

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

Chair's report from ISP meeting #8 held on 8 April 2014

The objectives of the meeting were to provide ISP members with an update on GHHP activities; review progress against the GHHP science milestones for 2014; review the Scope of Works/data sharing agreements for the connectivity, statistical support, data and information management system, habitat monitoring, and fish and crab monitoring projects; review the outcomes of the recent ISP modelling workshop and progress the Gladstone Harbour Model project; progress the causality of fish ill health research priorities; and, discuss the ISP input into the draft Water Quality Objectives for the Capricorn Curtis Coast prepared by the Queensland Government.

The ISP noted there had been good progress against the GHHP science milestones for 2014 and there were no areas of concern.

The ISP agreed the goal of Gladstone Harbour fish health research should be to develop a tool for the early detection of fish health issues that could be implemented in the GHHP report card in the future. ISP discussed a range of recent government and consultant reports on the Gladstone fish health issues and aggregated the key issues and knowledge gaps raised to date. However the previous programs and reports do not provide clear recommendations around priorities for causality research, however key themes included the need to better understand the impacts of multiple stressors on fish health and to be able to detect an effect rather than an exposure to a stressor.

The ISP agreed on a process to develop priorities and invite targeted proposals. The ISP also agree to explore the possibility of the GHHP fish ill health causality research being coordinated by the Fisheries Research Development Corporation (FRDC), which would provide a degree of professional independence and direction. The ISP also agreed that GHHP should collaborate with the Fitzroy Partnership for River Health and InfoFish to develop a fish health index that will be consistent between the two report cards.

Building on the Gladstone Harbour Model (GHM) workshop on 4 April, the ISP discussed outstanding issues and areas of agreement. ISP members agreed on the scope of the GHM project, have confidence in the proposed approach and agreed on the process to finalise the scope of works for MC consideration in May 2014.

The ISP also agreed on the process to finalise the connectivity, statistical support, data and information management system, habitat monitoring and fish and crabs monitoring projects scope for MC consideration in May 2014. Seagrass, corals and mangrove monitoring requirements may be addressed by existing monitoring programs. No new scope of works is required, however research is required in order to develop a suitable indicators and a monitoring program for mudflats. The habitat monitoring and fish and crabs monitoring projects will require data sharing agreements with Gladstone Ports Corporation, James Cook University and InfoFish and the provision of some statistical support to finalise indicators.

GREAN members joined the ISP for lunch and we had useful discussions around the status of GHHP data sharing agreements with existing data providers, plans for the fish and crab monitoring programs, and the challenges of interpreting the causes of algal blooms.

The next ISP meeting is scheduled for the 17 June 2014 in Gladstone.