

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

Chair's report from ISP meeting #14 held on 4 May 2015

The objectives of the meeting were to provide ISP members with an update on GHHP activities, and to review progress against the GHHP Science Program milestones. In addition the ISP discussed: the 2015 science budget and GHHP 2015 Science Plan; the 2015 Report Card timeline, the outcomes of the GHHP/FRDC fish health workshop held on 22nd and 23rd April; approval processes for scopes of works including the selection of successful tenderers; website publication of final reports; statistical support for 2015 Report Card and into the future; potential mudflat health; and, updated the nomenclature document. ISP also ratified out of session endorsement of following final reports: ISP005 Social, Cultural and Economic Indicators, ISP007 Connectivity, ISP010 Fish Recruitment Index and ISP011 Seagrass Indicators.

The Science Program is on track to deliver the required science inputs into the 2015 Pilot Report Card. Overall the milestones are on track. Although in consultation with the GHHP Management Committee there have been some revisions of deadlines for data agreements and contracting of projects. ISP agreed to modifications to the flowcharts for approval of scopes of works and project appraisals, and the new flowchart for final report approval and this is expected to improve the efficiency of the ISP review process. The ISP endorsed the 2015 science plan and 2015/16 science budget for submission to the GHHP Management Committee. The ISP finalized timeline for production of 2015 Report Card, website and technical report including the simultaneous delivery of the Report Card, website report card material and the technical report.

The ISP continued their discussion of the provision of statistical support for the report card to minimise the risk of non-delivery of the statistical outputs required for the 2015 Report Card. This discussion was informed by the outputs of the recent ISP statistical workshop. It was agreed the GHHP should investigate the availability of an appropriately qualified statistician to be available to work with the GHHP science team for a period of about 3-4 months part-time.

The ISP also continued their discussions about the development of the mudflat biodiversity indicators including a presentation by Dr Lev Bodrossy, Team Leader, CSIRO Environmental Genomics Team about ecogenomic approaches (sequencing DNA from environmental samples to provide information on microbial assemblages).

GREAN members joined the ISP for a lunchtime discussion focus on how water and sediment quality standards are set nationally and regionally. Discussions focused on detecting the cumulative impacts of different stressors in Gladstone Harbour, the effects of pH on metal concentrations in water and whether Aluminium bio-accumulates in food webs. GREAN members were also briefed about the recommendations from the GHHP/FRDC Gladstone Harbour Fish Health Research Program workshop held on the 22nd and 23rd April 2015. There were two key recommendations from the workshop. Commission two literature reviews: the first on fish health indicators and the second on the use of biomarkers in aquatic environments. The second was to develop a joint GHHP/FRDC project to develop an Australian approach to fish health monitoring using Gladstone Harbour as a case study. These will be discussed at the next ISP meeting.

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 4 May 2015 in Gladstone.