



Reef 2050 Plan

Reef 2050 Advisory Committee - Communique 14 April 2016

The Reef 2050 Advisory Committee (RAC) met for the fourth time today in Brisbane. The Committee is chaired by the Honourable Penelope Wensley AC, former Governor of Queensland. Together with the Reef 2050 Plan Independent Expert Panel (IEP), the RAC was established in 2015 to provide strategic advice to Ministers on implementation of the Reef 2050 Long-Term Sustainability Plan (Reef 2050).

Last month marked the first anniversary of the release of the Reef 2050 Plan. The Committee reviewed progress against the 139 actions identified in the plan and recognised there had been some significant achievements over the first twelve months, but emphasised the need to accelerate action in a number of key areas to realise more gains. In this regard, committee members placed particular emphasis on the importance of measuring the impact and effectiveness of interventions and on advancing the work currently underway to implement a Reef 2050 Integrated Monitoring and Reporting Program. The Committee agreed it was critical that the program demonstrate progress on some of the key indicators of reef health within the next two years.

As with the most recent meeting of the IEP, held on 5 April, the current Great Barrier Reef coral bleaching event was a major focus of discussion and concern. A briefing by Great Barrier Reef Marine Park Authority scientist, Dr David Wachenfeld, Director Reef Recovery, on the extent of the current bleaching event and surveys underway of all areas of the reef, reinforced the Committee's concerns about the need to quicken progress in key areas. In this regard, members recognised the need to reduce other stressors on corals, and in particular to accelerate actions around water quality improvement and crown-of-thorns starfish control. The Committee agreed the bleaching event reinforces the importance of reviewing the Reef 2050 Plan priorities as needed.

The Committee considered the major milestones for 2016, including the Reef 2050 investment framework which will determine investment priorities for the future and set out a strategy for boosting investment and diversifying its sources. The investment framework will be a key component of the report to the World Heritage Centre due in December 2016. The Committee also discussed the progress of Reef Trust and opportunities to leverage funds including through innovative financing mechanisms.

The Committee commented on the draft Reef 2050 Policy Guideline for decision makers. The Committee discussed ongoing work on the cumulative impact, net benefit and offset policy documents. These will be further developed in 2016 with comprehensive stakeholder consultation. The Committee acknowledged the challenges around these complex issues.

Members welcomed progress on the Reef 2050 Indigenous Implementation Plan.

The Committee discussed the communications strategy for the Reef 2050 Plan and effective ways to promote key achievements and enhance collaboration and information exchange among stakeholders. It agreed to set up an informal network of communications officers between RAC member organisations.



The Committee held a special session themed around water quality – one of the key priority areas for Reef 2050. Members discussed the range of initiatives underway and opportunities to further reduce sediment, nutrient and pesticide run-off. A series of invited guests gave presentations on the topic of water quality, including information about tracking improved agricultural practices, industry-led Best Management Practice programs, and the role of local government in improving water quality in urban areas.

The Committee plans to meet three more times in 2016 in June, August and October.

Membership of the Reef 2050 Advisory Committee includes the Association of Marine Park Tourism Operators, the Queensland Seafood Industry Association, a traditional owner representative, Queensland Resources Council, Great Barrier Reef Marine Park Authority, Queensland Farmers Federation, AgForce, Queensland Regional Natural Resource Management Groups Collective, Local Government Association of Queensland, Australian Committee of International Union of the Conservation of Nature, Australian Institute of Marine Science, CareFish, CSIRO, Great Barrier Reef Foundation, Local Marine Advisory Committees, Queensland Conservation Council, Queensland Ports Association and the World Wildlife Fund.