

# AusSeabed Steering Committee –Terms of Reference

Version 3 05/09/2022

## 1 Background

AusSeabed is a national collaborative seabed mapping initiative comprised of representatives from several government, academic, and private sector organisations. The governance of AusSeabed is provided by a Steering Committee and an Executive Board. The Steering Committee's role is to develop and implement annual and forward-looking work plans that represent the interests of the community and seabed mapping sectors. The Executive Board operates as an agile, high-level strategic governance body to ensure the direction of the AusSeabed program aligns with the interests of the nation.

Amendments to the Steering Committee Terms of Reference (TOR) can be submitted anytime to the Steering Committee for consideration and voting.

## 2 Purpose

The role of the Steering Committee is to provide direction and leadership from the perspective of government, academic, and private organisations to guide AusSeabed and best deliver the AusSeabed program.

The Steering Committee will work to achieve the AusSeabed vision and mission, to promote the program across all sectors, and to encourage sharing of technical knowledge, data, and resources. This includes identifying new opportunities to advance the Strategic Goals of AusSeabed in line with the [AusSeabed Strategy](#).

## 3 Membership

Steering Committee membership consists of representation from the various sectors that participate in the AusSeabed program (Table 1). Steering Committee membership is assigned to an entity rather than the individual.

Specifically, the Steering Committee consists of:

- Three standing members, to reflect national perspectives and the major levels of resourcing these organisations bring, being:

- Geoscience Australia
- Australian Hydrographic Office
- The Commonwealth Scientific and Industrial Research Organisation
- Up to 11 general members, comprising of:
  - Nine positions to represent the academic, private and government sectors
  - One position for an international member
  - One position for an Early Career Ocean Professional (ECOP)

Representatives of member entities can be granted internal positions to facilitate the functioning of the Steering Committee. Where the representative changes entity, the internal position reopens for nomination. The internal positions consist of:

- Chair - This position can only be held by a standing member organisation to ensure continuity.
- Vice-Chair – This position can be elected from any of the Steering Committee members.
- Secretariat - Will be held by Geoscience Australia, including the Program Director role.

*Table 1: Representation split of membership*

Sector	Count
Federal government standing members	3
Federal government	1
State government	3
Private	3
Academic	2
International (sector-agnostic)	1
Early Career Ocean Professional	1
<b>Total</b>	<b>14</b>

Three Theme Leads are also held on a volunteer basis by Steering Committee members representing *Tools, Guidelines and Standards, Outreach and Communications* and *Data Hub*. The Theme Leads help deliver community activities around each theme and provide specialised direction that contribute to the AusSeabed program. Appointment of Theme Leaders can be made at any time under the proviso that the Steering Committee support the appointment. Theme Leader appointments do not have a fixed term.

General membership in the Steering Committee will be held for a maximum period of three years with the exception of the ECOP, which will be held for 18 months. Membership renewal will be carried out in accordance with guidance provided at the AusSeabed Steering Committee Election Process SOP.

Members of the Steering Committee may withdraw from service at any time by notifying the Steering Committee Chair in writing. A decision will then be made by the Chair and Vice-Chair on whether an early election will be held to replace the resigning member. Alternatively, the membership election can be deferred until the next call for Steering Committee membership renewal, and an interim replacement appointed.

Internal Steering Committee positions will be held for a period of two years and elected internally by the Steering Committee in accordance with *Section 5: Decision Making Procedure of this Terms of Reference*. The internal positions may only be held by members after they have completed a year of service on the Steering Committee. Ideally, members will nominate for these positions in their second year, however, if the elected member is in their third year of general membership, they may remain on the Steering Committee until their internal position ends. Where an extension has been granted to a member, the general membership tied to the Steering Committee member organisation will be put up for election as scheduled. Therefore, there may be a period of up to 1 year where the Steering Committee includes an additional member.

In the event that a member of the Steering Committee cannot attend a meeting, a proxy representative from the same organisation or sector should be nominated from the self-nominated proxy list, developed in accordance with the [AusSeabed Steering Committee Election Process SOP](#). This proxy will be afforded the same voting rights and responsibilities of the general member position they are representing. If the Steering Committee member does not provide a substitute to represent the organisation, then the Chair and Vice-Chair can appoint a proxy. The proxy must be from the same sector as the absent representative.

If a Steering Committee member misses three consecutive meetings without sufficient notification, or nomination of a proxy, they forfeit their position on the Steering Committee. In such circumstances a decision will be made by the Chair and Vice-Chair on whether an early election to replace the member will be held or if an interim replacement will be appointed.

Members are encouraged to invite observers or guests to meetings, with the approval of the Chair, to present relevant information to the Steering Committee.

## 4 Roles and Responsibilities

### 4.1 Standing and General members

- Hold as their primary responsibility the success of AusSeabed.
- Attend and prepare for meetings, including proposing agenda items and nominating a proxy when unable to attend.
- Bring the perspectives and priorities of their organisation and, more broadly, the particular sector of the Australian seabed information ecosystem they represent (e.g. marine survey; fisheries management; marine environmental management etc.) by engaging with their sector. Engage their sector in order to obtain, collate and represent their sectors perspectives and issues to the Steering Committee, then provide and disseminate resulting feedback and other relevant information from AusSeabed

## 4.2 Chair

- Provide leadership and ensure the effective operation of the Steering Committee.
- Plan meetings and workshops, and develop the agenda in conjunction with the Steering Committee; ensure that agendas and supporting materials are delivered to members prior to the meeting.
- Chair the Steering Committee meetings and AGM according to the meeting guidelines:
  - make the purpose of each meeting clear and explain the agenda
  - call for a member to oversee the checklist of appropriate behaviours
  - clarify and summarise progress as agenda items are addressed
  - ensure action items are completed in a timely manner
  - run the meeting effectively and encourage broad participation in discussions by calling on different members
  - conclude each meeting with a summary of decisions, action items and their agreed time periods
- Ensure that decisions made at meetings are implemented.
- Follow up with Steering Committee members who have been absent without notification to determine if they wish to continue their membership.
- Find replacements for Steering Committee members who discontinue their membership.
- Ensure the nomination and appointment process takes place in accordance with the AusSeabed Steering Committee Election Process SOP.

## 4.3 Vice-Chair

- Stand in for the Chair if they are absent.
- Support the Chair in ensuring the Steering Committee and its activities run smoothly.
- Help the Chair to plan meetings.
- Assist with the organisation of meeting logistics.
- Deal with specific tasks or issues as defined by the Steering Committee.

## 4.4 Secretariat

- Maintain records and administration of the meetings, including delivering confidential votes.
- Uphold the legal requirements of the governing documents.
- Undertake effective Committee communication and correspondence.
- Broadly distribute the outcomes, recommendations and findings of the Steering Committee.
- Ensure documents arising from meetings are forwarded within two weeks after the meeting.

## 4.5 Early Career Ocean Professional (ECOP)

- Provide guidance to ongoing AusSeabed activities by representing early career perspectives and their sector (academia/government/industry).
- Engage with AusSeabed theme leaders to develop an understanding of activities across all aspects of the program, and contribute where possible based on background and expertise.
- Identify and lead an activity that can be completed within the 18 month term (e.g., develop a symposium or workshop proposal for the annual AMSA conference).
- Participate in the Communications & Engagement roster to produce one article or blog representing their sector for the AusSeabed newsletter.

## 4.6 Role of the AusSeabed Director

As endorsed by the AusSeabed Executive Board, the AusSeabed program directorship is held permanently by Geoscience Australia, who therefore appoints a Program Director. The Director:

- Plans and implements the program, which comes in the form of an annual Work Plan endorsed by the Steering Committee and Executive Board.
- Provides progress and annual reports to the Steering Committee and the Executive Board.
- Holds the financial delegation for the program.
- Participates in the Steering Committee meetings as an observer, only providing progress and reporting updates, unless they are the nominated representative of Geoscience Australia.

## 5 Meeting Schedule

The Steering Committee will meet three times each year. To establish a meeting, a minimum quorum of 10 representatives is required. Two meetings will be held face-to-face, pending travel restrictions. These two meetings will normally be held in July, usually coinciding with the Australian Marine Science Association conference, and at the end of the third quarter of the financial year. The third meeting will be held via teleconference in November. The Chair will ensure that agendas and papers are circulated at least one week before any Steering Committee meeting, AGM or collaborators workshop. Secretariat support will be provided by Geoscience Australia. Progress on action items from previous meetings will be communicated to the Chair one week before any subsequent meeting.

## 6 Decision Making Procedure

Motions and agenda items that require a judgement or decision will need to be raised by one Steering Committee member and seconded by another before being put to a vote. A majority vote of the quorum is required for a motion or item to be considered upheld or accepted. The Secretariat has the responsibility of conducting the vote counting in confidence, so that members voting remains anonymous. In the event of a tie, the Chair will have the deciding vote. If the tied vote is for election of the Chair position, then the tie break will consist of the majority vote within the standing members.

## 7 Document Control

Version	Revision Date	Author	Action
Draft	20180731	Ralph Talbot-Smith et al.	Developed TOR
1	20180731	Aero Lepastrier (AL)	Final - published
1.1	20190703	AL	Proposed changes
1.2	20190710	2019 AusSeabed Steering Committee	Steering committee input on proposed changes
1.3	20191001	AL, KP	Final revision of changes
2	20191004	AL, KP	Final – published
2.1	20211101	AL, KB	Proposed changes
3.0	20220905	2021/2 AusSeabed Steering Committee	Implemented changes after Steering Committee meeting and follow up engagement