



CATCHMENT AND COASTAL REEF ADVISORY COMMITTEE (CCRAC)

1st Meeting – 13 and 14 April 2010 – Townsville

SUMMARY DOCUMENT

The Catchment and Coastal RAC was appointed in November 2009. The Committee's first meeting was held in Townsville on 13 and 14 April 2010.

The GBRMPA's 2008 restructure saw a name change for the Water Quality and Coastal Development Group to the Coastal Ecosystem and Water Quality (CEWQ) Section, with an increased focus on the catchments and coastal environs and their major influence on water quality. As a result, the Water Quality RAC's name was changed to the Catchment and Coastal RAC.

Several members of the Water Quality RAC are now members of the CCRAC, along with several new members with relevant expertise and/or stakeholder or government body representation.

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

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

KEY ISSUES AND MANAGEMENT EFFECTIVENESS PRIORITIES IN THE GREAT BARRIER REEF OUTLOOK REPORT 2009

The Committee was provided information on the findings of the Outlook Report, and was asked to provide advice on priority work areas for the GBRMPA's CEWQ Section.

Members were advised the Outlook Report is supported by a series of web pages providing locator graphs to show the source of the information used. The web pages are live and updated as information comes to hand; however, the actual Report will only be updated when the next one becomes due.

The Committee was also briefed on the evaluation of management effectiveness and the management implications for the GBRMPA and the CCRAC in terms of water quality, coastal development and aquaculture.

Members felt it is important for the Natural Resource Management (NRM) groups to be involved in discussions on planning at the state level, and that regional statutory plans must incorporate NRM plans. Members also agreed it would be a good opportunity for the Commonwealth to be engaged in the regional planning processes in Queensland through a strategic assessment approach to coastal issues.

Coastal development is not just about water quality, it is also about the ecosystems of the Great Barrier Reef, wetlands and fauna.

Climate change is an issue we all have to address as a society right around the globe.

COASTAL ECOSYSTEM AND PARTNERSHIP PROGRAMS

Members were asked to consider what coastal ecosystems meant to them (e.g. freshwater, beaches and estuaries, terrestrial and marine).

In discussion, the following comments were made:

- The ecosystem has changed and modified over time.
- Need to know what ecosystems, natural and non-natural areas, impact on the Great Barrier Reef, before we can go further.
- Need to know what function all these things have before we can determine what impact it has on the Great Barrier Reef.
- In starting to bring all the information together, a few gaps have been identified (e.g. limited information on lagoon floor mapping).
- Groundwater and floodplains are also problem areas.
- Beaches and estuaries are high intensity areas of interaction.
- Terrestrial systems are potentially highly modified.
- Inhabitants will use the waterways and feed on those waterways; they are part of a structure (e.g. flying foxes, TI pigeons).

- The difficulty is in knowing where "marine" starts; and whether it includes mangroves and seagrass.

Members heard that from a local council perspective, there is no standard structure between various councils – you will likely have a planning department and an infrastructure department, but the similarities end there. The future town planning schemes are the things that will drive where development will occur and what development can take place.

If we know where areas are planned for development, there is then a possibility of looking at what impact it may have on the Great Barrier Reef. Development is not necessarily a bad thing; it can be used as a repairing thing as well.

While the Committee acknowledged the GBRMPA does not have the jurisdiction to directly influence change in this area, members agreed the GBRMPA has to look at the function and thresholds/guidelines of coastal ecosystems. There needs to be a discussion on what the desired priority outcomes are so there can be a focus on the functions; what opportunities planning offers (e.g. resources); who needs to be influenced; and the critical timelines.

The Great Barrier Reef is bigger than just the salty bit. That is the message that has to keep on being communicated.

Members agreed that, in terms of the ecosystem work, function rather than form is very important in moving forward, and that more emphasis is needed around groundwater interactions and floodplain function.

PROPOSED 2010-2011 ACTIONS FOR THE COASTAL ECOSYSTEM AND WATER QUALITY SECTION AND THE ROLL OF CCRAC

The Committee was briefed on the proposed actions for developing the 2010-2011 operations plan for the CEWQ Section's work program, and was asked to identify key activities and priorities during that time. It was noted that some of the opportunities already discussed depend on available resources (e.g. some of the cross-linking and influencing of partnerships such as Reef Guardian Farms), and we are also looking to put more resources into additional discussions with Canegrowers, Queensland Farmers Federation and others.

Members also discussed the proposed development of a Reef Guardian Farms program. We may need to look at this in a slightly different structure to the Reef Guardian Schools and Reef Guardian Councils programs, having consideration of agricultural issues at regional council level and to

avoid the possibility of farms operating in individual silos.

Thirteen of the 20 councils in the Great Barrier Reef catchment are now involved in the Reef Guardian Councils program, and the GBRMPA will shortly be looking to begin discussions with Indigenous councils.

One reason the Reef Guardian Council program has been successful, is that councils have to personally sign up to the program; it is the same for the schools, and will be for farmers. If it is personal, then people will take ownership of the responsibility.

With farmers, it is all about the doing, and the water quality at the end of the process, more so than the Schools and the Councils programs.

REEF PLAN

The Committee was presented an update on Reef Plan 2009 and the GBRMPA's role in delivery of Reef Plan outcomes.

Members were assured that regional bodies have been involved quite extensively in discussions.

NEXT MEETING

The next meeting of the CCRAC is scheduled to be held on 6 and 7 October 2010.

CURRENT MEMBERSHIP OF THE COMMITTEE 2009-2012

Mr Mike Berwick AM	Catchment management and Natural Resource Management (NRM)
Mrs Leith Bouilly	Independent Chairman
Emeritus Professor Valerie Brown AO	Coastal planning
Mr Grahame Byron	Department of the Premier and Cabinet
Mr Rob Cocco	Catchment management and NRM
Mr Dan Galligan	Queensland Farmers Federation (QFF)
Professor Iain Gordon	Catchment ecology
Mr Matthew Kealley	Canegrowers
A/Professor Catherine Lovelock	Coastal ecology and climate change
Professor Janet McDonald	Climate change
Mr Colin McKenzie	Marine tourism industry
Ms Sheriden Morris	Reef and Rainforest Research Centre (RRRC)
Mr Mark Piorkowski	Local Government Association of Queensland (LGAQ)
Dr John Robertson	Fisheries Queensland, Department of Employment, Economic Development and Innovation (DEEDI)
Mr Robert Speirs	Department of Environment and Resource Management (DERM)
Mr Brian Stewart	Urban Development Institute of Australia (UDIA)
Cr Vern Veitch	Local government, recreational fishing and wetlands
Mr Gary White	Department of Infrastructure and Planning
Supported by:	
Mr Peter McGinnity	General Manager, GBRMPA
Mr Hugh Yorkston	Director, Coastal Ecosystems and Water Quality, GBRMPA