

The Reef 2050

Traditional Owner Aspirations Project

Traditional Owner Governance Model Information Sheet

Background

At the Traditional Owner Reef-wide Workshop in Cairns from the 1-3 May 2018, a session focused on Traditional Owner governance models that could potentially support future engagement and consultation in the Reef. As a part of the Reef 2050 Traditional Owner Aspiration Project, hearing Traditional Owner perspectives on ways Traditional Owners currently want to engage in decision making forums regarding their country is critical. The Reef 2050 Traditional Owner Aspiration Project supports the outcome of "a coordinated approach for Traditional Owners to liaise with government, industry and other stakeholders on Great Barrier Reef matters and monitoring and reporting on delivery of the Reef 2050 actions."

Discussion at the TO Reef-wide Workshop

Many Indigenous organisations are important for our Indigenous communities. These Indigenous organisations can only work for us properly if they have strong governance that includes: informal and formal structures; legal and or statutory arrangements in place; a strong membership base; an effective governing board; and good administrative and corporate support.

Indigenous cultural (or customary) governance is equally significant in our communities, and continues to exist through our Indigenous Peoples' inherent cultural (or customary) rights to our traditional estates¹. Indigenous cultural (or customary) governance, however, has largely been invisible to many non-Indigenous organisations including governments. Characteristics of Indigenous cultural (or customary) governance are identified as being based on customary lore and traditions; reflects cultural traditions; and supports social and cultural cohesion.

Shared Governance arrangements that ensure Indigenous Peoples and governments work together fairly and equitability, are also important in our communities.

Indigenous knowledge can be best recognised and supported when Indigenous governance (both cultural and organisational) supports practices of: self-determination; empowerment; and leadership.

Current Traditional Owner Governance in the Reef

Currently, Traditional Owners voices are engaged through existing forums such as the Great Barrier Reef Marine Park Authority (GBRMPA) Indigenous Reef Advisory Committee (IRAC) and the Tourism Reef Advisory Committee (TRAC). In addition, the Reef 2050 Governance arrangements have some engagement with Traditional Owners through the Reef Advisory Committee (RAC), the Independent Expert Panel (IEP) and some avenues through the Reef 2050 Integrated Monitoring and Reporting Program (RIMReP) Processes.

Building on previous Traditional Owner work in the Reef

Advancing the previous work that Traditional Owners from across the Reef have previously identified as "big steps to move forward", include:

1. The core task is to build the strength and capacity of local Indigenous land and sea management organisations at the right scale;
2. Partnership frameworks are required for the engagement of government and non-government organisations at the GBR-wide, regional and local scales;
3. Support for open engagement with information and knowledge generation is critical.

¹Talbot, L.D. 2017. *Indigenous Knowledge and Governance in Protected Areas in Australia and Sweden*. PhD Thesis Submitted in the Division of Tropical Environments and Societies, James Cook University, Cairns.

Proposed suggestions for Traditional Owner Governance in the Reef

Common themes emerged from the discussions about governance amongst Traditional Owners at the Reef-wide Workshop in May (**Figure 1**).

Traditional Owners also supported the overall concept of a "cluster and hubs" approach to link Traditional Owners at local, sub-regional and regional scales, with different arrangements proposed (**Figure 2**).

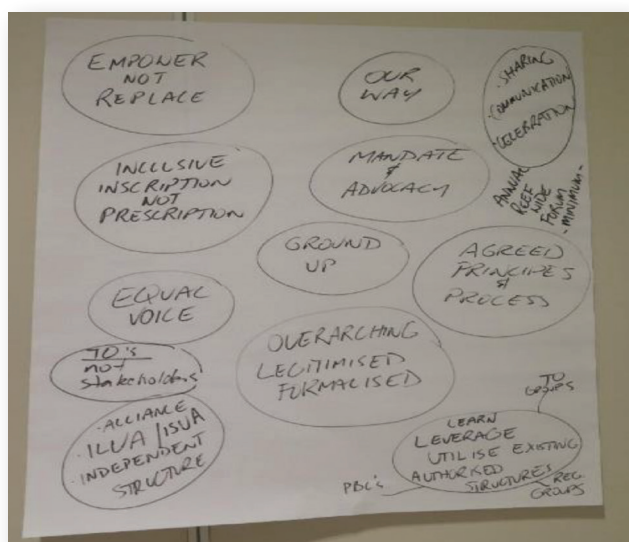


Figure 1: Traditional Owner governance themes

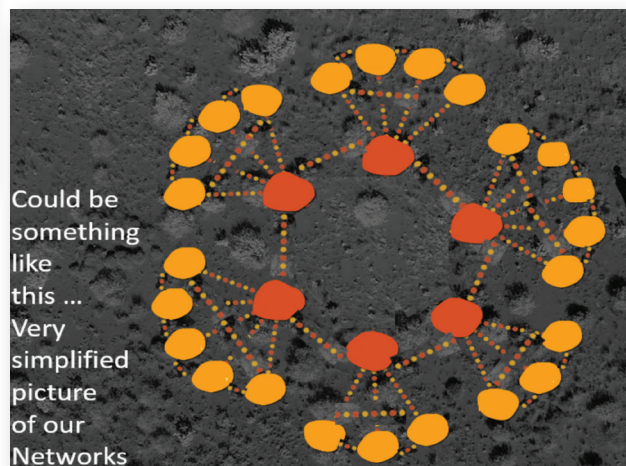


Figure 2: Example of a Cluster and Hub network

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