



## FISHERIES REEF ADVISORY COMMITTEE (FRAC)

### 15<sup>th</sup> Meeting

22 and 23 September 2005 – Townsville

## SUMMARY DOCUMENT

The 15<sup>th</sup> meeting of the FRAC was held in Townsville on 22 and 23 September 2005. A summary of the outcomes of the main items discussed is set out below.

### COMMUNITY PARTNERSHIPS

Members were updated on the activities of the Community Partnerships Group. They were advised that the role of the Regional Offices is not to replace relationships that the GBRMPA already has with stakeholders, rather, it is to support and enhance those relationships, and be mindful of community expectations. Regional Offices are to be a conduit of information, facilitating communication between the regions and the GBRMPA, and building/strengthening linkages between the GBRMPA, State agencies and the community. It was noted that the experience, knowledge and networks of the current regional staff are considerable. In discussion, the following comments were noted:

- Additional Regional Office responsibilities include administration of Local Marine Advisory Committees; assistance with the Reef Guardian schools program; provision of support when Townsville staff are unable to attend regional meetings; and monitoring relevant issues raised in the local media.
- While the importance of links with the Queensland Government was acknowledged (most people do not understand that both the State and Commonwealth Governments are involved in the management of the GBRMP), it was noted that the strength of this relationship varied currently along the GBR coast.
- Members agreed that the link between the community and the GBRMPA is critical, and that the GBRMPA Head Office and Regional Offices need to work hard to ensure the two-way exchange of information.

### RESEARCH PRIORITIES

Members were updated on the GBRMPA's Research Information System, and discussed how the new database will integrate existing and planned research activity, national research priorities, researchers, research locations and other relevant parameters. In discussion, the following comments were noted:

- The database will include Fisheries Research and Development Corporation (FRDC) links, and some historic information. The system will be updated regularly to maintain its currency.
- Once the system is "live" stakeholders will be encouraged to use the system and provide feedback to the GBRMPA.

Members were updated on the outcomes of the recent Queensland Fishing Industry Research Advisory Committee (QFIRAC) meeting to feed into the FRDC funding process, and how this related to the GBRMPA fisheries research priorities.

### DEPARTMENT OF THE ENVIRONMENT AND HERITAGE (DEH): ECOLOGICALLY SUSTAINABLE MANAGEMENT OF FISHERIES

Members were updated on the process, progress and outcomes of the DEH sustainable fisheries assessments under the Environment Protection and Biodiversity Conservation (EPBC) Act. This formed the basis of an extensive discussion, with the following outcomes.

The FRAC noted the need for independent review of the status of fisheries by an agency other than the fishery manager (like the Bureau of Rural Science's review of Commonwealth-managed fisheries), to provide greater community confidence on results reported.

The FRAC acknowledged that whilst the DEH assessment process applied to State-managed fisheries with an export component, a similarly rigorous assessment process should be applied to fisheries that did not export their product.

The FRAC recognised that the current DEH assessments are not able to assess effectively cumulative impacts on fisheries resources; e.g., recreational, Indigenous and non-export commercial sectors are not generally included, and these can have significant impacts on the fishery and the ecosystem on which it depends. Extrinsic factors such as water quality and the downstream effects of land use also are not considered (though it was noted that these are complex multi-jurisdictional issues).

The FRAC noted that there are community expectations that higher management standards should apply in the GBRMP because it is a World Heritage Area.

While the FRAC recognised that there is already a substantial amount of information about the assessment process available on the DEH website, public comment on each fishery submission had been less than expected. Therefore, the following suggestions, which may increase and improve stakeholder responses to the public comment phase, were proposed:

- Assessment reports by the managing agency need to be written in a simple, readily digestible form.
- Assessment reports and the call for public comments need to be advertised more widely.
- Assessment reports need to be clearly structured to allow for easy oversight and cross-referencing.

- Acknowledgement of, and feedback on, stakeholder comments needs to be provided in a timely and comprehensive manner by the managing agency, including justifications if comments are rejected.
- The call for public comment must state clearly what issues should be addressed.
- Indigenous stakeholder feedback cannot be expected through the normal channels, and may require a more culturally appropriate approach.

The FRAC noted that all fisheries management agencies (at both a State and Commonwealth level) have a legislative objective in their Fisheries Acts that relates to Ecologically Sustainable Development (ESD). A failure to meet this objective should be addressed through the Parliamentary process and it should not be up to the GBRMPA or the EPBC assessment to highlight deficiencies. The FRAC identified the following processes, which may assist in future reporting against ESD:

- Managing agencies should clearly specify their fishery objectives and the strategies and timeframes for how these are to be achieved.
- Annual reports by the managing agencies reporting on the status of the fisheries and fisheries trends are very useful, especially if they have Parliamentary sign-off.
- Regular assessments should be undertaken to determine how well current management arrangements address fishery trends.
- An adaptive management approach to emerging fisheries issues and prior agreement on management actions if specified reference points are triggered would ensure that emerging issues are addressed in a timely manner.

The FRAC identified several specific fisheries issues, but recognised that this was a list “in progress” and likely to grow in scope over time. In general though:

- It was recognised that data quality underpins the reliability of all fisheries information used in stock and risk assessments. It is important to establish processes, which result in the collation of reliable, accurate data.
- It was suggested that there be a co-ordinated approach across agencies to address the issue of data quality. A research project (possibly FRDC-funded) could examine the minimum data requirements to provide reliable fishery assessment advice within a risk assessment context. The findings of such a study could be used as a blueprint in the building of future fisheries information systems.
- It was acknowledged that the available research funding was inadequate for the multitude of fisheries questions that had to be addressed. The FRAC also noted that FRDC did not fund work considered to be core management agency business (like fishery monitoring and assessments).

The FRAC recommended that the QDPI&F provide an update at future meetings on progress against the DEH recommendations for GBRMP fisheries. Issues to be addressed should include progress with data validation, bycatch monitoring, risk management and research funding.

### **GBRMP STRUCTURAL ADJUSTMENT PACKAGE (SAP)**

Members were updated on the DEH process for the SAP associated with rezoning the GBRMP. It was noted that while some people, who were impacted by rezoning, did not meet the eligibility criteria for the licence buyout component, there was still some capacity for “de facto” buyout in the business-restructuring component of the SAP. Members were advised

that applications for assistance from the SAP close 31 December 2005 and noted that people are still able to contact the DEH or the Queensland Rural Adjustment Authority about their specific situations.

The FRAC discussed the misleading coverage in some sections of the media on the impact of GBRMP rezoning on the gross value of production (GVP) of commercial fisheries, particularly as it relates to the amount of money being paid in the SAP. Members noted the following:

- GBRMPA always provided advice on the impacts of the rezoning on the basis of GVP.
- GBRMPA advised that in addition to GVP impact estimates, other factors to be taken into account in determining any financial recompense should include capital value of commercial licence packages, business infrastructure costs and loss of income.
- The impact of the rezoning of the GBRMP on commercial fisheries as estimated by the Great Barrier Reef Marine Park Authority (GBRMPA), independent consultants (PDP Australia Pty Ltd) and the Bureau of Rural Sciences (BRS) were similar in amount.
- Estimates of the impacts of the rezoning on commercial fisheries were always calculated on the basis of annual GVP. The only exception to this was the PDP Australia Pty Ltd report that provided a value added figure (that is, value over and above the costs of undertaking the fishing activity) as the potential cost of the rezoning.

### **DIVE-BASED FISHERIES – UPDATE**

*Tropical Rock Lobster (TRL):* Members were reminded that the commercial East Coast Tropical Rock Lobster (TRL) fishery is centred on reefs north of Lockhart River and shares the same stock as the Torres Strait. Members were updated on recent developments in the Torres Strait and East Coast TRL fisheries, and discussed the need to address latent effort in the East Coast fishery.

*Coral and Marine Aquarium Fish:* Members were updated on progress towards finalising the Policy for the Management of the Coral Fishery. The GBRMPA ran a very successful compliance information workshop recently; similar information sessions would be run for industry groups before the coral policy is implemented by the QDPI&F.

### **NEXT MEETING**

The next meeting is proposed for 16 and 17 February 2006.

#### **CURRENT MEMBERSHIP OF THE COMMITTEE**

Mr David Bateman .....	Recreational Fishing
tba .....	Qld Environment Protection Agency
Mr Craig Bohm .....	Conservation
Dr Phil Cadwallader .....	GBRMPA
Mr Kevin Chard .....	Spear Fishing
Mr Colin Creighton .....	CSIRO Water for a Healthy Country
Mr Ian Cresswell .....	Dept of the Environment and Heritage
Mr James Gillespie .....	Qld Dept Primary Industries and Fisheries
Mr Cliff Greenhalgh .....	Commercial Fishing
Mr Bob Grimley .....	Qld Boating and Fisheries Patrol
Mr Ray Joyce .....	Charter Fishing
Mr Richard Leck .....	Conservation
Mr John Olsen .....	Commercial Fishing
Mr Chris Roberts .....	Indigenous Community
Mr Lyle Squire .....	Commercial Dive-based Fishing
Ms Diane Tarte .....	Independent Chairperson
Dr David Williams .....	Scientific Community