

COMMUNIQUÉ

MARINE NATIONAL FACILITY STEERING COMMITTEE MEETING #82: Wednesday, 21 February 2018

The 82nd Marine National Facility Steering Committee (SC) meeting was held in Hobart on 21st February. The SC approved the *Investigator* schedule options for single year applications for 2019-20 and discussed a number of strategic issues. An overview of these discussions is provided below.

Granted Voyage schedule

SC approved the proposed 2019-20 primary Granted Voyage (GV) schedule which will be published on the Marine National Facility (MNF) website after offers of sea time are accepted by the successful applicants.

The SC noted that the shortfall in funding is still preventing full utilisation of the vessel and this remains an issue, as demand for sea time continues to significantly exceed even the 300 day full capacity.

Three proposals—totalling 148 days at sea—were successful in securing sea time in the 2019-20 schedule, which will also include two multiyear projects awarded in 2016 and the final voyage of a three year trial for the Collaborative Australian Postgraduate Sea Training Alliance Network (CAPSTAN) initiative. The 2019-20 schedule also includes the compulsory five year dry-dock, which will see the *Investigator* out of operations for several weeks at the start of the schedule.

The quality of the proposals was high and feedback will be provided to all proponents in the coming weeks.

The Supplementary applications process for 2019-20 will commence in March 2018. If you are not currently on the subscriber list, you can subscribe [here](#).

Membership and Personnel Changes

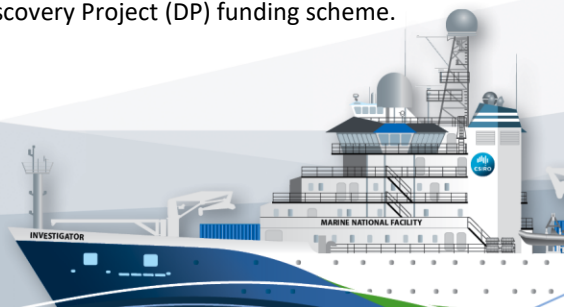
The SC would like to welcome our newest member to the committee: Dr Jan Flynn, Senior Metocean Engineer, Woodside Energy, who has taken up the Industry Representative position on the committee. A warm welcome also to Dr Barbara Musso who commenced as the MNF, Facilities Program Director in October 2017.



Marine National Facility Steering Committee meeting in Hobart. From right: Tim Moltmann (National Marine Science Committee); Gary Prosser (AMSA); Toni Moate, Dave Williams, Barbara Musso (CSIRO); Ian Poiner (Chair); Jan Flynn (Woodside); Donna Roberts (AAD); Neville Smith (Chair, Scientific Advisory Committee); John Gunn (Chair, National Benefit Assessment Panel). Image: CSIRO.

Alignment of ARC and GV application process

In response to feedback from proponents, the SC agreed to changes in the timing of the GV application process to better align with the Australian Research Council (ARC) Discovery Project (DP) funding scheme.



The new process will come into effect for proposals for the 2021-22 schedule, whereby the outcomes of GV applications will be provided prior to the ARC DP application closing date. The changes will benefit applicants by removing the need to submit a speculative application to ARC where the status of application for a GV is unknown. The new process will be published on the MNF [website](#).

Data Policy Review

Under the Australian Government Public Data Policy, non-sensitive publically funded research data is made open by default for use and reuse by the public, industry and academia, in a manner that is enduring and frequently updated using high-quality standards.

The MNF is committed to open access to data in a timely fashion and holds more than 30 years of marine data, used to support excellent science and to provide key information for evidence-based decision making.

The introduction of *Investigator* as Australia's state-of-the-art marine research vessel has brought with it exciting new opportunities, but the associated complexities are requiring the MNF to adapt the way it does business.

As part of a broader Business Improvement Project, MNF has identified the need to review the MNF Data Policy to reflect the increased operational complexity and in light of lessons learnt since the commissioning of *Investigator*.

A review of the policy provides the opportunity to identify and when possible address users' needs and concerns, while ensuring consistency with key principles for publically funded research data. Issues such as definition of 'data', data embargoes, archiving and curation arrangements and data ownership, are amongst the topics that will be covered through the review.

A key step in the Data Policy review process involves consultation with the science community, which will be facilitated by SC members. A draft discussion paper is being prepared to support a number of consultation activities, including a workshop at the Australian Marine Sciences Association conference in South Australia in July 2018.

Engagement Plan

The SC discussed the development of a Stakeholder Engagement Plan to assist the MNF in successfully delivering against the MNF Strategy to deliver excellent science in the national benefit.

The Engagement Plan will be finalised in the next few months with input from and discussions with relevant research and industry stakeholders.

Articulating Impact and National Benefits

In its capacity as an advisory committee under the SC, the National Benefit Assessment Panel (NBAP)'s overarching purpose is to provide advice to the SC on applications for sea time with respect to potential contribution to Australia's national benefit. The NBAP met in November 2017 to assess applications for the 2019-20 schedule. The NBAP found that an increasing number of applications are providing strong supporting documentation from end users and are clearly outlining the path to application of the science to deliver national benefits.

Notwithstanding the significant improvements, there remains a need for guidance to encourage researchers to better engage with relevant policy makers to ensure the end users have a direct interest in their proposal and are engaged at the project design stage.

The SC discussed options for the effective communication to future proponents of the requirements for enabling the assessment of the national benefit, e.g. the need to concisely articulate the engagement and impact strategy for end users, the importance of letters of support that clearly demonstrate genuine and sustained engagement with end users and a clear consideration of the timelines for impact.

In conclusion

The *Investigators* journey thus far—which has recently passed the 100,000 nautical miles point—has enabled Australia to participate in leading edge ocean research, but alongside this, the increasing demands and complexities have required a step change to the way the MNF does business. Key to meeting these challenges has been the introduction of new initiatives; and various policy and process reviews, for which the SC continues to provide support and strategic advice.

As with previous years, accommodating demand for sea time on *Investigator* continues to be a key challenge and working towards achieving full year operations for the *Investigator* remains the highest priority for the SC.

Dr Ian Poiner
Chair, MNF Steering Committee