

Reef 2050 Plan

Independent Expert Panel

Communiqué

10 August 2015

The inaugural meeting of the Reef 2050 Long-Term Sustainability Plan (Reef 2050 Plan) Independent Expert Panel was held today in Brisbane, chaired by Professor Ian Chubb AC, Australia's Chief Scientist. The panel has been established to provide independent scientific advice to the Australian and Queensland governments, including advice on the implementation of the Reef 2050 Plan, Reef Water Quality Protection Plan and Reef Trust.

Members of the panel represent a broad cross-section of scientific expertise in areas relevant to managing key threats to the Great Barrier Reef. The panel's Terms of Reference are outlined [here](#).

Panel members discussed how to prioritise actions listed in the Reef 2050 Plan which span seven key themes: ecosystem health, biodiversity, heritage, water quality, community benefits, economic benefits and governance. They endorsed a process to identify immediate and future priorities, noting that a broad range of factors need to be considered. Outcomes of the prioritisation process will be considered by the panel at their next meeting in October and will inform the development of a Reef 2050 Plan Investment Framework.

The panel provided advice on identifying investment priorities for the next two phases of the Australian Government's \$140 million Reef Trust and a process for developing additional Reef Trust projects and innovative approaches for consideration by the Australian Minister for the Environment. The panel noted that ongoing consultation would occur with a broad range of stakeholders, including government agencies, Traditional Owners, scientists, natural resource managers, industry bodies and extension providers to identify gaps and inform investment decisions.

Panel members were provided with an overview of the Reef Integrated Monitoring and Reporting Program and work carried out to date on its establishment. The panel noted the formation of the Reef Integrated Monitoring and Reporting Program Steering Group and the outcomes of its inaugural meeting on 17 July 2015. The program's principal purpose is to evaluate whether the Reef 2050 Plan is on track to meet its targets and outcomes and enable timely and suitable responses to emerging issues and risks. The Independent Expert Panel will play a key role in providing advice on integrated monitoring and reporting to ensure outcomes of investment can be measured and reported over time.

The panel supported the use of complementary approaches in investment prioritisation across governments in the longer term. In particular, the panel noted the recent establishment of the Great Barrier Reef Water Science Taskforce to advise the Queensland Government on the best approach to achieving the water quality targets set out in the Reef 2050 Plan and priorities for investment of an additional \$100 million over five years. The panel noted that the Taskforce will provide an interim report by the end of the year and a final report by May 2016 and endorsed the use of complementary approaches wherever possible in relation to water quality matters. The Chair of the Taskforce, Dr Geoff Garrett, Queensland Chief Scientist, is a member of the panel to ensure complementarity.

The Chair of the Independent Expert Panel will report to the Great Barrier Reef Ministerial Forum twice a year. The next Independent Expert Panel meeting will be in October 2015.

Panel members

Professor Ian Chubb AC (Chair)

Australia's Chief Scientist.

Associate Professor Eva Abal

Program Director of the Global Change Institute's Sustainable Water Program.
Chief Scientific Officer of the Great Barrier Reef Foundation.

Dr Andrew Ash

Chief Research Scientist.
CSIRO Agriculture.

Dr Mike Bell

Chair of Tropical Agronomy.
University of Queensland.

Dr Damien Burrows

Director of TropWATER.
James Cook University.

Professor Bill Dennison

Professor of Marine Science and Vice President for Science Applications.
University of Maryland Center for Environmental Science.

Dr Geoff Garrett AO

Queensland Chief Scientist.

Dr Stefan Hajkowicz

Natural resource policy and economic analyst.
CSIRO's Sustainable Regional Development.

Professor Ove Hoegh-Guldberg

Director of the Global Change Institute and Professor of Marine Science.
The University of Queensland.

Professor Terry Hughes

Director of the Australian Research Council Centre of Excellence for Coral Reef Studies.
James Cook University.

Professor Helene Marsh

Dean of Graduate Research Studies and Professor of Environmental Science.
James Cook University.

Dr Russell Reichelt

Chairman and Chief Executive.
Great Barrier Reef Marine Park Authority.

Dr Britta Schaffelke

Research Program Leader.
A Healthy and Resilient Great Barrier Reef, Australian Institute of Marine Science.

Adjunct Associate Professor Stephan Schnierer

Southern Cross University.

Dr Roger Shaw

Independent consultant.
Chair of Reef Water Quality Protection Plan Independent Science Panel.

Professor Natalie Stoeckl

College of Business, Law & Governance.
James Cook University.