

Terms of Reference

Purpose

The Environmental Health Standing Committee (enHealth) is a standing committee under the auspices of Australian Health Principal Committee (AHPC). enHealth provides advice and makes recommendations to AHPC and through it to Health Ministers on environmental health matters.

Environmental health is defined here as the physical, chemical, and biological factors external to a person that can potentially affect health and wellbeing. Environmental health issues include emerging health risks arising from natural or human-induced changes to a region's natural or artificial environment, such as chemical contamination, water and air quality, and any other changed environmental condition that could adversely impact on a population's quality of life and longevity.

The role of enHealth is to:

- provide expert technical advice on environmental health policy to the AHPC, the public, and environmental health stakeholders.
- provide national guidance on environmental health policy advice and risk management on environmental health threats in Australia; and
- to coordinate nationally agreed environmental health policies and approaches drawing on the expertise of the Committee and relationships with key partners and stakeholders.

enHealth provides a national focus in maintaining and improving the health of Australians by identifying and managing environmental health risks. This includes providing evidence-based guidance to prevent premature death, avoidable illness and disability caused by non-infectious, non-occupational, environmental factors.

Other committees and structures are in place to lead matters related to communicable (infectious) diseases, workplace health and safety, food safety, and the protection of the environment. These matters are therefore outside of the role of enHealth.

In delivering its role, enHealth will:

- make recommendations to AHPC on environmental health matters to mitigate emerging health threats related to environmental health;
- advise on national environmental health priorities and the allocation of resources to these priorities;
- support the development and adoption of national environmental health policies, guidelines and standards;

Environmental Health Standing Committee (enHealth) of the
Australian Health Protection Committee

- give strategic direction to and support the work of its Expert Reference Panels and Project Reference Groups including the:
 - Expert Reference Panel on Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Environmental Health (ERPATSIEH)
 - Expert Reference Panel on Environmental Health (ERPEH)
 - Radiation Health Expert Reference Panel (RHERP)
 - Water Quality Expert Reference Panel (WQERP)
- consult and negotiate with other relevant agencies and committees on environmental health, including other standing committees, expert committees;
- consult, collaborate and partner with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander health and environmental health practitioner groups and community-controlled bodies;
- promote the alignment of jurisdictional strategic plans and activities with agreed national priorities;
- oversee national activities that strengthen environmental health infrastructure, workforce and capacity.

Chairing

The Chair of enHealth will be nominated by members and approved by AHPC as the principal committee. In accordance with the AHPC Operating Guidelines, the Chair of enHealth will generally hold their position for a period of two years unless otherwise agreed by the Chair of the AHPC and on the advice of enHealth members.

Membership

The enHealth membership is to include representatives from:

- Each of the Commonwealth, State and Territory health departments
- The New Zealand Ministry of Health
- The National Health and Medical Research Council.

There will also be an observing representative from the Heads of Environment Protection Agencies (HEPA) Australia, the New Zealand Environment Protection Authority, and the National Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Health Protection (NATSIHP) Sub-Committee of AHPC.

In the event that a member cannot attend, an alternative representative may attend as a proxy with notice provided to the Chair and the Secretariat.

Reporting arrangements

enHealth will report against its strategic and work plans, and track progress of the priority tasks set by AHPC as required.

Strategic Plan and Work Plan

enHealth will work to achieve its objectives through projects and activities, including through publications, providing advice to other stakeholders, and conducting workshops. The Strategic Plan will outline the priorities for enHealth and the Work Plan will set out specific activities that will contribute to achieving these priorities.

enHealth will provide its proposed strategic and work plans to AHPC for consideration and approval. The Work Plan will include details of the proposed support structures to deliver the proposed projects and proposals for allocating funding, including where relevant funding from the Australian Health Ministers' Advisory Council (AHMAC) cost shared budget, to provide policy and project support.

enHealth will include work items on its Work Plan that address environmental health issues which disproportionately affect First Nations people's health and wellbeing, reflecting areas of high priority.

Meetings

enHealth will meet monthly and make an effort to meet face to face at least three times a year. When face to face meetings are held, host jurisdictions will ensure there are satisfactory facilities available for jurisdictions that wish to participate via teleconference or telepresence.

In addition to regular enHealth meetings, enHealth may convene extraordinary or emergency teleconferences, as required, to discuss health protection matters of national significance as they arise. enHealth members may also review items out of session.

Review

The Terms of Reference will be reviewed every three years in line with the consideration and drafting of the strategic plan for enHealth. Both the strategic plan and terms of reference will be endorsed by AHPC every third financial year.