

# Reef 2050 Plan Independent Expert Panel

## Terms of Reference

### 1. Background

The Great Barrier Reef World Heritage Area is special to all Australians and has been recognised globally for its Outstanding Universal Value. The Australian and Queensland governments are committed to its protection and management.

The Reef 2050 Long-Term Sustainability Plan (Reef 2050 Plan) is the overarching framework for protecting and managing the Great Barrier Reef from 2015 to 2050. The Plan is a key component of the Australian Government's response to the recommendations of the UNESCO World Heritage Committee. The Reef 2050 Plan has seven overarching themes reflecting the priorities for action — ecosystem health, biodiversity, heritage, water quality, community benefits, economic benefits and governance.

The Reef 2050 Plan addresses the findings of the Great Barrier Reef Marine Park Authority's Outlook Report 2014 and builds on the comprehensive strategic environmental assessment of the World Heritage Area and adjacent coastal zone completed in 2014. The Plan focuses on developing Reef health and resilience in the face of a variable and changing climate.

The Reef 2050 Plan draws together a number of key Australian and Queensland Government initiatives including the Reef Water Quality Protection Plan and Reef Trust.

The Great Barrier Reef Ministerial Forum's role, which is established under the Great Barrier Reef Intergovernmental Agreement, signed by the Prime Minister of Australia and the Premier of Queensland is to ensure an integrated and collaborative approach by the Commonwealth and Queensland to the management of marine and land environments within and adjacent to the Great Barrier Reef World Heritage Area. The forum actively seeks advice from stakeholder groups and the science community on management of the Great Barrier Reef.

### 2. Purpose

The purpose of the Independent Expert Panel is to provide scientific advice related to the Great Barrier Reef, including to support implementation and review of the Reef 2050 Plan, Reef Water Quality Protection Plan, Reef Trust, and other matters, as requested, such as regional report card partnerships.

### 3. Role

The Independent Expert Panel will provide advice to the Great Barrier Reef Ministerial Forum on Reef science matters as outlined below.

#### 3.1 Reef 2050 Long Term Sustainability Plan

The Independent Expert Panel will advise the Australian and Queensland Governments on implementation and review of the Reef 2050 Plan, including its objectives and targets, knowledge gaps and science priorities for delivery. This will include:

- Providing expert advice on the achievement and review of targets and objectives;
- Providing scientific input into review of the Reef 2050 Plan implementation strategy;
- Providing scientific input into development of the Reef 2050 Plan investment framework, and the prioritisation of actions;
- Conducting scientific reviews where requested by the Ministerial Forum or Standing Committee of Officials;
- Providing advice on research and monitoring priorities;

- Providing advice on science communication activities to be delivered to ensure appropriate communication of reef science matters and implementation of the Reef 2050 Plan to both technical and non-technical audiences;
- Providing advice on integrated monitoring and reporting to ensure outcomes of investment can be measured and reported over time;
- Providing advice on emerging scientific matters related to the Great Barrier Reef, where requested by the Ministerial Forum or the Standing Committee of Officials;
- Providing input into the five yearly reviews of the Reef 2050 Plan, the first due in 2020.

### 3.2 Reef Trust

The Panel will also advise the Australian Government Minister for the Environment on funding priorities for the Reef Trust, which may include:

- improving the quality of water entering the Reef;
- improving the health and resilience of coastal habitat; and
- improving and protecting marine biodiversity, including the reduction of crown-of-thorns starfish and protection of listed threatened and migratory species.

Funding for projects may only be debited from the **Reef Trust 2014 Special Account** in accordance with the terms of the *PGPA Act (Reef Trust Special Account 2014) Determination 01* (the Determination) made by the Finance Minister - available here: <http://www.comlaw.gov.au/Details/F2014L01218> as updated or amended from time to time.

It will have regard to cost-effective delivery and innovative mechanisms for the disbursement of funds. Wherever possible, the Panel will take into account Reef investment priorities being considered in the Great Barrier Reef World heritage Area by other bodies, including the Queensland Government.

## 4. Membership

### 4.1 Chair

The Chair is independent and is appointed by the Great Barrier Reef Ministerial Forum.

The inaugural chair of the Panel is the Australian Government Chief Scientist.

The Chair will convene meetings and report on behalf of the committee to the Great Barrier Reef Ministerial Forum.

The Chair will attend meetings of the Great Barrier Reef Ministerial Forum on a regular basis to report directly to ministers on scientific and technical matters related to implementation of the Reef 2050 Plan.

### 4.2 Members

The Independent Expert Panel will have a skills-based membership which will provide a cross-section of scientific expertise in areas relevant to managing the impacts on the Great Barrier Reef.

The Independent Expert Panel may include members with expertise in the following areas:

- Agronomic and landscape processes;
- Marine and freshwater biochemistry, ecology and modelling;
- Ecosystem health and biodiversity;
- Water quality
- Target-setting and monitoring;
- Information integration, synthesis, reporting and communication;
- Coastal ecosystems and connectivity
- Traditional knowledge;

- Social and economic methodologies; and
- Heritage.

Other expertise may be co-opted as required. Officials from the Australian and Queensland governments will be observers to the Independent Expert Panel.

#### **4.3 Appointment process**

Members of the Independent Expert Panel will be appointed by the Great Barrier Reef Ministerial Forum.

### **5. Operation**

The Independent Expert Panel will meet as required, but at least twice a year. The Independent Expert Panel is encouraged to hold a joint meeting with the Reef 2050 Advisory Committee once a year to share experiences and knowledge and discuss issues of mutual interest.

Alternates or proxies will not be permitted. Additional observers with particular expertise may be invited as needed.

The Chair and members of the Independent Expert Panel will declare actual or perceived conflicts of interest; apply good analytical skills, objectivity and judgment; express opinions frankly; and ask questions that go to the fundamental core of an issue.

Members will be reimbursed for reasonable costs associated with travel and accommodation. Non-government members will be eligible for sitting fees in accordance with the Australian Government's Remuneration Tribunal recommendation for Committee members of Cooperative Research Centres (currently \$1,117 for the Chair and \$922 per member per day).

Meeting agendas will be prepared by the Secretariat in consultation with the Chair and circulated to members at least one week in advance of meetings.

Any business transacted in the meetings including findings, conclusions and proposed recommendations prior to its release for public review or prior to endorsement by the Great Barrier Reef Ministerial Forum is strictly confidential unless otherwise stated.

#### **5.1 Establishment of working groups**

Working groups may be established for particular matters where approved by the Standing Committee of Officials.

A standing working group will be permitted for the Reef Water Quality Protection Plan.

The Reef Water Quality Protection Plan Working Group will support the Panel in relation to providing advice on the Reef Water Quality Protection Plan and the Reef Trust. To help facilitate a nested approach to monitoring and reporting within the Great Barrier Reef, the water quality working group may also be asked to provide advice to regional monitoring partnerships (such as the Mackay Whitsunday Healthy Rivers to Reef Partnership) as requested by the Standing Committee of Officials.

The Independent Expert Panel will nominate members to the working groups. The Chair of the working groups will be agreed by the Standing Committee of Officials.

All requests for advice to other partnerships must be accompanied by a separate Terms of Reference that includes provision for remuneration of non-government members. These requests must be approved by the Standing Committee of Officials, who will have regard for:

- the potential benefits of providing advice for integrating water quality monitoring and reporting processes and products
- any other potential benefits for water quality outcomes.

## **6. Reporting**

The Independent Expert Panel will report, through the independent chair, to the Great Barrier Reef Ministerial Forum at least twice a year on those matters relating to the implementation of the Reef 2050 Plan.

The Independent Expert Panel will also consider and provide advice to the Australian Government on matters relating to the Reef Trust.

It may provide advice on other matters including membership and terms of reference for working groups or undertake other tasks as requested by the Standing Committee of Officials.

Working groups will be required to report back to the Independent Expert Panel.

## **7. Secretariat**

Secretariat support will be provided by a joint Secretariat from the Australian Government Department of the Environment and Queensland Government Department of Environment and Heritage Protection. Those matters relating to the Reef Trust will be supported by the Australian Government Department of the Environment.

Costs for the Secretariat and the Independent Expert Panel will be shared by the Australian and Queensland governments.

The Secretariat will maintain records for the committee and its working groups, circulate agendas, papers and minutes.