

## COMMUNIQUÉ

### MARINE NATIONAL FACILITY STEERING COMMITTEE

#### MEETING #83: Friday, 14 September 2018

The 83<sup>rd</sup> Marine National Facility (MNF) Steering Committee (SC) meeting was held in Hobart on 14<sup>th</sup> September to discuss a number of strategic issues flowing from the very welcome announcement of full year funding for the MNF as part of the 2018 Federal Budget.

#### Independent Review of the Access Framework

Under the MNF access framework, merit access to sea time is limited to proposals that rank highly against both science excellence and national benefit criteria. Under the previous 180 day funding model, there was flexibility for the MNF to also grant sea time to researchers under user pays arrangements. With the move to full year funded operations there is a need to assess the impact this might have on equity, effectiveness and ultimate impact of the MNF.

The SC endorsed the MNF's proposal to undertake an independent review of the MNF access framework to ensure that the Facility continues to maximise the national benefit arising from its operations. The review shall require significant consultation with science, government and industry users. The MNF will engage an appropriate person to conduct the independent review, which will be completed in mid-2019. Further information about the review, including opportunities to participate, will be announced via the MNF mailing list. To subscribe to the mailing list please visit the following [link](#).

#### Challenges and Opportunities

**Transition to full year operations** – While representing a long anticipated and very welcome enhancement of resources for Australia's marine science community, the new funding to achieve full annual operational capacity brings with it challenges that require consideration.

From an operational perspective, the primary focus remains safety and wellbeing at sea and the SC welcomed the MNF's focus on strengthening safety frameworks and mitigating increased risk to maintain the Facility's excellent safety record.

Operational and technical support for voyages is provided by dedicated teams housed at CSIRO. This support will require an increase to deliver full year operations and SC was briefed on the recruitment strategy currently underway to address this.

**Coordination of research vessel facilities** - The 2016 Research Infrastructure Roadmap, to which the Budget announcement was a response, advocated for greater coordination across Australia's marine research fleet to ensure optimal use of expensive and limited infrastructure.

SC asked the MNF to continue discussions with other Research Vessel operators and relevant National Facilities to support efficiency and coordination. The SC agreed that closer relationships with relevant institutions should be pursued in the coming months.

**Scientific Capabilities** - The May Federal budget included a much needed capital expenditure budget to provide critical spares, maintain the scientific equipment on board, and ensure that the science capability of the platform keeps pace with developments in technology and science user's needs.

The SC endorsed a proposal to establish a scientific and technical advisory group—consisting of science community members and other experts—to allow users to provide input and direction on future science capabilities for the Facility.



## Membership and Personnel Changes

Community Representative - The SC welcomed its newest member to the committee: Professor Martina Doblin, University of Technology Sydney (UTS), who has taken up the Community Representative position. Professor Doblin leads the [Productive Coasts](#) research program within [the Climate Change Cluster](#) (C3) in the UTS Faculty of Science.



*Photo - Dr Martina Doblin (right) with Ms Amy Nau (CSIRO) somewhere off the East Coast of Australia on Investigator (image courtesy of CSIRO)*

**Early Career Researcher** - SC noted the very high interest in the position advertised for Early Career Researcher on the Scientific Advisory Committee (SAC). This position aims to assist in the development of the next generation of Australian marine scientists, and is eligible to early-career blue-water marine scientists.

With nearly 30 strongly competitive applications received, SC agreed to appoint two early career researchers to the SAC and also offer a similar position to one other candidate on the National Benefit Assessment Panel (NBAP).

Following a thorough evaluation and selection process, SC are pleased to announce that early career researcher SAC member positions have been offered to Dr Katherina Petrou, University of Technology Sydney (under the guidance of Prof. Philip Boyd) and Dr Jason Everett, University of New South Wales

(under the guidance of Dr Peter Doherty). These positions will run for 2 years, after which they shall be re-advertised. Biographies of new and existing SAC members can be found [here](#).

The SC would like to thank applicants who submitted an expression of interest to volunteer for our SAC. The high level of interest and quality of the applications received was extremely encouraging and infers a positive future for Australian marine science.

The Early Career Researcher position on the NBAP will be filled by an applicant for the SAC position and announced shortly.

## In conclusion

The MNF has reached a significant juncture with the announcement of full year operations. This communique has provided a high level summary of some of the exciting challenges that the MNF face in the new operational paradigm, and how the Facility will meet them to ensure it continues to support excellent science by Australian researchers and their international collaborators.

**Dr Ian Poiner**  
**Chair, MNF Steering Committee**