

Cairns-Port Douglas Reef Hub Steering Group Communique

June 2021 to January 2022

The Hub is a collaborative network that seeks to strengthen Reef and community resilience outcomes by enabling enhanced communication, collaboration and learning among partners involved in local-scale and larger-scale coral rehabilitation and stewardship activities based in the Cairns-Port Douglas region.

A Steering Group, representative of the diversity of Cairns-Port Douglas Reef Hub network, provides local and locally-relevant strategic leadership to guide the design and operations of the Hub.

The Steering Group is committed to a transparent approach and committed to regular communiques from meetings that can be shared with the network. The Steering Group is skills and experience-based and bring their understanding of issues and concerns of their wider sector/networks to build shared understanding that benefits the broader sector.

This communique provides some highlights of key decisions, actions and discussion points discussed through Steering Group meetings.

Key discussion points, actions and next steps

1. The Steering Group has informed the development of the Hub Coordinator role position and an assessment process has been undertaken to select the candidate (Dr Abbi Scott, from TropWATER, with broader TropWATER support from Dr. Katie Chartrand and Skye McKenna). Abbi will commence part time from January 2022.
2. One of the early tasks for the Coordinator will be to facilitate a knowledge sharing workshop in 2022. This will help build active dialogue and help inform a work plan to ensure activities are meeting key needs. To respect and understand Traditional Owner knowledge will require following up with Traditional Owners in the lead-up to knowledge sharing workshops.
3. A separate complementary process will enable longer-term strategic planning, helping build key pathways for enduring outcomes e.g. looking to explore links with COTS programs and skills building/employment pathways.
4. The Steering Group provided feedback to help inform the first Reef Restoration and Adaption workshop with local partners operating at the Moore Reef Cluster.
5. Early discussions were held with RRAP around the role of the Hub as a linking mechanism – offering ways to learn about how to best connect with local partners. The Hub is a chance to bring diverse perspectives and help set up two-way knowledge sharing and mutual benefits. This is important as it helps connect where we are now collectively with where we are going in the future and will need to consider rights and responsibilities in designing instruments.
6. The Steering Group endorsed an open call for Steering Group Members and a paid Chair role. Propose to actively seek greater Steering Group participation from Traditional Owner, Port Douglas, and additional tourism sectors, as well as a range of identified skills/knowledge areas. Proposed that a paid Chair role is independent, and that candidates demonstrate their experience and expertise in the type of thinking behind the Hub – this may come from other areas such as terrestrial work.
7. There is recognition that this early phase of the Hub has focused on governance and foundations building. The next phase of the Hub will actively shift into much wider engagement to deliver on the four pillars. A series of engagement activities has been tentatively planned through the Coordinator role (and will seek input from the wider network).

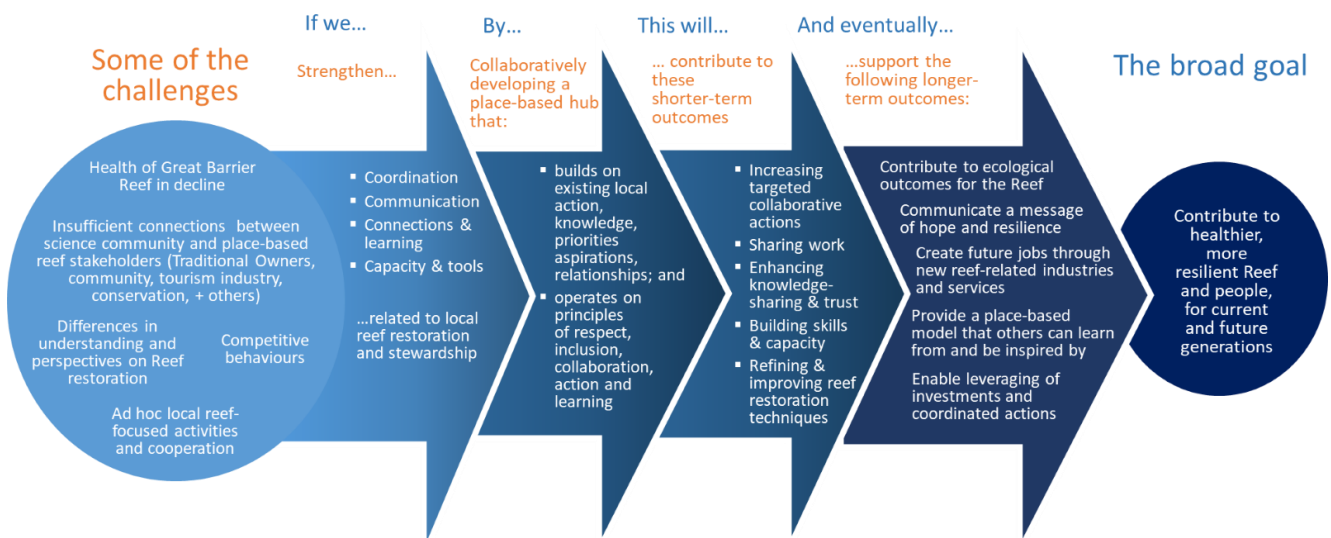
8. It is important that Hub implementation seek to leverage learnings from existing programs (such as Landcare) and capacity of existing organisations and networks. We don't have to re-invent the wheel. Will be looking for where intervention mobilisation, capacity building and investment been done well and what we can learn from and adapt.
9. Ideas around cross-regional opportunities to share and learn with the Whitsundays region (and beyond) have been discussed as another option for supporting sharing and learning.
10. Discussion around context of marine restoration and the role of the Hub to acknowledge land and sea connections, and make work visible for government & broader community. Communications and engagement need to reiterate that it's one (long-term) tool for proactive climate adaptation and resilience that goes hand in hand with swift action on climate change mitigation. The Hub can offer opportunities to bring more visibility to the collaborative work being done.
11. A draft Monitoring, Evaluation and Learning plan will be further refined with a key focus on how activities are adding value, need adjustment or offer learnings. See next section for details.

Monitoring Evaluation and Learning

A draft monitoring, evaluation, and learning (MEL) framework has been developed in partnership with the Reef Restoration and Adaptation Program (RRAP) with input from individuals who participated in early discussions about the concept of a Reef Hub.

The framework focuses on the role and influence the Hub model has on enabling and supporting stewardship and on-ground restoration activities. It is intended to help support continual improvement and will aim to enable collection of information about what success looks like, tracking and assessing progress, and capturing key insights and lessons learned to enable the Hub to adapt and remain relevant and impactful. The framework is intended as a resource for the network to build on and refine.

The graphic below represents a simple version of the draft theory of change. This is a visual representation of processes of change that the Hub hopes to catalyse. The Hub will be looking to socialise this and build practical ways to collect and share information with input from the Hub network.



Steering Group members

Listed affiliations are for reference and understanding member connectivity and Conflict of Interest Management.

- Stewart Lockie (Chair) - The Cairns Institute (JCU), RRAP
- Stewart Christie - Terrain NRM, Reef Restoration Foundation
- Peppi Iovanella - Down Under Cruise and Dive
- Jennifer Loder - Great Barrier Reef Foundation
- Neil Mattocks - Great Barrier Reef Marine Park Authority
- Fiona Merida - Great Barrier Reef Marine Park Authority
- Brian Singleton - Dawul Wuru Aboriginal Corporation, RRAS TO TWG
- David Suggett - University of Technology Sydney, Coral Nurture Program, Coral Reef Consortium, Australian CRC