



Communiqué

Marine National Facility Steering Committee

Meeting #100

The 100th meeting of the Marine National Facility Steering Committee (MNFSC) was held in Hobart from 23 to 24 July 2025. This fabulous milestone represents 41 years of the MNFSC providing the Marine National Facility with expert guidance and user community support.

Message from Steering Committee Chair – Ms Anne-Marie Lansdown

The 100th meeting of the Marine National Facility (MNF) Steering Committee was held in Hobart, and focused on several important agenda items including health, safety and environment (HSE) matters, the primary application review process, the MNF's decadal strategy (*MNF 2030*) mid-cycle review, funding and optimising value of this nationally significant facility.

A case study of the MNF's response to foreign navy live-fire exercises was received with great interest, and we considered how the upcoming release of the new National Marine Science Committee's decadal plan will influence our future approach and activities.

The MNF Steering Committee (the Committee) will meet again in November for our 101st meeting. In the meantime, will be following with close interest RV *Investigator's* movements to Tonga to study the aftermath of 2022 Hunga Tonga volcanic eruption, and to the activities in the Coral Sea with the deep-sea diversity assessment.

HSE report and safety pause

The Committee acknowledged the significance of the work the MNF has delivered in the Health, Safety, and Environment (HSE) space. The Committee was impressed with the HSE report and the significant work delivered to ensure the well-being of all personnel involved in MNF operations. We commend the team's proactive approach to safety, which included the implementation of a safety pause. This measure was particularly noted for its effectiveness as a proactive leading indicator to address potential hazards and the prevention of accidents.



Anne-Marie Lansdown, MNFSC Chair

The Committee's recognition of these efforts underscores the importance of maintaining a strong safety culture and continuously improving safety protocols to protect everyone involved in the project.

Live-fire response

The MNF faced unexpected challenges during the IN2024_ E01 trial and calibration voyage following the Long Maintenance Period due to the proximity of three foreign navy vessels performing live fire exercises in the Tasman Sea. This incident highlighted the importance of maintaining a watching brief and the difficulty of obtaining access to information during unique or unexpected situations. This was an opportunity to strengthen ties with other key Australian organisations and government departments.

The current situation management framework was deemed fit for purpose, and the Committee acknowledged the unexpected challenges faced by the MNF and praised the team's effective and diligent handling of the situation.

Research Advisory Committee and National Benefit Advisory Committee review process

The Committee determined that the Research Advisory Committee (RAC) and National Benefit Advisory Committee (NBAC) reviews of Primary Applications should remain a separate and parallel process and recognise that MNF has dedicated significant time and effort to address community feedback, making improvements to the application process. This decision ensures that the review processes for research quality and national benefit remain distinct, avoiding unconscious bias and maintaining the integrity of the evaluation process.

The Committee's commitment to continuous improvement and responsiveness to community input highlights their dedication to enhancing the application experience for all stakeholders.

MNF 2030 mid-cycle review

The MNF will commence a mid-cycle review of the *MNF 2030* strategy in 2025-26 and the Committee discussed the need to integrate feedback on science capability, focus on partnership arrangements and optimising vessel use to ensure maximum community benefit. The Committee reflected on the value of staying abreast of international developments and aligning MNF priorities with additional national benefit and policy frameworks such as the Sustainable Ocean Plan and the National Marine Science Strategy when these are released.

Strategic oversight and funding, and optimising MNF value

The Committee reaffirmed its strategic oversight role, particularly in relation to the upcoming National Collaborative Research Infrastructure Strategy (NCRIS) funding rounds. Emphasis was placed on demonstrating the value of the MNF by identifying emerging opportunities for collaboration. The discussion highlighted the importance of showcasing the MNF's value through

strategic partnerships, including with the National Marine Science Committee (NMSC) and NCRIS. The Committee noted the need to improve stakeholder recognition of the MNF and to leverage high-profile launches and events to raise the MNF's profile.

Additionally, the Committee discussed the importance of targeted outreach, storytelling aligned with national priorities, and building relevance in the context of climate change, marine heatwaves, and environmental reform.

Optimising MNF value

The Committee remains dedicated to optimising the use of the MNF, enhancing its value, and ensuring that future actions benefit the broader research community. The MNF continues to deliver significant impact and value to key government stakeholders by providing a wide range of essential data. Additionally, the establishment of key groups such as the Technology and Innovation Advisory Group, which includes user community representation, is fostering a collaborative approach to decision-making on new capabilities.

These mechanisms will ensure the MNF is prepared for the evolving research priorities outlined in the soon-to-be-released Sustainable Ocean Plan and National Marine Science Strategy. Meanwhile, the Committee has highlighted the growing need to balance research quality, equipment use, and the MNF's budget constraints.

National Significance

The Committee emphasised the MNF's value to CSIRO, Australia's largest research organisation, and to the broader scientific community. RV *Investigator* is a strategic national asset, delivering critical scientific knowledge and building resilience to climate and environmental challenges, ensuring long-term benefits for the Australian community. Through strategic engagement with key government departments and organisations such as the Bureau of Meteorology, Parks Australia, and Geoscience Australia, RV *Investigator* demonstrates clear impact and value to the research community.

The Committee outlined the significance of the MNF and user community working together to ensure these impacts are understood, securing the continuation of the services the MNF provides.

Committee membership changes: farewells and welcomes

The Steering Committee membership welcomed Dr Rob Hough to his first Committee meeting as CSIRO delegate.

The MNF has sought expressions of interest for Government and User Community representatives for the Committee as Dr Vanessa Lucieer and Mr Jason Mundy's terms are concluding. We have greatly benefited from both their contributions, as well as that from Prof Elanor Huntington while she was the CSIRO delegate.

Name	Role
Ms Anne-Marie Lansdown	Chair – Independent
Mr Greg Hood	Member – Government
Dr Vanessa Lucieer	Member – User Community
Mr Jason Mundy	Member – Government
Mr Keld Knudsen	Member – Industry
Dr Elizabeth (Beth) Woods	Member – Independent
Dr Rhonda Bartley	Ex officio – Australian Antarctic Division
Dr Lyndon Llewellyn	Ex officio – National Marine Science Committee
Dr Rob Hough	Ex officio – CSIRO Delegate
Prof Alex Brown	Ex officio – CSIRO Board Observer
Ms Toni Moate	Observer – MNF Director
Prof Peter Steinberg	Observer – RAC Chair
Mr Peter Cochrane	Observer – NBAC Chair

Anne-Marie Lansdown

Chair, MNF Steering Committee