SCIENTIFIC WORKING GROUP

COMMUNIQUÉ – MEETING No. 60

9 April 2013

The following members were present at the Scientific Working Group (SWG) meeting held on 9 April 2013: Peter Fairweather (chair), Luciano Beheregaray, Sean Connell, Milena Fernandes, Hugh Kirkman, Scoresby Shepherd and Hazel Vandeleur. Apologies were received from Anthony Cheshire, Bronwyn Gillanders, Charlie Huveneers, Martine Kinloch and Luciana Moller.

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

- SWG was updated regarding the first phase of the implementation that came into force on March 29. Unfortunately, SWG could not see that enough progress had been made with streamlining the changeover of permits for scientific research to co-ordinate between DEWNR and PIRSA, despite warning about the risks here over the last four years. Thus SWG predicts that research in the 19 marine parks (at least for Sanctuary and Habitat Protection Zones) will now have to grind to a halt until more clarity is forthcoming or else scientists run the risk of breaching the law. SWG sees this as an unfortunate failure on the part of the Department in keeping good faith made in promises to the research sector.
- SWG urges the Department to seek independent peer review of all the substantial pieces of advice it has commissioned from external scientists and other consultants, as the only way to ensure defensibility via meeting this stringent standard of mainstream science.
- SWG was concerned about the aims of the Citizen Science component of the planned Monitoring Evaluation and Reporting (MER) program and would like to clarify that this part is mainly a community engagement and participation exercise as opposed to a replacement for real, professionally collected scientific information for the MER and 10-year review of the Marine Park management plans.
- SWG further discussed in relation to MER: the Department's timetable for establishing the MER program through to August; lists of key questions to underpin the assessment of the network's performance; and the lessons learnt from a national workshop that the Department hosted last August with all jurisdictions. Advice on these items were given as appropriate with SWG members undertaking to provide more specific feedback out of session.
- SWG heard a presentation from a consultant Dr Simon Bryars about effective monitoring of fishes and invertebrates, especially those species that are fished. He has provided this advice amongst other information to the Department.
- SWG urged the Department that the MER program should ideally be staged over the years so that different vital questions might be the focus for a given financial year. Such a campaign approach would allow a broader coverage of the key questions across the coming decade without the burden of to continue a field program from when it is initiated regardless of whether

any questions has been answered. For example, in such a cycle would work systematically through some major issues to with biophysical or ecological questions within MER; say, 2013/14 might be designated to fill gaps in the habitat mapping and lists of valued assets within each park; 2014/15 to investigate connectivity of populations and processes within and between Marine Parks; 2015/16 might focus upon fish sizes, abundances and biomass in different zones; 2016/17 might tackle the issue of vulnerability and resilience in the light of relevant threats in each park; 2017/18 could focus upon how to best measure ecological processes within parks to demonstrate ecological function; 2018/19 might revisit the existence and condition of valued (iconic) assets within focal marine parks; 2019/20 could answer how different zones are performing; 2020/21 might revisit the status of fished species across different degrees of protection; and 2021/22 might revisit habitats and their values, including levels of surrogacy provided by this parks network. Such clear staging would not be more transparent as a plan and allow for sensible selection of test cases but also allow effects well in advance of the work commencing to secure the resources, partnerships and external (third party) grants that are needed to make them doable in the target year.

- SWG also began discussion about whether we could now meet less often, in large part as a response to the reduction in the budget that DEWNR has from next financial year. Members shall vote on that out of session.
- The SWG continues to look forward to meeting with the Minister in the future to discuss his priorities for us as a working group.

Professor Peter G. Fairweather
Chair, Scientific Working Group