



WATER QUALITY AND COASTAL DEVELOPMENT REEF ADVISORY COMMITTEE (WRAC) 25th Meeting 22 October 2008 – Brisbane SUMMARY DOCUMENT

The twenty-fifth meeting of the WRAC was held on 22 October 2008 in Brisbane. The Chairman paid respect to the Traditional Owners and acknowledged their traditional land and sea country in the Brisbane region.

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

GREAT BARRIER REEF OUTLOOK REPORT

The Committee was updated on the progress on the preparation of the Outlook Report, including key messages about water quality and coastal development, and the timetable for completion of the Report.

Once again, members provided comments on the key messages to assist the Outlook team in the development of the Report. These comments included:

- The provision of relevant and correct information is important.
- Consultation is important if you want good data.
- The historical aspect is very important; knowing where we have come from, so that we can go forward.
- There needs to be enough time allocated to scientific review of the information.
- The Report needs to be clear with its messages. Agriculture industries are feeling quite bruised at the moment; they need to have an idea of what is coming, what is said, what the key messages are, and how we can all work together.
- The Report will influence government policy and program in the future; a quick fix approach should be avoided.
- An ability to provide assessment and management in an objective way would help the utility of it all.

- The document should have a “solutions” tone to it, as it has to reach a higher strategic level. It is really about how we fundamentally change people’s knowledge and view sets. We need to think how we actively engage through social engagement processes.
- Ensure the use of simple and clear messages; key points need to be clearly explained, and key messages need to be not overly scientific.

In concluding discussion, members were in strong agreement that the launch of this important report should be without blame for any particular sector and should describe the historical development of policy with regard to land and water management which has driven landholder behaviour and resource management, such as the recent policy change from requiring the destruction of wetlands, clearing native vegetation to banning these activities.

QUEENSLAND WETLANDS PROGRAMME

The Committee was given an overview of the Queensland Environmental Protection Agency’s (EPA) wetland mapping initiative, which provides an excellent resource for decision makers and managers. The mapping process is now complete, and information is available via their website.

Members were advised that tools supporting the conservation and management of wetlands are also now available. The GBRMPA has been involved in an exciting communication and educational program through the school community. It is hoped that the Wetlands Programme will become part of a national school curriculum in the future.

Members remain concerned about the Queensland Government’s slow progress with wetland legislation and the need for wetland management to be included in coastal development.

REEF PLAN AND REEF RESCUE

The Committee was updated on the progress made to the rewrite of the Reef Water Quality Protection Plan and the integration with the Reef Rescue package. The focus on monitoring and reporting is likely to be the most important task, with target setting and commitments following.

Members remain concerned about the lack of clarity around roles and responsibilities for Reef Plan governance, particularly in regard to monitoring and reporting. Queensland Government announcements made at the recent Reef Summit have further confused the initiative and will, no doubt, have significant implications for the implementation of Reef Rescue.

With regard to the scope of Reef Plan, members agreed that the focus should be on all water quality issues, noting that Reef Rescue is only focused on diffuse pollution. Reef Plan should link water quality and climate change impacts, and the links between Reef Plan and Reef Rescue must be better explained.

Members agreed that stakeholder involvement in the strategic and implementation components of Reef Plan is critical to its success. Targets need to be clarified, and the level of investment required to achieve them provided in a business plan that stakeholders can agree to.

REEF PLAN AND REEF RESCUE

The Committee was updated on the progress of the implementation of the Reef Rescue package, and was asked to provide feedback on the Scientific Consensus Statement and the 2007 Water Quality Report, its strengths and weaknesses in moving towards a report card process.

Members were largely supportive of the scientific consensus statement, noting that much of the agricultural data contained in the grey literature was not able to be used. Some concern was expressed about the summary statement – *Current management interventions are not effectively solving the problem* – because the level of investment in on-ground activities has been minimal to date.

In concluding discussion, members suggested the preparation of a number of similar consensus statements focusing on the social landscape, coastal development and land and water management practices and their effectiveness.

SUSTAINABLE COASTAL DEVELOPMENT

The Committee was updated on programs and projects relating to coastal development adjacent to the Great Barrier Reef region, including: Reef Guardian Council Program; identifying and promoting Local Government actions to implement Reef Plan; Product Steward for Oil Program; the *CoastInfo* web resource; Development Information Guidelines for Coastal Development in the Great Barrier Reef Catchments; and the GBRMPA's Coastal Development Position Paper.

The WRAC's coastal development working group provided a report in relation to their recent deliberations.

Members continue to urge action in relation to coastal development which is seen as a significant threat to reef catchments and the reef itself.

REPORTS AND ISSUES

Members each provided a report on issues and activities within their representative group.

NEXT MEETING

Members agreed that the meetings during 2009 will be held on the following dates:

- WRAC 26 – 26 and 27 February;
- WRAC 27 – 25 and 26 June; and
- WRAC 28 – 22 and 23 October.

CURRENT MEMBERSHIP OF THE COMMITTEE

Mr Mike Berwick AM	Terrain NRM
Ms Veronica Blazely	Dept of the Environment, Water, Heritage and the Arts
Mrs Leith Bouilly	Independent Chairman
Mr Grahame Byron	Qld Government – Reef Secretariat
Dr Piet Filet	Non-Government Organisation, Conservation
Professor Iain Gordon	CSIRO
Ms Sandy McCathie	Sustainable Practices in Building and Development Industry
Ms Rachel Mackenzie	Horticulture Industry
Ms Sheriden Morris	Marine and Tropical Science Research Facility
Mr Mark Myerson	Qld Local Government Association
Ms Joann Schmider	Indigenous
Mr Kirk Smith	Landcare
Mr Bob Sullivan	Cape York NRM
Mr Vern Veitch	Recreational Fishing
Dr Tim Wrigley	Sugar Industry
Mr Hugh Yorkston	Director, GBRMPA
To be appointed	Mackay-Whitsunday NRM
To be appointed	Tourism Industry