

Charter for the
Regulatory Science Network (RSN)

June 2013

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BACKGROUND

The Regulatory Science Network (RSN) is a network of Australian government agencies responsible for regulating chemicals (including radio-isotopes) and/or biological agents. Its aim is to forge closer linkages between these agencies on common issues that are science-related.

MISSION

To strengthen regulatory science across government agencies by:

- providing a forum where regulatory and technical issues can be discussed, thereby enhancing inter-agency cooperation
- promoting a consistent approach to evidence-based decision-making across regulatory agencies
- providing cross-agency training and professional development opportunities for agency scientific staff
- enhancing cross-agency networking opportunities for agency scientific staff
- acting as a conduit for inter-agency liaison on technical and regulatory issues.

OBJECTIVE

To improve the performance of Australian government regulatory agencies by strengthening evidence-based decision-making.

The RSN does this through:

Improving Operational Effectiveness

- Creating gateways for liaison and cooperation between member agencies
- Establishing a cooperative forum that provides opportunities for information sharing and exchange
- Developing proposals that involve collaborations between the Regulators' Forum¹ and the RSN to deliver improvements in regulatory science

Capacity Building

- Promoting an interest in regulatory science, starting with cross-agency events and activities
- Convening seminars, workshops and conferences to promote staff professional development and training and to facilitate an inter-agency exchange of thoughts and ideas related to regulatory science
- Reinforcing the sense of belonging and cohesion of the regulatory science community through networking opportunities
- Encouraging recent graduates in relevant scientific disciplines to aspire to regulatory careers

¹ The Regulators' Forum is made up of the Heads of the seven agencies involved viz. the APVMA, ARPANSA, DAFF, FSANZ, NICNAS, OGTR and TGA; it meets quarterly. Its focus is risk assessment, workforce planning, public awareness and confidence, and addressing cross-agency issues.

Promoting Consistent Approaches to Regulatory Decision-making

- Establishing mechanisms for sharing of information across agencies, to the extent permitted by governing legislation
- Promoting approaches to regulatory decision-making that are consistent across agencies, to the extent permitted by governing legislation
- Forming associations with other organisations that may assist in advancing the objectives of the RSN

Developing proposals for consideration by the Regulators' Forum

- Developing proposals pertaining to strategic regulatory science issues, for consideration by the Regulators' Forum
- Promoting collaborative interaction between the Regulators' Forum and the RSN in order to investigate the value of particular inter-agency activities (including issues relating to feasibility and funding)

COOPERATIVE PRINCIPLES

In joining the RSN, member agencies agree to cooperate, as far as they reasonably can (subject to relevant legislative requirements, such as privacy laws), in:

- Open communication
- Promotion of opportunities to collaborate and work together
- Technical staff training and personnel exchange to advance the understanding of regulatory science
- The development of regulatory standards
- Any other matter relevant to regulatory science

Membership of the RSN does not affect the legal rights and responsibilities of member agencies in relation to confidentiality, security and intellectual property, and parties may need to further formalise arrangements in this regard.

MEMBERSHIP

Membership of the RSN is open to any Australian Government agency with involvement in the regulation of chemicals (including radio-isotopes) and/or biological agents.

Membership incurs the following responsibilities:

- Upon joining the RSN, agencies are to nominate an agency representative or representatives, as primary point(s) of contact. Agency representatives on RSN may be the Chief Regulatory Scientist, Principal Regulatory Scientist, Science Advisor or Senior Regulatory Advisor (or their equivalent).
- Agency representatives are to attend meetings of the RSN and participate in decision making
- Agency representatives are responsible for promoting RSN activities with other staff in their agency

Members may withdraw from the RSN at any time. If agency representatives withdraw, then agencies should nominate a new representative.

All members are encouraged to participate in specific RSN activities including meetings, sub-committee meetings, and conferences.

MANAGEMENT FRAMEWORK AND OPERATIONS

The RSN's management structure is based on broad representation from the relevant agencies.

The RSN reports to the Regulators' Forum through informal arrangements. These arrangements require that Outcome Notes recording the outcomes of RSN meetings are prepared and circulated to RSN members and the members of the Regulators' Forum.

Internal Management Structure

The RSN is internally managed by an RSN Steering Committee and supported by a part-time secretariat. The Steering Committee is made up of two executive office holders covering the positions of Chair and Vice Chair (who will be Chair Elect), drawn from, and appointed by, members of the RSN for a period of one year. Election will be by consensus. The Steering Committee is to meet in-person or remotely (telephone or e-mail) at least two times per year.

The Chair will seek secretariat support from his/her department.

Additional RSN members who are taking the lead on specific RSN projects and manage specific "cluster" activities² may liaise with the Steering Committee and will report to the scheduled RSN meetings.

Steering Committee Membership

Executive office holders are to include the positions of Chair and Vice Chair; the Vice Chair will take over the role of Chair in the following period, with the agreement of the RSN membership. Additional positions may be designated as office holders at the discretion of the RSN.

Executive office holders are to be drawn from RSN member agencies.

Agencies nominating a member to fill an executive office holder position are to be cognisant of the workload inherent in the relevant position, including the expectation that office holders will provide in-kind strategic and higher-level management support to the Secretariat, and will attend scheduled RSN meetings (refer to role statements in the Appendix).

² A cluster involves a small number of RSN members undertaking an activity, usually a project. One of the RSN members is the Project Leader. The informal nature of a cluster facilitates RSN members joining and/or leaving a project group over time.

RSN Secretariat

The Secretariat provides administrative and co-ordination support to RSN's activities. Secretariat services are provided through a Secretariat support officer, whose role and functions are listed in Appendix 1.

The Secretariat is to be housed within a nominated member agency ('the managing agency'). The managing agency is to:

- provide a Secretariat support officer with an appropriate level of skill and expertise; and
- provide facilities for the Secretariat at no cost to the RSN.

The Secretariat will be administratively managed by the managing agency, but will be operationally responsive and answerable to the RSN through the RSN Chair.

Decision Making

A consensus approach to decision-making will be adopted.

Meetings

The RSN will meet at least three times per year.

FINANCIAL MANAGEMENT

The RSN operates as a not-for-profit body.

Enabling Funding

The RSN Secretariat is to be funded by the managing agency.

Funding of Specific Activities

Specific activities are to be funded by contributions from member agencies, in approximate proportion to their involvement in the activity, and provided that the expenditure is consistent with relevant financial management legislation, regulations, delegations and guidelines of each of the agencies.

RSN CHARTER

The RSN Charter may be amended from time to time in response to changes in the RSN's operating environment or governance requirements. Amendments are to be approved via a resolution of the RSN.

Each amendment or set of concurrent amendments result in a new version of the Charter, a draft of which is to be circulated to RSN members for comment prior to its adoption.

APPENDIX

RSN Role Statements

Regulatory Science Network (RSN)

ROLE STATEMENTS

The roles and functions of RSN key appointments are as described below. Agencies whose members fill these appointments agree to incur the associated workload and costs inherent in these positions.

1. Executive Office Holders

Appointment	Role and Functions
Chair	<p>Role: To lead the RSN</p> <p>Functions:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Leadership and oversight of the RSN body and the RSN Steering Committee • Acting as a conduit between the RSN and the Regulators' Forum • Representation of the RSN at functions, forums and events at which RSN is invited/represented • Strategic engagement of partner entities and agencies • Attendance at Steering Committee meetings, scheduled RSN meetings, and other key events as they are scheduled • Advocacy on behalf of the RSN • Finalising outcome notes from RSN meetings • Finalising and actioning correspondence • Overseeing the Secretariat to ensure the RSN receives the necessary enabling support
Vice-Chair	<p>Role: To assist the Chair and act as understudy</p> <p>Functions:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Assist with the leadership and oversight of the RSN body and the RSN Steering Committee • Assist the Chair with strategic and management functions as required • Attendance at Steering Committee meetings, scheduled RSN meetings, and other key events as they are scheduled • Advocacy on behalf of the RSN

2. Other Office Holders

Agency Representatives	<p>Role: To represent the interests of their respective agencies</p> <p>Functions:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Liaison with the agency being represented in order to be able to present the agency views/position.• Preparation of occasional agency reports to the RSN• Attendance at RSN meetings and other key events as they are scheduled so as to be able to represent the interests and perspectives of their agency• Representation of the RSN at functions, forums and events at which the RSN is invited/represented• Advocacy on behalf of the RSN
Project Leaders (as required)	<p>Role: To take the lead on specific projects and act as conduit between any project group (“cluster”) and the RSN</p> <p>Functions:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Coordination of project group activities• Take ownership of, and responsibility for, progressing projects and the delivery of related outcomes• Preparation of project group reports to the RSN• Liaison with project group members to ensure progress of projects• Attendance at Steering Committee meetings and other key events as required

3. Secretariat Support

Appointment	Role and Functions
Secretariat support officer	<p>Role: To provide Secretariat support to facilitate RSN operations</p> <p>Functions:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Central and primary contact point for the RSN • Receiving/sending correspondence external to the RSN as directed by executive office holders • Maintenance of any shared website • Coordination of and attendance at meetings, and facilitating teleconferences and other key events as they are scheduled • Recording and promulgation of meeting outcomes and results of other RSN activities • Addition of new members • Liaison/correspondence with members and potential members • Provision of written reports to Steering Committee meetings • Collation of nominations for training courses • Assist with co-ordination of RSN activities, including (but not limited to): <ul style="list-style-type: none"> – the RSN meetings – RSN Steering Committee meetings – training courses • Act as conduit to other organisations as directed • Attendance at RSN meetings and other key events to take Minutes • Drafting outcome notes from RSN meetings and circulating them to RSN members and the members of the Regulators' Forum • Drafting correspondence on behalf of the RSN Steering Committee • Assisting the Chair and Vice-Chair with management functions as required <p>Other tasks as directed by RSN executive office holders</p>