Australian Strategic and Technical Advisory Group on Antimicrobial Resistance

Terms of Reference

Role
The Australian Strategic and Technical Advisory Group on Antimicrobial Resistance (ASTAG) will provide high quality, well considered strategic, technical, scientific and clinical advice to the Antimicrobial Resistance Prevention and Containment Steering Group (AMRPC Steering Group), which is responsible for the development and implementation of Australia's National Antimicrobial Resistance (AMR) Strategy (the “Strategy”). The Strategy will address seven key elements: Infection Prevention and Control; Surveillance; Antimicrobial Stewardship; Communication and Education; International Engagement; Research and Development; and Governance.

Terms of reference
The ASTAG will develop and provide technical, scientific and clinical advice to the AMRPC Steering Group to inform the development of the Strategy; and strategic advice to help ensure actions under the Strategy are effectively and efficiently implemented.

In formulating its advice, the ASTAG will take a One Health approach to AMR issues and actions, including by taking account of developments in AMR at the national and international levels, and across the fields of human and animal health, food, agriculture and the environment.

In particular, the ASTAG will provide:
- evidence-based advice to inform the development of the Strategy;
- advice, options and recommendations on approaches to implement actions under the Strategy, including consideration of costs and benefits, to ensure maximum effectiveness in responding to AMR;
- advice on implementation, in an Australian context, of recommendations arising from the WHO Global Action Plan on AMR;
- advice on the roles and responsibilities of key stakeholder groups in supporting and implementing actions under the Strategy;
- advice on current and emerging AMR issues, including surveillance findings and trends (both national and global), research priority areas and findings, new technologies, and challenges associated with responding to AMR in Australia and how they can be overcome.

In addition, the ASTAG will:
- develop and maintain effective linkages between governments, industry, professional bodies, educational institutions and other key stakeholders to advise and support a comprehensive and sustainable One Health response to AMR in Australia;
- review and update, as required, the publication, ‘Importance Ratings and Summary of Antibacterial Uses in Humans in Australia’; and
• provide advice to the Pharmaceutical Benefits Advisory Committee (PBAC), the Therapeutic Goods Administration (TGA) and the Australian Pesticides and Veterinary Medicines Authority (APVMA) on request, and other groups or organisations if required, in relation to the availability and conditions of use, of a specific antimicrobial product. Advice will consider any future surveillance arrangements necessary to monitor the product’s usage and related AMR trends.

The ASTAG will also have the flexibility to undertake other activities, as agreed by the co-Chairs and members, relevant to AMR in Australia.

Membership

Co-Chairs
The ASTAG will be co-chaired by the Australian Government Chief Medical Officer (CMO) and Chief Veterinary Officer (CVO).

Members
The membership of ASTAG will be by invitation from the co-Chairs. If a member is unable to attend an ASTAG meeting, a suitable proxy may be nominated, with the agreement of the co-Chairs. Members will be appointed for an initial two-year term. A Member’s appointment may be discontinued at any time at the discretion of the co-Chairs.

The following organisations will be invited to nominate a member to the ASTAG. Members nominated by non-government organisations will not serve as formal representatives of the organisation but rather will be asked to provide opinion based on their own personal experience and knowledge of AMR. Members will be expected to have relevant expertise, a sound understanding of their sector, and be able to actively contribute to the development of advice on actions and pathways to effectively respond to AMR.

Nominated representatives from the following organisations (one each):
Animal Health Australia
Australasian College for Infection Prevention and Control
Australian Commission on Safety and Quality in Health Care
Australian Group on Antimicrobial Resistance
Australian Pesticides and Veterinary Medicines Authority
Australian Primary Health Care Nurses Association
Australian Society for Antimicrobials
Australian Society for Infectious Diseases
Australian Veterinary Association
Communicable Diseases Network Australia
Food Standards Australia New Zealand
National Health and Medical Research Council
National Prescribing Service
Public Health Laboratory Network
Royal Australian College of General Practitioners
The Pharmacy Guild of Australia
The Royal College of Pathologists of Australasia
Therapeutic Goods Administration

Jurisdictional representatives:
Agriculture/Primary Industries: 2 x jurisdictions
Health: 1 x large jurisdiction; 1 x small jurisdiction

Expert advisers, time limited working groups and observers:
A wide range of advice will be required to inform the development and implementation of the Strategy and additional expertise may be required from time to time to inform discussions. Additional experts may be invited to attend ASTAG meetings, or participate in small time-limited working groups or one-off meetings to provide advice on a specific issue or element of the Strategy.

Departmental attendees:
Officers from the Department of Health and the Department of Agriculture will also attend ASTAG meetings.

Confidentiality and conflict of interest
Members must comply with confidentiality and conflict of interest requirements and will be required to complete a Deed of Confidentiality and Conflict of Interest form prior to participating in the ASTAG.

Secretariat
The Secretariat will be provided by the Department of Health through the Health Protection Policy Section, Office of Health Protection.

Meetings
The ASTAG will meet face-to-face no less than twice a year in Canberra. Teleconferences and additional face-to-face meetings may be held as required. A quorum for a meeting is half the membership plus one. Any vacancy on the ASTAG will not affect its authority to meet.

Each meeting will have an agenda, which will be agreed by the co-Chairs. Any Member may propose items for the agenda for the co-Chairs’ consideration. Agenda papers should be prepared with sufficient detail and circulated to Members in a timely way in order to allow Members to adequately consider their content and prepare for the discussion of the item at the meeting.
Reporting
The ASTAG co-Chairs are members of the AMRPC Steering Group and will report on the work and advice of the ASTAG at AMRPC Steering Group meetings. Reports to the AMRPC Steering Group will be provided in an appropriate format, including through verbal briefings and the provision of the minutes of ASTAG meetings.

The CMO and CVO will also provide regular updates on the development and implementation of the National AMR Strategy to jurisdictional colleagues through their membership of the Australian Health Protection Principal Committee and the Animal Health Committee, respectively.

Review
The ASTAG will be reviewed against its Terms of Reference on or before 30 June 2016, and continued beyond that date at the AMRPC Steering Group’s discretion.