



INDIGENOUS REEF ADVISORY COMMITTEE (IRAC) 2nd Meeting – 31 May and 1 June 2010 – Cairns

SUMMARY DOCUMENT

GBRMPA's REEF ADVISORY COMMITTEES

There are four Reef Advisory Committees (RACs): Catchment and Coastal; Ecosystem; Indigenous; and Tourism and Recreation RAC.

The RACs are competency-based committees comprising a cross-section of stakeholder interests with expertise and experience in relevant areas. The role of the RACs is to provide issues-based advice to the GBRMPA on operational issues. Each RAC shall work closely with staff of the relevant branch and sections, to ensure that policy development and strategic direction are developed in consultation with stakeholders.

The RACs are appointed for a term of three years, and members are eligible for reappointment. Each of the RACs includes Indigenous representation. Some members are appointed as a representative of a particular group or sector (e.g. industry, recreational, government), or for their linkages to Traditional Owner Groups. All RAC members are expected to adopt a broad perspective on issues that are addressed, mindful of the objectives of the relevant section or branch and of the GBRMPA's corporate priorities.

The Indigenous RAC (IRAC) provides strategic-level advice to the GBRMPA on the management of matters that relate to Indigenous Partnerships.

The 2nd meeting of the IRAC was held in Cairns on 31 May and 1 June 2010. The Chairman paid respect to the Traditional Owners and acknowledged their traditional land and sea country in the Cairns region.

A summary of the outcomes of the main items discussed is set out below.

SEA COUNTRY PARTNERSHIPS FORUM

The IRAC meeting was held in conjunction with the Sea Country Partnerships Forum (28 to 30 May), providing a brief opportunity for Great Barrier Reef Traditional Owners (TOs) to interact with Committee members.

There was discussion on the outcomes of the Forum, and how the Indigenous RAC/GBRMPA would be communicating outcomes and findings of the Forum back to Traditional Owners.

During the overlapping session at the Forum, the discussion was quite robust and open; delegates were interested in how members were appointed to the IRAC, and how often the Committee met. There was discussion about accountability, how to get

messages from the TOs to the Board of the Marine Park Authority (MPA); and the issue of trying not to build expectations about what the Committee can deliver on.

It was clarified that the Committee's role is to look at strategic business, and that there is very limited capacity to take on what happens on a day-to-day basis.

Members agreed to hold discussions out-of-session to clarify the role of the Committee, particularly how it will engage with the Indigenous community as a whole, and how the GBRMPA can support the IRAC to achieve the most effective process.

YOUTH LEADERSHIP SKILLS

There was much discussion given to the need to connect with Indigenous youth to develop leadership skills.

Members acknowledged it was important to get the young people back on country, to be mentored and inspired by the old people in a hands-on way, and to learn respect and responsibility.

There was a suggestion that an on country youth forum could be considered for the future, for young people between 18 and 30 years of age; with nominations being sought from the TO groups. In developing a program appropriate to a community, it would be important to consult closely with the TOs to determine their aspirations and particular needs.

ENHANCING SEA COUNTRY MANAGEMENT

An issue raised at the Forum was about Traditional Use of Marine Resource Agreements (TUMRAs) and the take of turtle and dugong in specific areas, and how that relates to and affects all the communities along the Great Barrier Reef coast. Members felt the synergy is already there in terms of what people want to do, providing a good way to have a common connection, linking all the communities, putting forward in a very positive way how we want to collectively and responsibly manage that resource.

An issue raised at the Forum related to the concept of partnerships and what is meant by that

term. The Committee listened to a presentation on the Sea Country Guardians program. One of the things members were hoping the program will deliver is some way of encouraging and educating young people to be guardians of their own sea country, perhaps developing processes where they can be monitors when they are on country with family or friends, similar to a reef check. Members also had discussions about trying to incorporate activities like a junior fishing activity either by themselves or with friends/family, as a first point, and that any information collected on country could be used by rangers and others.

Members expressed concern at reports that suggest many young Indigenous people have lost their connection to country, and so may not have as strong an inclination to look after it. In addition, some young people are being brought up to think unsustainable methods of hunting are normal. It would be a good idea for them to see through historical photographs and documents that this is not the case.

Members hoped that these sorts of issues could be dealt with in programs such as Youth Leaders and Young Hunters forums.

The IRAC recognised that while most of the work is being done in communities along the Great Barrier Reef coast, we must not forget urban groups who do not have their own land.

INDIGENOUS COMMUNITIES COMPLIANCE LIAISON PROGRAM

The Committee discussed the use of non-specific hunting methods (e.g. modified soccer nets) for dugong. Members agreed this is not an appropriate method to be used for take of dugong or turtle, both because of its impacts on dugong and turtle populations and the flow-on implications for other TO groups who are hunting in a responsible manner.

Members again expressed their concern at the lack of respect for elders and Traditional practices. It was suggested that the GBRMPA looks at the lessons that might be learned from the development of hunting management plans in communities around Australia as another useful tool to try and bring back understanding and respect for Traditional practices.

The Committee identified there is a need to develop a media strategy to provide clarity around hunting, including its role in Indigenous culture, and views on addressing inappropriate or unsustainable practices (particularly the use of nets to take dugong and turtle as discussed above). In developing such a strategy, there needs to be an awareness of the issue of respect for elders and respect for the structure of a community.

RECONCILIATION ACTION PLAN

The Committee noted the GBRMPA is unlikely to be included in the revised Department of the Environment, Water, Heritage and the Arts (DEWHA) Reconciliation Action Plan, and confirmed the previous advice that the GBRMPA should work towards having its own Reconciliation Action Plan completed by the end of 2010.

IRAC TERMS OF REFERENCE

Members agreed the review of the Terms of Reference should be finalised as soon as possible to provide clarity for the group on its role and future direction.

Members recommended that the GBRMPA approach The Nature Conservancy to be appointed to the Committee, to provide a perspective from a conservation NGO.

Members also recommended that Fisheries Queensland be represented on the Committee, and suggested that this might also provide an opportunity for the Indigenous RAC to have input into the development of the Queensland Indigenous Fishing Strategy.

WORKING GROUPS

The Committee agreed to form working groups to address out-of-session a number of priority matters prior to the next meeting, as follows:

- Leadership
- Communication between the Committee and Traditional Owners
- Sea Country Planning/TUMRAs.

NEXT MEETING

The next meeting of the IRAC is scheduled to be held on 27 and 28 October 2010.

CURRENT MEMBERSHIP OF THE COMMITTEE 2009-2012

Mr Wayne Butcher	Great Barrier Reef Traditional Owner
Ms Jean Fenton	Indigenous engagement, environmental management and community development
Miss Melissa George	Independent Chairman;
	Great Barrier Reef Traditional Owner
Miss Selina Hill	Indigenous engagement, environmental management and community development
Dr Rod Kennett	Indigenous land and sea management
Mr Ross MacLeod	Queensland Department of Environment and Resource Management
Mr Philip Rist	Great Barrier Reef Traditional Owner
A/Professor Stephan Schnierer	Indigenous policy
Dr Dermot Smyth	Sea Country planning and Indigenous Protected Areas

Supported by:

Mr Peter McGinnity	General Manager, GBRMPA
Mr Darren Cameron	Acting Director, Indigenous Partnerships Group, GBRMPA