



WATER QUALITY AND COASTAL DEVELOPMENT REEF ADVISORY COMMITTEE

6th Meeting

19 and 20 November 2001 – Townsville

SUMMARY DOCUMENT

A summary document is prepared after each meeting of the Reef Advisory Committee to inform other advisory committees serving the Authority, and persons generally (including the public) of business of the RAC. The document forms part of the records of the meeting and so its content is limited to matters raised in the meeting, and, where necessary, background details given to the meeting. Any inquiries should be referred to the Authority's Secretariat, or to the appropriate Member.

WATER QUALITY ACTION PLAN AND REEF PROTECTION TASKFORCE

The Committee discussed these two items concurrently as there were strong linkages between the documents. Members discussed both strengths and weaknesses in the documents. The Committee congratulated those involved in preparing these useful documents in the limited time available. The Committee recognises the environment in which they were prepared and supports their use to develop a comprehensive Action plan involving key stakeholders.

Through discussion the following points were raised:

- Good assessment of current issues (land-based), comparing present to 1850s;
- It is not really an ACTION plan, and there is some confusion about the title in the wider community;
- The plan has not identified on-ground actions to move towards achieving targets;
- The terms of reference are too ambitious;
- The issue of stakeholder involvement has led to confusion and needs to be addressed;
- Need to further develop the risk-based framework – it is a good start but more information is needed
 - to give better dollar allocation to remediation measures/actions,
 - need input from industries;
- Need to focus on prevention measures, particularly with industries (e.g., native vegetation, wetlands);
- Need to clarify perceptions with regard to 'statutory targets';
- Need to justify the targets – communicate reasoning – there is sufficient evidence now to take action;
- Support adaptive management principles, including monitoring;
- Clear responsibility setting, teams and champions (recommendations of Sturgess Report implemented);
- Support the performance-based program in NAP (however it is unlikely NAP funding would be

sufficient to address the funding needs even if it focuses on highest priorities) but would recommend extension to other catchments – funding to be allocated to highest risks;

- Part A: targets and risk assessment
- Part B: implementation/action plan needs to be fully costed – including partnership development, incentives, compensation, structural adjustment, education, training, regulations, planning, reconstruction (Reef Protection Plan) performance monitoring and Research and Development to support gaps in knowledge.

WATER QUALITY STRATEGIC WORK PROGRAM

The Committee expressed its appreciation that the Strategic Work Plan has been altered to reflect the comments of the WRAC at its August meeting. Primary issues addressed include:

- Development of achievable performance indicators in an annual cycle; and
- Identification of longer term strategies for the GBRMPA and other agencies to progress the protection and conservation of the Great Barrier Reef World Heritage Area (GBRWHA).

The Committee was advised that the WQ&CD Group would prepare a Strategic Plan for the next meeting and seek members' comments.

The Committee advised that it is important to engage in a consultation process with stakeholders before developing a draft Strategic Plan. It was acknowledged that this consultation can be demanding on resources and it was suggested that perhaps the WQ&CD Group could utilise forums where up to four regional catchment groups meet.

Members were also alerted to the issue of not being able to publish and disseminate results of projects to stakeholders and the public. The Committee have agreed to address this issue at the next WRAC meeting.

REVIEW OF WRAC PERFORMANCE PLAN (2001-2002)

At the last meeting of the WRAC, the Committee agreed that the Chairperson would review the 2001-2002 Performance Plan based on the comments made at the meeting.

Members of the Committee agreed that the document represented their comments. Members were advised that the document was comprehensive and the GBRMPA did not have anything extra to add at this time.

COMMONWEALTH AQUACULTURE APPROVAL PROCESS AND AQUACULTURE CODE OF PRACTICE

The Committee was advised that since the last meeting of the WRAC, the Commonwealth, Environment Australia and the GBRMPA have developed a 'one stop shop' aquaculture process. The assessment of the proposal will occur either under the *Environment Protection and Biodiversity Conservation Act 1999* (EPBC Act) or the *Great Barrier Reef Marine Park (Aquaculture) Regulations 2000*, and the decision will be made within 20 working days.

The Committee were advised that a letter had been sent to the GBRMPA in September advising the *Environmental Code of Practice for Australian Prawn Farmer's* was signed off by the Queensland Minister for Environment on 21 September 2001. The following issues were also raised:

- Seeking Deeds of Agreement with individual farms as there is potential for considerable overlap between the two instruments; and
- Commonwealth and State still have not agreed on a joint approval process.

The Committee decided to write to the GBRMPA Chairperson and request that this matter be resolved as soon as possible, as it has the potential to impact on the credibility of the organisations involved.

NATIONAL ACTION PLAN FOR SALINITY AND WATER QUALITY (NAPSWQ) AND GREAT BARRIER REEF MARINE PARK AUTHORITY

The Committee was provided with a progress report on the NAPSWQ, and were advised that the Queensland government indicated that there is a need for a seamless delivery of National Heritage Trust (NHT) and NAPSWQ funding based on regional NRM plans.

GBRMPA representatives have attended meetings to establish arrangements in the Burdekin and Wet Tropics and will need to be involved in workshops held in other relevant regions. It was also stated that given that land-based impacts on the Great Barrier Reef are a feature of the Reef Protection Plan, better integration of the State's regional coastal planning process with the regional/catchment plan process will need to take place.

PERFORMANCE OF CODES OF PRACTICE AND OTHER INITIATIVES IN THE PROTECTION OF THE GBRWHA

A representative of the Queensland Farmers' Federation provided the Committee with a presentation, outlining the performance of codes of practice and other initiatives that are being implemented to protect the GBRWHA.

After hearing the presentation, members identified the following issues:

- Effectiveness of practices at the other end – need to ensure we are achieving an outcome not just focussing on outputs;
- Need to identify suitable methods of getting scientific information on the ground;
- It is imperative that peak bodies have trust in the science; and
- Need to look at suitable extension methods that work on the ground.

The Committee agreed that it would discuss the best avenues for WRAC and peak industry bodies to get information to the people who are going to be directly affected.

OTHER BUSINESS

Reef Brochure

The Committee was advised that the CRC has published a brochure titled '*Land use and the Great Barrier Reef World Heritage Area*'. The brochure is a synopsis of the current state of knowledge of a lot of the work being done on water quality in the GBRWHA, and is intended to make people of a non-technical background aware of the effects of land use on the GBRWHA.

NEXT MEETING

It was proposed that the next meeting be held in June 2002.

CURRENT MEMBERSHIP OF THE COMMITTEE

Mr Tony Allingham	Grazing Industry
Ms Claudia Baldwin	Department of Natural Resources
Mr Harry Bonanno	Sugarcane Industry
Cr Greg Breckell	Local Government
Mr Martin Breen	Aquaculture
Mr Noel Dawson (Chairperson)	Water Quality
Mr Tony Fontes	Tourism Industry
Dr Miles Furnas	AIMS/CRC Water Quality
Ms Margaret Moore	Conservation
Ms Sheriden Morris	GBRMPA
Mr Chris Patearson	Environmental Protection Agency
Dr Christian Roth	CSIRO Tropical Land and Water Management
Dr Nick Schofield	Catchment Management
Dr Roger Shaw	Coastal CRC
Mr Kirk Smith	Catchment Management/Landcare
Mr Ian Sutton	Conservation
Mr Vern Veitch	Recreational Fishing
Ms Imogen Zethoven	Conservation