

# Environmental Water Advisory Group chairperson: Position description

## Gwydir Environmental Water Advisory Group

The Gwydir Environmental Water Advisory Group (EWAG) is a committee formed under Section 388 of the *Water Management Act 2000* and referenced in the Gwydir Water Sharing Plan. The EWAG's focus is the regulated river and wetlands within the Gwydir valley. The EWAG's purpose is to provide advice to the Minister for Energy and Environment, or their delegate, on the management of environmental water to maximise ecological benefits.

## Purpose of the role

The purpose of the chairperson is to work with EWAG Executive Officer and EWAG membership to fulfil its primary objectives. Chairs must ensure that decision-making processes are robust, and that established EWAG Terms of Reference, codes of conduct and other protocols are followed. This includes participants of a meeting being able to contribute effectively, act respectfully and adhere to the purpose of the group. The chairperson should also seek to maximise the outcomes from the limited meeting times of the EWAG by focussing discussion towards an action or motion, as required.

## Key responsibilities

- Commitment to achieving the EWAG's objectives.
- Lead the group in conducting business for the purpose of fulfilling EWAG's objectives.
- Chair the meetings in an impartial manner.
- Relay environmental watering information to interested people or organisations.
- Act as EWAG Spokesperson and representative, if required.
- Liaise with the EWAG Executive Officer to ensure the smooth operation of business, including managing meeting priorities, the agenda, motions, actions and observing developed guidelines<sup>1</sup>.
- Liaise with EWAG Executive Officer to invite and manage meeting guests, and monitor guest participation to ensure the effectiveness of the group.
- Review documentation between meetings, when necessary.
- Be available to contribute between meetings, if required.
- Communicate with the members and/or Executive Officer between meetings, when necessary.

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<sup>1</sup> Terms of Reference, Code of Conduct, Grievance Procedure, etc.

- Be able and willing to attend meetings two to four times a year, which may include regional travel (community member costs will be met). This should not preclude community members with responsibility as caregivers.
- Ensure the scope of the group's responsibilities is observed.
- Ensure that members are given an opportunity to participate and that their performance and conduct is appropriate.

## Key challenges

- Considering and respecting the views of others to maintain an inclusive and collaborative approach.
- Collating and considering information on a highly technical and complex topic.
- Articulating EWAG decisions to a broader community.
- Developing and maintaining an awareness of social, institutional, political and ecological issues relevant to local wetlands, water quality and river flows.

## Key relationships

<b>Internal</b>	Executive Officer	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Cooperate to plan and manage EWAG meetings</li> <li>• Manages EWAG administrative business</li> <li>• First point of communication and liaison to Department staff</li> <li>• Manages meeting actions and dissemination of information</li> </ul>
	EWAG Members and Alternatives	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Encourage full participation to consolidate, deliberate and develop advice</li> <li>• Manage the process for developing consensus in advice</li> </ul>
	EWAG Observers	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Participate in meetings as a guest, but does not participate in decision-making</li> </ul>
<b>External</b>	The Department	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Provides administration and support to EWAG</li> <li>• Receives advice of the EWAG and makes decisions for environmental watering</li> <li>• Resources other areas of environmental water management such as monitoring, reporting, etc.</li> </ul>
	EWAG Chairs	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Collaborate to mutually improve performance</li> </ul>

## Capabilities for the role

The chairperson must

- maintain an impartial reference-point for robust and respectful debate
- communicate effectively, including the ability to listen attentively to others, absorb alternative points of view and articulate a message
- analyse information and arguments, think critically and objectively about a complex problem and summarise
- exhibit goodwill and support an inclusive and collaborative approach
- employ appropriate interpersonal skills
- understand and manage conflicts of interest
- be skilled in facilitation and conflict management, in order to engage both sides on a sometimes contentious topic
- have experience on boards or committees
- have regard for Aboriginal people and communities in relation to land and water, cultural values and challenges for representation and participation
- lead the group to achieve objectives
- lead complex decision-making by consensus where possible.

Ideally, a chairperson should:

- communicate effectively with media and external stakeholders (Liaise and represent the EWAG effectively)
- understand New South Wales' water management arrangements, including the significance of environmental water in meeting Murray Darling Basin Plan commitments
- understanding of the role of water for local and regional communities and their environments – have knowledge of, or background understanding of, the stakeholders in the valley and their perspectives.