MINUTES

Board	**Woomera Prohibited Area (WPA) Advisory Board Meeting**	
Date	Monday 25 November 2024	
Time	**Start:** 14:00 pm AEST	**Finish:** 16.06 pm AEST
Venue	Building R2, Banksia Room, Russell Offices, Canberra	
Members	**Name**	**Appointment**
	The Hon Amanda Vanstone AO	Chair
	Ms Andrea Slattery	Deputy Chair
Ex-Officio Members	Mr Hugh Jeffrey	Deputy Secretary, Strategy, Policy, and Industry, Department of Defence
	AVM Stephen Meredith AM DSM	Chief of Air Force Representative to the WPA Advisory Board, Department of Defence
	Dr Paul Heithersay PSM	Chief Executive, South Australian (SA) Department for Energy and Mining
	Mr Ian Spencer	Executive Director, Defence and Industry, Defence South Australia (SA) representing Mr Matt Opie, Chief Executive Defence SA
	Mr Peter Chesworth	Head of Division – Minerals and Resources, Department of Industry, Science and Resources, representing Ms Jane Urquhart, Deputy Secretary, Resources and Strategy, Department of Industry, Science and Resources
Guests	Ms Rebecca Skinner PSM	Independent Lead of the 2024 WPA Review
	Mr Colin McKenna	Assistant Secretary Woomera Review
	Ms Emma Cooney	Assistant Secretary, Strategic Engagement and Corporate, Department of Defence
	Mr Benjamin Zammit	Executive Director, Regulation and Compliance, SA Department for Energy and Mining
	Mr Michael Smith	Director, Regulation and Compliance, SA Department for Energy and Mining
	Ms Elizabeth O'Brien	Director, Woomera Prohibited Area Coordination Office, Department of Defence
	GPCAPT Brett Risstrom	Director Security – Air Force, Air Force Headquarters, Department of Defence
	Mr Reg Carruthers	Director, Advanced Test and Training Environment, Air Warfare Centre, Air Force, Department of Defence

Opening and Acknowledgement of Country

Item	Discussion	Action Item	Owner
1.0	The Chair acknowledged the traditional custodians of the land on which attendees were gathered – the Ngunnawal and Kuarna people. The Chair welcomed Advisory Board members and supporting staff attending in-person and remotely.		

Security Briefing

Item	Discussion	Action Item	Owner
2.1	***Update on Complex Permit Assessment*** Defence updated the Board on current and future permit application considerations.	--	Defence SP&I
2.2	***Security and Threat Brief*** The Board received a briefing on WPA security and the threat environment.	--	Defence

Minutes from the previous meeting (1/2024)

Item	Discussion	Action Item	Owner
3.0	The Chair tabled the minutes from the previous Advisory Board meeting, held on 10 July 2024. The Board endorsed the meeting minutes, and agreed to publish them on the WPA website.	Defence to publish the July 2024 minutes on the WPA website.	Defence SP&I

Matters for WPA Advisory Board Decision

Item	Discussion	Action Item	Owner
4.1	***Annual Report 2024*** Defence presented the draft WPA Annual Report for 2023-2024. The Board welcomed the streamlined Annual Report, appreciating that it provided an update on WPA coexistence in a more accessible format for stakeholders. DISR requested an editorial correction. The Board endorsed the Annual Report for publication.	Defence to update the Annual Report, include the Chair's Report, and publish before the end of December 2024.	Defence SP&I
4.2	***WPA Dashboard Report April 2024 - September 2024*** Defence presented the WPA Dashboard Report for the April – September 2024 reporting period. The Deputy Chair sought clarification that the information captured was appropriate for publication. Air Force confirmed it was. The Board endorsed the publication of the Dashboard Report on the WPA website.	Defence to publish the April – September 2024 Dashboard Report on the WPA website.	Defence SP&I

Noting

Item	Discussion	Action Item	Owner
5.1	***First Nations engagement in the WPA update*** Defence and Air Force provided updates on First Nations engagement, including on efforts to fill the Indigenous Liaison Officer role at Woomera. Air Force is working to fill the role as soon as possible. The Chair requested future reporting be more straightforward, and detail challenges faced with engagement. Air Force noted that the update did not capture all of the Woomera Test Range's engagement with First Nations groups. Defence undertook to provide out of session updates to the Chair and Deputy Chair that	Defence to prepare a fact sheet of the Board's role and activities to share with First Nations groups in the WPA. Defence to provide the Chair and Deputy Chair out of session updates on Board agency engagement with First Nations groups.	Defence SP&I

	provided comprehensive insight into ongoing Board agency engagement programs, highlighting what is effective, and delays and impediments when encountered. The Board noted the progress update on the six Traditional Owner versions of the Heritage Management Plan and the update on the Regional Compliance Officer Program.		
5.2	***Update on the 2024 WPA Review*** The 2024 WPA Review Independent Lead presented the initial findings of the Review, including that the current strategic environment reinforces Defence as the primary user of the WPA in the interests of national security. Economic and cultural uses also remain important. There is inherent tension between the requirement to provide flexibility for Defence and certainty for non-Defence users. The coexistence framework requires updating to remain fit for purpose in this environment. The Independent Lead sought the Board's views on the draft recommendations, the future role of the Board, and enhanced stakeholder engagement and consultation. The Board noted the Review's initial findings, draft recommendations and proposed coexistence principles.	--	Independent Lead
5.3	***2018 WPA Review Implementation Update*** Defence updated the Board on progress to implement the four outstanding recommendations from the 2018 Review. Regarding Recommendation 11, Defence advised that it has identified a new Defence IT platform that may be suitable to deliver a digital platform to manage WPA permits. An ICT program manager will commence shortly to lead scoping and delivery of the project. The Deputy Chair asked for the anticipated delivery timeframe of the platform. Defence advised this will be informed by the initial scoping work, and undertook to provide a detailed update at the next Board meeting. The Chair requested out of session updates on progress, including once the program manager commences. The Board noted the implementation status of the four outstanding 2018 Review Recommendations: 2 Flexible Green Zone; 5 Economic and Prospectivity Assessment, 11 Modernising Administration of WPA Coexistence; and 12 Review of WPA arrangements by 2025.	Defence to provide the Chair and Deputy Chair out of session progress updates on delivery of a digital platform for managing WPA permits. Defence to return to Board meeting 1/2025 with more detail, including the anticipated delivery timeframe.	Defence SP&I
5.4	***WPA Exclusion Periods and Range Update*** Air Force updated the Board on Defence testing for the period 01 April to 30 September 2024 and upcoming exclusion periods. Air Force advised that Woomera Test Range activities are continuing to increase in support of delivering *2024 National Defence Strategy* and *Integrated Investment Program* capability priorities. The Board noted the update.	--	Air Force

5.5	***Resources Industry Activities in the WPA*** The South Australian Department for Energy and Mining (DEM) updated the Board on resource industry and South Australian Government activities undertaken in the WPA. The Board noted the update. The Chair noted that this was Dr Heithersay's last meeting and thanked him for his contributions to the Board.	DEM to publish the *Updated (2023) WPA Resource Prospectivity and Economic Assessment* report on its website.	DEM
5.6	***Defence Industry Activities in the WPA*** Defence SA provided a verbal update on Defence SA activities in South Australia. The Board noted the update.	Defence to discuss with Defence SA strategies to reduce pressure on the Woomera Test Range, and advise on whether proposed commercial use is aligned with the WPA coexistence framework.	Defence SA

Other business

Item	Discussion	Action Item	Owner
6.1	***WPA Advisory Board Forward Work Program*** The Deputy Chair sought an update following continued media coverage of radioactive waste. Defence took the request on notice. DISR offered to facilitate an update from the Australian Radioactive Waste Agency. The Board agreed the proposed Work Program for 2025. The Chair requested Defence provide out of session updates on Board agency WPA stakeholder engagement.	Board members to advise the Secretariat of any additional agenda items. Defence to return to meeting 1/2025 with an update regarding continued media coverage of radioactive waste. Defence to provide the Chair and Deputy Chair out of session updates on Board agency engagement with WPA stakeholders.	Defence SP&I

Next meeting – [April, 2025] in [Adelaide]

Item	Discussion	Action Item	Owner
7.0	The Chair invited Board confirmation of availability for the proposed dates for the first Board meeting of 2025. The meeting was brought to an end.	Defence to confirm member's availability to hold the next meeting in the week of 28 April 2025.	Defence SP&I

Meeting concluded at 16.06 pm AEST