

Department of Planning and Environment

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Terms of Reference

Reconnecting River Country Program Reference Groups

April 2023

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Acknowledgement of Country

The Department of Planning and Environment acknowledges that it stands on Aboriginal land. We acknowledge the Traditional Custodians of the land and we show our respect for Elders past, present and emerging through thoughtful and collaborative approaches to our work, seeking to demonstrate our ongoing commitment to providing places in which Aboriginal people are included socially, culturally and economically.

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1 Introduction

The scale and scope of the Reconnecting River Country Program requires engagement and collaboration with a broad range of stakeholders.

Reconnecting River Country Program Reference Groups provide a forum for landholders and First Nations communities (whose land or Country may be directly affected by the program's [proposed flow options](#)) to learn more about key program components and ensure their feedback is considered in the program's ongoing development.

To date, the program has engaged one-on-one with landholders (via case studies), community members (via snapshots), First Nations communities¹ (via on-Country assessments) and public land managers. The program has also engaged with a range of local advocacy groups.

The reference groups are being formed in direct response to program needs and informed by stakeholder feedback. The move reflects the program's commitment to meaningful and effective collaboration.

This next stage of the program will provide further opportunities to broaden the stakeholder focus to facilitate transparent, equitable, fair and consistent engagement with representatives of directly affected private landholders and First Nations communities.

1.1 Statutory provisions

The Reconnecting River Country Program Reference Groups have no statutory powers or authority. This Terms of Reference document guides the activities of the reference groups and their members.

1.2 Murray-Darling Basin Plan

The Murray-Darling Basin Plan was developed to manage the Murray-Darling Basin as a connected system.

The aim of the plan is to bring the Basin back to a healthier and sustainable level, while continuing to support farming and other industries for the benefit of the Australian community.

It sets the amount of water to be taken from the Basin each year, while leaving enough for our rivers, lakes and wetlands and the plants and animals that depend on them.

Managing water is a partnership between the:

- Australian Government
- New South Wales Government

¹ The term First Nations is used as a synonym for Aboriginal, Indigenous Peoples

- Queensland Government
- South Australian Government
- Victorian Government
- Australian Capital Territory.

In 2012, Basin state governments asked the Murray–Darling Basin Authority (MDBA) to develop a constraints management strategy to investigate how water can get to where it’s needed, when it’s needed while avoiding or mitigating impacts to riparian landholders, communities and industries.

The strategy sets out a process for:

- investigating small overbank flows to connect rivers to floodplains more often for a healthy floodplain environment
- investigating any affects of these flows on people and property
- ensuring any effects of these flows can be addressed before the flows proceed
- making the most efficient use of environmental water
- an occasional small increase in flow heights or rates to allow water to reach key floodplain wetlands currently missing out on being watered due to the current regulated flow levels.

1.2.1 Constraints projects

The constraints management strategy focuses on seven key areas in the Basin to investigate options for addressing constraints. Projects were proposed in the following areas:

- Hume to Yarrawonga
- Yarrawonga to Wakool Junction
- Goulburn
- Murrumbidgee
- Lower Darling
- Gwydir
- Lower Murray (South Australia).

Source: [Managing constraints | Murray-Darling Basin Authority \(mdba.gov.au\)](https://www.mdba.gov.au/managing-constraints)

Basin state governments are responsible for delivering the projects at a local level, including consulting with communities and detailed project design and implementation.

Projects to address constraints in all key focus areas, except the Gwydir, are part of the package of projects submitted by states through the Sustainable Diversion Limit Adjustment Mechanism process.

This includes the Reconnecting River Country Program.

2 Reference group role

2.1 Establishment and governance

The program has established a robust governance structure to facilitate the flow of information from potentially affected stakeholders to decision makers via the Reconnecting River Country Advisory Committee and Project Control Group. Establishment of reference groups will form a critical component of this governance structure.

Members will be appointed under the delegation of the Program Director, following an expression of interest and panel-based selection process.

2.2 Reference groups objectives

The objective of the Reconnecting River Country Program Reference Groups is to enable transparent, equitable, fair and consistent engagement with representatives of a broad range of the most affected landholders and First Nations communities. Outputs from reference group meetings will be communicated to the advisory committee (established on a parallel timeline to the reference groups) for consideration in developing advice to the program. Reference groups will meet in advance of the advisory committee.

The aims of the reference groups are to:

- represent the views and interests of stakeholders whose land may be most directly affected by the program's proposed [flow options](#)
 - represent the views and interests of declared stakeholder networks (those supporting individual nominations)
 - provide a forum for representatives to provide feedback and advice on key elements of the program
 - road test selected program information and communication products with their declared stakeholder networks
 - act as a conduit for sharing approved program information with their declared stakeholder networks.
-

2.3 Scope of Reference Groups

The Reconnecting River Country Program Reference Groups will meet to discuss key elements of the program, identify issues and opportunities for consideration by the program, and will work toward balanced and mutually beneficial outcomes.

Feedback opportunities will focus on:

- flow options
- mitigation measures
- landholder negotiation processes
- road testing selected program information and communication products with their declared stakeholder networks
- acting as a conduit for sharing approved program information with their declared stakeholder networks.

The reference groups will not provide feedback on resource (water) allocation, water trading, river operations or unrelated policy development.

2.4 Training and development

The Department of Planning and Environment's Water Infrastructure NSW is responsible for providing materials to Reconnecting River Country Program Reference Group members. The department may also deliver training and development activities to ensure reference group members have the information available to participate in a meaningful and collaborative way. Reference group members may propose and request information or learning activities for this purpose.

2.5 Term of operation

The Reconnecting River Country Program Reference Groups will operate until 29 October 2023, in line with the current program funding period. The reference groups may be disbanded at the discretion of the program director if:

- the function of the reference group has been fulfilled
- the program is either completed or cancelled, or
- required as a result of changes to Water Infrastructure NSW's governance structure.

If additional program funding is provided by the Australian Government within this period, the department may choose to extend the term of the reference groups in line with program need and with approval from the program director.

Once appointed, members will be provided appropriate documentation as part of onboarding and induction. Each member must acknowledge in writing their acceptance of these documents and declare any conflicts of interest before commencing as a group member.

2.6 Resignation from office

A Reconnecting River Country Program Reference Group member may resign at any time by providing a signed notice of resignation to the program director.

2.7 Removal from office

The program director may remove a Reconnecting River Country Program Reference Group member from office after first consulting the reference group. If the reference group agrees, the member may be removed at any time, otherwise a 30-day notice period applies.

The program director may terminate a member's appointment if the member is no longer able to commit adequate time to the role, there is a serious disagreement with other members that cannot be resolved, there is a conflict of interest that cannot be mitigated, or the member no longer meets the membership criteria. The program director may also remove a member from office for failure to behave in an appropriate and ethical way, breaches of the [Code of Conduct](#), repeated absence from meetings, repeated unruly or disruptive behaviour at meetings which results in the member being formally reprimanded by the Facilitator, or criminal conduct.

2.8 Other causes of vacancy

The position of a member of the Reconnecting River Country Program Reference Group also becomes vacant if the member:

- dies
- completes a term of office and is not re-appointed
- is absent from a meeting of which reasonable notice has been given, without prior leave from the program director, or acceptable reason (and make a note about supplying an alternate)
- the member becomes bankrupt, applies to take the benefit of any law for the relief of bankrupt or insolvent debtors, compounds with his or her creditors or makes an assignment of his or her remuneration for their benefit
- becomes a mentally incapacitated person.

If the position of a member becomes vacant through resignation, removal or one of the reasons listed above, the program director will appoint a person to fill the vacancy. The program director may appoint this replacement member by calling for new expressions of interest or appointing a person who had previously applied.

2.9 Limits to decision making

The Reconnecting River Country Program Reference Groups will not be delegated decision-making authority by the NSW Government. Final decisions on the program may take other information or considerations into account and may be inconsistent with the requests or recommendations of the reference groups. The department will, where practicable, seek to provide an explanation to the reference groups if and where this occurs.

2.10 Responsibility for the reference groups

The department is responsible for providing a resource to provide secretariat services to the Reconnecting River Country Program Reference Groups. The department will administer selection and appointment of an independent facilitator and members as per the process outlined in section 3.2.

2.11 Reference group deliverables

The Reconnecting River Country Program Reference Groups will meet at least twice between April and October 2023 to consider key program components including:

- flow options
- mitigation measures
- landholder negotiations processes
- road test selected program information and communication products with their declared stakeholder networks
- act as a conduit for sharing approved program information with their declared stakeholder networks.

These meetings will provide a forum to:

- discuss and respond to information provided by the program
- identify issues and opportunities within the scope of the program
- offer feedback to the program.

Members will be expected to canvass the opinions of their declared stakeholder network and bring that information to the reference group meetings to help inform discussions. The outcomes of these discussions (minutes) will be communicated to the Reconnecting River Country Advisory Committee for consideration in developing advice to the program. Reference groups will meet in advance of the advisory committee.

A copy of the minutes along with any advice items will be submitted to the advisory committee approximately two weeks prior to the committee's next meeting to inform the agenda of each meeting and provide adequate time for members to consider reference group advice in advance of each meeting.

Minutes of each meeting will be recorded and stored, in accordance with departmental policy (see section 3) and shared for consideration.

3 Membership

Each Reconnecting River Country Program Reference Group will comprise a maximum of 12 members. Members will be appointed under the delegation of the program Director following a panel-based selection process.

Each reference group member will represent a declared/disclosed group of stakeholders whose land or Country may be directly affected by the proposed program [flow options](#). The individuals or First Nations represented do not need to be part of a formally recognised group, however reference group members will be required to disclose the names of the stakeholders they represent to the program as part of the application process.

This information will be managed in accordance with the department's [Privacy and personal information collection notice](#) for the SDLAM program.

The reference groups are an important component of a broader communication and engagement strategy for the program, which involves several tiers and stages of engagement.

3.1 Membership categories

The Reconnecting River Country Program Reference Groups will be established for:

- landholders whose property may be directly affected by proposed [program flows](#) (specific selection criteria detailed in section 3.3)
- First Nations groups and individuals within the program footprint (specific selection criteria detailed in section 3.3).

The appointment of reference group members will be guided by the principles of the [NSW Government Appointment Standards: Boards and Committees in the NSW Public Sector](#).

3.2 Selection process

The department will seek Expressions of interest (EOIs) to become part of the Reconnecting River Country Program Reference Groups in January 2023, with applications open on 9 January 2023 until 5pm (AEST) on 10 February 2023.

To be eligible for selection, applicants will be required to:

- complete an EOI form addressing the selection criteria, which can be found at dpie.nsw.gov.au/rrcp-reference-groups
- provide a list of at least five individuals they will be representing (signed by each individual).

Applicants moving to the next stage of the selection process will be required to:

- identify an alternate representative to attend reference group meetings in their absence from their list of declared/disclosed stakeholders (should they proceed to selection)
- undergo reference checks (including a review of the declared / disclosed list of individual stakeholders they seek to represent).

In establishing reference groups, the program will seek to ensure fair and equitable representation of local stakeholders.

To ensure a fair and transparent selection process, the program will establish a selection committee comprising of the program director and key program personnel to assess the applications and select reference group members.

As part of the selection process, the selection committee will also assess the level of interest expressed in determining the number of reference groups to be established.

3.3 Selection criteria

Applicants submitting an EOI for the Reconnecting River Country Program Reference Groups must meet the selection criteria outlined below.

To be eligible to become a landholder reference group member, applicants must:

- be a landholder or property manager whose land lies within the program area and may be inundated up to the upper most level of the flow limit options being explored (as per [program inundation maps](#))
- own or manage land located within one or more of the following reaches: Hume to Yarrawonga; Yarrawonga to Wakool Junction; upper Murrumbidgee (from Burrinjuck Dam to Darlington Point); and lower Murrumbidgee (Darlington Point to the Murray Junction)
- consider the level of impact to their landholdings, enterprise or assets. We are seeking representatives whose commercial farming practices are most affected in terms of: percentage land affected up to the upper most flow limit option, depth of inundation, or assets affected (as per [program inundation maps](#))
- consider their farming practice or land use. We are seeking representation from directly affected landholders from a range of land use practices including but not limited to grazing, cropping, commercial forestry, beekeeping, or conservation
- represent a group of landholders. We are seeking directly affected landholders who can speak on behalf of a declared/disclosed group of landholders (minimum of five individuals) whose properties are identified as falling within the identified flow options (as per [program inundation maps](#)).

To be eligible to become a First Nations reference group member, applicants must:

- identify as an Aboriginal person and be recognised as such in their community
- have a cultural connection to the project area wetlands and rivers. We are seeking representatives from Traditional Owner groups, Aboriginal corporations and/or individuals from within the program footprint whose Country may be inundated by the flow limit options being explored (as per [program inundation maps](#))

- have a cultural connection to wetlands and rivers within, one or more of the following reaches: Hume to Yarrawonga, Yarrawonga to Wakool Junction, upper Murrumbidgee (from Burrinjuck Dam to Darlington Point), lower Murrumbidgee (Darlington Point to the Murray Junction)
- have knowledge in cultural heritage and landscape/water management. We are seeking representatives with experience in cultural heritage protection and advocating for the diverse needs of Country
- have cultural authority and representation. We are seeking First Nations people who can speak on behalf of Country and community.

4 Member roles and responsibilities

Reconnecting River Country Program Reference Group members are expected to attend:

- a minimum of two face-to-face meetings (weather conditions permitting) by 29 October 2023 (location to be determined)
- one on-site bus tour (to be confirmed based subject to time and resource capacity).

Reference group members are expected to prepare for each face-to-face meeting by:

- reading program materials
- sharing approved materials with declared/disclosed stakeholder network
- gathering feedback from declared/disclosed stakeholder network using standardised templates provided by the department
- constructively sharing feedback at face-to-face meetings
- liaising with program staff to determine any accessibility needs.

Reference group members are expected to engage respectfully, productively and collaboratively with program staff and other reference group members.

4.1 Independent facilitator

An independent facilitator will be engaged to conduct face-to-face meetings with the Reconnecting River Country Program Reference Groups.

The facilitator will provide a pathway for reference group members to achieve their meeting objectives.

As an independent facilitator, their role will be to provide a transparent, equitable, fair, and consistent approach enabling respectful and constructive discussions to take place.

4.2 Executive Officer and Executive Support

Executive secretariat and administrative support will be provided to the Reconnecting River Country Reference Groups by the department. An Executive Officer will ensure effective function through appropriate processes.

Specifically, they will:

- manage meeting arrangements (venue, catering, travel, and accommodation)
- undertake meeting administration (agenda preparation, distribution of papers, minute taking, recording and follow-up on actions)

- coordinate and facilitate communication between members, using the methods most appropriate to each member
- be the central point of contact for all stakeholders to keep accurate records
- ensure members are inducted and their capacity building needs are met
- enable members to claim eligible reimbursements and entitlements
- facilitate and arrange approval of member appointments
- manage disputes and grievances appropriately
- co-ordinate a regular evaluation of the reference groups (annually subject to ongoing funding).
- record and escalate conflict of interests.

4.3 Observers (invited guests)

The executive officer only may invite guests to participate in meetings as requested by either the department or the Reconnecting River Country Program Reference Group. Any guest invited by the executive officer must not impede the operation or effectiveness of the reference group, and their role and purpose at the meeting must be clearly stated and understood. Observers may be expected to present information to the reference group, respond to questions and participate in discussion relating to the topic.

Observers are required to:

- follow meeting protocols
- follow the requirements of this Terms of Reference
- follow the program's [Code of Conduct](#)

4.4 Proposed reference group meetings agenda

The proposed standing agenda for private landholders and First Nations Reconnecting River Country Program Reference Group meetings is outlined below.

4.4.1 Private landholders

- Welcome
- Welcome to, or Acknowledgement of, Country
- Confirm any changes or additional conflicts of interest to declare
- Program update overview
- Update on key program components
- Discussion of key program components: flow options, mitigation measures, landholder negotiations process, program communication products
- Feedback from declared networks
- Any other business.

4.4.2 First Nations

- Welcome
- Welcome to, or Acknowledgement of, Country
- confirm any changes or additional conflicts of interest to declare
- Program update overview
- Update on key program components
- Discussion of key program components: flow options, mitigation measures, landholder negotiations process, program communication products
- Feedback from declared networks
- Aboriginal Water Strategy
- Water for the environment
- Any other business.

*Any other projects can be included at the discretion of the First Nations Reference Group and executive officer.

5 Operational guidance

5.1 Responsibility of individual members

Reconnecting River Country Program Reference Group members have an obligation to the public interest. It is essential for members to demonstrate a standard of conduct and ethics that maintains the confidence and trust of program director as well as those in the broader community who may be affected by reference group activities.

5.2 Code of conduct

Reconnecting River Country Program Reference Group members will abide by the [Code of Conduct](#) supplied by the program.

5.3 Professional conduct

Reconnecting River Country Program Reference Group members are expected to maintain professional standards of conduct and ethics. While carrying out reference group activities, members must:

- behave honestly and with integrity
- act with care and diligence
- make the necessary commitment of time to ensure they are fully across reference group matters and well prepared for meetings
- treat other meeting participants with respect and courtesy, and display a cooperative approach to discussions
- observe confidentiality and exercise tact and discretion when dealing with sensitive issues
- express their views clearly and concisely
- contribute to discussion in an objective and impartial manner and avoid pursuing personal agendas or self-interest
- be prepared to consult with and listen to others.

5.4 Inappropriate behaviour

At all times Reconnecting River Country Program Reference Group members must refrain from:

- discrimination against any person because of race, ethnic or national origin, sex, age, marital status, pregnancy, disability, transgender grounds, sexual preference, political or religious beliefs or responsibilities as a carer. Such discrimination may be unlawful.
- bullying, which means behaviour that is repeated, unwelcome and unsolicited, considered offensive, intimidating, humiliating or threatening by the recipient or others who are witness to or affected by it.
- other inappropriate behaviour, such as harassment, vilification or victimisation, or aiding or permitting any bullying, discrimination, harassment or other such conduct.

5.5 Cultural safety

The department is committed to creating a culture of respect and inclusivity that supports cultural safety for all members. Members are encouraged to communicate any specific cultural needs to the group or executive officer.

Cultural safety is ensuring a socially, emotionally and physically safe environment for people, where there is no assault, challenge or denial of a person's identity. All members should feel comfortable to be themselves and express their cultural and spiritual beliefs.

The Reconnecting River Country Program Reference Groups will ensure cultural safety through the following strategies:

- members are expected to communicate with respect and empathy towards others, recognising and valuing diverse perspectives and experiences.
- members are encouraged to approach the meeting with cultural humility, recognising that they may not know everything about the experiences and perspectives of other members and being open to learning. Members are encouraged to ask questions and seek to understand the perspectives of others
- accommodation will be provided to meet the cultural needs of all members, including language, dress, food and other requirements. Members are encouraged to communicate any specific cultural needs to the group in advance.
- the group will not tolerate discrimination or harassment of any kind. Members are encouraged to report any incidents of discrimination or harassment, and the group will take immediate action to address any concerns.
- regular feedback will be sought from all members to evaluate how well the group is promoting cultural safety and inclusivity and identify opportunities for improvement. Members are encouraged to provide feedback on their experiences and suggest ways to improve cultural safety and inclusivity within the group.

5.6 Confidentiality

The Reconnecting River Country Program Reference Group will deal with issues that may be confidential in nature and not able to be discussed outside the group.

For any confidential material that is discussed at the reference groups members may be required to sign a confidentiality agreement.

Any confidential material will be marked as confidential on all meeting papers and flagged with members during the meeting.

5.7 Public statements and the media

The Reconnecting River Country Program Reference Group will deal with issues that could generate public and media interest meaning members may be approached by the media for comment.

To achieve consistency in the information being presented, all members that receive requests for public statements should get the reporters details and pass them on to the executive officer who will coordinate any media comment through the department's media team.

The facilitator may be delegated by the program director to provide comment.

No reference group member will be permitted to provide media comment relying on their position as a member without prior approval of the program director or Water Infrastructure NSW delegate on behalf of the program director.

All department media and communications protocols must be adhered to by reference group members.

5.8 Communication

It is acknowledged that a level of communication freedom is required to enable reference group members to discuss certain issues with their declared stakeholders to provide sound advice during reference group discussions, rather than opinion, wherever possible.

Reference group members may seek input and feedback from declared stakeholders on relevant matters to identify issues, concerns and opportunities regarding matters which have not been previously identified as being confidential.

5.9 Privacy

The membership of the Reconnecting River Country Program Reference Group will be publicly available however personal or organisational contact details will be maintained by the department and will only be shared with reference group members to facilitate good communication, and also with NSW Government officers who need to contact members in the course of their work.

Members can access and request changes to their contact details.

Volunteered personal information (for example, opinion recorded in approved minutes) may be used by the department. The [program's privacy policy](#) applies to the reference groups and the department staff who may have access to private information as part of their role.

Reference group members are also expected to treat personal information expressed in meetings as private.

5.10 Review of the reference groups

Review and evaluation of Reconnecting River Country Reference Groups will occur regularly (annually subject to ongoing funding).

5.11 Review of the Terms of Reference

Review and evaluation of Reconnecting River Country Reference Group Terms of Reference will occur regularly (annually subject to ongoing funding).

5.12 Conflicts of Interest

Conflicts of Interest must be disclosed and dealt with by the Reconnecting River Country Program Reference Group in a transparent way and in accordance with standing departmental policy.

A conflict of interest arises in relation to a person's duties as a member of the reference group, if for example:

- the member has interests which could improperly influence the performance of his or her responsibilities as a reference group member
- there is the potential for a member to personally benefit or provide benefits to associates from access to non-public information, or the results of non-public discussions, or decision-making processes.

Members must mitigate conflict of interests by:

- disclosing any actual or perceived conflict of interest which may exist as soon as they become aware of the issue
- declaring any actual or perceived conflict of interest on any agenda item at the start of the relevant meeting. The relevant interests in question, and the proposed mitigation actions if any, are to be recorded in the minutes of the meeting
- not participating in discussions, being excused from the room and not voting on any issues where an actual or perceived conflict of interest has been identified.

Conflicts of Interests that cannot be effectively mitigated may give rise to dismissal from membership to the reference group.

6 Administrative arrangements

6.1 Meetings

Reconnecting River Country Program Reference Groups will meet face-to-face at least twice between April and October 2023.

These meetings will be scheduled to align with key program deliverables to ensure effective and productive use of time. Reference groups meetings will occur approximately two weeks prior to advisory committee meetings. Minutes from reference groups meetings will be communicated to the advisory committee for consideration in developing advice to the program.

Prior to these meetings, reference group members will be expected to liaise with their declared/disclosed stakeholder networks, and to provide feedback from those networks to help inform robust program discussions.

The reference group members may choose to nominate an alternate to attend on their behalf, in their absence.

The alternate must:

- meet the selection criteria
- notify the meeting convenor prior to attending meetings
- declare any conflicts of interest.

Onsite engagement is an important part of understanding the Reconnecting River Country Program. Reference group members may be required to attend at least one on-site tour as part of their participation in the program (subject to time and resource capacity). The event will be designed to meet any accessibility needs.

In the event of an online meeting, all reference group members (and/or their alternates) must make themselves known to the meeting. If an attendee fails to do so, they will be removed from the meeting.

6.2 Attendance and quorum

A quorum will comprise half the total number of members plus one. At least two community (landholders or First Nations) representatives and two representatives of government agencies must be present. A meeting will not be convened without a quorum.

6.3 Records

Minutes of each meeting will be recorded and shared for consideration. All records will be kept in accordance with the department's [Records and Information Management Policy](#) and stored on the approved record management system.

Minutes from reference groups meetings will be communicated to the advisory committee for consideration in developing advice to the program.

6.4 Reference group communications

The department will provide Reconnecting River Country Reference Group members with approved materials prior to each meeting. These materials will be approved for sharing with declared/disclosed stakeholder networks for the purpose of generating discussion and gathering feedback to inform reference group meetings.

All materials developed by reference group members must be approved by the department prior to use or distribution.

6.5 Sitting fees

Equal sitting fees will be paid to Reconnecting River Country Reference Group members (excluding public sector employees) for their participation in meetings and as recognition of their value and expertise, and to support member retention and group functionality. Sitting fees have been set to align with guidance contained in the [Public Service Commission Classification & Remuneration framework](#). A full day will be paid for meetings of four hours or more duration. Half-day sitting fees will be paid for meetings of less than four hours.

Sitting fees have been set at \$220 per day for members.

Sitting fees may be remitted to members through either payroll or fee for service invoice at the discretion of the member.

Where payroll is elected, sitting fees are subject to ordinary PAYG Tax withholding requirements and will attract an additional superannuation payment in accordance with the rate prescribed in the *Superannuation Guarantee Act 1992*. A Tax file declaration and Superannuation standard choice form will be required to be submitted by the member on appointment.

Where fee for service invoice is elected, the sitting fee above is the GST exclusive amount. If a member is registered for GST and substantiates this, an additional 10% charge for GST may be added to invoices and will be paid by the department. PAYG Tax withholding will not be undertaken and there is no entitlement to an additional amount for superannuation.

An allowance equal to the sitting fee rate (\$220 per day) will be paid for one day of engagement with declared/disclosed stakeholder networks prior to each of the two face-to-face reference group meetings.

7 Expenses

Bookings and payment for travel and accommodation is to be arranged by the Reconnecting River Country Program Reference Group executive officer directly. The executive officer will confirm expenses align with departmental requirements.

In exceptional circumstances, where arrangements cannot be made by the executive officer directly the actual costs of travel, accommodation and meals for reference group meetings and any other related business approved by the department may be reimbursed to members. Where this is the case, a substantiated rationale must be provided by the member to the executive officer for approval and:

- members who are government employees will arrange for costs to be met by their respective agency
- members who are employees of the organisation they are representing may be reimbursed directly or choose to have the reimbursements paid to the organisation or forego reimbursement
- other members will be reimbursed for the actual out-of-pocket cost of travel, accommodation and meals associated with their role on the committee.

7.1 Claims

To claim reimbursement, members must provide the original receipts or a tax invoice. A tax invoice is a receipt that shows GST and ABN.

Reference group members are personally responsible for tax implications and meeting the Australian Tax Office requirements. Reference group members are advised to keep all receipts necessary for their tax records and to be aware of the allowance limits regularly updated by the Australian Tax Office.

Reimbursements will be limited to the maximum daily amounts updated annually by the Office of Finance and Services. Rates can be found via the [Boards and Committees section of the Department of Premier and Cabinet's website](#)

7.2 Accommodation and meals

Reasonable, pre-approved accommodation and meal expenses necessary for meeting attendance will be reimbursed or covered by the department.

7.3 Air, rail, taxi and bus fares

In exceptional circumstances, where the executive officer is unable to make arrangements on a member's behalf, a member may be required to make their own travel arrangements. Under such circumstances, where members have booked and paid for their own flights, used air tickets (boarding passes) and original tax invoices will be required with the reimbursement claim. Reimbursement must be pre-agreed and will be for the value of economy class travel.

Rail, taxi and bus fares up to \$50 in value may be claimed by submitting tickets or taxi receipts. Tax invoices are required for any expenses to be reimbursed.

Standard travel claim forms will be provided by the executive officer.

7.4 Use of private motor vehicles

A member may claim reimbursement for use of a private motor vehicle for approved Reconnecting River Country Reference Group related travel. The executive officer is responsible for providing information and forms.

Motor vehicle owners are covered by their comprehensive insurance for use of their vehicle when attending reference group meetings. However, policy dictates the owner must have:

- a certificate of registration with 'green slip' insurance
- a valid driver's licence
- comprehensive motor vehicle insurance, which indemnifies the department against any loss or damage occurring while the vehicle is on official business.

The department requires copies of this documentation before it can authorise members for use of personal motor vehicles. Reference group members are responsible for advising the department of any changes to this information and providing an annual update. Payment of the motor vehicle allowance is dependent on the indemnity of the department in the vehicle's comprehensive insurance policy. Insurance companies are usually willing to add this indemnity to a policy as a matter of course.

Reimbursement of private motor vehicle usage is made on an annually adjusted rate per kilometre, as listed on the department's travel expenses claim form. Payments made up to 5000 kilometres have a tax-free threshold, while payments over 5000 kilometres are fully subject to tax.

7.5 Use of personal light aircraft

Reference group members who choose to use personal light aircraft to travel to meetings may be reimbursed for travel costs to the meeting, subject to prior agreement with the department and based on an equivalent cost of motor vehicle travel.

7.6 Extra expenses

Extra expenses (alcohol, mini bar, entertainment, etc.) will not be reimbursed.