

TERMS OF REFERENCE

Joint Working Group for the extension of the Regional Forest Agreement for the South-West forest region of Western Australia

Purpose

To support the Australian and WA Government lead Ministers responsible for the Regional Forest Agreements, the Joint Working Group will work together to:

1. oversee the finalisation of the third five-yearly review (the review) of the WA Regional Forest Agreement (RFA); and
2. oversee the negotiation, development and processes to extend the WA RFA.

Accountable to: Australian and WA government ministers responsible for forestry/environment or RFA matters.

Informed by: Australian and WA government interdepartmental meetings, which will guide respective whole-of-government positions to ensure the needs and expectations of both governments are met.

Directs: a support team comprising officers from the Australian Government departments of Agriculture and Water Resources, and the Department of the Environment and Energy, and officers from the WA Government Department of Biodiversity, Conservation and Attractions and the Forest Products Commission.

Joint Working Group membership

Core membership

Australian Government

Assistant Secretary Forestry, Department of Agriculture and Water Resources (Chair)

Assistant Secretary Biodiversity Policy and Water Science, Department of the Environment and Energy

WA Government

Executive Director Conservation and Ecosystem Management, Department of Biodiversity, Conservation and Attractions

Business Manager, Forest Products Corporation

Priorities

The Joint Working Group will:

1. allocate resources to undertake the review, including finalising the joint government response to the independent reviewer's report.

2. negotiate the terms of the extension of the WA RFA and prepare draft variations to the WA RFA that:
 - a. provides for a 20-year rolling life; and
 - b. identifies improvements to the WA RFA to ensure it remains effective and credible in the long-term.
3. ensure the respective responsible ministers are regularly updated on progress with RFA negotiations and the delivery of the extended WA RFA
4. agree to the Joint Working Group Support Team and oversee the development of documents to support the RFA extension decision-makers' considerations, including:
 - a. the variations to extend the WA RFA;
 - b. the Assessment Report; and
 - c. a description of the Forest Management System in Western Australia.

Approach

In delivering these priorities, and in recognition of the bilateral nature of the WA RFA, the Joint Working Group will:

1. work collaboratively and efficiently in good faith—aiming to complete its work priorities by the end of 2018;
2. resolve differences and contentious issues respectfully and without prejudice;
3. defer matters that cannot be quickly resolved for further analysis by each party offline, including the development of alternative options where appropriate;
4. ensure legal officers from the Australian and WA governments are provided with an opportunity to discuss issues relating to the WA RFA review and/or extension process
5. ensure that its deliberations are informed by respective whole-of-government positions, reflecting the directions of relevant responsible ministers and the positions of each government's interdepartmental reference bodies; and
6. ensure key stakeholders are aware of, and are consulted on, the WA RFA extension process.

Meetings

Co-chair

Meetings will be co-chaired by DAWR and WA DBCA.

If the allocated chair is unable to participate at a scheduled meeting, the co-chair will chair the meeting.

Secretariat

Shared equally by the Department of Biodiversity, Conservation and Attractions and the Department of Agriculture and Water Resources

Meeting format

Meetings will be held via a combination of face-to-face meetings and teleconferences, as required.

Face-to-face meetings will be held in Perth, Canberra or another mutually convenient location as required, to progress issues not easily resolved via teleconference.

Communications protocol

Acknowledging the importance of providing clear and consistent messaging to stakeholders, the Joint Working Group will ensure that all reasonable steps are taken to provide advice and consult on the communications activities of respective governments regarding WA RFA matters.

Costs

The costs of participating in the Joint Working Group and its Support Team will be met by participating government departments and agencies.

Any other costs of agreed activities, such as engaging consultants or seeking independent advice, will be equally shared between the Australian and WA governments.

Joint Working Group Support Team

Purpose

The Support Team is an extension of the Joint Working Group. It is responsible for planning and preparing work priorities on behalf of and for consideration by the Joint Working Group.

Support Team membership

The Support Team's membership will be determined by the Joint Working Group. Its membership will be dynamic, responding to workloads, priorities and the focus of the Joint Working Group. It will comprise officers from:

Australian Government

Department of Agriculture and Water Resources (lead agency)

Members of the Forestry Branch

Department of the Environment and Energy

Other Australian Government agencies as required

WA Government

WA Department of Biodiversity, Conservation and Attractions (lead agency)

Members of the Conservation and Ecosystem Management Division

Forest Products Commission

Other WA agencies (as required)

Progressing work

Work will be progressed akin to officers working in the same team within the same department. Support Team members will stay in regular contact via email, phone and teleconference and participate in Joint Working Group meetings as required.

As the joint secretariat, to the Joint Working Group, the Department of Biodiversity, Conservation and Attractions and Department of Agriculture and Water Resources will also be responsible for keeping the work priorities of the Support Team on track.