

# Reef Restoration and Adaptation Program

## Intervention Risk Review Group

March 2023

Statement

The Reef Restoration and Adaptation Program (RRAP) Intervention Risk Review Group held its first in-person workshop in Townsville in March 2023. The RRAP's purpose is to develop a suite of new interventions that can help the Great Barrier Reef resist, adapt to, and recover from the impacts of climate change.

A thorough understanding and evaluation of intervention risks is a key component of RRAP. The [Intervention Risk Review Group](#) brings an independent, objective perspective to the risk review process. The Group's role is to consider matters related to, and provide guidance and advice on, the assessment and management of risks associated with interventions being investigated under RRAP. The Group is led by Independent Chair Sue Barrell AO FTSE. Members are subject matter experts operating nationally and internationally, outside of RRAP, selected for their expertise across relevant disciplines. Risk is considered from all angles - environmental/ecological, social, cultural, economic, and regulatory.

The RRAP interventions are being investigated against the background of an already threatened environment and uncertainty about its future. The March workshop focused on the context, risk identification and knowledge requirements for a robust assessment of intervention risks. During the workshop, the Group acknowledged the seriousness of the threat that existing pressures and especially global warming pose to the Great Barrier Reef (the Reef) and coral reefs globally, as well as the communities and industries that depend upon them. Evidence considered from the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change makes clear the extraordinary pressures that are being put on the Reef's ecosystem now and are projected to intensify in the future. The Group received a presentation by RRAP on projected ecological outcomes for the Reef under realistic climate change scenarios.

Members agreed that greenhouse gas emission reduction and strengthening conventional management under the Reef 2050 Plan are core strategies for sustaining a healthy and functioning Reef ecosystem. Members recognised that continuing current management practices is essential, but that doing nothing additional (i.e., not undertaking "new" interventions) is expected to result in major changes to the health and functioning of the Great Barrier Reef. Therefore, the Group supports the proposition that a suite of novel coral reef restoration and adaptation interventions will likely be needed to sustain the Reef's ecosystem functions and the Outstanding Universal Value that saw it inscribed on the World Heritage List in 1981.

The Group acknowledged that interventions have potential consequences, positive and negative, known and unknown, that need to be assessed and understood. Comprehensive and context-dependent risk assessment allows them to be assessed against the risk of inaction in circumstances where climate change impacts are expected to increase in frequency and severity. It enables the consideration of trade-offs between the risks and benefits of reef interventions and facilitates better informed decision-making by Reef managers and regulators.

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Through its work, the Group seeks to provide independent objective assurance to the RRAP Board, management agencies and Traditional Owners, that they have necessary understanding of the potential interventions to make informed decisions about reef management, conservation, and restoration. The scale of the Great Barrier Reef, and the scale at which interventions ultimately could be deployed, is unparalleled globally, and therefore a significant challenge to research, development and deployment. The Group acknowledged that ongoing research, technology development, and staged field trials of RRAP interventions are necessary to continue to build knowledge and reduce uncertainty around risk.

RRAP is approaching the development of coral reef interventions from a holistic perspective, including working closely with Traditional Owners and taking into consideration not just the ecological but also the social, cultural, economic, and regulatory aspects of interventions. The Group recognised that RRAP is a fully planned, designed, and integrated program of coral reef intervention research and development. Therefore, the Group agreed that RRAP is well placed to continue its role on reef restoration and adaptation work for the Great Barrier Reef and to contribute to global efforts as climate change impacts increase in frequency and severity.

The Intervention Risk Review Group will continue its work in an online capacity and hold a second in-person workshop later in 2023.

For more information, see webpages on the [Reef Restoration and Adaptation Program](#), including the [intervention options](#), and the [Intervention Risk Review Group](#).

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