



## INDIGENOUS REEF ADVISORY COMMITTEE COMMUNIQUE IRAC Meeting No. 23 – In person – 22 May 2025

*The Indigenous Reef Advisory Committee (the Committee) provides advice to the Great Barrier Reef Marine Park Authority (the Reef Authority) on Indigenous matters. The Committee has eight members and an independent Chairperson, Mr Shayne Blackman. The Committee is a sub-committee to the Marine Park Authority Board.*

### Welcome and Acknowledgement of Traditional Owners

The Chairperson welcomed the Committee to the 23<sup>rd</sup> meeting of the Indigenous Reef Advisory Committee (IRAC) and member, Mr Troy Johnson, was invited to deliver the Welcome to Country. The Chairperson invited members to introduce themselves and welcomed the Reef Authority Board members and Reef Authority staff joining the meeting. Apologies from two members, Ms Karrell Ross and Mr Jacob Cassidy, were noted/recorded.

### Reef Authority and post-election update

Ms Caroline Turnour, General Manager — Strategic Policy and Partnerships, provided an update on: Reef health, the Tourism Reef Protection Initiative, World Heritage, the redevelopment of the Great Barrier Reef Aquarium, the Southern Plan of Management, and the Master Reef Guide program. It was highlighted that the Reef has been nominated for a Lifetime Achievement Award; this is the first time a non-human nomination has been received.

A post-election update was also provided to the Committee, and it was noted the new Minister for the Environment and Water is Senator, the Hon Murray Watt.

Committee members discussed some of the updates, particularly the Master Reef Guide program regarding transferable qualifications and capacity building, and noted the other updates provided.

### Framework for place-based policy making

The Committee were provided with an update on the status of the review of the Reef 2050 Plan. As part of this review the Reef Authority's Strategic Policy team are exploring the potential of a place-based approach to policy development and program delivery to effectively bring together and draw on the skills, knowledge and experience of local people to address local issues impacting the Reef and Reef communities. The views of the Committee on this approach were sought.

The Committee discussed the opportunities and challenges for implementing this approach. The Committee expressed their wish to remain engaged in the policy development process.

### Crown-of-thorns Starfish Control Program

Dr David Williamson, Acting Director – Reef Interventions, provided a presentation on the Crown-of-thorns Starfish Control Program. This included an update on the ongoing development and status of the Crown-of-thorns Starfish Control Program including governance, strategic planning, operational delivery and Traditional Owner participation in the program.

Members discussed the outcomes from the project and at a high-level, current and future opportunities to increase the involvement of Traditional Owners in the program's governance, strategic planning and operations. It was noted that further discussions to support program development would be welcomed by the Committee.

### Modernised delivery of the High Standard Tourism Operator Program

Ms Fiona Merida, Director – Reef Education and Engagement, and Ms Olivia McKenna, Project Manager – Strategic Engagement, presented on the progress of the modernisation of the High Standard Tourism Operator Program.

The High Standard Tourism Operator Program is a voluntary program in which the Reef Authority recognises tourism operators for exceeding the regulatory requirements in key areas of sustainability including Protection, Partnerships and Presentation.

Members discussed the progress on the modernisation of this project and provided advice on the development and consideration of the approach to this project, particularly the inclusion of cultural aspects in the voluntary certification and opportunities for Traditional Owners and First Nations involvement.

## **Wuthathi TUMRA Sea Country Partnerships Pilot Project**

The Chairperson welcomed Mr Andrew Simmonds, Sea Operations Manager from Wuthathi Aboriginal Corporation, to provide a presentation on the Wuthathi Traditional Use of Marine Resources Agreements Sea Country Partnerships Pilot Project.

Mr Simmonds provided an overview of the work completed on the pilot project to date and outlined the next steps and desired outcomes.

The Committee discussed some of the framework (pilot project) and some of the opportunities and challenges in the development of this project.

The Committee acknowledged the approach taken and the engagement with both the Wuthathi Elders Council, and the Reef Authority.