



RRAT Committee: Inquiry into the identification of leading practices in ensuring evidence-based regulation of farm practices that impact water quality outcomes in the Great Barrier Reef

Australian Academy of Science response to questions taken on notice

Response to Senator Rennick's questions on notice (received 28 August 2020):

Academy approach to scientific advice

As noted in the Academy's [*Principles of science policy advice*](#), Academy advice is developed through working groups of Fellows and other experts, chosen for the relevance of their expertise to the nature of the advice being developed. Members of these working groups will include relevant sector stakeholders drawn from academia, education, industry, government and community sectors. The inclusion of specific expertise will depend on the nature and context of advice.

Contrary to the Senator's insinuation, it is neither necessary nor desirable to include expertise in all scientific fields for any given piece of advice. The Academy resources include the expertise of its Fellowship, as well as its capacity to call on volunteer contributions from other sources. The Academy stands by the accuracy and relevance of our advice.

The Academy also recognises scientific authority where relevant and appropriate: for example, the research of the Australian Institute of Marine Science and the Great Barrier Reef Marine Park Authority is considered highly reliable on matters pertaining to the health of the Great Barrier Reef.

Best Available Science

The Academy considers the *Great Barrier Reef Outlook Report 2019*, the *2017 Scientific Consensus Statement*, and the *Reef 2050 Plan* to have been prepared according to rigorous and transparent processes, and to represent reasonable syntheses of the relevant evidence. A call for completeness in this case is inappropriate and specious: these reports were prepared according to their own terms of reference and are entirely adequate to that purpose. If gaps exist – as they must – it is unlikely to be due to a lack of diligence or expertise on the part of the drafters.

If the Senator is unhappy with either the comprehensiveness, thoroughness or accuracy of these reports, the Academy recommends he consider providing funding to the GBRMPA, AIMS and the university research sector to provide additional analysis.

Response to Senator Carr's question:

Senator Carr asked "Has the academy in particular done any work with regard to the trends in contestability of non-core programmatic funding for water research in Australia in recent years?"

The Academy is working with the Australian Academy of Technology and Engineering (ATSE) and the Australian Social Sciences Academy (ASSA) on a National Strategy for Australian Water Research and Development. A Joint Academies Working Group has been established to prepare a report, which will highlight the significant economic, social and environmental value of water in Australia, and provide a clear strategy for prioritising and supporting water research and development based on international best practice and Australia's unique requirements.

The working group would be happy to provide a briefing as required.