



CATCHMENT AND COASTAL REEF ADVISORY COMMITTEE (CCRAC) 4th Meeting – 5 and 6 October 2011 – Townsville SUMMARY DOCUMENT

The fourth meeting of the CCRAC was held in Townsville on 5 and 6 October 2011. Members of the Ecosystem RAC joined the CCRAC on 5 October for joint presentations and discussions on several items.

The Chairman paid respect to the Wulgurukaba and Bindal 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.

BIODIVERSITY STRATEGY FOR THE GREAT BARRIER REEF

The Committees remained supportive of the Biodiversity Strategy, and agreed that the question of pressure on inshore biodiversity remains; we need to work out what is needed, and how we are going to get significant change.

EXTREME WEATHER EVENTS

Members of both Committees were provided an update on the extreme weather events of the 2010/11 summer, and the resultant very substantial impacts on the Great Barrier Reef ecosystem and marine-dependant industries. It was noted there have been five Category 5 cyclones so far this century, compared to none last century; and the predictions are that the frequency of cyclones will be dependent on climate change.

The Committees agreed that the presentation on the extreme weather outcomes highlighted the pressure the Great Barrier Reef is under, and prompted two questions for the GBRMPA:

- 1) Is the GBRMPA rethinking its management arrangements in light of the recent weather history?
- 2) How can the GBRMPA better communicate the message of what is, and has happened?

The Committees also noted the need for timely advice being provided to the Queensland Flood Recovery Group.

THE 2011 WORLD HERITAGE COMMITTEE DECISION

Members of both Committees were provided a briefing on the decision of the World Heritage Committee regarding their concerns for the Great Barrier Reef World Heritage Area in light of the Liquefied Natural Gas developments on Curtis Island near Gladstone. An array of activities will comprise

Australia's response to the Committee's decision, including a comprehensive strategic assessment to identify planned and potential developments that could impact on the "Outstanding Universal Value" of the World Heritage Area.

The Committees were also provided a briefing on the Australian Government's response, including a State Party report due to the World Heritage Committee by February 2012; along with a brief update from the Queensland Government's perspective. Generally, both are on the same page in terms of a strategic assessment. The task will be very time-consuming, and crosses over several departments. Some of this information will shortly be put to the Queensland Cabinet; essentially, to get a mandate to do the strategic assessment. Queensland is looking at the coastal area as a centrepiece of the work and, in terms of focus areas, is looking at a longer-term approach to underpin the management plans. Obviously there will be a need for some governance discussions around engagement.

EFFECTS OF COASTAL DEVELOPMENT ON THE GREAT BARRIER REEF

Members of both Committees were provided a presentation on the relevance of the 25 year vision for the Great Barrier Reef World Heritage Area; and on the assessment of catchment and coastal ecosystems and the critical coastal development, planning and management issues.

The Committees then participated in a workshop to discuss key coastal development issues, with a view to providing the GBRMPA with advice. During the workshop, attendees were asked to think about the information provided on coastal ecosystems, as well as the relevancy to the issues we are addressing of the vision *"To have integrated management of activities which take into account the ecological relationship between the Great Barrier Reef and adjacent areas supported by an informed, involved and committed community"*.

The Committees agreed the vision of the GBRMPA's 25 Year Strategic Plan is still relevant; however, issues like climate change and adaptation will require a strategic approach to address the cumulative impacts and to understand the thresholds in the ecosystems.

Members agreed generally with the coastal development issues identified by the GBRMPA, but noted there will be hot spots of development that will require a closer focus, early involvement, good

governance arrangements, an agreed focus or goal, and effective monitoring and reporting on achievements.

STRATEGIC ASSESSMENT OF THE GREAT BARRIER REEF WORLD HERITAGE AREA

Members of both Committees participated in a workshop to discuss strategic assessment of the Great Barrier Reef World Heritage Area, with a view to providing the GBRMPA with advice.

During the workshop, attendees were asked to provide comment on: (i) what they wanted from the assessment; (ii) what policy programs are currently underway; (iii) what are the ones that need to be picked up; and (iv) ideas for engaging the key stakeholders from start to finish.

The Committees agreed the objectives for the World Heritage Strategic Assessment will need to be clear, with transparent principles and using existing systems where possible (e.g. RACs, RDAs, GBR Ministerial Council). The assessment should be seeking a convergence of policies, plans and processes that protect the matters of national environmental significance. It should also seek to achieve confidence in the decision-making framework. Members highlighted the importance of working with the systems that are in place (e.g. Queensland's statutory regional plans/NRM plans), and that the assessment might need to have a 'deep assessment' in its focus areas of how these systems/processes are working.

There was recognition that there needs to be a conceptual understanding of how the complex management system works, and it was suggested that a matrix of development type and responsibility would possibly help. There are a number of powerful players who need to be engaged at a high level, so some sort of independent and well-facilitated reference group might be needed for testing of ideas, and the like.

The Committees recommended bringing Ministers periodically into the process, and potentially meeting with Chief Executive Officers of major industries at perhaps two to three key points during the planning process.

The issue of legacy of past decisions was raised by some members; that is, the difficulty of addressing these issues and looking for ways of mitigating their impacts. The potential for offsets to be used to do this was highlighted, as well as the need for coordinated and strategic use of offsets across governments and NRM regions.

The non-government members of the Committees wanted to record their extreme concern, in line with that of the World Heritage Committee, with the level of development in the Great Barrier Reef World Heritage Area, and felt there needed to be better communication of what was happening.

REEF GUARDIAN PROGRAM

Members of the CCRAC were provided an update on the expansion of the GBRMPA's Reef Guardian Stewardship Program, as part of the *Improving the*

Outlook funding commitment from the Australian Government.

Members acknowledged the importance of the need for consistency of standards across the programs, and that councils or local governments need to be held accountable for having the Reef Guardian brand and ensure they deliver on the standards. Members also supported the need for integration and collaboration.

The Committee expressed generally ongoing support for the Reef Guardian Program. Some members expressed their belief that it has been a very positive program for their industries; however, others would like to see the opportunity for further collaboration pursued, especially with regional NRM bodies, to improve the Program's integration with regional programs.

Members were pleased to hear that the Reef Guardian Schools Program was now generally being taken up by the whole school community, rather than the program lapsing due to the teacher first introducing the program leaving the school. In addition, students progressing from primary to high school, have been pro-active, keen to continue the Reef Guardian Schools Program where there is none in place.

DEVELOPING A COASTAL STRATEGY FOR THE GREAT BARRIER REEF CATCHMENT

Members of the CCRAC were provided a presentation on the development of the Coastal Strategy for the Great Barrier Reef Catchment.

The Committee agreed the conceptual model is excellent, and that the work done to date is impressive. Members agreed a working group be formed to take the Strategy forward.

NEXT MEETING

The next meeting of the CCRAC is scheduled to be held on 5 and 6 October 2011.

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)
Mr Matthew Kealley	Canegrowers
A/Professor Catherine Lovelock	Coastal ecology and climate change
Mr Colin McKenzie	Marine tourism industry
Ms Sheriden Morris	Reef and Rainforest Research Centre (RRRC)
Dr John Robertson	Fisheries Queensland, Department of Employment, Economic Development and Innovation (DEEDI)
Mr Robert Speirs	Department of Environment and Resource Management (DERM)
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