

WA Marine Science Strategy achieves unprecedented collaboration

A who's who of Western Australia's marine science, government, industry, conservation and community sectors met at the inaugural Blueprint for Marine Science Forum in Perth to begin building an Australian-first collaboration around marine science.

The Forum is a spinoff from the Western Australian Premier's Roundtable for Marine Science, which has been working toward building a collaboration that will form the basis for advances in marine industry operations, environmental protection efforts and community engagement over the coming decades.

The [Blueprint Implementation Strategy](#), developed by the Premier's Roundtable group supported by the Western Australian Marine Science Institution (WAMSI), outlines the pathway to: sharing unavailable data; improving WA's marine observing network; establishing science plans around decommissioning and the impact of marine noise; agreeing on indicators for environmental and physical ocean changes; and ensuring Indigenous knowledge is included in decision making. The groups involved are also considering studies to support biosecurity, improved fishing productivity, marine wildlife management and estuary management.

The difference to the status quo is that these plans are being led and supported by multiple sectors that have historically not worked together on these issues, in some cases due to conflict of interest.

“What we have all agreed is that the way we've been working just isn't going to cut it any more,” Western Australian Fishing Industry Council CEO John Harrison said. “It's a different world now. Our stakeholders and the community expects independent science to form the basis for decisions, but also all sectors need to be smarter about sharing data and

co-investing. None of us, including fishers, government, oil and gas companies, can afford to individually do our own thing any longer.”

In his presentation to the forum, Woodside Energy’s Chief Environmental Scientist Luke Smith said the models for collaborative investment, data sharing and outcome led science are already emerging in Western Australia. He described the \$20 million [Dredging Science Node](#), administered by the [Western Australian Marine Science Institution joint venture](#), as a great example of how to frame the questions needed to address the knowledge gaps and achieve outcomes.

“To deal with uncertainty about dredging impacts on the environment, industry spent over \$190 million on impact assessment and monitoring for just three dredging projects,” Dr Smith said. “We need to get that figure down by reducing that uncertainty ahead of time.”

“A good way to do that is through targeted, well led, and properly resourced collaborative projects like the Dredging Science Node, and we (all sectors) need to fund it adequately and share the findings openly and broadly,” he said.

National Energy Resources Australia Chair Ken Fitzpatrick said that it was important to have a trusted custodian of scientific data, suggesting the government’s model for [WAMSI](#): a joint venture partnership, was a positive way forward.

The Forum acknowledged that building collaboration based on shared effort between very different groups, not used to working with each other, will be challenging.

“The Blueprint needs to be seen as the trigger for a “culture change” which will be hard,” Acting Director of The University of Western Australia’s Oceans Institute and WA Premier’s Research Fellow Professor Shaun Collin said. “But if done properly, it’s a wonderful opportunity to work more closely together, initially on a few priorities, and once that trust is developed, we can go much further and deliver outcomes positioning

Western Australia as a genuine leader in marine science.”

The Advisory Group will meet again early in 2017 to consider proposed changes to current ways of working and plans for several long-term and important science programs.

Participants included:

Peter Klinken	Co-Chair (WA Chief Scientist)
Naomi Brown	Co-Chair (WAMSI Chair)
Mark Bailey	Managing Director BMT Oceanica / Environmental Consultant's Association
Heather Brayford	Director General, Department of Fisheries
James Brown	Managing Director, Cygnet Bay Pearls
Steve Buchan	Director RPS Metocean / Forum for Operational Oceanography
Shaun Collin	Technology Innovation Advisory Committee / UWA
Nick D'Adamo	Officer in Charge, UNESCO-IOC Perth Office
Christine Erbe	Centre for Marine Science & Technology, Curtin
John Finlay-Jones	DVC(R) Edith Cowan University
Ken Fitzpatrick	Chair NERA
John Harrison	CEO WAFIC
Tom Hatton	Chair EPA
Jeffrey Haworth	Executive Director Department of Mines and Petroleum (for Director General)

Brad Kitchen Ports Authority (for CEO)	Director Environment & Heritage, Pilbara
Peter Korsen Manager, Assets)	Manager Technology, Chevron (for General
Bruce Lake	Chair APPEA
Ken Lee	Flagship Director, CSIRO
Peter May	Head of Research, BoM
David Morrison	DVC(R) Murdoch University
Phil Murray	Blueprint Programs Manager, WAMSI
Simon McGarvie Executive Director)	Principal Policy Officer, Office of Science (for
Steve Newman of Fisheries	A/Supervising Scientist–Finfish, Department
Andrew Pomeroy	Engineers Australia
Andrew Rowland	CEO RecFishWest
Patrick Seares	CEO WAMSI
Jim Sharp Wildlife	Director General, Department Parks and
Luke Smith	Environmental Scientist Manager, Woodside
Stuart Smith	CEO NOPSEMA
Charlie Thorn	Director of Research, Curtin University
Mike Utsler	COO Woodside
Alexander Watson	Kimberley Program Manager, WWF Australia

(for Director)

Apologies: IMOS/NMSC, AIMS, GA, Parks Australia, ConsCouncil