



**SCIENTIFIC WORKING GROUP  
COMMUNIQUÉ – MEETING No. 58  
12 February 2013**

The following members were present at the Scientific Working Group (SWG) meeting held on 12 February 2013: Peter Fairweather (chair), Milena Fernandes, Charlie Huveneers, Martine Kinloch, Hugh Kirkman, Scoresby Shepherd, and Hazel Vandeleur. Apologies were received from Luciano Beheregaray, Anthony Cheshire, Sean Connell, Bronwyn Gillanders and Luciana Moller.

The SWG wishes to advise the Minister of the following key outcomes:

- SWG was updated regarding recent changes in the identity of the Minister for Sustainability, Environment & Conservation, the government's public advertising campaign, Select Committee & parliamentary discussions, links to the new Commonwealth reserves, how other jurisdictions are developing their park networks, and the NRM reporting framework.
  - SWG was updated about progress in developing the Monitoring, Evaluation and Reporting (MER) program, in particular the seven focal assets for MER indicators (reef, seagrass, mangroves/saltmarshes, soft sediments, fish, birds, marine mammals). This led to a series of discussions about optimising plans for how to do the crucial step of the actual monitoring done in the field. Specific advice was given to the department about experts to invite to workshops about fish monitoring, and other aspects of planning for the MER program. Given budgetary constraints, SWG recommended an initial focus upon well-replicated monitoring at a few key sites expected to demonstrate the effect of protection rather than spreading resources thinly over the whole network.
  - SWG requested to see a list of the 38 subtidal reef sites to be monitored, linked to predictions about what zoning will mean for each (including scientific justification of those expectations), along with plans for what measurements will be made, and explicit links to the objects of the *Marine Parks Act*. Similar reports for the other habitats and taxa would be sought at later dates.
  - SWG advised the department about the key questions to ask about any established methods that are being considered for MER uses, i.e. whether these have been developed to monitor trends or for baseline inventory purposes.
  - SWG considered ways of responding to some recent papers that seemed to unreasonably impugn efforts to develop marine park networks.
  - SWG recommended negotiating access for DEWNR to data related to aquaculture monitoring because this could be very cost-effective for the MER program.
  - SWG flagged future discussions about alternative funding models to improve understanding of, and decision support for, ecosystems in State waters. As previously advised to the former Minister, SWG considers that we need to grow the total pool of funds available for MER from all sources and to better link to other needs across government departments and other potential partners.
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- SWG would like to meet with the new Minister as soon as possible to discuss his views about the evolving role of SWG in the roll-out of our 19 marine parks over the next two years and for us to be sure of your priorities for advice from the SWG.

A handwritten signature in dark ink, appearing to read 'P. Fairweather', with a long horizontal flourish extending to the right.

Prof. Peter Fairweather  
Chair, Scientific Working Group