

BUREAU OF METEOROLOGY ADVISORY BOARD ANNUAL REPORT 2006-07

ROLE OF THE 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 Minister 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 Minister.

From time to time the Minister may assign ministerial responsibility for the Bureau to the Parliamentary Secretary or Assistant Minister appointed to assist with the portfolio. During 2006-07, the Advisory Board reported to the Parliamentary Secretary, the Hon Greg Hunt MP, from 1 July to 30 January and to the Assistant Minister, the Hon John Cobb MP, from 30 January to 30 June 2007. In this report, the term Minister is hereafter used to denote the person with ministerial responsibility for the Bureau.

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 at the invitation of the Minister, after consultation with the Prime Minister. While the Director of Meteorology and the Portfolio Secretary are included as exofficio 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;
- 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.

Since January 2006, the Advisory Board has comprised the following members.

MEMBER	POSITION
Mr Barry Gear AO (Chair)	President – elect * World Federation of Engineering Organisations
HE Ms Jan Adams	Ambassador for the Environment Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade
Mr Mackenzie Craig	Primary Producer
Mr Barry Gear AO	Chairman South Australian State Disaster Committee
Ms Sue Howard	Director of Radio Australian Broadcasting Commission
Ms Siobhan McKenna	Partner McKinsey and Company
Mr Russell Miller	Partner Minter Ellison
Professor Will Steffen	Director The Fenner School for Environment and Society, Australian National University
Mr David Borthwick (ex officio)	Secretary Department of the Environment and Water Resources
Dr Geoff Love	Director of Meteorology

** elected in October 2005, will take office as President in October 2007.*

ACTIVITIES OF THE BOARD 2006-07

MEETINGS

During 2006-07, meetings were held on 13 December (meeting 2006/2) and on 8 March (meeting 2007/1), at the Bureau's Head Office in Melbourne and the New South Wales Regional Office in Sydney, respectively. Details of member attendance at meetings is provided below.

MEMBER	13 DECEMBER (meeting 2006/2)	8 MARCH (meeting 2007/1)
Grear (Chair)	✓	✓
Adams	✓	✓
Craig	✓	✓
Howard	✓	X
McKenna	✓	✓
Miller	X	✓
Moody	✓	✓
Steffen	X	X
Borthwick	✓	✓
Love	✓	✓

MAJOR ISSUES EXAMINED IN 2006-07

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

- opportunities for commercialisation;
- establishment of the Bureau/CSIRO Joint Research Operation;
- pressures faced by the Bureau's Observations and Engineering Programs and Weather Services Program;
- development of the Bureau's Modernisation Plan;
- the Review of the Bureau of Meteorology;
- the Bureau's planning and budgeting arrangements;
- Bureau participation at the 15th Congress of the World Meteorological Organization (WMO); and
- the role of the Advisory Board.

More information on each of these is provided on the following page.

The Board was able to assist the Bureau by:

- advising on the Bureau/CSIRO Joint Research Operation;
- advising on the Bureau of Meteorology Modernisation Plan; and
- advising on Bureau's the Planning and Budgeting arrangements.

Opportunities for Commercialisation

At meeting 2006/2, the Advisory Board re-examined the potential for increasing the Bureau's revenue through increased commercial activities. The implications of work undertaken by the US National Weather Service on the development of a viable commercial meteorological sector was considered and members noted that while the Special Services Unit offered market-based services, overall demand for these was limited and the margins were slim.

The Advisory Board also discussed commercialisation in the context of the forthcoming Bureau of Meteorology Review and noted that the Review would be likely to seek advice from the Advisory Board as well as other stakeholders on the scope for further increasing commercial revenue and particularly net returns to the Bureau.

Establishment of the Bureau/CSIRO Joint Research Operation

The Advisory Board strongly endorsed the Bureau's vision for the Joint Research Operation between CSIRO and the Bureau. It provided advice on branding, the business model underpinning the new entity and areas for joint collaboration. The Advisory Board's view was that the new Joint Research Operation must be based on high quality science and produce a world-class forecast system to support the Bureau's role in delivery of public goods.

Pressures faced by the Observations and Engineering Programs and the Weather Services Program

The Advisory Board noted the difficulties being faced by the Bureau's Observations and Engineering Programs and Weather Services Program and the associated impacts on Bureau outputs, and that despite the pressures, the response from staff had been extremely positive. It considered that the Bureau's Modernisation Plan and the Bureau of Meteorology Review would provide a basis for addressing staffing and funding issues.

Development of the Bureau of Meteorology Modernisation Plan

A briefing on progress toward development of the Modernisation Plan provided an opportunity for the Advisory Board to advise on the development principles for and strategic direction in the document, including those future opportunities offered by enhanced collaborative arrangements with other agencies as well as through the application of new science and technologies.

Review of the Bureau of Meteorology

At meeting 2006/2, the Advisory Board expressed its support for the Review and noted that it was vital it be accepted as a credible representation of the Bureau's position. The Advisory Board considered that the Review's recommendations should be pitched to cater for the needs of different audiences: at ministerial level; for the Department of Finance and Administration; for the general public; and for Bureau staff.

In agreeing that it could provide input and would have a direct role in advising on recommendations arising from the Review, the Advisory Board noted that it was particularly important that the final report contain sufficient financial detail to satisfy DoFA of the need for any additional funding. It also needed to provide a specific focus for Cabinet-level discussions and should be media-friendly.

Subsequently, at meeting 2007/1, the Advisory Board was provided with an overview of the Review process and the major findings by Review Panel Chair Professor Mary O’Kane and member Mr Len Early. Ms Siobhan McKenna and Dr James Moody, members of both the Review Panel and the Advisory Board, were also in attendance. Possible outcomes and impacts of the Review were discussed and a process for providing the Director of Meteorology and the Minister for the Environment and Water Resources with advice on the findings was broadly outlined and agreed.

Bureau Planning and Budgeting arrangements

In response to a request from the Chair of the Advisory Board, a presentation on the Bureau’s planning and budgeting arrangements was provided at meeting 2007/1. The Advisory Board provided useful advice about the timing of the Bureau’s Budget Plan and the treatment of any subsequent amendments. In terms of its role in the arrangements the Advisory Board agreed that its input into the planning and budget cycle should focus on strategic rather than operational matters and, to the extent that guidance was required, it would comment on the relative priorities across programs.

Bureau participation at the 15th WMO Congress

The Director of Meteorology briefed the Advisory Board on the background to the major issues to be discussed at the 15th session of the WMO Congress to be held in Geneva from 7-25 May. Advisory Board member Mackenzie Craig subsequently participated at Congress as a member of the Australian delegation.

Role of the Advisory Board

The Advisory Board discussed the most appropriate and effective means by which it could contribute to the strategic management of the Bureau. There was general agreement that the role was advisory, rather than supervisory; that the Advisory Board should not be involved in either operational management matters or advocacy; and that it should act as a sounding-board on important issues brought to it by the Director of Meteorology or the Minister.

OTHER ACTIVITIES

Advisory 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.

15th WMO Congress

Mr Mackenzie Craig attended the 15th WMO Congress in Geneva from 14-19 May as a member of the Australian delegation.