

ENVIRONMENTAL BIOSECURITY ADVISORY GROUP

Terms of reference

The Environmental Biosecurity Advisory Group (Advisory Group) is a sub-group of the Environment and Invasives Committee (EIC). It provides a mechanism for environmental biosecurity stakeholders to discuss and provide advice to the EIC on environmental biosecurity policy and strategy, and other environmental biosecurity issues.

Environment and Invasives Committee

The EIC is a sectoral committee of the National Biosecurity Committee (NBC). It provides national policy leadership and advice to the NBC on managing emerging and established invasive pests and diseases, and environmental biosecurity. The committee is made up of representatives from each Australian state and territory and the Commonwealth. It provides national policy advice on the identification, prevention and management of invasive plant, vertebrate and invertebrate species that adversely impact the environment, economy, and community.

Role

The role of the Advisory Group is to:

- provide strategic advice on behalf of environmental stakeholders to the EIC on current and emerging environmental biosecurity issues, including national approaches to prevent, detect, identify, respond, and manage emerging and established invasive species of national significance that affect the environment,
- support national communication and stakeholder engagement for environmental biosecurity, including through appropriate national forums and engagement mechanisms, to facilitate a shared understanding of issues,
- champion industry, conservation sector and community participation and capacity building in response to environmental biosecurity threats and,
- foster effective communication and dissemination of information to and among stakeholder groups and members of the public.

In performing its role, the Advisory Group will take into consideration any relevant matters such as best practice, national and international trends, current government policies, industry and community capability, public opinion, scientific knowledge, and industry experience.

Membership

The Advisory Group consists of government members and non-government members with a national and strategic environmental and/or community outlook.

Membership is at an organisation-level, with members to advise of the representative at time of appointment. Where a representative who attends Advisory Group meetings no longer represents the member organisation, the member organisation may nominate a new representative to attend.

The Chair may nominate new members of the Advisory Group, as well as seek nominations from EIC and current members. The EIC will approve the appointment of any new Advisory Group members. The current membership is at Appendix A.

Term of Appointment

The term of appointment of members will be two years.

At the end of a member's term, the Chair will seek written advice from the member if they would like to request to be reappointed as a member of the Advisory Group for a further two years.

Requests to continue appointments will be considered by the Chair in the context of managing membership numbers, balancing continuity, as well as allowing for refreshed membership.

The Secretariat will facilitate this process.

Member obligations

- Members must bring an agreed position of their organisation or sector to Advisory Group discussions.
- Members are responsible for communicating issues and outcomes of Advisory Group meetings to the organisations and/or sectors that they represent. In cases where members need to engage in further consultation within their organisations, an agreed timeframe for consultation should be set. The Chair can provide permission to share relevant documents outside of the membership (at the Chair's discretion) where it is deemed necessary for consultation.
- If a member is consistently unable to attend meetings, the Chair will request for another representative to attend, or remove the member.
- Where a member organisation is no longer able to provide a national and strategic environmental and/or community outlook, the Chair will declare the position vacant.

Proxies

Members may nominate proxies to attend meetings in their absence. The purpose of the proxy is to enable progression of meeting objectives.

Members must nominate proxies to the Secretariat in writing, in advance of the meeting taking place where possible.

Observers

The Advisory Group will not have standing observers, however:

- organisations or persons with appropriate expertise may be invited to attend a meeting or be present for an agenda item where their knowledge may be valuable to the Advisory Group
- EIC members will be invited to attend Advisory Group meetings.

Remuneration

Members' participation is in a voluntary capacity. Members will not be remunerated and are responsible for their own costs of attending meetings or fulfilling the responsibilities of membership.

Meeting arrangements

Chair

The role of Chair will be filled by the Australian Chief Environmental Biosecurity Officer, from the Australian Government Department of Agriculture, Fisheries and Forestry.

Secretariat

Secretariat support for the Advisory Group will be provided by the Environmental Biosecurity Office from the Australian Government Department of Agriculture, Fisheries and Forestry.

The Chair and Secretariat are responsible for developing and distributing agenda papers as required.

Meetings

Meetings are generally to be held at least twice per calendar year, online or face-to-face.

An agenda will be prepared for meetings with relevant papers and provided to members two weeks prior to meetings. Matters will be considered and decided in accordance with the agenda.

Any issues arising outside of scheduled meeting timeframes can be dealt with out of session. Items should be sent through to the Chair or Secretariat and will be circulated to members via email.

Meeting record

The Secretariat will take meeting minutes and prepare a formal record of the meeting for members' information only. A meeting communiqué, appropriate for publication and circulation to other stakeholders, will also be produced.

The meeting record and communiqué are to be endorsed by members out of session prior to finalisation.

Confidentiality

The Advisory Group will, from time to time, deal with sensitive matters of a confidential nature, including information that may be commercial-in-confidence, information relating to a third party, sensitive information relating to government policies or financial issues, information that attracts legal professional privilege or internal Government working documents.

When appointed to the Advisory Group, member representatives will be required sign a confidentiality agreement.

All items to be treated as confidential must be clearly marked as such in the agenda or out of session paper.

Conflict of Interest

A conflict-of-interest declaration will be required to be completed by members prior to participating in the Advisory Group.

If a member becomes aware of a potential conflict of interest during a meeting, the member must immediately advise the Chair and, if appropriate, leave the meeting whilst the matter is discussed and not participate in any decision-making or advice related to the issue. This declaration will be noted in the meeting minutes.

Reporting

The Chair will report to the EIC at each EIC meeting or out of session as required.

This report will include a written update on Advisory Group discussions, progress on priority activities, and any information or advice from the Advisory Group to the Committee on relevant issues.

[Review of terms of reference](#)

The terms of reference will be reviewed at least every two years unless there is a requirement to review it earlier.

In reviewing the terms of reference, consideration will be given to the progress in integrating environmental biosecurity and general biosecurity across forums and sectors.

Environmental Biosecurity Advisory Group

Membership

Australian Government Department of Agriculture, Fisheries and Forestry

Australian Government Department of Climate Change, Energy, the Environment and Water

Bush Heritage Australia

Centre for Excellence in Biosecurity Risk Analysis

Council of Australasian Weed Societies

Ecological Society of Australia

Eco Tourism Australia

First Nations advisor (vacant)

Invasive Species Council

National Landcare Network & Landcare Australia (joint representation)

National Farmers' Federation

NRM Regions Australia

Wildlife Health Australia