

THE WESTERN AUSTRALIAN MARINE SCIENCE INSTITUTION

WAMSI Chairman's Newsletter No. 9

July 2008

This Newsletter is sent out to all those involved in WAMSI activities and projects as a regular update on activities.

I am pleased to be able to inform you that all WAMSI project funds are now committed and the majority of the 85 projects being funded are underway. Some projects have been going now since 1 July 2006 and those in that category are currently undergoing their first year of reviews and a validation of their science quality. The projects which have commenced more recently will be reviewed in early 2009. WAMSI will undergo a mid-term program review in 2009 to ensure we are proceeding as per the stipulated key performance indicators established with the MRF Grant. On current progress, WAMSI 1 is due to terminate at the end of 2011 although the WAMSI Board is working hard behind the scenes to ensure that WAMSI seamlessly moves into a second phase based largely around the Kimberley Browse regional marine science activity. In that regard, most of the proposed activity of the Board and CEO over the last few months has involved work in support of the Kimberley Browse Consultancy being undertaken by Dr Des Mills and Dr Mike Wood. This work is involving the development of a coupled Science Case and Business Case which is due for presentation to the WAMSI Board and Governors on 20 August 2008. The following day, both the Board and the Governors are meeting for their annual Strategic Review to look at where to take the recommendations coming out of the Kimberley Browse Consultancy.

This Consultancy has involved extensive stakeholder consultation with a broad variety of people based in Canberra, in Perth and as well in the Kimberley region. The intent is to develop a regional Marine Science Plan that would be funded to the tune of tens of millions of dollars over several years; at least a similar level of program activity as is currently underway with WAMSI 1. You will probably be aware that WAMSI conducted a Kimberley Browse Marine Science Summit in early March 2008 which was attended by over 45 people representing a broad stakeholder interest. As a result of the Summit and over 100 stakeholder consultation meetings, we feel that we are now in a position to go to Governments, industry, the research community and possibly philanthropy organisations to try to establish a co-funding model for the Kimberley Browse Marine Science work over the next few years.

Related to this, we have also been taking part in some expeditionary marine research cruises aboard the Kimberley Quest 1 to Camden Sound, Montgomery Reef and Collier Bay along the Kimberley coast to support the humpback whale population research, to look at the bottom substrate types and to begin to describe the fringing reef communities in that area. Several WAMSI partners have sent scientists as part of the research cruises, with several cruises still to be undertaken during the remainder of 2008. The results from the cruises already are demonstrating the

importance of the macro-tidal regime, so characteristic of this part of the Kimberley with up to 12 metre tides, which is basically determining the biodiversity, habitat and species distributions, both on the sea floor and in the water column. The fringing reefs, whilst living in turbid conditions, are very rich and have a high percentage cover, in many cases of extensive soft coral communities. What has also been of interest has been the richness of the filter feeding communities that are living down to depths as great as 50 metres. We look forward to providing a fuller and more integrated report on these activities at the end of this year.

It is with great pleasure that I welcome the Chemistry Centre (WA) as a new partner to WAMSI and a recent development is that the WA Department of Planning and Infrastructure is also now in the process of joining WAMSI, again as a full partner.

A large amount of effort over the last few months has gone into trying to establish a lasting legacy for WA's marine and coastal data sets. In that regard, the Board last November, approved WAMSI to team with iVEC and WASTAC in providing a marine data management environment based around the iVEC high performance computer facility. We also employed Luke Edwards to assist with metadata creation and data archiving and Luke has been working tirelessly with project leaders to ensure that the WAMSI marine data sets live on, beyond the life of the individual projects.

We also conducted a successful two day seminar on *Marine Science in WA* in late February, the first day in association with AMSA WA as part of the annual Show & Tell series and on Day 2 we held the Node 1 Mini-symposium for 2008. Both events were very well attended and we received some very positive feedback. This was then followed by the *Annual Marine Research Presentations* by Node Leaders and myself to the WAMSI Governors and the general public at an event on Wednesday, 12 March 2008 at the Perth Convention and Exhibition Centre. The feedback received in terms of the quality of the science, the quantity of the research being undertaken, its integrated nature and the collaborative approach to the work has received critical acclaim from all who attended; so well done to one and all. More recently we have undertaken the *Second Ningaloo Symposium*, an event attended by over 100 people on Thursday, 29 May 2008 at Murdoch University. A proceedings from that event is currently being produced.

It is with great pleasure that I inform you that WAMSI has appointed a Communications Manager. Mrs Sue McKenna joined WAMSI a few weeks ago in a part-time capacity to assist WAMSI in getting the good news stories and messages out to the broader community. Sue is in the process of working with Node Communication Managers, Node Leaders and Project Leaders to ensure that the snippets of scientific information that could and should reach a broader audience, are indeed doing so. Welcome Sue and we look forward to you working closely with many of the WAMSI partners.

Finally I am pleased to be able to announce that His Excellency, Dr Ken Michael AC, Governor of Western Australia, has invited WAMSI to organise an event at Government House, sometime in the coming months, to showcase Marine Science in Western Australia, and in particular, the opportunities now arising in the Kimberley Browse region as highlighted by the WAMSI Marine Science Case and Business Case development. The WAMSI HQ has the lead on organising this event to raise profile and communicate the capabilities across the partnership.

So, all in all a very exciting period for WAMSI. It is incumbent on us all to ensure that the work that has been funded to date through the original MRF Business Plan is delivered in a timely and competent manner and that we do not compromise on the science quality of the work we produce. It is also incredibly important to ensure that the communications messages that are coming out of the WAMSI research are clear, coherent, consistent, frequent and pay credence to the joint venture partnership that we all belong to.

Many thanks.

Peter Rogers
WAMSI CHAIRMAN