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Dear Committee

The Great Barrier Reef is a world renowned environmental and economic asset and it is important that the policy settings, funding and governance are of the highest standard.

The Great Barrier Reef Foundation is being provided with a significant level of funding – and from this there should be significant outcomes achieved for the Reef. These outcomes need to be explicitly and precisely set out up front before funds are spent. Further, there will need to be annual reviews to ensure that progress is on-track.

The new role of the Foundation does not mean that the Australian and Queensland governments will not need to meet their Reef responsibilities. In fact it will be critical that the roles and responsibilities of each entity is set out, so there is clarity around delivery and the ability to assess performance.

For example, both governments have agreed on new pollution reduction targets specific to the 35 catchments that flow into the Great Barrier Reef. The actions and investment needed to achieve these targets must be clearly set out – and then responsibility assigned to either the Australian or Queensland government or the Foundation. Annual report cards should assess the performance of programs undertaken by the three separate key investors.

The greatly enhanced importance of the Great Barrier Reef Foundation in the delivery of the Reef 2050 plan also raises a number of governance questions. Key amongst these is to define the role of key advisory bodies (such as the Reef Advisory Committee and the Independent Expert Panel) in relation to the Foundation as well as determining a process for review of the Reef 2050 Plan. If we are going to have a Great Barrier Reef to pass onto future generations we need to rapidly act on climate change. However, we also need to address all the other key impacts to the Reef so that it has the best chance to respond to the global warming impacts that are already inevitable – as the recent back-to-back bleaching events show. To do this we need appropriate policy, laws, funding and governance.

WWF provides the below comments on the Terms of Reference for the Inquiry into *Great Barrier Reef 2050 Partnership Program Budget* measure.

The 2018–19 Budget Measure *Great Barrier Reef 2050 Partnership Program*, with particular reference to:

a. the delivery of the Reef 2050 Plan, including through the Great Barrier Reef 2050 Partnership Program and through other avenues;

- The roles and responsibilities of the Foundation for implementing the Reef 2050 Plan in relation to the State and Federal Governments need to be transparent and clearly defined.
- Progress towards targets for water quality is very poor as shown in the most recent [Reef Report Card 2016](#).
- Due to this inadequate delivery of pollution programs, the World Heritage Committee's 2017 report '*strongly encouraged*' Australia '*to accelerate efforts*' to meet the water quality targets.
- Significantly increased funding is necessary to accelerate the rate of practice change on farms and the restoration of pollution hotspots in Reef catchments, beyond funds announced to date.
- The World Heritage Committee has requested a report demonstrating effective delivery of the Reef 2050 Plan by December 2019.
- The funding provided to the Great Barrier Reef Foundation (GBRF) will be an important part of Australia meeting its Reef 2050 Plan commitments.

b. the proficiency of the Great Barrier Reef Foundation and its capacity to deliver components of the Reef 2050 Plan;

- The GBRF will need to undertake significant changes to be able to effectively deliver the new functions it has received funding for.
- WWF has long advocated for an independent entity to be established to consolidate and disperse funds to the most cost-effective actions to restore Reef health (see attached report *Reef Bank – Concepts, Options and Opportunities*).
- The final form of the Reef Trust whilst informed by this work did not meet with the arrangements that WWF had proposed.
- It would be beneficial if GBRF could incorporate some of the recommended arrangements including:
 - Sourcing of both private and public funds – including commercial investors for projects which provide a return on investment whilst boosting Reef health.
 - Fund disbursement based on best available science
 - Investment in the most cost-effective actions to restore Reef health
 - A clear and detailed investment plan to maximise efficiency and effectiveness.
 - Governance arrangements to ensure independence and avoid conflicts of interest

c. the proficiency of other organisations and their capacity to deliver components of the Reef 2050 Plan;

- The funding provided to GBRF is for functions that are very similar to current programs as shown in the below tables.
- This is unsurprising as these are the actions that have been committed to under the Reef 2050 Plan – the new funding can be seen as largely a transfer of resources and responsibility for these actions.
- The organisations and individuals who have been involved in the delivery of these actions will likely form the core resources for their ongoing delivery.
- However, the changed arrangements do offer the opportunity to look at new models of delivery and to bring in organisations to enhance programs.

Reef 2050 Investment Plan. Table 1: overview of current investment in Reef 2050 actions over the next five years (page 7).

	Reef Water Quality Protection Plan (14 actions)	Field Management Program (16 actions)	Reef 2050 Integrated Monitoring and Reporting (16 actions)	Crown-of-thorns starfish control (1 action)	Traditional Owner (23 actions)	Fisheries (5 actions)	Other Reef 2050 actions (76 actions)	Total (151 actions)
Australian Government	\$212.4 m	\$48.1 m	\$62.0 m	\$10.8 m	\$39.4 m	\$ -	\$343.9 m	\$716.6 m

New \$500 million Reef investment

	Improving water quality	Management and compliance operations on the Reef	Reef health monitoring and reporting	crown-of-thorns starfish control.	Community and Indigenous traditional knowledge		Science that supports Reef resilience	Total
New Australian Government funding	\$201 m	\$56 m	\$40	\$58 m	\$45 m		\$100	\$500 m

d. the process of granting funding to the Great Barrier Reef Foundation for the Great Barrier Reef 2050 Partnership Program, the terms of agreement for funding, and the ongoing administration of funding;

- The terms of agreement for the funding had not been made available at the time of writing this submission, nor the arrangements for ongoing administration of funding.
- WWF would like to see arrangements put in place as set out above in section b.
- It is important that arrangements are in place to ensure public funds are spent on the right outcomes whilst allowing for flexibility around what specific programs and projects are invested in to achieve these outcomes.
- An important document will be the *Reef 2050 Water Quality Improvement Plan* which is soon to be released, and is supposed to set out the activities over the next five years to achieve pollution reductions.
- However, the document lacks sufficient detail on the actions and investments that will occur (there is of course little detail included on how the \$201 million assigned to GBRF will be spent which will now be a major part of the program).
- Therefore it will be critical to update the *Reef 2050 Water Quality Improvement Plan* so there is a clear plan to implement the most cost-effective projects across Australian and Queensland Government programs as well as those funded by the Great Barrier Reef Foundation.

e. the prior activities and operations of the Great Barrier Reef Foundation, including research, public-policy advocacy and fund-raising;

- The Foundation has successfully delivered a number of GBR conservation projects. These include climate resilience projects and it appears the Foundation has recently specialised in the area of coral reef restoration.
- The Foundation has successfully raised considerably funds for the Reef, particularly from large philanthropy funds and corporate partners.
- The Foundation does not engage in public-policy advocacy but has a successful and extensive community engagement program.

f. the establishment, governance and membership of the Great Barrier Reef Foundation, including the management of conflicts of interest and commercial interests; and

- Much of the above goes to this aspect of the inquiry.
- Important matters to address include:
 - The terms of agreement for the funding needs to set clear objectives and performance criteria for the funding, as well as reviews to ensure that milestones are being achieved.
 - Plans, programs and investments must be endorsed by an independent scientific advisory group.

- Whilst it is beneficial to have major corporations involved in GBRF, to draw on their resources and skills, there will need to be very clear protocols regarding decision making to avoid any conflicts of interest.

g. any other related matters. *Levels of investment in Reef programs*

- Funding for the Great Barrier Reef is a critical issue and there needs to be clarity around what levels of funding go to which programs over what years.
- This will allow an assessment of the adequacy of funding for programs, and will also allow for clarity on when 'new' funding is a genuine increase in resources for Reef programs as compared to an extension of current funding levels into the future or a reallocation of funds.
- The \$500 million package announced by the Australian Government is clearly a significant increase on what was previously in the Budget for Reef programs.
- However, it is not clear how much the announcement increases overall funding commitments that have been made for Reef programs and therefore how much is genuinely "additional" as claimed.
- The Australian Government set out funding levels for Reef programs in its [Reef 2050 Plan Investment Framework](#) which was submitted to the World Heritage Committee in December 2016.
- The Investment Framework confirmed that there will be a ten year investment of over \$2 billion to 2025 from both the Queensland and Australian Governments.
- With an additional \$500 million this investment should now be \$2.5 billion.
- A document setting out how the \$500 million funding adds to the overall ten year investment, should be provided to the Senate Inquiry (this should include a break-down of which programs the money goes to and who the money is provided by)
- The Investment Framework also detailed a 5 year investment of \$1.28 billion for Reef 2050 Plan actions between 2015-2020 - the portion of the Australian Governments investment being \$716 million (see above table for breakdown).
- In this year's Budget Paper No. 2 Expense Measures it states that "The Government will provide \$535.8 million over five years from 2017-18 to accelerate the delivery of *Reef 2050 Plan* activities."
- On face value it therefore appears that funding has actually decreased – however there may be items included in the Investment Framework figure that are not in the Budget.
- The Senate Inquiry should request a document which sets out how the current level of funding, post the \$500 million announcement, compares to the five year funding for the suite of programs set out in the Investment Framework.

Thank you for the opportunity to provide input into the Inquiry.

Yours sincerely

Paul Tony
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WWF-Australia