

Community and Environment Reference Group (CERG)

Last Reviewed Date: 8 December 2025

Introduction

NOPSEMA's (the regulator) vision is for a protected offshore workforce and environment. This vision can only be achieved with engagement with the community.

This document outlines the Terms of Reference for the operation of Community and Environment Reference Group (CERG), established by the regulator.

Purpose

The CERG facilitates community engaging with NOPSEMA to share a variety of community perspectives on specific matters of interest to the regulator or members of the CERG relevant to offshore energy environmental management and regulation, to help guide the regulator's approach to regulation of environmental management.

Membership

The regulator will select CERG members based on their relevant experience and knowledge.

Members will be broadly reflective of the community to capture a range of different perspectives including: commercial and recreational fishing, conservation advocacy, public policy and government function, small business and tourism, cultural heritage and Indigenous communities, youth; as well as regional perspectives from the north-west, south-west, north, south-east and east coastal areas of Australia.

Members do not act in a representative capacity for any particular group or organisation.

CERG member participation and appointments will be reviewed annually with the possibility of extension.

CERG member participation will conclude after a maximum term of three years unless renewed by mutual agreement. The regulator will notify affected members in writing six months ahead of the end of their CERG term.

CERG participation may be discontinued if members fail to attend two consecutive meetings without providing a valid reason, as determined by the regulator.

Expectations

It is expected that each member of the CERG will:

- Provide robust, independent perspectives on specific matters referred by the regulator
- Raise matters of concern or for discussion, relevant to their perspective(s)
- Engage in an objective-based and constructive dialogue in a respectful manner

- Share learnings and insights with their community as desired
- Contribute to forming a collective view by consensus, in instances where a conclusion or recommendation is requested by the regulator.
- Participate in ad hoc engagement opportunities outside of scheduled meetings, as reasonably requested by the regulator, to provide timely input on emerging issues.
- Review and provide feedback on documents, proposals, or communications circulated by the regulator between meetings, where relevant to the CERG's purpose.

In addition, members

- Understand that the regulator is not a policy agency and cannot take on responsibility for policy or legislative change.
- Agree that the CERG is not an appropriate forum to prosecute regulatory decisions by the regulator, debate the merits of specific proposals under consideration or already approved, or engage in political lobbying or matters outside of the agreed purpose of the CERG.

The regulator intends to:

- Value the CERG as a reliable source of informed, cohesive and balanced community views
- Refer matters to the CERG for discussion, and provide feedback on suggestions and comments
- Typically collect the range of perspectives of the group for consideration, but on occasions may request a consolidated view or recommendation from the group
- Demonstrate how learnings from the CERG have informed its decisions and direction
- Appoint members and provide executive, administrative and technical support

Conflict of interest

Where members feel that their interests may be considered in conflict, either material or perceived, with their role in the CERG, members must declare these interests at a meeting or as they arise. Any conflicts of interest raised will be recorded for transparency.

Meetings

Meetings will be held at least twice per year or as otherwise requested by the regulator and will be nominally two hours. An agenda and meeting papers will be provided by the regulator one week (seven working days) prior to the meeting date.

Meetings will require the participation of at least two thirds of members to ensure an adequate representation of perspectives is gained. Tele-conferencing will be available to facilitate attendance at minimal cost to members.

If agreed by CERG and the regulator, representatives from other government agencies may be invited to join for item(s) where it assists achieve the purpose.

Meeting outcomes will be reviewed and agreed with the group members and published on the regulator's website.

Meeting summaries will be recorded in writing and shared with members by email and published on the regulator's website.

Code of Conduct

Members are expected to adhere to a code of conduct in meetings that promotes respectful dialogue, inclusivity, and constructive engagement. Disruptive or disrespectful behaviour may result in removal from the meeting and/or group.

Governance

The regulator will facilitate the Community and Environment Reference Group.

The group is an informal liaison body and will exchange perspectives in an objective and independent manner.

The group is not a formal advisory or decision-making body.

Review

The regulator will review this Terms of Reference annually. Ongoing operation of the group will be at the discretion of the regulator in consultation with group members.

Criteria against which the group's value will be evaluated include:

- Issues raised by the CERG have been agreed by the regulator to warrant action, and action has been implemented
- Initiatives have been developed to improve regulation of environmental management as a result of suggestions from the CERG
- The regulator maintains organisational sustainability and social license to regulate
- Other suitable criteria identified by the CERG or the regulator