

	National Environmental Information Infrastructure – Reference Group	September 25 th , 2014
		For information

TERMS OF REFERENCE - DRAFT

BACKGROUND

The National Plan for Environmental Information (NPEI) initiative is an Australian Government program intended to improve the quality and accessibility of environmental information for decision making. The National Environmental Information Infrastructure (NEII) is a core activity under the initiative that aims to improve discovery, access and re-use of fundamental environmental data across Australian Government. When fully mature the NEII will provide an operational data infrastructure to support a number of national environmental reporting requirements such as State of the Environment reporting.

The NEII proposes a network of standards-based IT components, supported by a network of collaborators working together to build the capability to improve environmental data discovery and access. Standards define harmonised data exchange formats and protocols to ensure environmental data can be accessed and interpreted in a common manner. This approach also enables stakeholders to rapidly develop and deploy new application use-cases that leverage the data infrastructure. To ensure sustainability and feasibility the NEII architecture will be distributed, standards-conformant and based on existing international best practice. Key outcomes expected to emerge from the NEII include:

- Improved ability to discover, access and use fundamental environmental data through harmonised online data services and web portals.
- A sustainable standards-based distributed environmental information architecture that can support multiple application use cases.
- A governance and collaboration framework for coordination and environmental information standards adoption.

A key component of the NEII engagement focus area is the establishment of the National Environmental Information Infrastructure Reference Group.

TITLE

The group will be known as the National Environment Information Infrastructure (NEII) Reference Group

PURPOSE

The purpose of this group is to (a) provide implementation advice to the Bureau of Meteorology's NEII Programme, (b) provide a cross-agency forum to assist in the development and implementation of a strategic agenda for the NEII, (c) establishing a community of practice to support groups to implement NEII, and (d) form working groups to address specific issues arising from the NEII programme.

MEMBERSHIP

Membership will initially be open to representatives from agencies on the Australian Government's Environmental Information Advisory Group (AG EIAG) nominated by existing members, in addition to representatives from relevant environmental information initiatives led by these agencies. This includes for example relevant National Collaborative Research Infrastructure Strategy (NCRIS) facilities and Cooperative Research Centres (CRCs).

Once the reference group is established, members are able to nominate new members from other agencies and organisations by majority decision at any meeting.

Membership is targeted at director-level staff and would suit individuals from enterprise architecture, IT strategy and information and data management areas.

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FUNDING

The group is unfunded. The costs of members participating in activities shall be borne by the member.

REFERENCE GROUP LIFE SPAN

The ongoing role of the group and their Terms of Reference will be reviewed by biannually.

GOVERNANCE

In its role under the auspices of the National Plan for Environmental Information initiative, the chairing and secretariat functions will be provided by the Bureau of Meteorology's Environmental Information Programme. The Reference Group will be chaired by the Bureau of Meteorology and the Secretariat function provided by the NEII Programme team (Bureau of Meteorology). The Reference Group will table an update on its activities to each meeting of the Australian Government Environmental Information Group (twice yearly).

The responsibilities of the chair include:

- Scheduling meetings and notifying committee members;
- Guiding the meeting according to the agenda and time available;
- Reviewing and approving the draft minutes before distribution;
- Developing and tabling an update to each meeting of the Australian Government Environmental Information Advisory Group.

The responsibilities of the secretariat include:

- Maintaining a list and contact details of members in the group;
- Preparing an agenda for each meeting and ensuring that all supporting documents are included;
- Distributing the agenda one week prior to each meeting;
- Taking notes and preparing minutes of each meeting;
- Distributing the minutes;
- Publication of papers and minutes.

The responsibilities of the members include:

- Assisting the NEII programme to engage with their organisations (brokering role);
- Assisting the NEII programme to engage with jurisdictions and other initiatives where members have established relationships;
- Supporting organisations to align with NEII principles and technologies;
- Engendering support within organisations to engage with NEII working groups;
- Advising the Bureau on components of the NEII roadmap and programme (direction, review and continual improvement).

MODE OF OPERATION

Meetings shall be held quarterly. Where a member is unable to attend a meeting, they may nominate an alternative to attend in their place. This nomination must be received by the secretariat before the meeting. Members can contribute to the agenda by forwarding agenda items to the secretariat two weeks prior to the next scheduled meeting (directed to: environment@bom.gov.au). Terms of Reference, meeting papers and minutes will be published to the NEII webspace.

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WORKING GROUPS

Where appropriate, the Reference Group may establish working groups to address specific issues. These groups will have clearly defined deliverables and will normally have a limited lifetime.

- Invitation may be extended to anyone with suitable knowledge to participate in a working group but there must be at least one member of the Reference Group on each working group.
- Terms of reference shall be established for each working group.
- A Chair will be nominated for each working group, selected from amongst members.
- The Chair of each working group shall report to the Reference Group at each quarterly meeting.
- Once established, a working group shall develop a plan for delivering the required outputs, including a timetable.
- The lifetime of a working group may be extended if there is an identified need.

AMENDMENTS TO THE TERMS OF REFERENCE

Amendments to these terms of reference shall be by unanimous agreement of existing members of the Reference Group.