



## Communiqué

# Marine National Facility Steering Committee

## Meeting #99

The 99th meeting of the Marine National Facility Steering Committee was held in Hobart on 7 November 2024

### Message from Steering Committee Chair – Ms Anne-Marie Lansdown

The 99th meeting of the Marine National Facility (MNF) Steering Committee was held in Hobart while RV *Investigator* was in port. The agenda for the meeting incorporated a ship's tour at the end of the day, which was the first time for many committee members to see the ship up close. The Committee was privileged to meet several members of the MNF's sea going team, and it was invaluable for members to see the ship's capabilities and equipment.



Anne-Marie Lansdown, MNFSC Chair

The meeting focused on several important agenda items, most importantly the discussions around and endorsement of the 2026-27 RV *Investigator* voyage schedule and the Southern Coastal Research Vessel Fleet (SCRVF) 2025 schedule. Both schedules are based on the review and recommendation of our Research Advisory Committee (RAC) and National Benefit Advisory Committee (NBAC), plus 43 external expert reviewers from around the world. The Committee would like to thank these reviewers for their time, expertise and contribution to ensuring that great science of national benefit is awarded sea time onboard RV *Investigator*, and the vessels of the SCRVF.

The meeting also discussed the Mid-Life Refit, MNF's Cyber uplift plan, the reintroduction of the Collaborative Australian Postgraduate Sea Training Alliance Network (CAPSTAN) and training the next generation of marine scientists. On behalf of the MNF Steering Committee, I will be presenting these key updates as part of the Chair's Report to the CSIRO Board in December.

The MNF Steering Committee will meet again next July for our 100th meeting, and in the meantime, look forward to celebrating another milestone – RV *Investigator*'s 10th anniversary of operations. Reflecting on the 112 voyages that have been conducted on RV *Investigator* since she was commissioned, it is inspiring to imagine just what an impact this facility has had on careers,

scientific understanding, and modern policy. Congratulations to everyone who has made this facility a wonderful resource – scientists, technical staff, crew and shoreside support.

## Voyage schedule decision

The Committee endorsed the 2026-27 voyage schedule based on supported applications received in the 2024 call for sea time. Our endorsement triggers the MNF issuance of Letters of Offer to supported applicants with scheduled voyages. The announcement of the draft Primary Voyage Schedule for 2026-27 will be undertaken in early 2025. The Committee remarked on how the applications showed tremendous breadth and diversity and also the pleasing increase in applications under Stream 4 - Technology and Innovation.

The committee also recognises and greatly appreciates the contribution made by the Research Advisory Committee (RAC), National Benefit Advisory Committee (NBAC) and 43 external experts from around Australia and internationally. Their detailed reviews, discussions and decisions support an application assessment process essential to ensuring that RV *Investigator* enables high quality research of national benefit.

## Mid-Life Refit

The Committee remarked on the exciting array of capability upgrades that were made recently during the Mid-Life Refit in Singapore and noted that there are more upgrades and capability improvements to come as part of the Hobart based long maintenance period commencing at the end of this year. The Committee commends the MNF for its handling of HSE during the complex dry-docking period, reflective of MNF's expertise and unwavering commitment to best practice HSE and risk management.

## Cyber Uplift Plan

The Committee discussed how, as technological dependence increases, so does the vulnerability to cyber security threats, especially in complex infrastructure environments like RV *Investigator*. The Committee endorsed the MNF's proposed cyber security uplift plan to enhance the vessel's cyber security posture in line with the Australian Signals Directorate's Essential Eight mitigation strategies. Key stakeholders, including CSIRO Information Management and Technology (IM&T), Mermaid Marine Australia (MMA) Offshore, and the MNF, will collaborate on this project over the coming years with several phases of assessment and implementation.

The Committee was pleased to note the MNF has a long-term vision of continuous improvement to further advance the vessel's cyber security maturity in response to evolving threats, balancing operational needs with rigorous security measures.

## SCRVF – collaboration and integration

The Committee endorsed successful applicants for sea time in 2025 onboard the NCRIS funded Southern Coastal Research Vessel Fleet (SCRVF). The Committee remarked on the benefits of this collaborative partnership between the South Australian Research and Development Institute

(SARDI), the Western Australian Department of Primary Industries and Regional Development (DPIRD) and CSIRO for increasing the marine research community's access to coastal research vessels through the efficient coordination of national vessels.

## What's coming up for the MNF?

The Committee was pleased to approve the 2025 call for sea-time timeline, noting that the call for supplementary applications to fill available capacity in the 2026-27 granted voyage schedule on RV *Investigator* will open on 4 February 2025, followed by the opening of the primary application call for sea time in the 2027-28 financial year on 18 February 2025.

The Committee was pleased that MNF is taking its immersive marine science experience, the INVESTIGATE science exhibit, to Brisbane in December 2024 where it will feature at the International Conference on Research Infrastructure.

## CAPSTAN

The re-establishment of the Collaborative Australian Postgraduate Sea Training Alliance Network (CAPSTAN) program, which develops Australia's next generation of marine researchers, has been received with huge interest.

The Committee has strongly supported the efforts to re-introduce this fantastic program over recent years and is delighted to see that come to fruition. The next voyage is scheduled to take place in early 2025 and will focus on providing students, trainers and Chief Scientists with invaluable experience conducting research at sea.

## TIAG

The Committee is also pleased to hear that the Technology and Innovation Advisory Group (TIAG) held its first meeting on 14 October 2024, kickstarting this new chapter of research community engagement. The Group has been established to provide the MNF with advice on current and future technology advances to support continuous improvements in the ship's capabilities. The Group's ten members will bring together expertise across Australia's atmospheric, biological, geoscience and oceanographic research communities, as well as autonomous technologies and robotics.

## MNF Voyage Catalogue

Find out where RV *Investigator* has been in the MNF Voyages Catalogue on the MNF website [mnf.csiro.au](https://www.csiro.au). Below is a link to a transit voyage from Fremantle to Hobart, which took advantage of the opportunity to host marine science students. There are great videos linked in the page, including voyage documentary "Transit across the G.A.B." by Olly Dove from the *That's What I Call Science* podcast.

[https://www.csiro.au/en/about/facilities-collections/MNF/Voyages-schedules/Voyages/2024/March/IN2024\\_T01](https://www.csiro.au/en/about/facilities-collections/MNF/Voyages-schedules/Voyages/2024/March/IN2024_T01)

# Committee membership changes: farewells and welcomes

## Steering Committee membership

The Steering Committee membership remains unchanged since July 2024.

<b>Name</b>	<b>Role</b>
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
Prof Elanor Huntington	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