CRC Reef Research Centre
COMMUNICATION PLANNING FOR RESEARCHERS

These guidelines are to assist CRC Reef researchers to plan how to communicate research results to the end-user in the most effective way.

Communicating research

One of the aims of a Cooperative Research Centre is to ensure that results of research are made available to potential users, and converted into outcomes of economic, environmental or social benefit to Australia.

CRC Reef uses a number of tools to communicate research outcomes to the members and other interested parties including the website, newsletter, information sheets and technical reports. Through formal advisory committees, the task associate program, workshops and conference presentations our messages reach a wider audience.

These processes are coordinated by the CRC Reef Communication and Education team who can help researchers with planning and communication.

Planning for communication

We encourage CRC Reef researchers to take an active role in communication, to strengthen the relationship with research users. From the beginning of your project you should think about how you plan to tell people about your research objectives and results. Communication planning should be part of the task proposal process. An outline of the communication plan should be included in the Abbreviated Task Proposal, and a more detailed strategy in the Full Task Proposal. By building it into research planning, the necessary links with industry and management can be established early on.

One or more task associates from relevant partner agencies will be assigned to each task – this will provide an important link to key research users. Where possible, the research communication plan should be developed in consultation with the task associates.

Preparing your communication plan

By addressing the following questions, you will form the bones of a communication plan, which will help to ensure that the research is communicated to the end-user in the most effective way. It will also improve the uptake of research by reef-based industry and management.

What are your research objectives and likely outcomes ?
CRC Reef research priorities are identified by the CRC Reef Board in response to information needs of the partners. These needs will have guided your research objectives, and will set the direction for your communication plan. Think about the possible outcomes of your research. What information/answers do you hope to get from your research?

Who will be interested in the outcomes (i.e. target audience)?
CRC Reef has eight member organisations, each with specific interests in your research. In addition to the members, other parties (stakeholders), such as businesses, research or tertiary education institutes, conservation groups, indigenous groups and schools may be interested in hearing about your research outcomes. Who are they?

What is the best way to communicate your research to the different audiences (check the communication products and activities table)?
You will probably want to communicate with different audiences who will have varied levels of interest in your findings. Think about the best way to reach different people, including other scientists, CRC Reef member organisations, industry members, managers and community groups. Business and industry will want to hear how your research relates to their operations, while management agencies may want to apply it in policy development. Maybe your research is of interest to the general public or school children. You will need to use different communication tools for different audiences and need to pitch your message at different levels. The CRC Reef Education and Communication staff can help with this communication process, but in most cases, the audience will prefer to hear from you.

The written medium
CRC Reef produces a regular newsletter, information sheets (*Exploring Reef Science*), technical reports and issues brochures (e.g. dugong, crown-of-thorns starfish), which serve different communication needs. Which of these printed products would be suitable for your research results?

Traditionally, the final outcome of CRC Reef research has been reported as a technical report. If you are planning to write a technical report, the following guidelines can be found on the CRC Reef website:

- Technical Report Style Guide for Authors
- Guidelines for publishing CRC Reef technical reports.

However, this may not be the most appropriate and cost-effective output, particularly if the audience is limited. You may prefer to combine scientific journal articles with a plain-English summary for a more general audience.

Will your research results be of interest to the tourism or education market? If so, a graphic and colourful product may be more appropriate. If your target audience is the indigenous community, then your written material should be in an appropriate style. If you are intending to produce specialist written products, you will need to budget for their production.

Perhaps your work is part of a bigger picture and can be included in a synthesis document (e.g. *Crown-of-thorns starfish on the Great Barrier Reef. Current state of knowledge. April 2001*). Have you talked to other researchers to explore opportunities to collaborate on this type of document?

Are there existing communication channels you can use such as an industry newsletter with an established circulation? This could be a direct, cost-effective link to your target audience.

Electronic medium
All CRC Reef researchers should provide a brief research summary for the website. This is also an ideal medium for written research results which can be accessed by a broad target audience. Think about how your research results may be best presented on the web.

Face-to-face presentation
Face-to-face presentations are always worth the effort, provided you are well prepared. What would be the best forum for presenting your research? Most researchers should take the opportunity to present at the CRC Reef Research Days, or to give a seminar as part of the AIMS, JCU or GBRMPA series. If your research has a specific industry focus, then look for opportunities to present at industry conferences and expos. Consider taking advantage of the presentation skills training offered by CRC Reef.

CRC Reef researchers have the opportunity to work closely with managers and industry partners through the task associate relationship. There should be regular face-to-face feedback throughout the research program. A seminar to a broader group (e.g. fisheries management committee, GBRMPA staff, tourism industry group) might also be well received.

Do you owe feedback to people who have participated in your research?
Some research (social sciences in particular) relies heavily on cooperation and input by stakeholders e.g. tourists, recreational and commercial fishers. These people will expect some feedback on the final outcome. Think how you can best do this e.g. face-to-face, mail-out of information sheets, an article in their association magazine? A clear summary of your research results written in plain-English may be more appropriate for this audience than a scientific journal article or lengthy technical report.

Who will communicate your research?
As a CRC Reef researcher you are encouraged, where possible, to take an active role in communicating your research outcomes to the different target audiences you have identified. Make sure you build this important process into your planning. CRC Reef has dedicated communication and extension staff, who can provide advice and support. CRC Reef also offers a range of training courses to improve your communication skills (see 'Developing your communication skills').

Who will pay?
The CRC Reef communication budget includes provision for products such as the annual newsletters, information sheets, technical reports and website development. If you are planning more specialised publications such as a book, manual, brochure, educational materials, display, posters etc. you will need to budget for this (e.g. editing and production costs).

Developing your communication skills
CRC Reef offers a variety of training courses to help you develop your communication skills, including:

- media skills
- science writing
- presentation skills
- intellectual property seminar.

Make the most of these courses and the expertise offered by CRC Reef communication and extension staff. If you have specific training needs, you can discuss them with the CRC Reef staff.

The CRC Reef Education and Communication Team

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CRC Reef communication products and activities

Printed
- Capability Statement
- CRC Reef brochure
- CRC Reef Newsletter (two per year)
- ELF Newsletter (two per year)
- Technical Reports
- 'Exploring Reef Science' information sheets
- Special topics brochures
- Annual Report

Electronic
- Email (CRC Reef list, student list)
- Website

Media
- Press releases
- Articles in magazines, books, newsletters, papers
- Weekly science radio broadcasts
- TV coverage
- CRC Reef promotional video

Displays
- Posters and banner panels
- 'Threaded Reef' display
- Events displays

Formal Committees
- Board
- Board Executive Committee (BEC)
- Scientific Advisory Committee (SAC)
- Task Review Committee (TRC)
- Users Advisory Group (UAG)
- Fishing and Fisheries Steering Committee
- Staff representation on other committees (e.g. GBRMPA Research Advisory Committees)

Informal Committees
- Tourism Task Advisory Group (TTAG)
- Eye-on-the-Reef Steering Committee

Seminars
- Input to AIMS, JCU, GBRMPA seminar series

Workshops, Conferences
- CRC Reef Research Days
- Issue and research task workshops
- AMSA, ACRS (and other) conferences

Staff, Researcher and Post-grad Training (facilitation or delivery)
- Science Business Fusion
- Media skills
- Communication planning
- Science writing
- Presentation skills
- Intellectual property
- Statistics
- GIS

Events
- National Science Week
- Australian Science Festival
- Townsville Fishing Expo etc.

Awards
- Marine Science Journalism Prize
- Student awards (AMPTO)
- Dorothy Paramore Highly Commended Award

Extension activities
- AMPTO regional meetings
- Public contact at events
- Presentations to community groups
- Workshop facilitation
- Input to community monitoring (e.g. Eye-on-the-Reef, Seagrass Watch)
- Input to school education programs
- Support for community arts programs
- Indigenous liaison

CRC Reef Research Communication Plan

Refer to the Guidelines and use this form to develop your communication plan

CRC Reef Research Program……

Task number and title……

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Task Leader ……

Task Associate…… Organisation……

Task Associate…… Organisation……

Task objectives

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Who will be interested in the results of your research, and how do you intend to communicate with them?

Target audience Identify CRC Reef members, industry, peak bodies, interest groups etc.	Communication method *Written, electronic, oral etc – refer to Guidelines*

What written products do you expect to produce as part of your research?
Indicate the expected products and think about the timing

Information sheet ☐

Technical report ☐

Special topic brochure ☐

Scientific papers ☐

CRC Reef newsletter article ☐

Web information ☐

Specialist newsletter ☐

Other ……...

Do you plan to hold a stakeholder workshop during the course of your research?
If Yes – for whom? What support will you need from CRC Reef?

Yes/No Details ……..……..……

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Do you expect to collaborate with other researchers to produce a 'synthesis' product (e.g. brochure, video, book)?

Possible product ……..

Collaborators ……..

Have you budgeted for any special communication products (e.g. publications, CD, video, workshops)
Details of product ……..

Expected costs ……..

Communication training needs
CRC Reef offers courses in the following communication areas. Tick those you would like to attend, and identify other skills you would like to develop

Media Skills	☐	Presentation skills	☐	Science writing	☐
Geographic Information Systems (GIS)	☐	Communication planning	☐	Inellectual property	☐

Other communication skills
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Signed…….. Date: …./…../……