



# Darwin Harbour Advisory Committee

## MINUTES FOR MEETING 11

4 July 2005

9.00am – 12.00pm

Meeting Room 1, Darwin City Council Building, Harry Chan Ave, Darwin

### 1. WELCOME AND APOLOGIES

#### Present:

Name	Representing
Ms Annie Andrews	Business and industry
Mr John Bailey	Independent chairperson
Ms Angelika Hesse	Local Government Interests
Mr Chris Makepeace	Amateur Fishermen's Association of the NT
Ms Donna Odegaard	Larrakia Nation Aboriginal Corporation
Ms Adele Pedder	Environment Centre of the NT
Ms Kira Schlusser	Project Co-ordinator, Darwin Harbour Regional Plan of Management
Dr Simon Townsend	Chair, Ecosystem Monitoring Group
Ms Christine Truarn	Horticultural/agricultural interests
Professor Bob Wasson	Charles Darwin University

#### Apologies:

Name	Representing
Mr Alastair Black	Darwin Port Corporation
Mr Brendan Dowd	Local government interests
Ms Liza Schenkel	Landcare
Mr Chris Young	Shipping and transport industry

Mr Bailey welcomed members of the Darwin Harbour Advisory Committee (DHAC) and Ms Angelika Hesse, Environment Manager for Darwin City Council, who attended the meeting on behalf of Mr Dowd.

Mr Bailey said that due to the unfortunate passing away of one of the members of the Indigenous Working Group (IWG), agenda item 8 *Indigenous Working Group*, would be moved to the first business of the day so Ms Odegaard could leave the meeting early to attend to pressing matters. The committee would observe protocols by not mentioning the name of the deceased until permission was granted from her community.

### PREVIOUS BUSINESS

### 2. INDIGENOUS WORKING GROUP (IWG)

Ms Odegaard reported on the loss of the first indigenous woman and elder who supported the formation of the Indigenous Working Group and the development of protocols for the implementation of the Darwin Harbour Regional Plan of Management. Ms Odegaard said she had spent time with the deceased prior to her passing who had asked Ms Odegaard to commit to

carrying on with the work begun by the working group as well as other matters.

Ms Odegaard informed members of the date of the funeral and asked if the committee would formally acknowledge the deceased's role in the IWG.

She said that the IWG sought to bring together Larrakia and non-Larrakia indigenous people in the region and that this would be the first forum in the region with this intention.

She also discussed the Larrakia Ranger Program and plans to expand it. She said that she would try to organise a presentation by the team leader for the next IWG meeting. The next IWG meeting would also need to formalise the structure of the IWG to ensure a continuing forum for all indigenous groups within the catchment.

Ms Odegaard summarised the outcomes from the previous IWG meeting. She said that Dr Trish Bourke and Ms Lorraine Williams had briefed IWG members on the progress of the cultural surveys project, being managed by Mr Steve Sutton from the Office of Environment and Heritage. After discussion, working group members agreed to ask DHAC members to extend the deadline of the project until December 2005 so that further work could be achieved.

Mr Bailey moved that the deadline for completion of the Cultural Surveys project be extended to December 2005. Seconded by Ms Andrews.

Committee members requested a list of IWG research projects.

**ACTIONS:**

1. The project co-ordinator would organise a notice in the *NT News* regarding the deceased IWG member as soon as possible.
2. Ms Odegaard would contact the family and ask for permission to print the deceased's name and inform the project co-ordinator.
3. The leader of the Larrakia Rangers Program will be asked to give a presentation at the next IWG meeting.
4. The project co-ordinator will notify Mr Steve Sutton that the deadline for the Cultural Surveys project has been approved by the DHAC.
5. The project co-ordinator will prepare a list of IWG projects for DHAC and circulate it to committee members.

**3. STORM WATER STRATEGY PRESENTATION**

Mr Michael Lawton, Director Waste and Pollution Management, arrived to present his briefing at 9.30am. Mr Lawton reported that resources from within the Office of Environment and Heritage had been secured to recruit a new officer now that contracts had expired for the previous two officers' undertaking the work.

Mr Lawton said that the strategy needed to be partially reworked to take into account references to comments from the recent Environment Protection and Heritage Council (EPHC) meeting held recently. The EPHC had made statements about the National Water Initiative and Mr Lawton said he understood that additional national guidance documents would be provided.

Mr Lawton indicated that once completed, the confidential draft strategy would be circulated to the committee prior to being submitted to the Minister. He also identified issues that needed to be resolved:

- finding resources to implement key priorities;
- who would have the responsibility for lobbying for resources;
- how the strategy would be revised over time;
- how the strategy is to be implemented in practice.

Mr Bailey thanked Mr Lawton for his briefing.

Committee members expressed concern that the process of developing the strategy had not met expectations. Apart from one minor exception, committee members had not had any opportunity to provide input to the strategy nor seen any work-in-progress.

Further, they were disappointed with the idea that they would be presented with a document, which members were expected to endorse prior to it being seen by the Minister, and would have only a matter of days in which to do so. Under these conditions opportunity for making changes, if required, would be limited.

Members were also concerned that a substantial amount of funding made available through the committee had been returned to Treasury at the end of the financial year due to months of delay in starting the project.

**ACTION**

The project co-ordinator will write a letter to the Office of Environment and Heritage expressing concern about the committee's involvement and the process of developing the stormwater strategy as outlined in the minutes of the meeting.

**4. ACCEPTANCE OF PREVIOUS MINUTES**

Moved: Ms Andrews

Seconded: Ms Pedder

**5. ACTION SHEET AND STATUS REPORT**

Members noted the action sheet, the status report of projects and the work program to date.

## 6. CORRESPONDENCE

Correspondence noted.

Ms Pedder raised were concerned that an extension given to provide comments regarding sand mining in the harbour had not been dealt with by the Department of Business, Industry & Resource Development as expected. The comments had not been included with all other submissions despite being granted an extension. DBIRD's letter of acknowledgement stated that the submission had been received outside the objection period and may be considered.

### **ACTION**

The project co-ordinator will follow up with the relevant agency to determine whether the extension had not been communicated or whether there was another reason for the unsatisfactory response.

## 7. FINANCIAL REPORT

Members noted the financial statement. Ms Schlusser said that the under-expenditure of approximately \$30K was explained by funds not being spent on the Stormwater strategy.

### **ACTION**

The project co-ordinator will write a letter to Ms Colleen LaPorte thanking her for her efforts towards preparing monthly financial reports for the committee.

## 8. ECOSYSTEM MONITORING GROUP (EMG)

Dr Townsend reported that the recruitment process had been started for the project "Identifying Significant Habitats" and someone skilled in Geographical Information Systems (GIS) was one of the requirements of the position.

He said that the consultants working on the review of the report on monitoring programs within the region, with Jeff Morgan as the project officer prior to his departure, had around eight weeks to complete their work.

## 9. ECOSYSTEM RESEARCH GROUP (ERG)

Professor Wasson expressed concern that filling a one-year post doctoral research fellowship position would be difficult, since any successful candidate would more than likely start to look for another position shortly after they had started.

Professor Wasson suggested he explore the possibility of one of the researchers from Coastal and Marine Hydrology Branch of the Department of Infrastructure, Planning and the Environment being seconded to Charles

Darwin University to do the work. A small working group could be formed, who would take the results of the EMG report on monitoring in the region and, together with the conceptual model developed by the researcher, would undertake “what if” analyses on potential threats to the harbour. For example, the group could look at the scenario of incremental development of aquaculture farms in Darwin Harbour and the likely cumulative impact over time.

Secondly, Professor Wasson said that barramundi, an iconic species suggested at the ERG workshop to be used in developing a conceptual model, had many advantages. However, because information on fishing effort is not available it could not be used for the modelling exercise at this point in time.

Professor Wasson said that a dipstick diagnostic method to determine the histopathology of barramundi using blood, recently developed by an Honours student, was promising. He said that this type of research yielded exciting results and showed the value of student research, as alluded to in Attachment 7 of the agenda papers and would be addressed later in the meeting.

**ACTION**

Professor Wasson, together with Dr Townsend and Ms Schlusser will continue to investigate the possibility of seconding an officer from DIPE to undertake the modelling work as outlined.

**10. PLANNING WORKSHOP**

Ms Schlusser presented some background information on the Moreton Bay Partnership in readiness for the planning workshop when the Project Leader, Ms Diane Tarte would give the committee a briefing. The project coordinator also presented other websites that demonstrated useful variations in methods of reporting to the public on actions in management plans or from meetings.

Professor Wasson suggested the training of dairy farmers in the Peel Harvey region in Western Australia (reference Bob Humphries) was another relevant model that the committee could consider.

**ACTION**

The project co-ordinator will investigate the Peel Harvey model for the 22 August workshop.

**11. PROJECT CO-ORDINATOR'S REPORT**

Mr Bailey referred to the hand-out listing the project co-ordinator's actual and anticipated expenditure of time. Given the committee's primary responsibility of overseeing the implementation of the Darwin Harbour Regional Plan of Management, the current regime of monthly meetings was placing a high

administrative load on the project co-ordinator with the result that the tasks required to implement the plan of management were not progressing.

After discussion, committee members agreed to consider holding quarterly meetings and separate 'issues' meetings to deal with development issues as they came to hand. A final decision on the frequency of meetings was postponed until members could discuss the committee's model of operation at the planning workshop on 22 August. The table provided for this meeting would be distributed for the workshop using the quarterly meeting scenario.

**ACTION**

The table discussed will be distributed for the workshop using the quarterly meeting scenario.

**BUSINESS ARISING**

**12. FISH FARM SUBMISSION**

Ms Pedder referred to the document she had distributed with the agenda papers on issues of concern regarding aquaculture facilities proposed for the harbour. Members noted that Ms Pedder's aim was to share the information for future reference.

**13. GUNN POINT BLUE HOLES REPORT**

Mr Bailey tabled the report *Inspection of Blue Holes at Gunn Point for anchor damage to coral* prepared by Andria Marshall, Aquatic Pest Management – Fisheries Group.

The report's conclusion was that: "Of the 2.5 square kilometres of coral bommies and reef walls surveyed by the five divers during the 500 minutes spent in the water, no evidence of anchor damage was observed."

Committee members wanted the report to be available on DHAC's website or a link provided to the report. After clearance with the author, the report would also be mentioned in the next newsletter.

Members asked that the silt covering the corals be followed up along with a letter of thanks to Dr Marshall.

**ACTIONS**

1. The project co-ordinator will organise for the report to be put on the DHAC website, liaise with Dr Marshall regarding copyright and silt on the corals.
2. The project co-ordinator will ensure that the report is covered in the next newsletter.
3. The project co-ordinator will write a letter of thanks to Dr Marshall.

#### **14. DHAC-SPONSORED HONOURS STIPEND**

Professor Wasson said that he and Dr Townsend would like the committee to consider offering a stipend for an Honours student, which could be called the *Darwin Harbour Advisory Committee Honours Stipend*.

The funding of \$3000 would be made available from the communications plan budget.

**Mr Bailey moved that the proposal be accepted. Seconded by Mr Makepeace.**

Members suggested that continued funding should be sought from sponsors, including AFANT, Conoco Phillips, Boating Industry Association, Wharf Consortium and Defence Housing.

#### **ACTION**

1. \$3000 will be made available for an Honours student from the Communications Plan funding.
2. The project co-ordinator and committee members will pursue sponsorship to fund the stipend in future years.

#### **15. OTHER BUSINESS**

##### **15.1. East Arm Waste Treatment Facility – incinerator proposal**

Ms Hesse expressed concern about the Draft Notice of Intent and Development Application for the East Arm Waste Treatment Facility. She said that an incinerator was planned which could bring several problems, including furans and dioxins released into the air.

Committee members were concerned that they had not been made aware of this development and wanted to ensure they were informed of future proposals, particularly in the early stages of planning.

#### **ACTIONS**

1. The project co-ordinator will follow up accessing development applications on behalf of the DHAC.
2. Ms Hesse will provide information on her response to the review of the development application for the proposed incinerator.

##### **15.2. Coastal erosion**

Ms Hesse raised the issue of the low pH of the groundwater she had discovered in Darwin, which raised the possibility of a link between the erosion of the coast in the harbour. She said that there was a need to monitor bores in the region to determine one way or the other whether there was a need for concern. In order to carry out this work a special request for funds would need to be made.

**ACTION**

Ms Hesse will provide a summary of the issue so that it can be pursued by the committee.

**15.3. Integrated Natural Resource Management Funding**

Ms Hesse raised the possibility of funding being made available through the NHT (Natural Heritage Trust). Committee members noted the information.

**ACTION**

Once the briefs have been made publicly available the project co-ordinator will notify DHAC members.

**15.4. Report: "Taking NRM Beyond the Shore"**

Ms Pedder informed the committee about a recent publication by the Marine and Coastal Community Network, which is available through the website: [www.mccn.org.au](http://www.mccn.org.au). Members noted the information.

**16. NEXT MEETING**

The next meeting will be the planning workshop on 22 August 2005 and the quarterly meeting will be on 3 October 2005.