

Terms of Reference

Role of the Commissioner's Reference Group

The *Commissioner for Environmental Sustainability Act 2003* provides that the Commissioner may establish an advisory group, called the Reference Group.

The Reference Group will provide an external perspective and opinions for consideration by the Commissioner on matters nominated by the Commissioner including:

- acting as a testing ground for ideas on issues related to the development of the 2023 State of the Environment Reporting Framework – due to be tabled in mid-2020.
- providing advice and support on issues related to the delivery of the State of the Environment Report 2023 (SoE).
- providing ongoing support and advice to the Commissioner on broader stakeholder engagement.
- to the best of their ability, reflect the views of their community of interest and act as a conduit to the broader group which they represent.

It is expected that those opinions presented to the Commissioner by members of the Reference Group will be representative of their areas of expertise and reflective of their representative sectors' thinking and sentiment.

The Reference Group is advisory and not a governance forum.

Membership

Membership is by invitation from the Commissioner with selection based on a skills and affiliation basis.

Chair

The Commissioner will hold the position of Reference Group Chairperson. The Commissioner will nominate a Deputy Chair who may deputise for and chair meetings on behalf of the Commissioner as required.

Confidentiality

The deliberations of the Reference Group must be treated confidentially in order to provide a forum for frank advice and discussion. Meeting agendas, minutes, papers or other materials are not to be discussed publicly without the consent of the Commissioner. In the broad, Chatham House rules apply.

Conflict of Interest

A member who has a direct or pecuniary interest in a matter being discussed at a meeting must declare the nature of the interest as soon as possible after becoming aware of the interest. The Commissioner will determine if the member declaring an interest will take part in discussions relating to the interest.

Term of Appointment

Membership will be reviewed annually to ensure the Reference Group maintains strong relevance to the delivery of the Commissioners reporting reform. There will be an annual cycle of re-appointments where determined by the Commissioner to be appropriate.

Expenses

Reimbursement of expenses will be paid in accordance with the Appointment and Remuneration Guidelines: Processes and principles for appointing and remunerating members of Victorian government entities including boards, panels, commissioners and similar offices. Guidelines effective from 1 July 2019.

<https://www.vic.gov.au/guidelines-appointment-remuneration>

Meeting Procedure

Meetings will be conducted formally with meeting agenda and previous meeting minutes issued one week prior to the meeting. The agenda will have a standing item relating to disclosure of any conflict of interest or matters that could be perceived as creating the opportunity for conflict of interest or perception of advantage. A record of each meeting will be kept by the Commissioner and provided to members.

Delegation of meeting attendance may only occur with the prior approval of the Commissioner.

It is anticipated that meetings will be held on a quarterly basis for no more than three hours at a time. More frequent meetings may occur on an as needs basis with prior consultation.

Support

Executive and Secretariat support will be provided by the Office of the Commissioner for Environmental Sustainability.