NSW National Parks and Wildlife Service

Regional Advisory Committee Handbook
## Contents

1. Introduction 1  
   1.1 Purpose of the Handbook 1  
   1.2 Review of this Handbook 1  

2. Establishment of regional advisory committees 2  
   2.1 Legislation 2  
      2.1.1 Constitution of advisory committees 3  
      2.1.2 Functions of advisory committees 3  
      2.1.3 Dissolution of advisory committees 3  
      2.1.4 Membership composition 4  
   2.2 Role of members 4  
   2.3 Responsibilities and relationships 5  
      2.3.1 Minister 5  
      2.3.2 National Parks and Wildlife Advisory Council 5  
      2.3.3 Regional advisory committee members 6  
      2.3.4 OEH NPWS 6  
      2.3.5 External stakeholders and the broader community 8  

3. Governance 9  
   3.1 Induction 9  
   3.2 Operating framework 9  
      3.2.1 Meetings 9  
      3.2.2 Attendance and attendees 10  
      3.2.3 Office holders 10  
      3.2.4 Agenda 11  
      3.2.5 Minutes 12  
      3.2.6 Quorum 12  
      3.2.7 Resolutions 12  
      3.2.8 Decision-making 13  
      3.2.9 Sub-committees and working groups 13  
      3.2.10 Logo and letterhead for NPWS boards and committees 14  

4. Appointments, vacancies, removal from office and resignations 15  
   4.1 Appointments 15  
   4.2 Term of office 15  
   4.3 Vacation of office 15  
   4.4 Removal from office 16  
   4.5 Vacancies and additional members 16  

5. Business planning 17  
   5.1 Regional advisory committee priorities and goals 17  
   5.2 Annual reporting 17  
   5.3 Statewide advisory committee conference 17
6. Resources 18
   6.1 Remuneration/sitting fees 18
   6.2 Travel, accommodation, meals and other expenses 18
      6.2.1 Use of private motor vehicles 19
      6.2.2 Insurance and liability 19
      6.2.3 Incident reporting 19
      6.2.4 Taxation obligations 19
7. Recognition of service 20
   7.1 Complimentary NPWS All Parks Passes 20
   7.2 NPWS volunteer pins and certificates 20
8. Code of conduct 21
   8.1 Expectations of conduct 21
   8.2 Respectful behaviour 22
   8.3 Conflicts of interest 23
   8.4 Public resources 24
      8.4.1 Use of public resources 24
      8.4.2 Use of official information 24
      8.4.3 Gifts and benefits 24
      8.4.4 Public expenditure 24
   8.5 Corrupt conduct and maladministration 25
   8.6 Confidentiality 25
   8.7 Public comments and the media 26
   8.8 Plan of management (PoM) submissions 26
   8.9 Community engagement 26
9. Glossary of terms 27
10. References 28

List of figures

Figure 1  NPWS Boards and Committees logo ................................................................. 14
Figure 2  NPWS Q&A session with Advisory Council Chair Julie Hegarty, Executive Director Robert Quirk and Southern Ranges Branch Director Mick Pettit, during the 2017 Regional Advisory Committee Conference (Photo: Tess Hilleard/NPWS) ................................................................. 17
Figure 3  Kinchega Repatriation Ceremony 2017 was very significant for the local people and the Far West Regional Advisory Committee (Photo: Max Richardson/NPWS) ................................................................. 20
1. Introduction

Under the provisions of the *National Parks and Wildlife Act 1974* (NPW Act) regional advisory committees are an important consultative forum for community input into National Parks and Wildlife Service (NPWS) planning, policies and decision-making.

1.1 Purpose of the Handbook

This Regional Advisory Committee Handbook (the Handbook) has been developed in line with the best practice principles outlined in the Department of Premier and Cabinet’s *NSW Government Boards and Committees Guidelines*. It supports the NSW Government’s commitment to promote accountability and integrity across the public sector.

The Handbook will assist NPWS regional advisory committee members to understand and perform their roles by detailing how legislation, policies, administrative arrangements and conventions affect the responsibilities and conduct of the eight regional advisory committees across New South Wales.

It also serves as a key induction tool for new committee members and as an ongoing reference to guide the effective governance and operation of regional advisory committees as members work together, with the NPWS, to care for and protect our environment and heritage in New South Wales.

The Handbook replaces the *Memorandum of Understanding between the National Parks and Wildlife Service and Regional Advisory Committees 2012–17*, which previously guided the respective roles and responsibilities of the NPWS and regional advisory committees.

The information contained in this Handbook applies to regional advisory committees constituted under section 24 (2) of the NPW Act.

Note: For information about the constitution and procedures of ‘additional advisory committees’ constituted for a particular purpose by the Minister under section 24 (3) of the NPW Act, contact the relevant Committee Secretariat listed on the Office of Environment and Heritage (OEH) website at [www.environment.nsw.gov.au](http://www.environment.nsw.gov.au).

1.2 Review of this Handbook

The information contained in this Handbook will be reviewed within five years of its publication or earlier if requested by a regional advisory committee or the NPWS in response to post-implementation feedback, or changes to legislation, or as necessary.
2. Establishment of regional advisory committees

National Parks and Wildlife Act 1974

Advisory committees were established under the NPW Act to provide an important consultative forum for community input and advice to OEH NPWS and to the National Parks and Wildlife Advisory Council (the Advisory Council) on park management policy and plans for their particular administrative region.

National Parks and Wildlife Amendment Bill 2001

In 2001 a significant review was undertaken of the NPW Act to strengthen the state’s legislative framework for the conservation of natural and cultural heritage. Amendments following this review altered provisions relating to the establishment of advisory committees including their constitution and dissolution, functions, composition, terms of office of members and the NPWS support to be made available to each advisory committee. Provisions also allowed for committees to be formed for other specific issues or purposes.

National Parks and Wildlife Amendment Bill 2010

Further amendments relating to advisory committees were made in 2010 to section 24 and Schedule 8 of the NPW Act to clarify that there are two types of advisory committees constituted under section 24:

(a) a regional advisory committee constituted for each administrative region under section 24 (2), and
(b) additional advisory committees that may be constituted by the Minister for particular purposes determined by the Minister under section 24 (3).

These amendments make it clear that Schedule 8 applies to regional advisory committees only and that the Minister may determine the constitution and procedure of an additional advisory committee constituted under section 24 (3).

2.1 Legislation

OEH has responsibilities and functions under many pieces of environmental legislation. The constitution, functions, dissolution and operation of advisory committees are covered under sections 24 to 26 of the NPW Act.

Schedule 8 of the NPW Act also applies to regional advisory committees constituted under section 24 (2). The schedule provides details in relation to advisory committee composition, removal of members from office, additional member appointments, filling vacancies, term of office, meeting procedures, quorum requirements and members’ expense entitlement.

Part 9 of the National Parks and Wildlife Regulation 2009 complements the NPW Act with information relating to the administrative arrangements for advisory committees, including meetings to be held, appointment of officers, presiding member and other matters.

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1 National Parks and Wildlife Amendment Bill: Debus Second Reading Speech 16 November 2001
2 National Parks and Wildlife Amendment Bill 2001 Explanatory note
3 National Parks and Wildlife Amendment Bill 2010 Explanatory Note
Statutory provisions under Part 5 of the NPW Act relate to regional advisory committees and plans of management, including:

- The advice of the appropriate regional advisory committee is to be sought on draft plans of management.
- The appropriate regional advisory committee must consider the plan of management and representations and provide the Advisory Council with such advice as the committee considers appropriate – section 73A (clause 4).
- The Advisory Council then considers the plan of management, the representations and any advice received from the appropriate regional advisory committee and provides the Minister with such advice as it considers appropriate.
- The Advisory Council must send a copy of any advice it provides to the Minister to the appropriate regional advisory committee and the appropriate regional advisory committee may provide comments to the Minister within 30 days of receiving the copy of the advice – section 73A (clause 6).

### 2.1.1 Constitution of advisory committees

Under section 24 of the NPW Act:

1. The Chief Executive is to divide the state into administrative regions and may at any time alter or abolish those administrative regions.
2. A regional advisory committee is to be constituted for each administrative region.
3. Additional advisory committees may be constituted by the Minister for particular purposes determined by the Minister.
4. Schedule 8 contains provisions with respect to each regional advisory committee constituted under subsection (2).
5. The Minister may determine the constitution and procedure of an additional advisory committee constituted under subsection (3).

### 2.1.2 Functions of advisory committees

Under section 25(1) of the NPW Act, the functions of a regional advisory committee are:

(a) to advise the Chief Executive and the National Parks and Wildlife Advisory Council (the Advisory Council) on policies and plans for the administrative region for which it was constituted
(b) to advise the Chief Executive and the Advisory Council on activities carried out or proposed to be carried out within the administrative region for which it was constituted
(c) to provide advice to responsible authorities within the meaning of section 71BO on draft plans of management relating to the administrative region for which they are constituted and to the Advisory Council on the implementation of such plans of management
(d) to provide advice to the Chief Executive on the implementation of plans of management relating to the administrative region for which it was constituted.

Note: Under section 25 (2) an advisory committee, constituted by the Minister for particular purposes under section 24(3), has such functions as are conferred or imposed on it by the Minister.

### 2.1.3 Dissolution of advisory committees

Under section 26 of the NPW Act:
(1) If an administrative region for which a regional advisory committee is constituted is abolished, the advisory committee is dissolved.

(2) A person who was a member of the advisory committee immediately before its dissolution is eligible for appointment to another advisory committee constituted for an administrative region that encompasses all or any part of the former administrative region for which the dissolved committee was constituted.

2.1.4 Membership composition

Regional advisory committee membership reflects a broad range of community perspectives in line with NSW Government policy and the requirements of the NPW Act.

A variety of participants contribute to the success of the committees and a diverse mix of skills, experience and qualities support their effective performance.

The NSW Government actively promotes the participation of Aboriginal people, women, young people, people with a disability or people from culturally and linguistically diverse backgrounds on government boards and committees.

Schedule 8 sets out the composition of regional advisory committees as follows:

(1) A regional advisory committee will consist of at least 12 members, but not more than 17 members, appointed by the Minister.

(2) The members are to include at least two Aboriginal persons, a person jointly nominated by the Nature Conservation Council of NSW and the National Parks Association of NSW, and such other persons as the Minister decides and who have one or more of the following qualifications:

   (a) expertise and experience in local government
   (b) expertise and experience in community involvement in conservation
   (c) expertise and experience in Aboriginal Cultural Heritage
   (d) scientific qualifications in the area of conservation biology, wildlife management or related disciplines
   (e) expertise and experience in rural or regional issues
   (f) expertise and experience in agriculture and rural issues, being a person nominated by the NSW Farmers’ Association
   (g) expertise and experience in ecotourism or ecologically sustainable visitor use, enjoyment and appreciation of reserves
   (h) expertise and experience in environmental education and community involvement in environmental education, and
   (i) expertise in non-Aboriginal cultural heritage conservation.

(3) The Minister is to ensure, as far as is possible, that the composition of the advisory committee reflects the expertise and experience referred to in sub clause (2).

2.2 Role of members

Regional advisory committees play an important role in the relationship between the NPWS and the community by:

- providing strategic advice to NPWS Directors, OEH Chief Executive and the NPW Advisory Council on the plans, policies and activities affecting parks in the administrative region for which they are constituted
- recommending improvements to the care, control and management of parks within the administrative region for which they are constituted
• providing expert advice on relevant technical and specialist matters
• liaising with community and interest groups within the administrative region for which they are constituted to seek their views on NPWS issues and giving feedback to the community about NPWS initiatives, and
• providing input into the development, consultation and implementation of plans of management for parks within their administrative region.

Advice should be sought from the Branch Director if the committee is uncertain if an issue being addressed is appropriate and relevant to the role and responsibilities of the regional advisory committee. Committees should keep their formal activities focused on on-park issues. It is not the role of a regional advisory committee to make comments on independent developments off-park.

In practice, regional advisory committees advise Branch Directors under delegated authority and all actions of committees should be conducted through the Branch Director.

2.3 Responsibilities and relationships

2.3.1 Minister

Regional advisory committee members are appointed by the Minister administering the Act, according to sections 24 to 26 and Schedule 8.

Under Schedule 8 (clause 2), the Minister may for any cause which to the Minister seems sufficient remove from office any member of an advisory committee. The Minister may also remove from office a member of an advisory committee who is absent without leave of the advisory committee (or without being excused by the committee) from three consecutive meetings held by the advisory committee over any period of 12 months.

Resignation advice must be provided under the advisory committee member’s hand, addressed to the Minister as per schedule 8 (clause 3b).

Regional advisory committees advise Branch Directors under delegated authority. As such, all advisory committee matters and actions should be conducted through the relevant Branch Director. Accordingly, is not appropriate for an advisory committee to raise issues directly with the Minister other than comments related to plans of management under Section 73A (6) of the NPW Act, or when committee members are submitting letters of resignation.

2.3.2 National Parks and Wildlife Advisory Council

The National Parks and Wildlife Advisory Council (the Advisory Council) advises the Minister for the Environment on a range of topics, particularly those relating to the operation and management of parks and reserves. It has a particular role in considering representations received on draft plans of management.

Although bringing different perspectives, the Advisory Council and regional advisory committees coordinate and work closely together, demonstrating mutual respect and support through:

• discussion of issues brought forward by regional advisory committees to Advisory Council meetings
• referring issues to regional advisory committees for comment where appropriate via the Stakeholder Liaison Officer in the Community Engagement Team
• providing feedback to regional advisory committees on issues that may be of interest, raised by them or on which their advice was sought
inviting the chairperson or other relevant members of advisory committees to field inspections conducted as part of the Advisory Council’s review of draft plans of management, giving adequate notice of intended site visits

attending major regional advisory committee gatherings or conferences to report on relevant Advisory Council outcomes and contribute to debate on issues of strategic importance

providing a summary of Advisory Council meeting discussions for distribution to regional advisory committees (via Branch Directors) following each Council meeting

forwarding its meeting schedule to all regional advisory committees at the beginning of the year to ensure meeting calendars are scheduled to best progress plans of management.

The specific statutory responsibilities of regional advisory committees relative to the Advisory Council are detailed in **Section 25 of the NPW Act**.

**Schedule 7 of the NPW Act** provides for up to four advisory committee members to be appointed to the Advisory Council, representing the geographic spread of the reserve system.

### 2.3.3 Regional advisory committee members

Committee members provide an important link between the community and the NPWS contributing their expertise and experience by:

- supporting the regional advisory committee to perform its functions
- attending meetings and participating in decision-making processes
- undertaking consultation or research to support and promote discussion of the agenda items.

Members are expected to:

- recognise the primacy of the objectives of the NPW Act in all their deliberations
- provide professional and timely advice as required to the Minister, the OEH Chief Executive, the Advisory Council and the NPWS (via the relevant Branch Director)
- maximise effectiveness in providing advice and guidance on natural and cultural heritage conservation matters from a community perspective
- play an advocacy role in the community to support the work of regional advisory committees and bring to the attention of the relevant committee any conservation and park management issues of interest to the community
- provide well prepared, balanced, reasoned and informed input to regional advisory committee deliberations based on their areas of expertise and experience
- abide by the **OEH Code of Ethics and Conduct** and **NSW Government Boards and Committees Guidelines**.

Note: Guidance for managing actual or perceived conflicts of interest is provided in the code of conduct section of this Handbook.

### 2.3.4 OEH NPWS

Under **Schedule 8 of the NPW Act**, the OEH Chief Executive must arrange for a senior officer of the NPWS to attend meetings of each advisory committee and for secretariat support to be available to each advisory committee. The Chief Executive has delegated this responsibility to the National Parks and Wildlife Service to support the effective operation of regional advisory committees.
OEH NPWS is also committed to:

- effectively seeking the advice of the appropriate regional advisory committee
- seeking early consultation, wherever possible, with the appropriate regional advisory committees on emerging issues and when strategy and policy matters are being developed
- providing feedback on the outcome of regional advisory committee advice in a timely manner
- building relationships between NPWS advisory bodies by providing detailed meeting summaries of the deliberations of the National Parks and Wildlife Advisory Council to regional advisory committee members (via Branch Directors)
- promoting the health, safety and welfare of all regional advisory committee members. OEH’s vision is ‘everyone home, without harm, every time’
- undertaking periodic review of committees and supporting the implementation of review outcomes.

OEH NPWS Branch Directors are committed to:

- supporting, assisting and advising committee members in relation to their roles and functions, including providing an appropriate level of resources, such as induction materials and other information, to support the effective operation of advisory committees
- arranging for secretarial support to be available to each advisory committee for the conduct of its meetings and for other administrative tasks
- contributing to the preparation of meeting papers, providing information to support discussions and decisions (where relevant and appropriate) and considering and, where possible, responding to matters arising
- clearly indicating to regional advisory committee members when issues are contentious and where confidentiality is required
- organising field trips/inspections to inform regional advisory committee deliberations and associated matters as necessary
- ensuring that matters that cannot be actioned or resolved at the branch level or that may have statewide implications are referred via Branch Directors to the NPWS Executive Director and/or the OEH Chief Executive
- maintaining the regional advisory committee’s Pecuniary Interests and Conflict of Interest Register
- reporting on the regional advisory committee’s compliance with statutory requirements and any other governance obligations.

OEH NPWS Branch Regional Advisory Committee Secretariats are committed to:

- preparing induction packages for incoming advisory committee members
- regularly asking members to update their pecuniary interest declaration form
- maintaining the advisory committee’s register of gifts (if any), which may form a part of the equivalent NPWS register
- providing secretariat support for the regional advisory committee to facilitate the smooth flow of business such as circulating papers in advance of meetings
- working with the Branch Director and chairperson to develop agendas, manage meeting papers and prepare a range of documents to support the operation of the regional advisory committee
- organising meeting facilities and other meeting logistics
• taking minutes of the meeting including decisions, an overview of relevant discussion of the item and any dissenting views where appropriate
• providing day-to-day liaison with members on matters relating to their regional advisory committee
• providing routine administrative support to their regional advisory committee on behalf of their Branch Director, including the processing of travel and expense claims
• assisting in the coordination of presenters, briefings and field trips on behalf of their Branch Directors
• if appointed secretary by the advisory committee, providing administrative support as required by Section 85 (1–4) of the National Parks and Wildlife Regulation 2009.

The NPWS Community Engagement Team is committed to:

• providing statewide coordination, advice and assistance to NPWS Branch Directors and branch secretariats including the filling of vacancies, compliance of regional advisory committees with statutory requirements and the issuing of All Parks Passes
• coordinating meetings of regional advisory committee chairpersons (as required) and the statewide Regional Advisory Committee Conference
• facilitating communication between NPWS Branch Directors on statewide matters relating to regional advisory committees
• acting as a point of contact for referral of statewide issues of concern to the NPWS Executive Director and OEH Chief Executive, if appropriate
• coordinating the volunteer recognition program of regional advisory committee members.

2.3.5 External stakeholders and the broader community

Regional advisory committee members are expected to maintain contact with neighbours, community groups and other external stakeholders as part of providing the NPWS with insight and a better understanding of reserve management issues affecting the administrative branch for which they are appointed.

Where a regional advisory committee member has been nominated by a particular stakeholder interest, it is expected that the member will maintain contact with that stakeholder group for the purpose of maintaining expertise and accurate understanding of the constituency to contribute effectively to formulating the positions of the advisory committee.

Communication to that stakeholder interest about committee business must not breach any decisions of the regional advisory committee about matters that are to remain confidential.

Regional advisory committees may seek advice directly from other agencies, individuals or other stakeholder groups to obtain information that will assist the committee in providing advice to the NPWS.

Regional advisory committees must take care not to commit the OEH or NPWS to a position or action while consulting with external stakeholders.

The relevant Branch Director should be made aware of any regional advisory committee liaison with external bodies to ensure the NPWS is able to respond if necessary to issues which may arise.
3. Governance

3.1 Induction

OEH NPWS will conduct induction sessions for the newly constituted committees and as required during the term of the advisory committee. These sessions will include presentations on:

- the roles and responsibilities NPWS regional advisory committees
- ethical conduct for regional advisory committee members
- plans of management for NSW parks and reserves.

An information package will be provided to advisory committee members, containing resources such as:

- NSW Government priorities, the OEH corporate plan and any other relevant strategic directions
- geographical maps of NPWS reserves and NPWS administrative boundaries, including the NSW national parks pocket guide (hardcopy publication)
- flowcharts showing the process for plan of management preparation
- OEH and NPWS organisational chart with key contacts
- Regional Advisory Committee Handbook
- contact list for other committee members
- OEH Code of Ethics and Conduct and NSW Government Boards and Committees Guidelines
- relevant administrative forms.

Other information sessions may be coordinated by the relevant Branch Director in consultation with the chairperson, including:

- introductory sessions with key OEH NPWS staff and other experts
- field trips and site visits, hosted by local OEH NPWS staff.

3.2 Operating framework

The following framework outlines the standard procedures for the operation of advisory committee meetings.

These procedures may be amended by formal resolution of each advisory committee, except where provided for in legislation.

3.2.1 Meetings

The procedures for the calling of meetings of an advisory committee and for the conduct of business at those meetings shall, subject to Schedule 8 of the Act and any regulations made in relation thereto, such as the National Parks and Wildlife Regulation 2009, be as determined by the advisory committee.

Meeting procedures will be consistent with sound meeting practice.

The diversity of opinion of advisory committee members is to be respected and all members are to be given fair and equal opportunity to participate in the deliberations of their advisory committee.

Members are encouraged to endorse a 12-month schedule of meeting dates to facilitate the efficient and effective working of the advisory committee and maximise meeting attendance.
In accordance with the National Parks and Wildlife Regulation 2009, advisory committees must:

- hold an annual general meeting (AGM) before the end of June each year and appoint office holders
- hold the first meeting within three months of the constitution of the committee
- hold ordinary meetings at least once every three months.

Where an advisory committee meeting is likely to generate matters requiring consideration by the National Parks and Wildlife Advisory Council, the meeting should ideally be held at least one month before Advisory Council Planning Committee meetings. This allows sufficient time for regional advisory committee comments to be endorsed, updates made to submission reports and draft plans of management, and approvals to be sought prior to the documents going to the planning committee.

### 3.2.2 Attendance and attendees

Members should attend committee meetings and field trips wherever possible to ensure the advisory committee functions effectively and to meet its legislative responsibilities.

Advisory committee meetings may be attended in person, by teleconference, video conference or using other technologies approved and agreed by the committee.

The Minister may remove from office a member of an advisory committee who is absent without leave of the advisory committee (or without being excused by the committee) from three consecutive meetings held by the advisory committee over any period of 12 months.

Under Schedule 8, clause 1 (4) of the NPW Act, a senior NPWS officer is required to attend each advisory committee meeting and NPWS secretarial support to be made available.

OEH representatives, and other external experts, may also be invited to advisory committee meetings as appropriate, to assist it in its deliberations. Generally, the chairperson and Branch Director would make such decisions in consultation. Such attendance should relate to a specific agenda item and shall be restricted to the duration of discussion on that agenda item.

### 3.2.3 Office holders

At each AGM, the members must appoint a chairperson, deputy chairperson and secretary (clause 83 of the National Parks and Wildlife Regulation 2009).

The chairperson will preside over meetings. In the absence of the chairperson, the authority of the chairperson resides with the deputy chairperson.

In the absence of both the chairperson and deputy chairperson, members present at the meeting will elect another member to preside.

A vacancy in any office holder position must be filled at the next meeting after the vacancy occurs.

**Chairperson**

The chairperson is responsible for leading the activities of the advisory committee including:

- ensuring the committee performs its functions, acting within relevant statutory powers, legal obligations and complying with relevant policies (including whole of government policies)
- presiding over and conducting committee meetings in accordance with the legislation and this Handbook ensuring that discussions remain focused and conclude with clear resolutions and/or recommendations
• establishing a sound working relationship and liaising with the relevant NPWS Branch Director and secretariat staff to set agendas and finalise minutes, implement actions arising from committee meetings such as approval and signing of correspondence
• facilitating the conduct of meetings to allow frank and open discussion, encourage feedback from members and provide all members with the opportunity to effectively contribute to discussions
• working collectively with OEH NPWS to induct and mentor new members
• facilitating the flow of information to members and stakeholders
• participating in statewide Chairs meetings and Regional Advisory Committee Conferences
• representing, in consultation with the NPWS Branch Director and regional advisory committee, the committee at public and private forums
• ensuring all members are informed of the Chairperson’s activities.

Deputy Chairperson

In the absence of the chairperson, the authority of the chairperson resides with the deputy chairperson (National Parks and Wildlife Regulation 2009).

Secretary

The secretary may be elected from amongst the members or may be a person who is not a member appointed by the members (NPW Regulation 2009 clause 83 (4)). In practice, this role is usually performed by NPWS RAC secretariats.

The secretary is responsible for:

• circulating to each member an agenda and associated business papers at least seven days before any meeting of the advisory committee
• taking and managing the minuting of meetings
• the care of all business papers and correspondence
• forwarding to the OEH Chief Executive (via the NPWS RAC Stakeholder Liaison Officer), not later than 30 June of each financial year, the particulars of the dates of, and members attending, each meeting during that (financial) year.

3.2.4 Agenda

The secretary must circulate to each member an agenda and associated business papers at least seven days before any meeting of the advisory committee.

The agenda for regular meetings of the advisory committee will typically include:

• Welcome to Country
• apologies
• notification of conflicts of interest – members to declare or update any real, perceived or anticipated conflicts of interest or pecuniary interests
• confirmation of minutes of previous meeting
• actions from previous meeting
• Branch Director’s report
• Chairperson’s report
• correspondence
• plans of management
any other agenda items; for example, discussion of issues of strategic or emerging significance for the management of parks and reserves in their administrative region

- general business
- next meeting date and location.

Members will have the opportunity to raise other issues at an advisory committee meeting by way of:

- raising the matter initially with the chairperson, but no less than three weeks prior to the meeting if it requires the circulation of papers
- raising a matter outside of a meeting with the Branch Director if they are not satisfied with the response of the chairperson
- raising an item at the meeting in general business.

The advisory committee will determine whether an issue will be pursued. All matters should be channelled via the relevant Branch Director. It is not appropriate for an advisory committee to raise issues directly with the Minister (other than comments related to plans of management under Section 73A (6) of the NPW Act).

### 3.2.5 Minutes

The secretary is responsible for ensuring that the minutes of each meeting are recorded in written form as a true and accurate record of proceedings.

Draft meeting minutes will be circulated to advisory committee members not later than one calendar month after the date of the meeting (clause 85 (2) of the National Parks and Wildlife Regulation 2009).

Minutes will ordinarily be presented for adoption at the subsequent advisory committee meeting.

The secretary will arrange for a copy of the adopted minutes to be entered into the appropriate NPWS record management system (currently CM9) to enable the NPWS Community Engagement Team to monitor for any statewide issues and trends.

### 3.2.6 Quorum

According to Schedule 8 (clause 8) of the NPW Act, a majority of the current members of an advisory committee shall form a quorum at any meeting and any duly convened meeting of the committee at which a quorum is present shall be competent to transact any business of the committee.

Questions arising at a regional advisory committee meeting shall be determined by a majority of votes of the members present and voting.

Meetings can take the form of face-to-face, teleconference, videoconference or by using other approved and agreed technologies.

At times, a teleconference, videoconference or other approved and agreed technologies may be needed to satisfy quorum requirements where sufficient numbers are not achievable on a face-to-face basis or to deal with urgent matters or particular issues.

Items may also be discussed out of session via electronic means (e.g. email, teleconference, videoconference) if required where a quorum cannot be formed at a physical meeting.

### 3.2.7 Resolutions

Advisory committees may prepare resolutions, for consideration by OEH NPWS, in respect to matters relating to the care and management of parks and reserves and any other NPWS responsibilities within the administrative region for which they are constituted.
Resolutions should be well researched, based on sound analysis and clearly state what action is being recommended for NPWS consideration.

Advisory committee resolutions recommending consideration of an action or if providing expert advice or opinion on topical issues, should be directed to the Branch Director and may also request that the Branch Director refer a particular resolution to the NPWS Executive Director, OEH Chief Executive or NPW Advisory Council for consideration.

When a resolution relates to an issue more broadly than just within the regional advisory committee’s particular administrative region, it should be accompanied by a clear recommendation from the Branch Director and any supporting papers to enable consideration by the NPWS Executive Director, OEH Chief Executive or the Advisory Council. A copy should also be sent to the Stakeholder Liaison Officer, Strategy and Coordination Branch, for information.

Matters referred by the regional advisory committee to the Advisory Council should be sent via the NPWS Stakeholder Liaison Officer, Community Engagement Team, at rac@environment.nsw.gov.au. The Stakeholder Liaison Officer will advise the Branch Secretariat when the matter will be listed for discussion by the Advisory Council and the process of feedback to the regional advisory committee.

It is not appropriate for advisory committees or advisory committee members to forward resolutions direct to the Minister.

### 3.2.8 Decision-making

Questions arising at a meeting of an advisory committee shall be determined by a majority of votes of the members present and voting.

Where possible, members should endeavour to reach consensus decisions; however, in the absence of a consensus view, the regional advisory committee may choose to provide a range of views for consideration by the OEH Chief Executive or the Advisory Council.

Members who do not agree with the advice of the advisory committee may seek to have their views recorded in the minutes.

Where voting is required on an issue, the carriage of a motion which is proposed and seconded shall be determined by a majority of votes of the members present and voting (refer Schedule 8 (clause 2)). The person presiding over the meeting will have a second or casting vote in the event of equal votes.

### 3.2.9 Sub-committees and working groups

Sub-committees and/or ad hoc working groups may be established by a regional advisory committee for a defined period of time to cover specific issues or to carry out some of its work, as required. Meetings of sub-committees and/or ad hoc working groups require approval by the Branch Director given meals/travel/accommodation or other incidental expenses are likely to be incurred.

Sub-committees and working group meetings do not count towards the minimum four meetings per year required of the full regional advisory committee.

The priorities for sub-committees will be determined by the regional advisory committee as part of its work program, and/or from emerging issues raised at its meetings. It is the responsibility of sub-committee convenors to alert the regional advisory committee if and when those priorities need to be reviewed.

Unless otherwise delegated by the regional advisory committee, reports and recommendations of sub-committees will be referred back to the regional advisory committee for ultimate determination.
OEH will provide reasonable and timely support to ensure the efficient operation of a sub-committee. In establishing sub-committees, regional advisory committees must be mindful of the impact and cost to OEH of such support.

The maximum size for a sub-committee will be determined by the regional advisory committee. As a guide it is suggested that the maximum membership be five members and the minimum three members. The quorum for a sub-committee is as per the regional advisory committee, i.e. a majority of the members of the sub-committee.

Any matters or issues that require broader consideration than provided for by a sub-committee’s terms of reference, or members’ experience and expertise, will be referred back for consideration at a subsequent meeting of the advisory committee. A convenor will be elected for each sub-committee by members of that sub-committee.

The convenor will preside over sub-committee meetings. In the absence of the convenor, the sub-committee members present at the start of the meeting may nominate an alternate to preside as convenor at that meeting.

Convenors will develop the sub-committee meeting agenda and review draft minutes for each meeting. They will provide a report on these outcomes to subsequent full advisory committee meetings.

3.2.10 Logo and letterhead for NPWS boards and committees

To ensure a clear distinction between NPWS and its boards and committees, a customised logo and letterhead was developed.

Those NPWS boards and committees without their own logo must use this new logo and letterhead on correspondence and communication materials.

Figure 1  NPWS Boards and Committees logo
4. Appointments, vacancies, removal from office and resignations

4.1 Appointments

Regional advisory committee members are appointed by the Minister administering the NPW Act, according to sections 24 to 26 and Schedule 8.

Applications for appointment are sought through advertisement or invitation to the appropriate stakeholder groups such as the Nature Conservation Council of NSW, National Parks Association of NSW and the NSW Farmers’ Association.

Once an appointment has been approved by the Minister, the committee member will be provided with a letter of offer, a *Pecuniary Interest Declaration and Undertaking* form and a copy of the *OEH Code of Ethics and Conduct*.

An eligibility list of additional suitable applicants may be formed from those applicants not successful in gaining initial appointment, for consideration should a vacancy occur during the term of office (see Section 4.5 Vacancies and additional members).

The *NSW Government Boards and Committees Guidelines* (the Guidelines) have been developed by the Department of Premier and Cabinet based on best practice principles. The Guidelines support the NSW Government’s commitment to promote accountability and integrity in the public sector.

The Public Service Commission has also developed principles-based guidance on member appointments, as outlined in *Appointment Standards: Boards and Committees in the NSW Public Sector*.

4.2 Term of office

Schedule 8 (clause 5) of the NPW Act states that members of an advisory committee shall hold office for such period, not exceeding four years, as may be specified in their respective instruments of appointment, and are eligible, if otherwise qualified, for further appointment.

4.3 Vacation of office

Schedule 8 (clause 3) states that a member of an advisory committee shall be deemed to have vacated the member’s office if the member:

- dies
- resigns the member’s office by writing under the member’s hand addressed to the Minister
- becomes a temporary patient, a continued treatment patient, a protected person or an incapable person within the meaning of the *Mental Health Act 1958* or a person under detention under Part 7 of that Act, or
- is removed from office by the Minister.

A member intending to resign should do so by writing under the member’s hand addressed to the Minister. The member should also inform the relevant advisory committee chairperson and Branch Director as early as practicable. The Minister’s contact details are available from the branch regional advisory committee secretariat.
4.4 Removal from office

Under Schedule 8 (Clause 2) of the NPW Act:

- The Minister may for any cause which to the Minister seems sufficient remove from office any member of an advisory committee.
- Without limiting the generality of sub clause (1), the Minister may remove from office a member of an advisory committee who is absent without leave of the advisory committee (or without being excused by the committee) from three consecutive meetings held by the advisory committee over any period of 12 months.

In this event the advisory committee shall note the absences without notice and the chairperson, in consultation with the Branch Director, will initiate action to obtain an explanation from the member.

In the absence of a satisfactory explanation, the chairperson in consultation with the Branch Director, may recommend the termination of an individual's membership of the regional advisory committee.

4.5 Vacancies and additional members

The Minister may from time to time appoint additional members of any advisory committee or appoint a member to fill any vacancy (refer Schedule 8 (clause 4)).

Should a vacancy relevant to a candidate’s experience and expertise arise during an advisory committee’s term, appointments may be made by the Minister from the advisory committee’s eligibility list (established from suitably qualified but unsuccessful candidates at the time of constituting the committee).

As regional advisory committee members are appointed by the Minister, temporary filling of vacancies is not appropriate.
5. Business planning

5.1 Regional advisory committee priorities and goals
On an annual basis the regional advisory committee and the Branch Director will agree on the committee's goals and priorities for the year.
Priorities should remain flexible to respond to emerging issues.

5.2 Annual reporting
In accordance with clause 85 (4) of the National Parks and Wildlife Regulation 2009, a regional advisory committee is required to forward to the OEH Chief Executive not later than 30 June of each financial year, the particulars of the dates of, and of members attending, each meeting during that (financial) year.

5.3 Statewide advisory committee conference
Every two years a conference is held – the Regional Advisory Committee Conference – that brings together two representatives from each regional advisory committee and other NPWS advisory bodies from across New South Wales to discuss statewide issues.
The primary objectives of conducting the conference are:
- to provide a networking opportunity for regional advisory committee members across New South Wales
- to provide an opportunity for regional advisory committee members to meet and network with members of the National Parks and Wildlife Advisory Council
- to learn about emerging and/or topical issues relevant to conservation management and to discuss their implications for the management of protected areas within New South Wales
- to disseminate information on these issues to regional advisory committees.

Figure 2  NPWS Q&A session with Advisory Council Chair Julie Hegarty, Executive Director Robert Quirk and Southern Ranges Branch Director Mick Pettit, during the 2017 Regional Advisory Committee Conference (Photo: Tess Hilleard/NPWS)
6. Resources

6.1 Remuneration/sitting fees

Decisions about the remuneration of individual boards and committees are guided by the Classification and Remuneration Framework for NSW Government Boards and Committees (the Framework).

Regional advisory committees are classified as Group C: Advisory Boards, Councils and Committees, Level C1-i. The criteria for inclusion in this level is:

Committees which have been established for the purpose of consultation, advice or liaison with local communities in relation to social, economic, environmental or industry issues and/or the deployment of community resources or assets at a local level.

Classification of an entity does not mean that the payment of sitting fees is mandatory or automatic. The decision to pay fees is a matter for Ministers and variations to sitting fee entitlements are permitted under the Framework.

In relation to regional advisory committees it has been determined at a ministerial level that sitting fees will not be paid to members.

6.2 Travel, accommodation, meals and other expenses

A member of an advisory committee is entitled to receive such travelling and other expenses (if any) as determined by the Minister (clause 10 of Schedule 8 of the National Parks and Wildlife Act 1974).

Meal, travelling and other allowances are reviewed and adjusted annually on 1 July each year by way of a Treasury Circular under the Crown Employees (Public Service Conditions of Employment) Reviewed Award 2009. Meal, travelling and other allowance payments for advisory committee members are paid in accordance with these rates set by NSW Treasury.

The allowances are to be taken as an indication of the upper limits for reimbursements and receipts must be provided for all actual amounts being claimed.

Regional advisory committee members may be reimbursed for legitimate incidental expenses incurred while carrying out their duties, with the prior agreement of the Branch Director.

The Board Member Travel Reimbursement Form (PC-WPB31) must be accompanied by receipts for all actual amounts being claimed. These documents should be submitted in a timely manner to the relevant NPWS branch regional advisory committee secretariat.

Expenses will not be paid for:

- unauthorised travel
- fines, penalties or infringement notices, or
- alcohol purchases or costs associated with mini-bar facilities.

Advisory committee members should be mindful of their actions in the expenditure of public monies and should avoid any action or situation which could create the impression that official services or facilities are being improperly used for their own or any other person’s or body’s private benefit or gain.

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Due economies should be observed by members and every effort made to minimise costs to OEH. Failure to do so may result in inefficient use of public funds or allegations of maladministration, leading to reputational damage for the organisation.

6.2.1 Use of private motor vehicles

An NPWS Branch Director, or other appropriate approver, may authorise an advisory committee member to use a private motor vehicle, when required, to travel for official business where:

- it will result in greater efficiency or involve OEH in less expense than if travel were undertaken by other means, or
- the member is unable to use another means of transport due to a disability.

Choice of mode of transport should result in the lowest overall cost; for example, air travel for long distances is preferable, since it allows travel to be completed in the shortest time, whereas an overnight stay may be required if travelling by motor vehicle. However, this needs to be balanced with work, health and safety considerations, flight availability and individual circumstances. OEH will only agree to pay accommodation costs if flights or travel arrangements do not permit for travel to be taken on one day, or the committee member is required to be away from home on official advisory committee business for more than one day.

When it is necessary for a regional advisory committee member to drive a private motor vehicle to attend meetings or other official regional advisory committee functions, a kilometre allowance can be claimed according to the rates set by NSW Treasury (see above).

6.2.2 Insurance and liability

Regional advisory committee members provide voluntary service and are therefore covered under the OEH Miscellaneous Insurance Policy against any injury sustained while engaged in official duties both on and off park. The benefit payable is in accordance with, and equivalent to, the benefits payable under the NSW Workers Compensation Act 1987 as amended.

As advisory committee members have no policy determination or operational executive function, they are indemnified against personal liability in relation to claims arising out of the provision of independent comment and advice to the NPWS and the National Parks and Wildlife Advisory Council.

6.2.3 Incident reporting

An incident report form (available from branch secretariat) must be submitted to the relevant Branch Director in respect of any personal injury, accident or near miss which the advisory committee member is involved in whilst undertaking their duties, including (but not limited to) the use of a private motor vehicle whilst in transit.

6.2.4 Taxation obligations

Regional advisory committee members must seek their own professional advice on taxation obligations arising from remuneration of expenses and mileage claims related to their obligations as members. Group certificates will be issued by OEH to regional advisory committee members who have claimed mileage allowances during the financial year.
7. Recognition of service

7.1 Complimentary NPWS All Parks Passes

Regional advisory committee members are eligible to be issued with one complimentary NPWS All Parks Pass whilst a member of a committee. The All Parks Pass provides free entry into all national parks, nature reserves, historic sites, NPWS managed state recreation areas and regional parks where an entry fee applies.

This entitlement recognises the valuable voluntary work undertaken by regional advisory committee members and aims to encourage members to visit, enjoy and familiarise themselves with parks and reserves across the state.

The replacement or transfer of the complimentary All Parks Pass (if lost or if registration details change) will incur an administration fee payable by advisory committee members. A copy of the new vehicle registration papers must be sighted by the branch secretariat and, where possible, the original All Parks Pass returned to OEH.

Branch secretariats will liaise with the NPWS Stakeholder Liaison Officer to assist in coordinating the issuing/transfer and replacement of any All Parks Passes for regional advisory committee members.

7.2 NPWS volunteer pins and certificates

NPWS volunteer pins and certificates are available to recognise 5, 10, 15, 20, 30 and 40-year service to a regional advisory committee.

Branch secretariats will liaise with the NPWS Stakeholder Liaison Officer to coordinate branch presentations of the pins and certificates to eligible recipients.

Figure 3  Kinchega Repatriation Ceremony 2017 was very significant for the local people and the Far West Regional Advisory Committee (Photo: Max Richardson/NPWS)
8. Code of conduct

This section of the Handbook defines the values and minimum standards of behaviour expected of regional advisory committee members. A presentation on the ethical conduct framework as it relates to regional advisory committees will also be given by Branch Directors at the time of induction.

8.1 Expectations of conduct

As public officials, regional advisory committee members have an obligation to act in the public interest with decisions and outcomes able to withstand public scrutiny. All members of NSW Government boards and committees must have a clear understanding of their public duty and legal responsibilities and always act for a proper purpose and without exceeding their powers.

Decisions of advisory committees should be made in the light of applicable legislation, the OEH and NSW boards and committees codes of conduct, Government policy and agency objectives.

Regional advisory committee members, as public officials, must comply with the OEH Code of Ethics and Conduct where it is relevant to their activities and responsibilities. Members are also subject to the Department of Premier and Cabinet’s NSW Government Boards and Committees Guidelines, which outline fundamental values and principles that define the standards of behaviour expected of members of NSW Government boards and committees.

Without limiting the application of these requirements, regional advisory committee members must:

- reflect on and reveal the values behind opinions offered and positions formed
- perform functions with integrity, impartiality, honesty, conscientiousness, care, skill, diligence and loyalty to the public interest
- ensure efficient and responsible expenditure of public funds in accordance with government legislation, policy and guidelines, including travel arrangements and approved expenses
- attend all or as many regional advisory committee meetings as practicable, and allow the necessary time to prepare for meetings, and to arrange for an apology to be provided if unable to attend a meeting
- not disclose official information otherwise noted as confidential or documents acquired because of membership of the regional advisory committee other than what is required by law or when the member has been given proper authority to do so
- neither represent, appear to represent nor speak on behalf of the regional advisory committee unless delegated to do so, when making public comment on issues
- not accept gifts, benefits or hospitality, which might be construed as compromising the member or regional advisory committee’s position on particular issues, and where appropriate, arrange for entries to be made in the regional advisory committee’s register of gifts
- as soon as practicable, disclose to the relevant Branch Director in writing any real, perceived or potential conflict of interest, in relation to the member’s position or interest in an organisation or as an individual, that might possibly conflict with the member’s function and role on the regional advisory committee
- report any corrupt conduct or suspected corruption to the regional advisory committee chair, the Minister, the Independent Commission Against Corruption (ICAC), NSW Ombudsman, or the NSW Auditor-General, as appropriate.
The regional advisory committee must also comply with a broad range of other government regulations and policies including those stipulated in legislation, regulations, ministerial memoranda, Department of Premier and Cabinet circulars, Treasury publications and Public Service Commission policy documents. This includes the Independent Commission Against Corruption Act, working with children checks (if required), rules relating to the contesting of elections, the lobbyist code of conduct, ethical decision-making, management of conflicts of interest, efficient public expenditure and the adherence to a code of conduct.

The *Government Information (Public Access) Act 2009* (GIPA Act) enables NSW Government information to be more readily available to improve openness and accountability.

The GIPA Act applies to all NSW Government agencies, including regional advisory committees. Committee members will be appropriately briefed by OEH on their obligations under the GIPA Act.

### 8.2 Respectful behaviour

Members of a regional advisory committee have the right to be treated with respect in the exercise of their functions and have an obligation to treat others with respect in the workplace.

Regional advisory committee members are expected to meet the standards set out in the *OEH Respectful Workplace Policy (2015)*, which states:

> Respect at work means treating others as we would like them to treat us. To do this we must not treat others differently because of their sex, race, disability, marital status, pregnancy, sexual preference, age, carer responsibilities or gender status. We must act in a courteous and professional manner at all times and respect the right of others to express a view that might differ from our own view. We must also ensure that, by our actions at work, we don’t make others feel uncomfortable, isolated or unsupported.

The following definitions of unacceptable behaviour apply to regional advisory committee members:

- **Bullying.** Any behaviour that is unreasonable or undesirable at the place of work or outside of work, and that is intimidating, humiliating or undermining. Bullying is generally repeated, unwelcome or unsolicited. The target considers the behaviour to be offensive, intimidating, humiliating or threatening as would others who witness it or are affected by it.

- **Discrimination.** Any behaviour that treats someone differently because of their sex, race, disability, marital status, pregnancy, sexual preference, age or carer’s responsibilities. These characteristics apply whether presumed or perceived, and also apply to an associate or a relative. Harassment is a form of unlawful discrimination. In accordance with the *Anti-Discrimination Act 1977 (NSW)* section 22A, sexual harassment includes any situation where there is a sexual advance, a request for a sexual favour or conduct of a sexual nature and where the advance, request or conduct is unwelcome, and a reasonable person would have anticipated that this would cause offence, humiliation or intimidation.

- **Harassment.** Unwelcome or unreciprocated behaviour which intimidates, offends or belittles. Harassment can occur in any work location, including places outside the usual place of work, and may occur while staff are in departmental premises, doing department work but not in departmental premises (such as field work or an overnight trip), participating in a social event organised by the employer including those held in the workplace (such as a Christmas party) or elsewhere (for example, unwelcome visits, phone calls or letters to a person’s home). It is unlawful to discriminate in employment or
in providing a service. This includes sexual or racist comments, taunts, propositions, jokes, questions about sex life, distribution of material such as cartoons, posters, emails and videos, and leering, sexual gestures, kissing, hugging or other touching of a sexual nature.

- **Intimidation.** Any behaviour that frightens someone.
- **Victimisation.** Any behaviour that exploits, excludes, isolates or treats someone so that they are a victim, scapegoat or belittled.
- **Vilification.** Any behaviour that tries to encourage hatred or contempt.

### 8.3 Conflicts of interest

Regional advisory committee members are appointed for their expertise and skill in particular areas. As a consequence, there is the potential for conflicts of interest to arise between a member’s duties to regional advisory committee, and his or her personal interests (or his or her duties towards others).

A conflict of interest exists when it is likely that a member could be influenced by a personal or business interest. If a conflict of interest leads to partial decision-making, it may constitute corrupt conduct. A conflict of interest, whether real, potential or perceived, may arise for example from:

- other directorships or employment
- professional and business interests and associations
- investment interests or the investment interests of friends or relatives
- family relationships
- participation in party political activities
- personal beliefs or attitudes that affect impartiality.

A member has a duty to declare any private interest that may impinge on a regional advisory committee deliberation. These declarations should include any pecuniary or other interest (including any payment, gift or benefit) intended or likely to influence, or could be reasonably perceived by an impartial observer as intended or likely to influence the member, to:

- act in a particular way (including making a particular decision)
- fail to act in a particular circumstance, and/or
- otherwise deviate from the proper exercise of their duty as a member.

A member’s interests include those of an associate or close relative.

Disclosure should be made at the beginning of a member’s term and during the term as necessary. When an issue arises, the regional advisory committee member must, as soon as practicable, disclose full and accurate details of the interest or issue to the regional advisory committee using the *Pecuniary Interests Declaration and Undertaking Form* available from the branch secretariat. A register of such interests is to be maintained by the regional advisory committee.

At the commencement of a meeting, members must make a full disclosure of interests that might possibly be construed as being in conflict with their responsibilities as regional advisory committee members. Members may need to withdraw from the meeting during a discussion for which a conflict has been declared. Such conflicts of interest must be recorded in the minutes. Members declaring a conflict of interest may be asked by the chairperson to absent themselves from the meeting or refrain from debate while the issue is discussed, if the majority of other members feel that course of action is warranted.
Should any doubts exist about a declared conflict of interest and the regional advisory committee is unable to agree whether or not the particular member(s) should refrain from participating in discussions or consideration of the issue, the matter is to be referred to the Branch Director for determination.

Regional advisory committee members should consider the following strategies (adapted from ICAC guidelines) to manage conflicts of interest:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Strategy</th>
<th>What this strategy means</th>
<th>When it is most suitable</th>
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</table>
| Register | You formally register details of the existence of a possible or potential conflict of interest | • For very low-risk conflicts of interest  
  • Where recording the conflict of interest is sufficient to maintain transparency |
| Restrict | Restrictions are placed on involvement in the matter to oversee part or all of the process that deals with the matter | • Members can be officially separated from parts of the activity or process  
  • The conflict of interest is not likely to arise frequently |
| Recruit | Use the expertise of a disinterested third party to oversee all or part of the process that deals with the matter | • It is not feasible or desirable for you to remove yourself from the decision-making process  
  • In small or isolated communities where your particular expertise is necessary and genuinely not easily replaced |
| Remove | You choose to remove yourself completely from the matter | • For ongoing serious conflicts of interest, where restriction or recruitment of others is not appropriate |
| Relinquish | You relinquish the private interest that is creating the conflict | • Where your commitment to public duty outweighs your attachment to your private interest |
| Resign | You resign from your position on the regional advisory committee | • No other options are workable  
  • Where you cannot or will not relinquish your private interest  
  • Where you prefer this course as a matter of personal principle |

### 8.4 Public resources

#### 8.4.1 Use of public resources

Furniture, equipment, staff and other resources may be provided to the regional advisory committee to perform its functions and should be used only in relation to those functions and in accordance with any OEH guidelines or rules about the use of those resources.

#### 8.4.2 Use of official information

Members must not disclose official information or documents acquired as a consequence of their membership of the regional advisory committee, other than as required by law, or when the member has been given proper authority to do so.

#### 8.4.3 Gifts and benefits

Members should be aware that it is illegal to seek, offer or receive money or gifts in order to obtain a benefit or favour. Members must also not accept gifts or benefits that could place them under an actual or perceived financial or moral obligation to another organisation or individual.
Gifts or hospitality of nominal value may be accepted in limited circumstances where the member’s position will not be compromised. Regional advisory committee members may access the OEH Register of Gifts to provide a high degree of transparency.

8.4.4 Public expenditure
Members must ensure the efficient and responsible expenditure of public monies in accordance with legislation and government policies and guidelines.

8.5 Corrupt conduct and maladministration
Corrupt conduct can generally be understood as the dishonest or partial exercise of public official functions. It may also involve the conduct of non-public officials which adversely affects the honest and impartial exercise of a public official’s functions.

For conduct to be considered corrupt under the Independent Commission Against Corruption Act 1988 definition it has to be serious enough to involve a criminal offence, a disciplinary offence, be grounds for dismissal or, in the case of Members of Parliament, involve a substantial breach of their code of conduct.

The regional advisory committee chairperson is required to report corrupt conduct or suspected corruption to the Independent Commission Against Corruption (ICAC). A report must be made to the ICAC as soon as you have a reasonable suspicion that corrupt conduct may have occurred or may be occurring. Matters must be reported to the ICAC regardless of any duty of secrecy or other restriction on disclosure. It is important that reports to the ICAC be made without advising the person(s) to whom the report relates and without publicity.

The Public Interest Disclosures Act 1994 provides protection to public officials who voluntarily report suspected corrupt conduct. Regional advisory committee members can make reports to the chairperson, to the Branch Director or to the NPWS Executive Director. Members can also report directly to the following investigative bodies:

- disclosures concerning corrupt conduct should be made to the ICAC
- disclosures concerning maladministration should be made to the NSW Ombudsman
- disclosures concerning serious and substantial waste of public money should be made to the NSW Auditor-General.

8.6 Confidentiality
Regional advisory committees will discuss a wide range of issues, many of which may be complex, sensitive or contentious. To enable members to make an informed decision on a particular matter, it will often be necessary to consider ‘privileged’ information. Such information should be treated with the utmost confidentiality and kept within the confines of the committee.

Regional advisory committee members must respect the confidentiality of their deliberations and any privileged information with which they may be provided. Members are asked to maintain confidentiality regarding matters discussed, irrespective of whether they have an affiliation with another group or organisation.

Information obtained at regional advisory committee meetings may be reported to the community only where such information would also be available to the public via other means.

If unsure about the appropriateness of sharing information from a regional advisory committee meeting, members should consult the regional advisory committee chair and Branch Director.
8.7 Public comments and the media

Advisory committees may seek to identify opportunities to promote and/or raise public awareness of conservation and local issues in their administrative region or promote the work and activities of their advisory committee.

All media releases and promotional material should be drafted in consultation with Branch Directors and be submitted to the NPWS for review and approval prior to publication. Privileged or confidential information must not be released to the media.

The regional advisory committee chairperson is the only person authorised to speak on behalf of the regional advisory committee to media or to make public comment, including through social media forums on regional advisory committee-related business.

It is inappropriate for regional advisory committee members to comment to the media about a matter that will come before the regional advisory committee for consideration, including plans of management.

All committee members need to ensure that any public comments made as an individual on matters outside of regional advisory committee business, are not construed as being on behalf of or representing the views of the committee or the NPWS.

8.8 Plan of management (PoM) submissions

Regional advisory committees have a statutory role in providing comments and reviewing submissions for plans of management (PoMs).

Regional advisory committee members are discouraged from directly or substantially authoring any public PoM submissions, to minimise actual or perceived conflicts of interest arising from their review of public submissions.

If a regional advisory committee member is involved in a submission on a draft PoM they must declare this and not participate in the committee discussion of that PoM.

8.9 Community engagement

Regional advisory committee members are expected to maintain contact with neighbours, community groups and other stakeholders as part of providing the NPWS with insight into the reserve management issues that are of potential concern to the community.

Regional advisory committees may seek advice directly from other agencies, individuals or other stakeholder groups in order to obtain information that will assist the committee in providing advice to the NPWS.

Prior to seeking such external advice, regional advisory committee members must consult with the Branch Director to determine whether the matter is regarded as potentially contentious. Where issues are deemed contentious, the NPWS may make contact on behalf of the committee.

Regional advisory committees must take care not to commit the NPWS to a position or action in the course of consulting with external stakeholders.

The Branch Director should be made aware of regional advisory committee liaison with external bodies to ensure the NPWS is in a position to respond if necessary to issues which may arise.
9. Glossary of terms

In this handbook, unless the context otherwise requires, the following definitions apply:

**Actuals**  
Actual costs incurred as shown by receipts (tax invoices). Also called actual expenses. It is the money actually spent.

**Additional advisory committee**  
An additional advisory committee constituted under section 24 (3) of the *National Parks and Wildlife Act 1974* by the Minister for a particular purpose.

**Advisory Council**  

**Administrative region**  
A geographic area within a defined operational boundary administered by a Branch Director and containing national parks and other protected areas within the landscape.

**Branch Director**  
The officer of the National Parks and Wildlife Service appointed as a Park Operations Director of the branch in which the regional advisory committee is located, and includes any person for the time being acting as such.

**Chief Executive**  
The Chief Executive of the Office of Environment and Heritage and is the Chief Executive of the National Parks and Wildlife Service as described by the *National Parks and Wildlife Act 1974*.

**ICAC**  
Independent Commission Against Corruption.

**Member**  
A person appointed by the Minister to an advisory committee.

**Minister**  
The Minister administering the *National Parks and Wildlife Act 1974* in the state of New South Wales.

**NPW Act**  
The *National Parks and Wildlife Act 1974* as amended from time to time and any Act replacing the same.

**NPWS**  
NSW National Parks and Wildlife Service.

**OEH**  
NSW Office of Environment and Heritage.

**Regional advisory committee**  
An advisory committee constituted under section 24 (2) of the *National Parks and Wildlife Act 1974*. 
10. References

These references have been consulted in the preparation of this Handbook. Copies of these documents are available at the links provided or by contacting the appropriate regional advisory committee branch secretariat.


Electoral Commission of NSW, *Lobbyists website*, (includes Lobbyist Register and Lobbyist Code of Conduct)

*Government information (Public Access) Act 2009*

Independent Commission Against Corruption 2012, *Identifying and managing conflicts of interest in the public sector*

*Independent Commission Against Corruption Act 1988*

*Privacy and Personal Information Protection Act 1998*

*National Park and Wildlife Act 1974*

*National Parks and Wildlife Act 1974 – Schedule 8*

*National Parks and Wildlife Regulation 2009*


Office of Environment and Heritage 2015, *Code of Ethics and Conduct*


Office of Environment and Heritage 2017, *Procedures for disclosing interests and managing conflicts of interest* (to be reviewed November 2019)

Department of Premier and Cabinet, *Boards and Committees – Forms and Resources* (including Governance)


*Privacy and Personal Information Protection Act 1998*

*Public Interest Disclosures Act 1994*

Public Service Commission 2013, *Appointment Standards: Boards and Committees in the NSW Public Sector* (updated 26/10/15)

Public Service Commission 2015, *Behaving Ethically, Code of Ethics and Conduct for NSW government sector employees*