



Meeting Report – 23 March 2017

INTRODUCTION

The first meeting of the National Marine Science Committee (NMSC) for 2017 was held in Canberra on Thursday 23 March. It was clear from the presentations, reports and discussions at the meeting that Australia has never had a greater need for high quality marine science to drive sustainable development of our blue economy. It promises to be an exciting year.

While all NMSC members have access to agendas, papers and minutes, this Meeting Report has been prepared for much wider distribution within the national marine science community. Its purpose is to ensure that the broader community is informed about the NMSC's action agenda, and has the opportunity to provide comment and input.

HOT TOPICS

Josh Gibson from the Great Barrier Reef Marine Park Authority (GBRMPA) gave a well received presentation on the [Reef 2050 Integrated Monitoring and Reporting Program](#) (RIMREP). RIMREP has three working groups, on Program Design, Data Management and Systems, and Synthesis and Reporting. The working groups are now in full swing, with a June 2018 deadline for information to feed into the 2019 Great Barrier Reef Outlook Report. In addition to being a project of national significance in its own right, RIMREP is of considerable interest to the broader marine science community given developments in the Commonwealth Marine Reserves network and in a number of State marine jurisdictions. We expect to discuss it further at future meetings.

Two important reports were released just prior to the meeting and received some discussion:

1. The Australian Institute of Marine Science (AIMS) 2016 Index of Marine Industry (see [here](#)), and
2. The 2016 State of Environment (SoE) Report (see [here](#)). NMSC will have a dedicated session on SoE at its next meeting, aimed at understanding how marine science can continue to improve Australia's capacity to assess the state of its marine and coastal environments, and to inform societal responses.

MEMBERSHIP UPDATE

NMSC welcomed the [Marine National Facility](#) (MNF) to the committee, represented by Toni Moate (CSIRO). It was also agreed that the [Antarctic Climate and Ecosystems Cooperative Research Centre](#) (ACE CRC) would join the committee, represented by Tony Worby (who was in attendance). We have also been approached by the [International Ocean Discovery Program](#) (IODP) and agreed to invite them to join us at the next meeting. The committee sees growth in the membership base as a very positive signal in terms of its relevance.

NATIONAL MARINE SCIENCE PLAN PRIORITIES

The 2016 National Research Infrastructure Roadmap is significant for NMSC priorities related to (1) utilisation of the national research vessel fleet, and (2) sustaining and expanding the Integrated Marine Observing System (IMOS). The Roadmap has been finalised and is now under consideration by Australian Government. Both of these priorities were well represented in the Draft Roadmap as reflected in NMSC's submission of 16 January 2017, which can be found [here](#). We hope to have some positive news on national marine research infrastructure sometime in the near future.

NMSC has had some difficulty identifying a group of willing and able representatives from the University sector to work on the priority to 'develop marine science research training that is more quantitative, cross-disciplinary and congruent with the needs of industry and government'. However we have now identified a core group to work on this with support from the NMSC secretariat.

A good discussion was held on the 'marine baselines and long term monitoring' priority. Around Australia there is a lot of activity in this general area, much of which is now represented at NMSC. This includes RIMREP (see above), the NESP Marine Biodiversity Hub, the Western Australian Marine Science Institution (WAMSI) etc. NMSC agreed that it has an important role to play in national coordination, capacity development, and gap analysis. John Gunn (AIMS) will lead the formation of a national working group to do this.

Led by Peter Steinberg (SIMS), the working group on 'marine system processes and resilience' is planning a workshop in Sydney on 15-16 May, with an initial focus on habitat forming mechanisms. The report from this workshop will be discussed at the next meeting.

A report on the priority to 'develop a dedicated and coordinated science program to support decision-making by policymakers and marine industry' generated a lot of discussion. A consensus emerged that this is really an overarching priority of the National Marine Science Plan, and that the rate and trajectory of change in marine systems will require a paradigm shift in thinking that is unlikely to emerge from past experience with marine systems. Issues confronting decision makers include climate impacts, biosecurity, social licence to operate, restoration ecology, and of course the interplay between them. Several members expressed interest in contributing to an emerging priority project, drawing expertise from other domains as appropriate. This idea will be explored out of session.

The remaining national marine science plan priorities (on a national ocean modelling system, and creating an explicit focus on the blue economy) will be given more emphasis at the next meeting.

AUSTRALIAN OCEAN DATA NETWORK (AODN)

AODN Director Roger Proctor dialled in to speak to his report. NMSC members were asked to assist in revitalising the AODN Technical Advisory Group (TAG), and supporting increased availability of their data collections online. Marine data was a consistent theme in discussion of other priorities, including on 'marine baselines and long term monitoring'. It was pleasing to see the committee elevating the importance of this issue on its agenda.

NEXT MEETING

The next NMSC meeting will be held in Canberra on Thursday 20 July 2017. In view of the large number of important items on our agenda, this will be a full day meeting (9am to 5pm).

NMSC Chair, on behalf of the Committee

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