panel noted the potential for the draft prospectus to identify high priority research and suggested seeking project ideas directly from philanthropists.

The Panel discussed the potential to give higher profile in the draft prospectus to quality assurance, measuring success, performance management and assessment.

The Panel endorsed the delivery of a wetlands and coastal ecosystems restoration project by Greening Australia as a pilot to be funded with both Australian Government funding and private investment, noting that the proposal needs adjusting to demonstrate that evaluation and communication should be upfront and throughout the project.

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The Panel also noted the proposed inclusion of a pilot private equity investment project, in the form of a low-interest loan programme supporting the purchase of water quality improvement assets, in the Reef Trust Investment Prospectus in partnership with the National Australia Bank.

The Panel discussed the importance of embracing citizen science in the delivery of the Reef 2050 Plan and the potential for leveraging resourcing to support citizen science.

Action 2: Department of the Environment to follow up on bank loan project with Dr Andrew Ash.

Action 3: Dr Russell Reichelt to brief the Panel on citizen science work.

7 Presentation on Maintenance Dredging Strategy

Mr Daniel Spooner, Managing Director of Australian Marine Associates presented an overview of their proposed approach to developing a maintenance dredging strategy for the Reef.

The Panel thanked the presenter and noted the importance of social science in informing the community's perception of risk and social license to operate.

The Panel also noted that, as the project was review-based and not a quantitative study, the final report must identify knowledge gaps.

8 Reef 2050 Plan – Draft Policy and Guidelines documents

Ms Celeste Powell and Ms Josh Gibson summarised the draft policy guideline for decision makers and the information paper regarding cumulative impact management, net benefit policy and offset guidelines.

Regarding the draft policy guideline for decision makers, the Panel discussed the need to:

- more clearly articulate the target audience;
- increase the focus on people and community empowerment and education; and
- consider relevant international obligations including the Convention on Biological Diversity.

The Panel discussed the challenges of developing guidance and policy on cumulative impacts, net benefits and offsets. It noted the importance of considering climate change as part of any decision making process or cumulative impact assessment and acknowledged the impact of episodic events.

Noting the lack of existing net benefit approaches globally, the Panel discussed the credibility of offset and net benefits concepts in a Great Barrier Reef context. The Great Barrier Reef Marine Park Authority acknowledged the challenges and pointed to coastal habitat restoration and water quality improvement options that could contribute to improved reef health, similar to the approach implemented through the Reef Trust. The Panel agreed there is a need to ensure cause and effect relationships between actions and their impacts are well understood and to carefully evaluate any offsetting approach. The Panel noted a lack of evidence of successful offsets in the Reef to date, and suggested that real examples are needed to add substance to any new relevant guidelines/policies.

The Panel also noted the need to ensure the rights and role of Traditional Owners are acknowledged in any new documents, including in info graphics.

9 Queensland Great Barrier Reef Water Science Taskforce

Ms Elisa Nichols introduced the Great Barrier Reef Water Science Taskforce's draft Interim Report noting it is not the latest draft currently available and it is still evolving, including to better align with the Reef 2050 Plan. Panel members who also sit on the Taskforce clarified that final

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recommendations from the Taskforce are also still under development and have not yet been prioritised.

While discussing the draft Interim Report, the Panel provided the following key comments:

- ensure final recommendations are clearly articulated up front and that they are sharp, specific and clear;
- ensure the lack of support for tax-associated tools is clearly explained and justified; and
- further explain or better define the proposed lack of support for research funding, noting that to explicitly rule out funding for research could be counter-productive.

The Panel noted a final version of the Interim Report will be provided to the Queensland Minister for Environment and Heritage Protection and Minister for National Parks and the Great Barrier Reef by December 2015 and that there will be an opportunity for further input before the final report is provided to the Minister in May 2016.

The Panel also noted that the Great Barrier Reef Water Science Taskforce held its second workshop in Brisbane from 1 - 2 September 2015.

10 Reef Water Quality Protection Plan – Report Card Approval process and clearances

Ms Elisa Nichols introduced an information paper on the review and approval process for the annual Great Barrier Reef Report Card. The Panel noted the review and approval process.

11 Updates

Dr Roger Shaw, Ms Josh Gibson and Ms Elisa Nichols provided an update on the Reef Water Quality Protection Plan Independent Science Panel working group, the Integrated Monitoring and Reporting Program and the Reef 2050 Advisory Committee. The Panel noted the updates.

12 Emerging Science Matters

Dr Roger Shaw summarised his paper “Emerging Science Issues” and raised each of the suggested actions. The Panel’s decision regarding each proposed emerging science topic is summarised below:

- Remote sensing for the future: the Panel agreed to receive a report on outcomes from the proposed GBRMPA workshop.
- Large episodic events: the Panel agreed to seek support from the Bureau of Meteorology.
- Adaptive ecosystem health management: the Panel noted that the Great Barrier Reef Foundation is working with an informal working group and will circulate the resulting paper, most likely by the end of the year.
- Synthesis of science: the Panel encouraged the development of a proposal for further review.
- Fisheries indicators: the Panel noted the Integrated Monitoring and Reporting Program will look strategically at indicators and reporting.
- Groundwater: the Panel encouraged officials to examine scope to include existing groundwater modeling skills in Paddock to Reef modeling.

Dr Damien Burrows provided an update on recent progress of the Tropical Water Quality Hub and approved National Environmental Science Programme projects. The Panel noted the update.

The Panel also noted the Science Strategy and Information Needs and the Reef Water Quality

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Protection Plan Research, Development and Innovation Strategy 2013-2018.

Action 4: Dr Roger Shaw and Dr Andrew Ash to draft a letter from the Chairman to the Bureau of Meteorology outlining the impact of large episodic events and the importance of improved climate predictability for the tropics and invite them to engage.

Action 5: Assoc Prof Eva Abal to circulate paper on adaptive ecosystem health management when available.

Action 6: Dr Roger Shaw and Ms Elisa Nichols to further develop a *synthesising science* proposal for review.

Action 7: Dr Roger Shaw and Ms Elisa Nichols to approach relevant Queensland Government officials to examine scope to include existing groundwater modeling skills in Paddock to Reef modeling.

12 Other Business

In reviewing action 6-01 from the first Panel meeting, the Panel agreed that where available, the Australian and Queensland governments will share funding summaries for water quality investments but that the secretariat will not be required to maintain an updated, consolidated list.

13 Next Meeting

The Panel agreed to meet in 2016 on Tuesday 5 April, Tuesday 2 August and Tuesday 18 October. It noted that the April and October dates allow for a one week lag time between meetings of the Panel and the Reef 2050 Advisory Committee and there was scope to meet jointly with the Committee in August.