



Ms Christine McDonald
Secretary
The Senate Environment and Communications Reference Committee
PO Box 6100
PARLIAMENT HOUSE, CANBERRA ACT 2600

By email:ec.sen@aph.gov.au

REF – CR2016-0044

Dear Ms McDonald,

Inquiry into the threat of marine plastic pollution in Australia

Thank you for your letter of 16 March 2016 about the inquiry into the threat of marine plastic pollution in Australia and the allocation of funding under the Great Barrier Reef Marine Debris Clean-up Project.

The occurrence and threat of marine debris is highlighted in the *Great Barrier Reef Outlook Report 2014* and the *Reef 2050 Long-term Sustainability Plan*, particularly the impact on protected marine migratory species. Interaction with marine debris can severely compromise these animals and their habitats even resulting in death in some cases. The Great Barrier Reef Marine Park Authority has long established programs, i.e. Reef Guardian Schools and Councils, which focus on the key threats to the Reef, including marine debris. These ongoing programs form a solid platform to raise awareness and promote action to reduce the impact of marine debris. The Great Barrier Marine Debris Clean-up project represented an opportunity to expand the marine debris reduction work that was already being delivered through these programs. Reef Trust funds totalling \$700,000 were provided to the agency to support actions that reduce the occurrence of marine debris through on-ground works and increase community awareness of this issue.

I can confirm that Tangaroa Blue Foundation is one of the key contractors in this project. Responses to your specific funding enquiries are below:

How much has been spent on contracting organisations to deliver clean-up activities?

The Great Barrier Reef Marine Park Authority, through the Great Barrier Reef Marine Debris Clean-up project, will provide \$407,272.17 (GST exclusive) to contractors for activities associated with on-ground action by the completion date of the project (30 June 2016). As at 18 March 2016 \$281,818.17 (GST exclusive) has been provided to contractors.

The contracts focus on on-ground marine debris removal activities but also incorporate capacity building support and awareness raising activities.

Which organisations have been contracted to deliver services under this initiative?

The Great Barrier Reef Marine Debris Clean-up project uses two marine debris removal groups to deliver on-ground and awareness raising activities — Tangaroa Blue Foundation and Eco Barge Clean Seas. In initial scoping of this project, these contractors were identified as established organisations capable of delivering the large-scale on-ground activities required to achieve desired project outcomes.

Tangaroa Blue Foundation will receive \$332,272.20 (GST exclusive) through this project. An additional \$15,000 funded outside this project has been secured for Tangaroa Blue Foundation to work with Indigenous groups to help build capacity for marine debris removal activities. Eco Barge Clean Seas will receive \$75,000 (GST exclusive) for on-ground activities specifically in the Whitsundays region as part of the project.

The funding disparity between organisations is directly due to capacity and operational locations of each organisation. Eco Barge Clean Seas operates only within the Whitsundays region, whereas Tangaroa Blue Foundation operates throughout the wider Great Barrier Reef catchment, and in particular, remotely within the Cape York region.

How much has been spent on community awareness and education campaigns?

Community awareness regarding marine debris will continue to be delivered in all facets of this project. This includes a targeted messaging campaign, presentations to key stakeholders, school activities, community clean-up days, source reduction workshops and community installations.

Project funds of \$90,000 (GST exclusive) have been specifically allocated to marine debris source reduction awareness with local communities and stakeholders throughout the Great Barrier Reef catchment. This includes the delivery of source reduction workshops which Tangaroa Blue Foundation has been contracted to facilitate. Engagement with Reef Guardian Schools to promote action and awareness of marine debris has utilised \$10,000. Targeted marine debris communications throughout the project constitute a further \$94,000.

Further community awareness and measures are specified in the contracts with both providers.

How much has been spent on project administration costs?

The Great Barrier Reef Marine Debris Clean-up project was assigned 10 per cent of project funds, equating to \$70,000, from Reef Trust for administration and reporting requirements. This allocation has been fully exhausted. The Great Barrier Reef Marine Park Authority continues to support the administration and coordination of this project with our own funding. It is an important component of our ongoing work, and will continue to be represented by on-ground action and key messaging through our stewardship programs.

I thank you for the opportunity to respond to these queries. Please contact parliamentary@qbrmpa.gov.au if you require any further clarification.

Yours sincerely

Russell Reichelt
Chairman

24 March 2016