



Australian Government

Reef 2050 Plan

Independent Expert Panel



Queensland
Government

MINUTES

Date	Monday, 10 August 2015
Venue	Level 8, 215 Adelaide St, Brisbane, QLD
Opened	9:00am
Closed	1:30pm

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	Dr Stefan Hajkowitz
Assoc Prof Eva Abal	Adj Assoc Prof Stephan Schnierer
Prof Mike Bell	

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 Stefanie Lowe	Secretariat Officer, Department of the Environment
Ms Claire Andersen	Director, Department of Environment and Heritage Protection
Ms Josh Gibson	Director, Great Barrier Reef Marine Park Authority
Dr Will Howard	Assistant Director, Office of the Chief Scientist

APOLOGIES

Members

Dr Geoff Garrett AO	Prof Terry Hughes
Prof Helene Marsh	

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 and Introductions

The Chair welcomed members to the first meeting of the Independent Expert Panel. He provided the Panel with an outline of his role and of the agenda for the meeting.

Panel members introduced themselves and outlined their field of expertise.

The Chair called for any new conflicts of interest. He noted that he would repeat the call at all meetings and that members should take this obligation seriously. No new conflicts of interest were raised.

3 Secretariat Administration

Ms Rachel Parry gave a brief outline of the role of the Secretariat. Key points were:

- Joint secretariat arrangement between the Department of the Environment, Great Barrier Marine Park Authority and the Department of Environment and Heritage Protection.
- The Department of the Environment is the lead secretariat for this Panel and manages all operational procedures such as setting meeting dates, agenda, coordinating and distributing papers, and arranging travel and accommodation.

The Secretariat outlined relevant housekeeping issues including location of the toilets, emergency evacuation procedures, visitor passes and catering for the day.

4 Purpose and Scope of the Panel

The Panel discussed its purpose and scope as outlined in the terms of reference.

Ms Rachel Parry highlighted the media handling requirements in the Panel Operating Protocols. The Panel endorsed the Operating Protocols without amendment.

The Panel agreed to an indicative work program, noting that there may be a requirement for out of session work, and that this could occur through teleconferences.

5 Reef Science Panels

Ms Claire Andersen provided the Panel with a breakdown of the Governance model across Reef 2050, Reef Water Quality Protection Plan and the Great Barrier Reef Water Science Taskforce (Taskforce), encompassing Government, Stakeholder and Science committees and bodies.

Dr Russell Reichelt gave an update on behalf of Dr Geoff Garrett AO on the Taskforce, noting the *Current Situation Analysis – June 2015* as a good source of information for members.

The Panel noted the establishment of the Taskforce on water quality matters, its terms of reference, early deliverables and cross-over members.

The Panel noted that the Taskforce will be providing an interim report on investment priorities and policy interventions to the Queensland Minister for Environment and Heritage Protection and Minister for National Parks and the Great Barrier Reef by the end of 2015, and final

DISCUSSION

recommendations following consultation around the draft by May 2016.

The Panel endorsed the use of complementary approaches wherever possible between the Taskforce and the Panel, as it relates to water quality matters.

Dr Roger Shaw provided the Panel with an update on the Reef Water Quality Protection Plan Independent Science Panel, noting that it is now a working group of the Independent Expert Panel. He outlined that the Independent Science Panel is currently working on various Report Cards across the Reef and the next release is likely to be in September. He noted that the next Report Card is likely to look different from previous versions as the methodology has evolved, including through management of uncertainty, consideration of drivers (e.g. discharge) and changes in modeling. The Panel discussed the need for a clear approval and decision making process.

The Panel noted that the Independent Science Panel working group will continue, with its specific focus on water quality actions, and will be a standing agenda item on the Panel agenda. The working group will be reviewed in 2016 to ensure processes are working effectively.

Action 1: Secretariat to distribute Great Barrier Reef Water Science Taskforce *Current Situation Analysis – June 2015* to members.

Action 2: Discussion paper for the next meeting detailing the Report Card approval process and clearances.

6 Reef 2050 Plan Prioritisation of Actions

Ms Celeste Powell spoke to the paper regarding the Prioritisation of Actions within the Reef 2050 Plan, outlining the 139 actions within the Plan, and the progress made to date with the Investment Framework.

The Panel discussed the complexities of prioritising the actions. The Panel recommended that the following criteria be considered in the prioritisation process:

- Outcomes and Impact – what are the outcomes and impacts in the short-term and longer-term.
- Uncertainty – will the action reduce uncertainty in results or impact predictions.
- Capacity – is there sufficient resources, expertise, and time to deliver the action.
- Comprehensive – is the action comprehensive and will it aid system wide synthesis and management.

The Panel noted that the current criteria were very process focussed and needed to be more outcome orientated and consider adaptive management.

The Panel noted that prioritisation needed to consider new breakthroughs and innovation and that an improved understanding of environmental impact per dollar spent would help determine priority actions.

The Panel generally supported the prioritisation approach and requested that the prioritisation process be further refined to incorporate the criteria above. The Panel requested that the revised outline be presented back to the Panel out of session.

The Panel noted that the outcomes of the prioritisation process will be presented for discussion at the next meeting.

Action 3: Joint Secretariat team to speak to Dr Roger Shaw in more detail regarding the matters to

DISCUSSION

be considered in the Reef 2050 Plan action prioritisation process.

Action 4: Revised approach for prioritising actions within the Reef 2050 Plan to be distributed to Panel members out of session.

7 Prioritising Reef Trust Phase 3 Investment

Mr Kevin Gale presented the paper on Prioritising Reef Trust Phase 3 Investment, noting that Reef Trust is only one mechanism for delivering the Reef 2050 Plan.

The Panel agreed that the focus of the next two phases of investment should be improving water quality to maximise the resilience of the Reef to other stressors and maximise progress towards the relevant Reef 2050 Plan targets. It discussed the regional priorities overview and future funding gaps, including the expansion of agriculture in Northern Australia, climatic changes, geographic targeting etc.

The Panel discussed options for diversification of funding including crowd-sourcing, philanthropic donations, taxes and green bonds and the usefulness of partnerships to leverage funding. It had a broad ranging discussion on innovative ways to leverage investment and taking the opportunity to learn from innovation in other fields i.e. increasing tourist levies, the Uber application, crowd sourcing funding or expertise, the Cancer Institute. An update will be provided at the next meeting.

The Panel noted that monitoring for assessment and evaluation should be an explicit part of Reef Trust projects, especially those using innovative approaches or technology. It encouraged innovative thinking for delivery of actions under the Reef 2050 Plan, both for Reef Trust projects and for broader actions. It noted the importance of balancing innovation with successful tried and tested methodologies.

Behaviour change was acknowledged as a key element of success and the Panel discussed the need to focus heavily on behavioural change and exploring approaches to achieve behavioural change, including the use of social media, peer support/pressure, social licence requirements and using social scientists to assist in designing projects.

The Panel discussed approaches for prioritising and monitoring the effectiveness of activities targeting system repair and that managing for resilience was different to managing for condition.

The Panel discussed delivery mechanisms for investment and targeting. It was highlighted that areas with good underlying data could be better targeted and the delivery of more innovative approaches lacking data could include the establishment of replication and control sites to better quantify improvements and value for money approaches.

The Panel also discussed the current state of knowledge regarding sediment budgets at Reef-wide and regional scales and that nutrient run-off should be more correctly referred to as nutrient loss as this captured surface and ground water losses of nutrients.

The Panel discussed the use and transparent communication of decision models including: the marginal benefit/cost of investment given level of information available now vs cost of acquiring information; the granularity of information (from Paddock to Reef) to inform decision making across scales and link on-ground practices to outcomes; the use of multi-criteria analysis and systems which improve transparency in how investments are allocated; and apportioning investment across innovation, on-ground actions and proven technologies.

The Panel highlighted the need for science to be made publicly available and that the engagement of citizens in these processes could lead to innovation and new ideas.

The Panel agreed that the Department of the Environment should develop potential projects in the

DISCUSSION

areas of:

1. Decreasing nutrient loss from intensive agriculture, especially sugarcane, by better matching fertilizer application rates to yield potentials at the management unit level and investigating the feasibility of controlled release and/or enhanced efficiency fertilizers to protect against environmental loss.
2. Improving grazing land management, including addressing erosion hotspots such as areas with low ground cover, gullies and streambanks, to reduce erosion losses to the Reef.
3. Innovative approaches to facilitating behavior change and encouraging partnerships and engagement.

The Panel noted that the Department of the Environment is continuing consultation with a broad range of Reef 2050 Plan stakeholders, including government agencies, Traditional Owners, scientists, natural resource managers, industry peak bodies and extension providers to identify resourcing gaps and inform the development and implementation of future phases of Reef Trust investment. The Panel noted that this process may identify further project themes for consideration.

The Panel agreed that the Australian and Queensland Governments will continue to work together to ensure the projects funded by both governments complement each other to maximise water quality outcomes, particularly in relation to nutrient and sediment reduction projects.

Action 5: Department of the Environment to develop potential Reef Trust projects in three agreed areas for consideration at the next meeting.

8 Consistent and collaborative approach for water quality investments

Ms Claire Andersen spoke to the paper regarding consistent and collaborative approaches for water quality investments.

The Panel endorsed the use of complementary approaches between the Taskforce and Panel as it relates to water quality matters.

The Panel endorsed the proposed approach to evaluating investment prioritisation tools with a view to better informing future investment decisions over the medium and long term and informing the work of both the Taskforce and Panel.

The Panel requested the Secretariat to maintain a consolidated list of funded projects to be presented at the next meeting.

Action 6: Secretariat to develop a consolidated list of funded projects for discussion at the next meeting.

9 Reef 2050 Integrated Monitoring and Reporting Program

Ms Josh Gibson presented an overview of the Integrated Monitoring and Reporting Program including its role in informing annual report cards, five-yearly Outlook reporting and the review of the Reef 2050 Plan.

The Panel noted the purpose of the Reef Integrated Monitoring and Reporting Program and work carried out to date on its establishment.

The Panel noted the formation of the Reef Integrated Monitoring and Reporting Program Steering Group and the outcomes of its inaugural meeting.

DISCUSSION

The Panel noted the Steering Group's role in providing advice to the Ministerial Forum on monitoring and reporting requirements for the Great Barrier Reef (including monitoring of activities in the catchments as they relate to the Great Barrier Reef).

Action 7: Secretariat to distribute presentation on Integrated Monitoring and Reporting Program.

10 Other business

The Panel recommended that a rolling agenda item be added, *Emerging Science Matters*, in order to give the Panel time for discussion on upcoming science topics.

The Panel requested that the Secretariat revise attachment headers and page numbers prior to the next meeting for ease of handling.

The Panel discussed the importance of language in reports, especially in relation to Traditional Owners. It was highlighted that indigenous involvement in implementation of the Reef 2050 Plan can go further than solely indigenous actions, and that research should be inclusive of indigenous issues on the reef.

The Panel reviewed a draft communiqué and agreed to its release on the Department of the Environment website with minor adjustments. The Panel discussed the development of an op-ed article by the Chairman to follow on from the next meeting.

Action 8: Secretariat to include *Emerging Science Matters* as a rolling agenda item for the Panel.

Action 9: Secretariat to revise attachment headers and page numbers prior to the next meeting.

11 Next meeting

The Panel agreed that the next meeting will be held on 29 October 2015, in Brisbane.