

# Cairns-Port Douglas Reef Hub Steering Group Communique

March to June 2021

The Cairns-Port Douglas Reef Hub is a network of people motivated to care for the ecosystems and communities of the Great Barrier Reef. Across the region, Traditional Owners, tourism operators, NGOs, and scientists are already leading a number of reef stewardship and restoration projects. The aim of the Hub is to help scale up these activities and strengthen their outcomes by providing a platform for communication, information exchange and collaboration.

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

The Steering Group is committed to a transparent approach and committed to regular communiques meetings that can be shared with the network.

This communique provides some highlights of key decisions, actions and discussion points held over the first three Steering Group meetings.

## Actions and next steps

1. The Steering Group has finalised a Terms of Reference, recognising this will require regular review and updates.
2. The Steering Group has been informing development of the Hub Coordinator role position. One of the early tasks for the Coordinator will be to implement strategic/collaboration workshops. These will contribute to developing and implementing the Strategic Plan and Work Plan.
3. A draft Monitoring, Evaluation and Learning plan has been developed and is under review.
4. The Coordinator will continue building a landscape summary, including context (drivers, permitting, etc) the current actions underway and key players, key challenges and opportunities. This process could apply a similar framework to the process that proposed for engaging with Traditional Owners to understand capacity, strengths, challenges and values.
5. The Coordinator will plan and enable a sharing symposium by the end of 2021. This event could apply some of the structure from the Reef Restoration Symposium of 2018 but focus on locally-relevant activities and lessons. The event could also have some targeted activities to identify shared goals for informing the strategic plan and opportunities for collaboration. The Steering Group will help with guiding design of the activities.

## Steering Group members

Stewart Lockie (Chair) - Social scientist (Affiliations Reef Restoration and Adaptation Program, The Cairns Institute, JCU)  
Stewart Christie - Sustainable development and management (Affiliations Terrain NRM, Reef Restoration Foundation)  
Brian Singleton - Reef Traditional Owner (Affiliations Dawul Wuru Aboriginal Corporation, Yirrganydji Indigenous Land Sea Rangers, Reef Restoration and Adaptation Science Traditional Owner Technical Working Group)  
Gareth Phillips - Tourism (Affiliations Australian Marine Park Tourism Operators (AMPTO) and Reef Teach)  
Peppi Iovanella - Tourism (Affiliation Down Under Cruise and Dive)  
Fiona Merida - Reef management and industry engagement (Affiliation Great Barrier Reef Marine Park Authority)  
Neil Mattox - Reef conservation actions (Affiliation Great Barrier Reef Marine Park Authority)  
David Suggett - Reef ecology and restoration science (Affiliations University of Technology Sydney, Coral Reef Consortium and Australian Cooperative Research Centres, Coral Nurture Program)  
Jennifer Loder - Community partnerships (Affiliation Great Barrier Reef Foundation)

## Key discussion points

- **Recognising the context, challenge and opportunity** - There was strong recognition from the Steering Group that coral stewardship and rehabilitation is an active and growing space with multiple priorities. Central to the concept of the Hub is exploration of how we can better collaborate within this space to deliver better outcomes. Coral restoration is one tool for supporting reef and community resilience in the context of climate change. Realising the benefits of restoration will rely on parallel action to reduce greenhouse gas emissions and address other causes of reef degradation.
- **Importance of Hub roles & responsibilities** - The Steering Group's main role is to provide strategic direction for the Hub. It will provide leadership through the design and implementation of processes to identify collaborative priorities for the region and to communicate these to funding bodies (including but not limited to GBRF). The Steering Group will approve a workplan for the Hub that will be led, on a day-to-day basis, by the Hub Coordinator. The uniqueness and importance of the Coordinator role has been acknowledged for project success.
- **The value of enabling project connections** - It was agreed that networking and coordination will provide most benefit by connecting participants and projects regardless of funding source. They will help understand the broader landscape of work, look for gaps, share learning, reduce duplication and deliver greater impact. The Hub will promote development of on-ground funded projects through communication, networking and collaborative learning activities. Specifics will be identified through the collaborative planning process.
- **The importance of links with permitting** - The relationship between the Hub's coordination function and permitting processes within the Great Barrier Reef Marine Park was raised in multiple focus group discussions. The Steering Group resolved that a structured relationship between the Hub Coordinator and the GBRMPA permit team will facilitate better understanding of proposed activities in the region and opportunities to connect work. For newly proposed restoration/research work, GBRMPA is exploring how they can let people know about the Hub as a resource for knowledge exchange.
- **Communication is critical** - The Hub can play a valuable role in communications both with those in the local reef stewardship sector and with the broader regional, national and global communities. Public facing communications must clearly communicate the issue and limitations, but focus on sharing the proactive work being done to support solutions and our learnings along the way. Communications should facilitate understanding and engagement pathways for opportunities for many interested parties to go on the journey. Communications is also important for sharing work and learnings – ensuring that the rapidly evolving work underway is being shared in a timely manner through regular information exchanges and seeking to leverage existing local knowledge.
- **Forging connections** - Part of the rationale for the Hub was to strengthen connections between local practitioners and with the Reef Restoration and Adaption Program (RRAP) for better two way information exchange. This creates further opportunities to value and utilise local knowledge, operational capacity and visitor connections that can contribute to shared goals. Translating and sharing research and practitioner findings quickly is important to support learning and continual improvement. Scientific papers are important but can't be the only tool. One way to help with connections is to have those with interests directly involved in R&D.
- **A holistic view** – Early discussions and discussions with Traditional Owners in the Cairns-Port Douglas area are reiterating the holistic and connected nature of habitats that must be considered for stewardship and restoration. Discussions supported through a part-time Traditional Owner Coordination Support role have been using the [UNEP continuum of actions](#) for reef protection, framing restoration as one tool in a highly connected environment – this appears to reflect feedback to date from Traditional Owners.