

	<b>Australian Government Environmental Information Advisory Group</b>  <b>FOR OFFICIAL USE ONLY</b>	29 April 2015
		AG EIAG #10 Draft Minutes
		<b>For Member Approval</b>

**ATTENDANCE & DRAFT MINUTES , AUSTRALIAN GOVERNMENT ENVIRONMENTAL  
INFORMATION ADVISORY GROUP MEETING #10, 29 APRIL 2015**

**BUREAU OF METEOROLOGY, LEVEL 3, 14 CHILDERS STREET, CANBERRA**

**ATTENDEES**

<b>Representative</b>	<b>Agency</b>
Rob Vertessy	Bureau of Meteorology (CHAIR)
Graham Hawke	Bureau of Meteorology
Ian Ewing	Australian Bureau of Statistics
John Sims	Department of Agriculture
Tim Neal	Department of Communications
Kirsty Douglas	Department of Education and Training
Jason Ferris	Department of the Environment
Stuart Minchin	Geoscience Australia
Lex Cogle	Murray-Darling Basin Authority (MDBA)
Cathryn Geiger	Department of Infrastructure and Regional Development
Tamara Lee	The Treasury

**OBSERVERS**

<b>Name</b>	<b>Agency</b>
Antony Stinziani	Geoscience Australia
Lesley Seebeck	Bureau of Meteorology
Adam Lewis	Geoscience Australia
Christine Williams	Australian Bureau of Statistics
Darren Wheatley	Department of Infrastructure and Regional Development
Geoff Tranter	Department of Education

**APOLOGIES**

<b>Representative</b>	<b>Agency</b>
Mark Crossweller	Attorney General's Department
Helen Blain	Department of Defence
Andrew Johnson	Commonwealth Scientific & Industrial Research Organisation (CSIRO)
Pia Waugh	Department of Finance
Teresa Morahan	Department of Health
Helen Wilson	Department of Prime Minister and Cabinet

**SECRETARIAT**

<b>Representative</b>	<b>Agency</b>
Louise Minty	Bureau of Meteorology
Andre Zerger	Bureau of Meteorology
Mardi Albert	Bureau of Meteorology

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## MINUTES

<b>ITEM</b>	<b>The AUSTRALIAN GOVERNMENT ENVIRONMENTAL INFORMATION ADVISORY GROUP (AG EIAG)</b>
<b>10.1</b>	<b>ADOPTION OF AGENDA</b>
10.1a	<b>Adopted</b> the agenda for AG EIAG #10
<b>10.2</b>	<b>OPENING AND ATTENDANCE</b>
	Dr Rob Vertessy (Chair) welcomed participants.
10.2a	<b>Noted</b> the attendance of the members, observers and guest presenters to the meeting.
<b>10.3</b>	<b>MINUTES AND ACTIONS</b>
10.3a	<b>Approved</b> the minutes as a true and accurate record of the AG EIAG #09 held on 29 October 2014.
10.3b	<b>Noted</b> no outstanding actions and Bureau noted there will be further discussion towards the end of today's meeting about action item 9.11c which concerns proposed themes for AG EIAG meeting #11.
<b>10.4</b>	<b>NPEI – UPDATE AND MAJOR ACTIVITIES</b>
Presentation	<p>Andre Zerger provided an overview of its leadership of the National Plan for Environmental Information initiative (NPEI) and an update on the Bureau's NPEI core activities. He outlined the framework of core activities including: (a) Coordination, (b) National Environmental Information Infrastructure (NEII), and (c) Products and Services. Also noted (d) the Environmental Information Reform Agenda which is led by the Department of the Environment.</p> <p>Members were referred to Attachment 10.4a which provides progress updates on activities under the Products and Services area including eReefs Marine Water Quality Dashboard and the National Air Quality Data Service (NAQDS) and noting that the Bureau will also provide an update regarding the NEII at the next agenda item.</p> <p>Under the <b>Coordination</b> activity:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>Environmental Information Products and Services Directory</b> (<a href="http://www.bom.is/directory">www.bom.is/directory</a>) - the aim is to showcase mature products and services with content updated twice per year and primary audience is the public.</li> <li>• <b>eXchange e-newsletter</b> – Issue 5 (April 2015) went out to 1051 subscribers and doubled in subscription base since first issue with incremental promotion to a national audience. Reiterated its purpose of showcasing what our collective organisations are doing and our aim to continue to expand the subscription base nationally.</li> <li>• <b>Products and Services Activities Report</b> – this is an evolving body of work for communicating emergent strategic activities occurring across the APS. The last report was produced in 2014 and a stakeholder review was conducted in late 2014 with recommendations to be implemented shortly. The review highlighted an appetite for stakeholders to regularly meet and discuss their emerging environmental information activities.</li> </ul>
Discussion	There was no further discussion.

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10.4a	<b>Noted</b> progress of the NPEI initiative and the core activity updates.
<b>10.5</b>	<b>NATIONAL ENVIRONMENTAL INFORMATION INFRASTRUCTURE (NEII) – REFERENCE GROUP REPORT</b>
Presentation	<p>Louise Minty provided an overview of the NEII including a recap on the vision and how it's envisaged as a network of environmental data nodes delivered as a standards-based infrastructure to improve discovery, access and re use of nationally significant environmental data.</p> <p>Under the NEII Programme, data service deliverables so far have included eReefs for estimates of marine water quality in the GBR region, the Geofabric product from the Water Information Services Program and Solar data climatologies developed by the Bureau's Climate Information Services Program.</p> <p><b>NEII Reference Group</b></p> <p>There are five key focus areas under the NEII Programme including 'engagement'. Under the engagement focus area the key activity is the formation of the NEII Reference Group. The group's purpose is to provide strategic advice to the Bureau and provide a cross-agency forum for implementation of NEII. Their recent focus has included advice regarding NEII's approach to state/territory engagement, improving our joint understanding of the role of information modelling, and supporting a body of work around better understanding the benefits from a mature NEII from an individual partner perspective. The Reference Group has diverse representation and includes NCRIS (National Collaborative Research Infrastructure Strategy) partners as custodians of nationally significant environmental data. It's been a successful forum and there has been strong and positive engagement within the group.</p>
Discussion	<p>There was discussion about how information from the human dimension (social data) will be incorporated into the NEII. The Bureau noted that the architecture is flexible to accommodate human and/or social data for example key data from the ABS. Indeed this information is critical for providing context to environmental information. The Chair noted the importance of individual agencies bringing forward candidate datasets for delivery under the NEII to create in essence a 'virtuous circle' of growth and development to realise the joint NEII vision.</p> <p>Other comments included:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The opportunity within the spatial/statistical framework for integrating data (e.g. statistical with biophysical), nested grid standards to enhance environmental information and opportunities for the statistical community to work towards new products – aligns with UN direction on data management.</li> <li>• There are opportunities to improve the existing national land use mapping through the use of NEII-based standards.</li> <li>• The Bureau detailed a decision under the NEII program to not focus on building portals or dashboards but to focus on development of the base infrastructure. As an interim communication product the Bureau has developed the NEII Viewer (in collaboration with NICTA). The NEII Viewer leverages the earlier work around the development of the National Map product (Department of Communications and Geoscience Australia) to produce a simple web interface for key stakeholders to view NEII data.</li> <li>• The group noted the value of such a collaboration (Viewer development) and the importance of leveraging earlier investment and suggested exploring the potential for developing a national portal architecture to reuse tools, platforms and software</li> </ul>

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	through an open-source model for web interface development.
10.5a	<b>Noted</b> progress towards the development of the NEII through the NEII Programme and progress of the NEII Reference Group.
<b>10.6</b>	<b>National Principles for Environmental Information</b>
Presentation	<p>The Department of the Environment (Jason Ferris) provided an overview of the draft National Principles for Environmental Information. These have originated under the NPEI initiative and in direct response to a discussion held at the previous AG EIAG meeting in late 2014. The NPEI joint steering committee (JSC) also identified the importance of developing a policy instrument to provide national guidance and set the agenda around environmental information reform. The principles provide a high level framework to encourage action rather than dictating specific requirements to stakeholders.</p> <p>The Department of the Environment are seeking further feedback from the AG EIAG noting that the next steps involve taking member feedback back to the NPEI JSC and then exploring options for ministerial release. The intent is for the AG EIAG to ultimately have carriage and endorsement of the principles once finalised hence the criticality of member input at this early stage.</p>
Discussion	<p>The Chair expressed his support for this initiative and its potential to take us in a common direction regarding whole-of-government environmental information reform. Discussion points from members included the following:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The group agreed the principles are sound but may require more refinement to make them more engaging to an external audience</li> <li>• Discussion around the privacy/confidentiality aspects where data is associated with individuals or businesses and that balances access and use. Some members offered a counter view that privacy can be used as a barrier to sharing data and noted that privacy legislation exists and we're operating within that context. In an environmental context there is the potential for loss of data if privacy arguments are used as a barrier.</li> <li>• Suggestion to make some principles more concise noting the terms 'ethical' and 'lawful' are superfluous.</li> <li>• Consider including a preservation and archiving principle.</li> <li>• There is some mismatch in principles in terms of their specificity and detail.</li> <li>• Geoscience Australia offered to provide further input regarding refinement from a communication perspective and the ABS will provide advice around the privacy/commercial-in-confidence aspects raised during the discussions.</li> <li>• Further feedback should be provided to: <a href="mailto:environmentalinfo@environment.gov.au">environmentalinfo@environment.gov.au</a></li> <li>• The Chair noted the importance of finalising this process before the next meeting hence endorsement will need to occur out-of-session.</li> </ul>
10.6a	Department of the Environment to incorporate recommendations and circulate updated draft of National Principles for Environmental Information out of session for endorsement by members (prior to AG EIAG #11).
10.6b	Department of the Environment to seek guidance from Geoscience Australia and the ABS (for communication and privacy aspects respectively) prior to finalising the National Principles for Environmental Information document.
<b>10.7</b>	<b>ICT Innovations in Environmental Information 1 (Bureau of Meteorology)</b>

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Presentation	<p>Dr Lesley Seebeck (Chief Information Officer, Bureau of Meteorology) provided an overview of ICT and data in the Bureau in the context of greater data availability, higher resolution (spatial and temporal) and greater variety and demand for access.</p> <p><u>Key Points</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Himawari-8 satellite data from the Japan Meteorological Agency and the forthcoming modelling outputs from the new supercomputer procurement will considerably increase data volumes handled by the Bureau - every time grid size is halved, computing power goes up by factor of 8-10 times and the data requirements increases by a factor of 4.</li> <li>• Provided an outline of Bureau technology in terms of observing networks, instrumentation, automation, satellite, internet and digitisation – all in the context of how we can do more and do better with the information and data</li> <li>• We're in an increasingly digital age, on-demand 24/7 and with increasing uptake and utility – building a conversation with our users is a priority, complexity of tracking use across channels and noting the shift to mobile technology are emerging challenges.</li> <li>• Importance of the Bureau's skills, expertise and brand name – value in collection, monitoring and quality assurance.</li> <li>• Data and information principles in terms of strategic alignment, discoverability, usability, authoritative, robust governance, innovation, leadership and delivering value to users.</li> <li>• Issues around multiple stakeholders, boundary issues, lack of clear owners, data quality as an enabler, integration, data security/integrity, storage, transmission costs (the cloud), data as a central, core asset.</li> <li>• Getting all this right means ICT is a driver of productivity and value, contributing to national security in terms of community resilience (e.g. disaster mitigation), providing economic and scientific opportunities, adding to individual and community wellbeing in terms of technology, increased effectiveness and standards.</li> </ul>
Discussion	<p>There was discussion about the value of data only being realised once it is used and the issues around referring to data as an asset within the context of current financial/accounting frameworks (capitalisation rules for data). Data could be referenced instead in terms of 'infrastructure' rather than as an 'asset'. Discussion about the importance of developing a robust costing model to analyse costs/benefits, and ensuring this receives a treatment from a public good perspective (benefits model and benefits realisation were identified as critical).</p>
<b>10.8</b>	<b>ICT Innovations in Environmental Information 2 (Geoscience Australia)</b>
Presentation	<p>Antony Stinziani (Chief Information Officer, Geoscience Australia) provided an overview of ICT innovation and environmental information reform in Geoscience Australia (GA) including key activities, challenges and delivery approaches.</p> <p><u>Key Points</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Provided historical context around funding and the business case for scientific data stewardship.</li> <li>• Issues around data discovery, access, use and computational science – high performance computing, high performance data, the fusion of scientific data and software engineering.</li> <li>• Formalisation of partnership with National Computational Infrastructure (NCI).</li> </ul>

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	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Geoinformatics and data services team focussing on national/international data standards and web services.</li> <li>• Data custodianship and single point-of-truth datasets are a priority.</li> <li>• Alignment of data principles between the Bureau and GA has occurred.</li> <li>• Chair and secretariat of Australian Government Science Agency Data Stewardship Working Group – bringing science agencies together and being active in the international science data community.</li> <li>• Harvesting of GA catalogue for input into NEII catalogue is a priority.</li> <li>• Data cube potential and application broadening to other domains – expecting it to become the new standard for managing satellite imagery.</li> <li>• Progress around collaboration and common architectures – CSIRO and the Bureau, virtual labs project/concept.</li> <li>• Issues including data storage, connectivity, brokering interoperability between datasets, computational science capability, innovation being ‘left on cutting room floor’, balancing budget vs. strategic priorities (within context of cloud technology), and moving towards not having in-house infrastructure – instead linking in to National Research Infrastructure and NCRIS.</li> <li>• Launching into ICT transformation phase over next 2 years, reviewing enterprise data model and looking to increase the innovation component of the current funding ratio.</li> <li>• Vision around ‘Devops’ science teams – concept of continuous deployment into science teams, partnering with scientists and running proof of concepts over next 6-12 months in GA.</li> </ul>
Discussion	<p>Discussion ensued about security in this context and GA talked about taking a risk-based approach to security but noting the importance of data integrity. Lesley Seebeck commented that she sees security as being about enabling people to do their job within a data integrity context and with monitoring, resilience and continuity built into the system – a new paradigm that sees security as an enabler of trust rather than as a control mechanism.</p> <p>Further discussion around the Government’s model for capital funding and defining the assets of data organisations – real value in intangible assets, should this be redefined in accounting definitions? The group agreed this is an important issue that needs further discussion within government – steering the conversation around benefits and value and the need to refine the budget/funding model.</p>
<b>10.9a</b>	<b>MEMBER UPDATES: ICT THEME</b>
	<p><b>Australian Bureau of Statistics</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• A funding proposal has been submitted around reengineering embedded metadata processes and having a separate metadata registry.</li> <li>• On 16/04/15 ABS released first experimental ecosystem account for the Great Barrier Reef: <a href="http://www.abs.gov.au/ausstats/abs@.nsf/mf/4680.0.55.001">http://www.abs.gov.au/ausstats/abs@.nsf/mf/4680.0.55.001</a></li> </ul> <p><b>Geoscience Australia</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Recently GA enabled harvesting of over 24,000 data products on the GEOS Infrastructure that is now discoverable globally.</li> <li>• Close to signing MOU with EU around access to Copernicus Sentinel data (new European satellite system) involving operation of a regional data hub and providing</li> </ul>

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	<p>free and open-access data, noting Sentinel 2 is Landsat equivalent significantly improving resolution and access to data.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Data Cube – expanding use-cases beyond water observations from space and offering potential operational products and a more cost-effective approach. Currently prototyping and making a case for the data cube concept to be treated as a whole-of-government investment and to become operational.</li> <li>• Collecting a large dataset from the Southern Indian Ocean for MH370, to be made publicly available in due course through web services.</li> <li>• Looking at a major issue around environmental data collected by industry.</li> </ul> <p><b>Department of the Environment</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Reforms within the EPBC Act involving enhanced bilateral agreements with states/territories who'll take on majority of regulatory process but responsibility for decisions still stay with the federal minister. This will have significant impacts on the management of environmental information and data.</li> <li>• Working with Geoscience Australia and now have around 50 open datasets and 20 of these have test services, in line with NEII vision.</li> </ul> <p><b>Department of Communications</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• PM&amp;C public data taskforce established and associated requests will be forthcoming to departments regarding their high-value data.</li> </ul> <p><b>Department of Education and Training</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The branch responsible for NCRIS has recently undergone a major restructure and now awaiting approval of guidelines and distribution formula for 2015 NCRIS funds.</li> </ul> <p><b>Murray-Darling Basin Authority</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• MDBA CIO role was split into two roles two years ago: CIO and CTO which assists in understanding in terms of technology, data management and information management as important, complementary activities.</li> <li>• Continuing relationships with key data providers and a major project with ABS around social data.</li> <li>• Focus on the data delivery portal for the elevation data due at end of December. To provide blended, space shuttle radar at best available resolution for the whole country including MDB.</li> </ul> <p><b>ABARES</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Proposal submitted to transform ABARES data infrastructure to make it more open and available, within existing security constraints.</li> <li>• A number of major data releases are underway including catchment scale land use data</li> </ul>
<b>10.9b</b>	<b>AG EIAG Terms of Reference Revision</b>
Presentation	<p>The Chair presented a revision of the groups terms of reference noting it's timely considering the AG EIAG was established around four years ago and the group's purpose and mode of operation has changed in that period.</p> <p><u>Key Points</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The purpose hasn't really changed but the TOR should be modified to reflect changes in focus that has shifted away from advising on the implementation of the NPEI itself to providing a senior executive-level information sharing forum.</li> </ul>

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	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Propose to remove the reference to maintaining a priority list of national policy issues requiring environmental information.</li> <li>Propose to continue the recent approach of having a thematic focus for each meeting (i.e. this meeting's focus: ICT innovations).</li> <li>Propose to be more open in sharing meeting outcomes and actions across the sector to enhance line of sight and stimulate further engagement. This will occur by releasing minutes (after their approval) publically.</li> <li>Seeking endorsement of Attachment 10.9b Revised Terms of Reference.</li> </ul>
Discussion	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>The Bureau noted the inclusion of an additional item under the purpose statement that includes 'developing cross-agency policy positions' around major environmental data and information issues, for example as has occurred through the development of the National Principles for Environmental Information.</li> <li>Discussion around aligning this group's focus with governmental policy priorities both in the short and longer term. Agreement about the value in this approach at a fundamental level but also building in an awareness that priorities and language used by government of the day changes so the group needs to be suitably responsive.</li> <li>Members noted this forum has the capacity to inform government and stimulate thinking about emergent issues around environmental information. These issues could be tabled ahead of future meetings by members.</li> <li>It was noted that 'water' has been suggested as a theme for the next AG EIAG noting its cross-agency importance and this received endorsement from members.</li> </ul>
10.9ba	TOR revision <b>approved</b> by members.
<b>10.10</b>	<b>Other Business</b>
	Nil.
<b>10.11</b>	<b>NEXT MEETING DATE &amp; THEME</b>
Discussion	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>AG EIAG #11 proposed for 28 October 2015 from 1-4pm. This will be formalised through a formal meeting invitation shortly</li> <li>The Bureau noted there were a number of options for themes including around reporting (e.g. water, State of the Environment), environmental information in the research and innovation system, licensing and legal issues. It was agreed that water information would be an ideal theme noting the range of stakeholders involved in water information and the emerging criticality of this information at a national-level.</li> <li>The Bureau suggested that a number of shorter, targeted presentations would make for a sensible approach to accommodate multiple stakeholder interests. The secretariat will complete some design work to ensure the theme adds value to members and will seek presentations from members.</li> </ul>
10.11a	AG EIAG #11 date to be confirmed and invitations issued.
10.11b	A theme around water information was agreed for AG EIAG #11.
10.11c	Secretariat to complete design of this meeting and approach members for presentations ahead of AG EIAG #11.
10.11d	Presentations from AG EIAG #10 to be circulated with minutes.

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## ACTION ITEMS

Note: actions completed and accepted by the AG EIAG will be removed from the rolling action list.

ITEM	ACTION	DUE DATE	STATUS
10.6a	Department of the Environment to circulate updated draft of National Principles for Environmental Information out of session for endorsement by members, prior to AG EIAG #11.	Ahead of AG EIAG #11	In progress
10.6b	Department of the Environment to seek guidance from Geoscience Australia and the ABS (for communication and privacy aspects respectively) prior to finalising the National Principles for Environmental Information document.	Ahead of AG EIAG #11	In progress
10.11a	AG EIAG #11 date to be confirmed and invitations issued.	Ahead of AG EIAG #11	In progress
10.11c	Secretariat to canvass members to structure presentations for AG EIAG #11.	Ahead of AG EIAG #11	In progress
10.11d	Presentations from AG EIAG #10 to be circulated with the minutes.	ASAP	In progress