Terms of Reference

Fraser Island World Heritage Scientific Advisory Committee

2016-2019

1. Introduction

The Convention Concerning the Protection of the World’s Cultural and Natural Heritage (the World Heritage Convention) was adopted by the UNESCO General Conference in Paris on 16 November 1972. The World Heritage Convention came into force in 1975. The World Heritage Convention promotes cooperation among nations, in order to identify and protect heritage that is of Outstanding Universal Value and ensure its conservation for current and future generations.

In August 1974, Australia ratified the Convention. Fraser Island, (K’gari), as it is called by the Butchulla people, was inscribed on the World Heritage List in 1992 and is recognised for the Outstanding Universal Value of its ancient and magnificent sand dune systems (ongoing geological and biological processes), and its spectacular forests and freshwater lakes (superlative natural phenomena).

Day to day management and protection of the World Heritage property is carried out under the provisions of the Nature Conservation Act 1992, the Recreation Area Management Act 2006 and the Sustainable Planning Act 2009. Australia’s World Heritage properties are protected under the Environment Protection and Biodiversity Conservation Act 1999 (EPBC Act). World Heritage properties are recognized as a matter of national environmental significance under the EPBC Act’s assessment and approval provisions.

Two Fraser Island World Heritage advisory committees have been established. These are the Scientific Advisory Committee (SAC) and the Community Advisory Committee (CAC).

Day-to-day management of Fraser Island World Heritage area is the responsibility of the Queensland Parks and Wildlife Service (QPWS), Department of National Parks, Sport and Racing. World Heritage policy and strategic directions, and secretariat support to the committees, is carried out by the World Heritage Management Unit within the Department of Environment and Heritage Protection (EHP).

2. Purpose of the Fraser Island World Heritage Scientific Advisory Committee

The purpose of the SAC (the Committee) is to provide advice to State and Australian Ministers responsible for World Heritage on matters relating to the identification, protection, conservation, presentation and transmission to future generations of the cultural and natural heritage of the Fraser Island World Heritage property from the viewpoint of the scientific
community. This includes advice on the review and implementation of Fraser Island World Heritage plans, strategies or management issues which impact on communities.

The Committee does not formally ‘vote’ on issues, but may indicate to management that recommendations are unanimous, or represent a majority view. When committee members have dissenting or divergent views, the various viewpoints should be identified and conveyed to management. It is the responsibility of the SAC Chair and the members to ensure the minutes of meetings accurately reflect the Committee’s viewpoint. At times this may involve a ‘show of hands’ on an issue but this will be seen by management as a guide rather than a vote. In this way management becomes aware of divergent or minority views.

The Committee should function as more than just a sounding board on issues. Members should use their best endeavours to understand other points of view and try to move issues in the direction of a consensus outcome, or at least identify in the first instance the aspects of issues which prevent a consensus outcome.

As membership of the Committee is on an honorary basis, the Australian and Queensland Governments are appreciative of any time commitments made by members. Although no minimum time commitments are set, it is expected that Committee members will attach a priority to attending Committee meetings and allocating appropriate preparation time for reading of agenda papers etc.

Committee members are not expected to be ‘ambassadors’ for the Fraser Island or its management, although individual members may elect to assume this role in their own sectors of representation.

Members at their own discretion can also function as information providers to their sectors of representation on Fraser Island World Heritage issues. At times there may be a conflict between providing information to the community and respecting the confidentiality of some of the information provided to the SAC. It is the responsibility of members to identify such conflicts and seek direction, either during committee meetings or through the Executive Officer.

Only the SAC Chair has the authority to make statements on behalf of the Committee.

3. Membership

Membership of the Committee will consist of various scientific and technical advisers relevant to the World Heritage values of the property. Membership will include up to nine representatives, chosen from the following fields: soils, geomorphology, cultural heritage, botany, zoology, marine sciences, ecology (terrestrial, freshwater and marine), hydrogeology, social sciences, climatology, protected area management and sustainable visitor management. A Chair, with expertise in one or more of the above fields, will also be appointed in addition to the nine members.

The Chair is an independent, non-government person, with no current direct financial or political vested interest in the way in which the Fraser Island World Heritage area is managed.
Australian and Queensland Government observers may attend meetings with the agreement of the Chair.

The Executive Officer will provide administrative and technical support at each of the SAC meetings.

Other guests, observers and specialist advisers may be invited to attend and to provide advice.

The Chair of the Scientific Advisory Committee may also represent Fraser Island on the Australian World Heritage Advisory Committee (AWHAC), which will consider national and cross-cutting issues relevant to all World Heritage properties in Australia.

4. **Appointment of Members**

Members shall be appointed by the Queensland Minister who is responsible for World Heritage.

The independent Chair will be selected with the agreement of both the State and Australian Government Ministers responsible for World Heritage.

Expressions of interest for new committee members will be publicly advertised.

Nominations will be encouraged from individuals who have a capacity to provide multiple levels of advice to the Committee or from nominees who might offer a high level of advice from a particular sector. Similarly, individuals nominating for the Committee will be encouraged to seek endorsements from as many relevant organisations as possible.

New membership selection will also be mindful of the SAC corporate memory and may give additional consideration to ensuring some continuity of membership between the outgoing and incoming committees. Consideration will be given to gender balance and other equity issues within the Committee.

5. **Term of Appointment**

Members are appointed for a three year period. Members may resign at any time they feel unable to offer informed advice regarding their nominated sector of representation. Members are eligible for reappointment in another term.

The Chair is appointed for a three year period. The Chair may resign at any time they feel unable to offer informed and independent advice. The Chair is eligible for reappointment in another term.
6. Meeting Attendance

Members are strongly encouraged to attend all meetings.

A member unable to attend a meeting may seek approval from the Chair for a stand-in to represent his/her interests at the meeting. This request should be in writing and should explain the reasons for non-attendance and identify the preferred stand-in. A proxy cannot attend more than two meetings in any term.

Membership of the Committee will lapse if a member fails to attend two consecutive meetings without valid reasons acceptable to the Director, Strategic Environmental Programs, Environment and Heritage Protection and/or Chair.

If the Chair is not present at a meeting of the Committee, the members present will elect one of their members to preside at the meeting.

7. Termination

Other than by resignation, termination of membership of the SAC shall be by the Queensland Minister responsible for World Heritage. In the case of the Chair, by both the State and Federal Ministers responsible for World Heritage.

Grounds for termination include:
- Unauthorized representation of the Committee
- Misconduct and inappropriate behaviour
- Misuse of any information provided for the operation, deliberation and decision-making process of the Committee
- Breach of confidentiality
- Other reason at the discretion of the Minister responsible for World Heritage.

8. Meeting Cycle

The Committee shall meet up to four times each financial year, one of which may be a combined meeting with the SAC and the CAC. An annual schedule of meetings will be made available at the first meeting of the SAC of each financial year.

A quorum shall be a simple majority of members.
Operational Guidelines

Fraser Island World Heritage Scientific Advisory Committee

2016-2019

1. Roles and Responsibilities

Chair is responsible for:
(a) Chairing meetings in accordance with formal meeting protocols
(b) Speaking on behalf of the Committee
(c) Code of conduct at the meetings.

Members are responsible for:
(a) ensuring they fully represent the view of their respective sector
(b) endeavouring to reach a consensus view on issues discussed where possible
(c) ensuring outcomes of the Committee are conveyed to their respective sector and/or stakeholder group as appropriate
(d) following up on Committee actions as per the minutes
(e) conducting themselves in a professional manner and maintaining confidentiality on identified sensitive issues.

Executive Officer is responsible for:
(a) assisting the committee to operate in accordance with the principles and requirements of legislation, policies, strategies and guidelines appropriate to Fraser Island World Heritage property
(b) assisting the committee to maintain a focus on addressing the requirements of the SAC
(c) coordination of committee meetings and ensuring an appropriate level of administration support and processing payments
(d) dissemination of information to members and other relevant stakeholders
(e) providing the level of background information reasonably considered necessary to assist the members in their deliberations
(f) ensure relevant recommendations of the committee are provided to the Minister/s.

2. Agendas and Minutes

The Executive Officer shall call for agenda items from members and the Chair and shall also call for agenda items from the QPWS Regional and Operations Managers responsible for Fraser Island, and relevant officers within the World Heritage Management Unit of EHP, to identify specific matters on which the advice of the Committee is sought. The final agenda is to be approved by the Chair. The agenda will be distributed by the Executive Officer to members at least one week prior to the meeting and including any agenda papers and all supporting documentation.
The Executive Officer will take the meeting minutes. Final minutes are to be approved by the Chair prior to distribution to members. At the following meeting, members may resolve to accept the minutes as a true and accurate record or accept with amendments.

All minutes shall be distributed to the Chair and members within 10 working days of the meeting and cc'd to the following:

1. Director, Natural Heritage, Department of the Environment (DoE)
2. Fraser Island Desk Officer, Natural Heritage, DoE
3. Director, Strategic Environmental Programs, EHP
4. Manager, World Heritage Management Unit EHP
5. Principal Project Officer, World Heritage Management Unit EHP
6. Area Manager Fraser Coast, Sunshine Fraser Coast Region QPWS
7. Community Advisory Committee members.

Minutes may be made publicly available on the EHP, QPWS and/or DoE websites.

3. Committee Spokesperson

The Chair is the only authorised spokesperson on issues concerning the operations, deliberations and decisions of the Committee. No other member may act as the spokesperson for the Committee in a relation to a media enquiry on any committee matter.

Unauthorised and/or deliberate misrepresentation of the Committee is grounds for termination.

4. Reporting

The Committee will report to the State agency responsible for World Heritage through the Chair. The Chair or Executive Officer will report back to the SAC on any decisions or other relevant matters made by the agency responsible for World Heritage.

The Chair, after each meeting, may convey to the Department responsible for World Heritage a report on the agenda items considered at the meeting. The report should include the Committee’s advice.

5. Committee Operating Expenses

The Executive Officer provides secretariat support to the Committee. This position is employed by EHP and is responsible for applying for Federal Government funding to cover the Executive Officer salary and Committee operating expenses.

In accordance with State Government policy, sitting fees will not be paid to advisory committee members. The Chair, in recognition of his/her extra work load, will be paid a sitting fee at the current State Government remuneration rates.

Costs of travel and living expenses associated with the attendance to meetings will be met at the standard State Government rate, or at rates approved by EHP. Members and the Chair
will be reimbursed for meals not provided by the Queensland Government (excluding alcoholic beverages). The reimbursement of tax invoices for meals will be capped at the standard meal allowances as per the Queensland Government Domestic Travel and Relieving Directive (as of May 2016 the rates are: Breakfast-$21.15; Lunch-$24.20; Dinner-$41.65). Members and the Chair are also entitled to an incidental allowance of $17.30 per overnight stay. Personal vehicle mileage claims and tax invoices for reimbursements should be provided to the Executive Officer within six weeks.

Invited guests, observers and specialist advisers attend at their own costs unless otherwise approved by the Director, Strategic Environmental Programs, EHP.

6. Code of Conduct

All members are to act honestly and fairly and with respect and proper regard for the rights and obligations of others.

Members must abide by the following committee principles:
- Promotion of open discussion
- Recognition of respective roles and responsibilities of each member
- Management of issues in a consistent and effective manner.

7. Fraud Awareness

Members of the Committee are required to undertake Fraud Awareness training by reading a Fact Sheet provided by the Executive Officer and signing a Short Induction Checklist.

8. Conflict of Interest

A member of the Committee who has a direct or indirect conflict of interest in a matter being considered or about to be considered by the Committee shall, as soon as practicable after the relevant facts have become known to the member, disclose the nature of the member’s conflict of interest.

A disclosure of a conflict of interest (pecuniary or otherwise) shall be recorded in the Minutes and the member shall not, unless otherwise determined by the Chairperson of the Committee, be present during any discussion with respect to that matter or contribute to or influence any advice the Committee may provide on that matter.

9. Confidentiality

All documents provided to members (except those normally available to the public) are to be considered by members as confidential working documents unless otherwise indicated.