

TERMS OF REFERENCE

Virtual Fencing Harmonisation Project: Stakeholder Reference Group (SRG)

Background

The Animal Welfare Task Group (AWTG) is developing a mechanism to harmonise virtual fencing animal welfare regulations across jurisdictions. A Virtual Fencing Subgroup has been established to examine the issues that are involved and propose a mechanism to achieve harmonisation.

A literature review of contemporary animal welfare research and science regarding animals exposed to the technology will underpin this work.

To ensure harmonisation meets the needs of the public, industry, consumers, and developers and has good animal welfare outcomes, the work of the AWTG Virtual Fencing Subgroup will be informed by science and the input of key stakeholders via a Stakeholder Reference Group (SRG).

Purpose of the SRG

The SRG will:

- be consulted during the process of developing a mechanism to harmonise regulations
- provide advice to the AWTG Virtual Fencing Subgroup on materials received
- exchange information on virtual fencing technology, focusing on animal welfare outcomes.

The SRG will not develop or make decisions about the mechanism for harmonisation, although relevant advice will be considered by the AWTG Virtual Fencing Subgroup members.

Scope and duration

The SRG will be invited to consider materials referred by the AWTG Virtual Fencing Subgroup. The SRG will exist for the duration of the development of the mechanism to achieve harmonisation. The SRG will provide written or verbal feedback on materials as requested by the AWTG Virtual Fencing Subgroup. The SRG is not a decision-making body, but feedback provided by the SRG will be considered by the AWTG Virtual Fencing Subgroup.

Membership

Membership of the SRG will include animal welfare and agricultural scientists and representatives from agricultural industry groups, animal welfare organisations and the veterinary industry from across Australia.

State and territory government agencies responsible for animal welfare will observe SRG meetings to ensure they have a good understanding of discussions leading to SRG advice and recommendations but will not participate unless requested by the facilitator.

Representatives from virtual fencing manufacturing companies and end users of the technology will attend as requested by the AWTG Virtual Fencing Subgroup to provide advice on relevant topics including device design, operation and implementation.

Only one representative from each organisation should actively participate in the meeting. Where possible this should be the same person at each meeting. Silent attendees must be approved by the secretariat.

Chair

The SRG will be chaired by an independent facilitator. The chair will be independent from the cattle and sheep industries, and animal welfare, veterinary science and regulation areas, and will have professional expertise in facilitation.

Expectations of members

Members of the SRG are expected to:

- represent their groups/organisations, bringing relevant knowledge and skills
- respect the diverse views of other members of the SRG
- not share any information identified as confidential during the meetings
- adequately prepare themselves for meetings including considering any meeting papers
- provide feedback in a timely and constructive manner.

Where a representative is unavailable for a meeting, a suitable proxy may attend on the representative's behalf.

Remuneration

There will be no remuneration for members. All meetings will be conducted remotely and any expenses associated with participating will be met by each member's respective organisation.

Secretariat Support

The AWTG secretariat (The Department of Agriculture, Fisheries and Forestry) will provide secretariat support for the SRG. This support will include:

- preparing and distributing agendas, papers, and meeting minutes
- acting as an intermediary between the SRG and the AWTG Virtual Fencing Subgroup
- providing other background information related to the work of the SRG.

Meetings

The SRG will convene a minimum of 4 times, with the schedule to be advised. Some correspondence may be circulated out of session to ensure the timely progress of work.

A meeting quorum comprises the chair and not less than 75 per cent of the remaining SRG membership. If the chair is unable to participate, an acting chair may be nominated from the AWTG Virtual Fencing Subgroup if there is a consensus agreement on their suitability.

In some cases, the AWTG Virtual Fencing Subgroup may convene special meetings with a subset of the SRG membership. This may be necessary to allow discussion of commercially sensitive information. One on one direct consultations may also be used at the discretion of the AWTG Virtual Fencing Subgroup.