

BUREAU OF METEOROLOGY ADVISORY BOARD ANNUAL REPORT 2004-05

ROLE OF THE ADVISORY BOARD

The Bureau of Meteorology Advisory Board was created in June 2002 as a non-statutory body. The function of the Board is to advise the Parliamentary Secretary and the Director of Meteorology on issues of relevance to the proper discharge of the functions of the Bureau. More specifically, the role is set out in the following terms of reference approved by the Parliamentary Secretary.

TERMS OF REFERENCE

The major responsibilities of the Board are to:

- a) keep under review, and advise the Minister and Director of Meteorology on:
 - (i) The changing environment affecting national and international demand for the provision of meteorological and related services;
 - (ii) The Bureau's Corporate Strategy and Forward Program;
 - (iii) The optimal balance of resources to be applied to the various public interest priorities of the Bureau including severe weather warning services, provision of public weather, climate, hydrological and oceanographic services, maintenance of the national climate record and the conduct of research and investigation;
 - (iv) The appropriateness of the allocation of current and future products and services provided by the Bureau in the categories of free, cost recoverable or commercial;
 - (v) Stakeholder views of the Bureau's current products and services and emerging needs;
 - (vi) Any other issues of relevance to ensuring the efficiency and effectiveness of the Bureau of Meteorology;
- b) respond to issues and requests addressed to it by the Minister, the Director of Meteorology and members of the stakeholder community; and
- c) report, at least annually, to the Minister on its activities and to make recommendations in relation to the performance and future direction of the Bureau.

MEMBERSHIP

Membership of the Board is by Parliamentary Secretary invitation, after consultation with the Prime Minister. While the Director of Meteorology and the Portfolio Secretary are included as ex-officio members, the balance of membership is constituted so as to broadly reflect the Bureau's stakeholder community, with individual members selected on the basis of their ability to contribute at the highest level to the development of meteorology in Australia.

Members are selected to represent, as far as possible, the following broad sectors:

- Agriculture;
- Aviation;
- Defence;
- Fire and Emergency Services;

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- Environmental Management;
- Marine;
- Media;

and/or, as representatives of the following specialist fields:

- Economics;
- Law;
- Meteorology; and/or
- Scientific research.

Some members are recognised as contributing expertise and experience in more than one of these areas.

At 30 June 2005, the Bureau of Meteorology Advisory Board comprised the following members:

MEMBER	POSITION
Professor Vicki Sara (Chair)	Chief Executive Officer Australian Research Council
Mr Ian Castles AO	Visiting Fellow Asia Pacific School of Economics and Government Australian National University
Mr Mackenzie Craig	Primary Producer
Mr Barry Gear AO	Chairman South Australian State Disaster Committee
Ms Sue Howard	Director of Radio ABC
Mr Russell Miller	Partner Minter Ellison
Professor Peter Schwerdtfeger	Senior Adviser Airborne Research Australia
Mr David Borthwick (ex officio)	Secretary Department of the Environment and Heritage
Dr Geoff Love (ex officio)	Director of Meteorology Bureau of Meteorology
Note: Professor Gillian Triggs resigned from the Advisory Board on 5 May 2005.	

ACTIVITIES OF THE BOARD 2004-05

MEETINGS

During 2004-05, meetings were held on 25 November (meeting 2004/3) at the Bureau's Head Office in Melbourne and on 19 May (meeting 2005/1) at Sydney Airport. Member attendance at meetings is provided below.

MEMBER	25 November (meeting 2004/3)	19 May (meeting 2005/1)
Sara (Chair)	✓	X
Castles	✓	X
Craig	X	✓
Grear	✓	✓
Howard	X	✓
Miller	✓	X
Schwerdtfeger	✓	✓
Triggs	X	X
Borthwick	✓	✓
Love	✓	✓

MAJOR ISSUES EXAMINED IN 2004-05

Across the two meetings, the Board considered the following major issues:

- providing advice on the Bureau's interactions with CSIRO and other organisations in meteorological and climatological research;
- the upgrade to the Bureau's Field Offices;
- the integration of the National Tidal Centre within the Bureau;
- the policy framework for the operation of the Special Services Unit; and
- the Director's vision for the Bureau in 10-years' time.

More information on each of these is provided below.

The Board was also able to assist the Bureau by:

- playing a key role in shaping the Bureau's five-year Strategic Plan 2005-10 which was published in March and circulated widely internally and externally. Board input during 2004 was critical in the reshaping of the document to provide a more broadly accessible, streamlined and tightly focused plan with clearly identified priorities;

- providing guidance on strategies for interaction with the private meteorological service providers;
- assisting the Bureau in developing a media strategy in relation to the rebalancing of its surface observations network;
- helping the Bureau refine its guidelines for working with the media;
- considering and providing advice on the role of the Bureau in climate science;
- reviewing proposals for the 2004-05 budget; and
- reviewing the outcomes of the 2004-05 budget.

Collaborations in Meteorological and Climatological Research

As part of his report at meeting 2004/3, Dr Love informed the Board of the Bureau's collaborations with the Australian Greenhouse Office and CSIRO on the Australian Climate Change Science Program; and also its ongoing negotiations with CSIRO aimed towards a national approach to climate modelling, a key component of which would be the development of an Australian Community Climate and Earth System Simulator (ACCESS). The Board agreed that, whilst there were potential risks in providing climate change policy advice to government through a single framework, Australia's relatively small population made it necessary to pool resources for the development of major systems when aiming for world class results.

Upgrade to the Bureau's Field Offices

At meeting 2004/3, the Advisory Board discussed the review of the Bureau's capacity to fund the replacement or refurbishment of its field offices, commissioned with the agreement of the Department of Finance and Administration (DoFA), and undertaken by the consultants KPMG. The Board were very supportive of the Bureau's objectives in maintaining its infrastructure, and provided valuable advice on strengthening the Bureau's New Policy Proposal, suggesting that it should:

- address future requirements as well as current needs;
- consider how technology might change the need for field stations into the future;
- clearly address each point raised by KPMG; and
- canvass alternative funding options such as Private Funding Initiatives (PFIs).

The Board agreed that Vicki Sara would stay in contact with the Bureau on the issue, out of session, to provide any further advice or support from the Advisory Board within the timetabled budget process.

Dr Love informed the Board at Meeting 2005/1 that the New Policy Proposal had been successful with the Bureau securing \$14.4 million over six years for the replacement of 12 field offices. With respect to the choices between refurbishment of field offices and the possible automation of some stations, the Board advised that the Bureau should follow the most suitable business case when deciding the manner in which the refurbishment of each station should be managed.

National Tidal Centre

At meeting 2004/3 the Board were given an overview of the progress made in taking on the former National Tidal Facility and the options for integrating its successor, the newly formed National Tidal Centre (NTC), within the Bureau. The Board were pleased with the outcome for the NTC, both in terms of the Bureau securing external funding for its operation, and in its preservation as an important function of government. The Board noted that the funding arrangement, consisting of contributions from multiple portfolios, was unusual within government and that the Bureau would need to put particular effort into managing the stakeholder agencies.

After being briefed on three options for integration, the Board's general advice was to integrate the NTC functions across the Bureau's Branches and Programs whilst maintaining the NTC name and continuing to use it with customers and stakeholders. However, the Board felt strongly that the Bureau should adopt the third option presented - that the NTC be incorporated within a new specialised oceanographic centre - as a 10-year vision for all of the Bureau's oceanographic and marine activities.

Special Services Unit

An overview of the practical application of the Special Services Unit (SSU) policy framework, using the SSU's project in Kuwait as a case study, was provided to the Board at meeting 2004/3. Particular emphasis was placed on the SSU's alignment with the Bureau's policies on the provision of commercial services.

The Advisory Board recognised some of the specific issues for the SSU in being awarded the Kuwait contract, including the Bureau's relationship with the Kuwait Meteorological Department, the budget available to do the work, the rarity of this kind of project and the intangible benefits flowing from the project.

The Board provided constructive input on the Bureau's approach to costing, with specific reference to including:

- the margin for profit, risk and contingencies;
- the margin on sub-contractors;
- coverage for the additional staff costs associated with international work; and
- coverage for insurance costs.

They suggested that, with reference to industry standards, the SSU develop a minimum profitability rate, taking into account all risk and contingency aspects, and that Executive approval should be sought if projects were to be quoted at below this level.

The Board requested to be kept informed of future developments and suggested they look at the SSU again in mid-2006.

The Director's Vision for the Bureau in 10 Years

At meeting 2005/1 Dr Love provided the Advisory Board with his vision of how the Bureau would develop in the coming decade, noting:

- the national need for an all-hazards approach to warning services;
- the need for Australians to have access to the broadest possible range of basic, high quality meteorological products that science and technology can provide;
- the need of the community and policy makers for information from a state-of-the-art

Earth system simulator; and

- the requirement for an "environmental data warehouse" that will meet the needs of the community and policy makers for information on sustainable management of the Australian environment.

The Board felt that some reworking of the vision was necessary to define the scope of this its elements more clearly, whilst acknowledging a possible leadership role for the Bureau in working with other custodians of environmental data sets beyond those traditionally handled by the Bureau.

OTHER ACTIVITIES

Inspection of Bureau Facilities

At the closure of the meeting 2004/3, the Advisory Board were provided with a tour of the Bureau's new premises at 700 Collins Street including the Executive area, the wintergarden areas, the Central Computing Facility and the round-the-clock operational areas.

Following the meeting 2005/1, the Advisory Board toured the Bureau's Sydney Airport Observing Office, one of the offices funded for replacement in the 2004-05 budget.

Board Representation

Members of the Advisory Board are, from time to time, invited to attend Bureau activities to represent the Board and to increase their knowledge of the Bureau, its operations, services, clients and stakeholders. Generally speaking, members are invited to Bureau events that are held in their local area or that pertain to their particular area of expertise.

A limited budget and conflicting engagements limited the number of official representation activities undertaken in 2004-05.

MEMBER	ACTIVITY	DATE
Russell Miller	Bureau's Private Sector Consultative Meeting, Sydney	19 August 2004

This activity was supplemented by the attendance of Board members at various meetings, conferences and other interactions at their own initiative, at which, or from which, they have been able to gain valuable information, insight or other benefit for the Bureau.