



INDIGENOUS REEF ADVISORY COMMITTEE (IRAC) 5th Meeting – 16 and 17 November 2011 – Rockhampton

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 5th meeting of the IRAC was held in Rockhampton on 16 and 17 November 2011.

The Chairman paid respect to the Traditional Owners and acknowledged their traditional land and sea country in the Rockhampton region.

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

PORT CURTIS CORAL COAST REGIONAL TUMRA ACCREDITATION AND LAUNCH

Members were very pleased to hear of the development, accreditation and recent launch of the Port Curtis Coral Coast (PCCC) Regional Traditional Use of Marine Resources Agreement (TUMRA).

Recent media programs have brought attention to the health of the sea country around the Gladstone area at the present time, particularly in light of the mining activity and the heavy program of dredging, which must affect the marine environment. Traditional Owners in the PCCC area are keen to work with relevant groups, and are involved in meetings including the Gladstone Port Authority.

The GBRMPA has accredited the TUMRA, and is keen to work with the Traditional Owners to implement the TUMRA, and to assist them with managing their sea country.

Members congratulated the PCCC group on the launch of their TUMRA.

SOCIAL AND ECONOMIC LONG-TERM MONITORING PROGRAM – NATIONAL ENVIRONMENTAL RESEARCH PROGRAM

Members were briefed on the establishment of a social and economic long-term monitoring program for the Great Barrier Reef Marine Park.

Advice was sought to identify Indigenous communities who may be interested in being involved; the most appropriate way to engage the Indigenous community; and what Traditional Owners may want out of such a project.

Members were pleased to hear that Traditional Owners had not been forgotten. The need for researchers to establish and understand people's long-term aspirations was stressed. At the end of the project, the Indigenous aspirations established should be reported on, perhaps by way of publications through the GBRMPA.

Input will also be sought from government, industry and the general community.

Members agreed the GBRMPA should promote or seek to engage strongly with communities in northern Australia, particularly in relation to cultural issues.

TRADITIONAL OWNER FORUM (CAIRNS)

Members were briefed on the outcomes of the recent Traditional Owner Forum held in Cairns. There were 72 attendees, representing 40 Indigenous groups. This was the first opportunity for many of the Traditional Owners to get together to speak about sea country, and they were very keen to be engaged in the consultation process. The efforts of the GBRMPA were acknowledged by those who attended, in getting all these groups together in the one place.

IRAC members agreed that an overarching sea country management framework would be useful, similar to that of the Sea Forum, providing support for Traditional Owners at a state-wide level. Such a structure would be useful for groups getting together and sharing knowledge and engaging in debate on various issues, working towards making decisions on their own sea country. Members also saw value in the GBRMPA continuing their membership of the Indigenous Dugong Management Steering Committee, providing the GBRMPA a useful connection to the consultation process.

The IRAC recommended to the GBRMPA that it would be useful to conduct an auditing exercise, to identify the types of activities Indigenous communities are undertaking on their country, including management plans such as Indigenous Land Use Agreements (ILUAs), Indigenous Protected Areas (IPAs) or TUMRAs. The Committee also supported the need to develop some pilot projects, including some media training for Traditional Owners, and some communication tools to get information out about Indigenous hunting of turtle and dugong.

THE 2011 WORLD HERITAGE COMMITTEE DECISION

Members were briefed on the array of activities that together will comprise Australia's response to the World Heritage Committee's concerns regarding the possible impacts on the Great Barrier Reef of proposed coastal developments (e.g. port expansions in the Gladstone harbour area).

The GBRMPA will undertake a strategic assessment exercise of the management of the Great Barrier Reef World Heritage Area, and the Queensland Government will do a similar assessment of the adjacent coastal zone. Terms of Reference will be developed, and will be available for public comment in due course.

Members agreed the Australian Government needs to ensure that Article 10(C) of the UN Convention on Biological Diversity is considered in terms of use and access for Indigenous communities.

Members of all RACs will be kept up-to-date on the progress of the strategic assessment process.

LEADERSHIP – SENSE ACTIVITY PROGRAM

Members were provided a presentation about the GBRMPA's leadership program being run in Rockhampton, which is teaching the local Indigenous community respect for sea country and other people's country, as well as respect and appreciation for others in general. The program is being delivered through the school system, but could also be delivered in a TUMRA area.

Members were keen for the program and its 'story' to be promoted on the GBRMPA's website; perhaps including a video of the presentation, and photographs and/or videos taken by participating students.

Members could see the advantage in other groups taking on the program as a basis for their own community.

SEA COUNTRY MANAGEMENT PLANS

Members were concerned at that apparent lack of focus on the part of the Queensland Government on Aboriginals' participation in the management of sea country. For example, the wild rivers rangers program was an election promise, but only around

half the positions have ever been filled. However, it was noted that not all Traditional Owners wish to pursue community-based ranger programs, but that they wish to partner with management agencies on the management of their sea country. There is a desire within the Indigenous community to see more employment opportunities open up at a local level for Traditional Owners. One of the concepts behind the Indigenous Dugong Management funding package was to look at how to invest money strategically. One of the Traditional Owner-recommended ways forward suggested on-ground management agencies employ Traditional Owners at a local scale to manage sea country issues, including turtle and dugong.

BIODIVERSITY STRATEGY FOR THE GREAT BARRIER REEF

Members were advised that the Biodiversity Strategy has been approved by the Board of the Marine Park Authority (MPA), and that it will shortly be available on the GBRMPA's website.

The purpose of the Strategy is to identify at risk habitats, species and species groups; setting priorities for biodiversity. The Strategy has been submitted to each of the RACs, and their suggestions and comments have been taken into account during the development of the document.

Members agreed there needs to be a process to identify culturally significant species, and to ensure they are key components of any such biodiversity program. It was also agreed the engagement of Traditional Owners in monitoring activities should be a priority. Members supported the inclusion of an up-front statement of Indigenous involvement.

Members also agreed the Strategy should be better aligned with the UN Convention on Biological Diversity, and the Australian and Queensland Governments' Strategies, more appropriately referencing Indigenous people and cultural diversity as an integral part of the ecosystem.

NEXT MEETING

The next meeting of the IRAC is scheduled to be held in July 2012.

CURRENT MEMBERSHIP OF THE COMMITTEE 2009-2012	
Mr Wayne Butcher	Great Barrier Reef Traditional Owner
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
Dr Geoffrey Lipsett-Moore	The Nature Conservancy
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
Ms Liz Wren	Director, Indigenous Partnerships Group, GBRMPA