

Native Vegetation Assessment Panel

Terms of Reference

1. PURPOSE

The Native Vegetation Assessment Panel (the Panel) has been established within the Department of Natural Resources, Environment, the Arts and Sport (NRETAS) to provide high level expert advice on applications to clear native vegetation and about other matters dealing with native vegetation clearing in the NT. It also includes representation from the Primary Industry Division of the Department of Regional Development, Primary Industry, Fisheries and Resources (RDPIFR). The Panel reviews each application and all comments received about the application. It then makes a recommendation to assist the consent authority in determining an application. These terms of reference establish the framework for the provision of advice, the membership of the Panel and the procedures to be followed by the Panel.

2. ADVICE TO THE DEPARTMENT

(a) Scope

The Panel will, from time to time be requested by NRETAS to provide advice in relation to the matters including:

- (i) clearing applications;
- (ii) native vegetation research; and
- (iii) native vegetation management.

(b) Reference to Certain Material

The Panel will make recommendations, give reasons for recommendations and provide advice to NRETAS and the consent authority on matters referred to it having regard to the material forwarded to it and in each and every case having regard to the Territory's adopted policies, guidelines and regulations.

(c) No delegation of power or functions

The Panel provides advice only. It is not a Committee or a Board established by NRETAS or RDPIFR. It has no power or authority, whether by delegation or otherwise, to exercise any function, right, duty or power of NRETAS or RDPIFR.

3. MEMBERS

The Panel will comprise a Chair and four members with membership being based on skills and knowledge supporting best practice management of the Territory's natural and cultural resources. The panel can from time to time seek additional input from others with demonstrated skills, experience and knowledge.

(a) Chair

The Chair will draw on the expertise of all board members to make clear, well-thought out recommendations and to ensure that the department's representatives formally record the Panel recommendations. The Chair for a meeting will be determined by the members present at that meeting from amongst themselves.

(b) Members

The selection of members will reflect the skills required to ensure that all matters relating to natural and cultural resource management in the context of native vegetation clearing are considered including biodiversity conservation, water resources, land resources, primary production and heritage conservation. It is preferable that Panel members are not directly involved in technical assessment of the individual applications before the Panel. Where Panel members have been involved in assessing a particular application it is their responsibility to advise the Panel when the application is being assessed. The delegate (consent authority) is not a member of the Panel.

4. CONDUCT AND DISCLOSURES

Members must comply with the pecuniary interest and conflict of interest requirements and all other requirements imposed by the Northern Territory Government.

5. MEETING PROCEDURES

- (a) The Panel will meet at such place and time as notified to the members by NRETAS.
- (b) A quorum will be four members present.
- (c) Staff of NRETAS and RPIFR may attend the meetings as observers provided that prior notice is given to NRETAS.
- (d) NRETAS staff will take minutes of the Panel meetings. The minutes will include a record of all recommendations and reason for recommendations made by the Panel.