

Gladstone Healthy Harbour Partnership (GHHP) Independent Science Panel (ISP)

Chair's report from ISP meeting #10 held on 5 August 2014

The objectives of the meeting were to provide ISP members with an update on GHHP activities; review progress against the GHHP Science Program milestones and budget; progress the data sharing agreements with providers of existing datasets and in particular the arrangements with TropWATER, Infofish and Department of Agriculture, Forestry and Fisheries (DAFF); and review progress on the development of the Fish Health Causality Research project and collaborations with the Fishing Industry Research and Development Corporation (FRDC).

The ISP confirmed the selection of a provider for projects - ISP006 – Gladstone Harbour Model, 007 – Connectivity indicator pilot project, 008 – Statistical pilot project and 009 – Data and information management system noting there had been considerable inter-sessional Panel discussion about these projects. The ISP endorsed the GHHP science program budget for 2014_15 for consideration by the GHHP MC. The Panel heard an update on the implementation ISP Project - ISP005: Social, cultural and economic indicator pilot project and discussed ways to improve the social survey prior to its implementation.

The Science Program is on track to deliver the required science inputs into the key GHHP outputs including the guaranteed data (and some of the non-guaranteed data) for the pilot report card and the data and Gladstone Harbour Model required for the first Report Card in 2015. Overall milestones are on track although there have been some acceptable revision of dates associated with data agreements and contracting of projects. The ISP noted good progress in the development of the TropWATER and Infofish projects and both are expected to be ready for GHHP endorsement in August 2014. The ISP agreed on the need to progress the Fish Health Causality Research Program and collaborations with FRDC as a matter of priority.

The ISP considered ways of progressing the mud crab indicator including the use of commercial catch and effort data collected by DAFF. ISP noted the current effort data collected by DAFF makes standardisation of the catch difficult. The discussions with DAFF are continuing and ISP is also considering other options for incorporating mud crab data in the report card.

ISP members continued their discussions around the nature and form of technical documents required to support the report card. The Panel agreed on the need for three reports. The first will focus on overarching information, the second on the results and their interpretation, and the third will focus on responses to the Report Card results. The development of the technical documentation will continue out of session and will be finalised at the next ISP meeting.

The Panel discussed the PCIMP water and sediment quality program and identified two issues we need to clarify with PCIMP – measurement of sediment size and the metals analysis methods. There was also a discussion on the possible need for a one-off assessment of TBT levels in the Harbour. The ISP considers it is unlikely to be an issue but a one off monitoring activity may be required if previous studies are inadequate or there are major gaps in sampling across the harbour. The ISP will continue to investigate this issue.

GHHP Chair Mr. Paul Birch and GHHP Coordinator Ms. Rachael Stegemann attended part of the meeting and provided an update on GHHP activities. GREAN members joined the ISP for lunch and we had mutually useful discussions around the links between coral disease and dredging and the use of satellite imagery to assess sedimentation from dredging activities.

The ISP acknowledged the significant amount of work the science team had completed since our last meeting, thanked them for their dedication and noted the ongoing high quality of their work.

The next ISP meeting is scheduled for the 14 and 15 October 2014 in Gladstone.