

Terms of Reference for the National Marine Science Committee

(Approved by NMSC at its 1 December 2016 meeting, updated 1 February 2018)

Role

The role of the National Marine Science Committee (NMSC) is to promote coordination and information sharing across the Australian marine science community. The NMSC's interests encompass all aspects of marine science, including:

- marine research providers, users, and stakeholders
- federal and state government agencies, universities, marine industries, and marine non-governmental organisations
- open ocean, continental shelf, coastal, and estuarine marine science
- marine geoscience, ocean physics, biogeochemistry, biology & ecosystems, social sciences and economics
- marine observing, process studies, experimental studies, data management and visualisation, modelling, decision support, and risk assessment, and
- marine technology development and application.

NMSC provides a mechanism for delivering coherent marine science advice and support to Australian Government, across State and Territory Government jurisdictions, and national level industry and non-governmental fora as required.

The NMSC will:

1. Promote a coordinated, collaborative and integrated approach to marine science across the Australian marine science community, including through national marine science plans;
2. Facilitate the establishment of partnerships that identify and address marine science needs;
3. Provide a forum for information exchange across the marine science community;
4. Seek to promote the uptake of marine science and research outcomes across governments, industry and society; and
5. Contribute new information and provide advice to Australian Government and other users and stakeholders on priorities and future needs for marine research, marine science capability, and marine technology and research infrastructure investments.

Chair

The NMSC will have a Chair appointed by the NMSC members.

Secretariat

The Chair will be supported by a Secretariat. The Secretariat will oversee the record of membership and member representatives and proxies, preparation and distribution of meeting papers, minutes and follow-up actions. It will assist the Chair in overseeing implementation of decisions agreed by NMSC, including managing the committee's forward work program and communication with the marine science community.

The person(s) to fill those roles will be agreed from time-to-time by the Chair and Members. Funding for the Secretariat will be drawn from member contributions, along with in-kind contributions from the organisation of the Chair and other member organisations where available.

Meetings

Face to face meetings will be held quarterly in Canberra at the premises of one of the member organisations. Additional teleconferences and meetings may be held if necessary to advance key initiatives of NMSC. A draft agenda will be prepared in discussion with the Chair, and distributed to Members at least three weeks ahead of each meeting. Full papers will be finalised and distributed via email five working days ahead of each meeting. It is expected that each Member will provide a written report on key initiatives since the prior meeting. These will be taken as read for each meeting, and Members will be given an opportunity to highlight any major items

Reporting

As at December 2016 there is no formal reporting mechanism to an Australian Government Minister, though updates will be provided to relevant Ministers' offices. NMSC aspires to establish a formal mechanism with an appropriate Ministry and this will remain a priority. The Chair and Secretariat will prepare a report after each meeting for placement on the NMSC website and distribution to the marine science community email list. Members will use these reports to brief other key stakeholders (e.g. relevant State and Territory Government Ministers).

NMSC Website - <http://www.marinescience.net.au/>

The Chair and Secretariat will provide oversight of information made publically available on the NMSC website, and coordinate update of material so the website remains current.

Funding and in-kind resources

NMSC relies on member organisations contributing their knowledge, time, and effort to undertake its role (see above). All Members are expected to fund attendance of their staff at meetings, and to actively contribute to the business of NMSC.

NMSC also requires at least some level of cash funding to support the Secretariat and pay for meeting venue hire and catering, website development and maintenance, and agreed special initiatives (e.g. development of the National Marine Science Plan). The breadth of NMSC membership is a great strength and it is recognised that not all members are in a position to provide cash contributions. The established practice is that the subset of members who are willing and able will provide a set annual cash contribution. These are the NMSC 'Sponsors'.

The cash funds available to NMSC will be coordinated through a specific account set-up within the accounting system of the Chair's organisation. A report on receipt and usage of NMSC funding is to be provided to each NMSC meeting.

Membership and proxies

NMSC aims to represent the Australian marine science community at the national level, with an emphasis on Australian Government as well as across State and Territory Government jurisdictions, and national level industry and non-governmental fora. Importantly it encompasses marine research providers, users and stakeholders.

It is not expected that all organisations in the Australian marine science community will be members of the committee. NMSC will engage the broader community through periodic national marine science planning processes, regular communication, and formation of sub-committees and working groups as required.

The membership of NMSC is grounded in the organisations that formed the (now defunct) Oceans Policy Science Advisory Group (OPSAG), and has been expanded over time to better reflect the diversity and strength of the Australian marine science community. Additional members can join with agreement by the committee. Existing members can leave at their own discretion, by advising the Chair in writing. A list of current NMSC Member Organisations will be recorded on the NMSC website.

It is expected that at any point in time a senior member of each organisation will be nominated to attend NMSC meetings, with proxies only being nominated if that person is unable to attend a specific meeting. The Secretary will be responsible for holding the official list of Member Organisations and their representatives. Due to the large number of Members, additional persons from each organisation will only be able to attend meetings for significant matters arising to be agreed with the Chair (e.g. for topical issues, if main representative is unavailable and two people need to represent instead).

NMSC Executive

NMSC is (by design) a large committee. Experience has led us to a model of forming a smaller Executive to provide agile leadership as required. The Executive is comprised of the Sponsors (see above) and other members as determined by the Chair in order to ensure a balance of interests.

On behalf of the NMSC, the NMSC Executive will:

- a) Provide agile leadership in advocacy, coordination and facilitation across the broad NMSC/Australian Marine science community.
- b) Provide a key point of contact for advice to Government (Ministers, Departments, Chief Scientist, Commonwealth Science Council etc.) on marine science.
- c) Lead development of the NMSC strategic agenda (currently articulated through the National Marine Science Plan 2015-25).
- d) Provide a conduit for communication/interaction between State and Commonwealth Governments in the marine science sphere.
- e) Represent marine science in deliberations about the development of Australia's national innovation system.

The NMSC will be consulted at each meeting on any work done or planned for the NMSC Executive.

NMSC Sub-Committees, Working Groups etc.

NMSC needs two types of supporting mechanisms to progress matters that cannot/should not be dealt with by the full Committee:

1. Ongoing mechanisms, called sub-committees.
2. Time-bounded mechanisms, called working groups.

An example of sub-committee is the AODN Technical Advisory Group (TAG), which is the data sub-committee of NMSC. Examples of working groups are those used to develop implementation plans for high level priorities in the NMSP as required (e.g. Research Training). The intention has always been that they will wind up when their work is done.