

National Waste Policy Strategy Cluster 6

Regional and Remote Australia Working Group

Terms of Reference

Background

On 5 November 2009, the Environment Protection and Heritage Council (EPHC) endorsed the *National Waste Policy: Less waste, more resources* (the NWP).

At the 5 July 2010 meeting of the EPHC, the NWP Implementation Plan was endorsed. The Implementation Plan contains a number of high level priorities and timeframes that have been agreed by EPHC. It also sets out priority initiatives and milestones for each of the sixteen strategies for the first five years. These strategies are grouped into seven clusters and a working group is to be established to implement the work program for each strategy cluster.

The Regional and Remote Australia Working Group, Chaired by Western Australia, is responsible for progressing strategies 14 and 15 of the NWP. The objective of these strategies is to support waste management and re-use of waste in regional, remote and Indigenous communities.

Strategy 15 is part of a Council of Australian Governments (COAG) national partnership on remote indigenous housing. Timeframes, milestones and governance and reporting arrangements are established by COAG and progressed by the Commonwealth Department of Families and Housing and Community Services and Indigenous Affairs. These take precedence over the National Waste Policy arrangements and requirements.

The Regional and Remote Australia Working Group will report to the Environment Protection and Heritage Standing Committee (EPHSC) and the EPHC¹ through the NWP Implementation Working Group (IWG).

The Implementation Plan acknowledges that in addition to these priority initiatives, individual jurisdictions will continue to manage waste in line with their strategic objectives and constitutional responsibilities. This may include developing and funding their own initiatives in addition to initiatives within the Work Plan of the Regional and Remote Australia Working Group.

Role of the Regional and Remote Australia Working Group

The role of the Regional and Remote Australia Working Group is to provide a collaborative forum which:

- Encourages state, territory and local governments to work together to identify regional and remote waste and resource recovery actions to build capacity and ensure an appropriate suite of services is available to communities
- Regularly reports progress and emerging issues to the EPHSC and EPHC (see reporting section below)
- Submits requests to fund cross-jurisdictional projects under the agreed Work Plan for the Regional and Remote Australia Working Group to the EPHSC for approval prior to proceeding

¹ All references in this document to EPHC and EPHSC can be read to mean any other forum that may be created following the 2009 COAG Review of Ministerial Councils.

- Shares knowledge, and progresses opportunities for improved regional and remote waste and resource recovery actions across jurisdictions in the short and long term.

Work Plan

The IWG will provide an annual Work Plan template to the Regional and Remote Australia Working Group. The substance of the Work Plan will be developed and endorsed by the Regional and Remote Working Group at their inaugural meeting. This Work Plan will include a template for seeking EPHSC approval for cross-jurisdictional funding requests.

There are a series of initiatives and key milestones agreed to by jurisdictions, and documented within the NWP Implementation Plan. These will form the basis for the Work Plan of the Regional and Remote Australia Working Group. Key initiatives and milestones are as follows:

Strategy14

To identify regional and remote waste and resource recovery actions to build capacity and ensure an appropriate suite of services is available to communities.

- Regional networks:
 - Best practice in regional and remote stakeholder waste networks to build capacity and enhance development opportunities shared by 2015.

Strategy 15

Strategy 15: To undertake an audit of existing waste infrastructure and local capability in selected remote Indigenous communities as part of a larger municipal and essential services audit under the Council of Australian Governments' National Partnership on Remote Indigenous Housing.

- Audit of selected communities:
 - Base level waste standards that draw on existing national guidelines and frameworks and a review of jurisdictional standards, guidelines and/or regulations agreed by 2010
 - Clarification of roles and responsibilities with respect to funding and service delivery, with new arrangements to be in place by 1 July 2012.

Where funding is required for cross-jurisdictional projects to implement elements of this work program and cost sharing is agreed by the Working Group members, a draft proposal using the funding template provided by the IWG is to be submitted for approval to the EPHSC through the IWG.

Once finalised, this Work Plan must be provided to EPHSC for endorsement, and will form an attachment to these Terms of Reference.

Membership

The Regional and Remote Australia Working Group, chaired by Western Australia, will comprise representatives from the Australian Government and other, state, territory and local governments.

If the Regional and Remote Australia Working Group requires expert advice, participation of an expert will be at the discretion of the Chair. The Chair may invite representatives to attend meetings from relevant government departments, organisations or businesses as required.

Where a member cannot attend, a nominated proxy will be accepted. Observers may attend at the Chair's discretion. Members will fund their own participation in the Group.

Administrative support

Administrative support will be provided by the Chair of the Regional and Remote Australia Working Group.

The National Environment Protection Council Service Corporation (NEPSC) may also provide administrative support to the group if and when required².

Administrative support envisaged involves arranging meetings and distributing papers, as well as managing Regional and Remote Australia Working Group cross-jurisdictional contracts and coordinating reports for EPHSC and EPHC. The Regional and Remote Australia Working Group members will be provided with an agenda prior to each meeting, and a summary record of the meeting and actions arising will be distributed to all working group members as soon as practicable after each meeting.

Frequency and conduct of meetings

The Regional and Remote Australia Working Group will meet regularly to progress its work. Where appropriate, teleconferences will be used to minimise time and expense to members and other participants.

Reporting

For strategy 14, the chair of the Regional and Remote Australia Working Group is responsible for providing timely and accurate advice to the IWG twice a year, using the reporting templates that will be provided by the IWG. The IWG is responsible for co-ordinating reports and funding requests from the seven Working Groups for EPHSC and EPHC on the activities and progress of the NWP.

For strategy 15, existing COAG reporting mechanisms will be used to track progress against NWP milestones.

Confidentiality

Discussions of the Regional and Remote Australia Working Group are 'government-in-confidence'. The Working Group will agree on what, if any, information should be released publicly.

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² NEPSC's role in providing administrative support to working groups will be subject any changes to EPHC arrangements arising from the 2009 COAG Review of Ministerial Councils.