



Department of
**Energy and Economic
Diversification**

Science and Technology Council of Western Australia

Terms of Reference

Contents

1. Terms of Reference	2
1.1. Introduction	2
1.2. Purpose	2
1.3. Scope and responsibilities	2
1.4. Accountability.....	3
1.5. Membership.....	3
1.6. Operating procedures	4
2. Integrity Governance	5
2.1. Acceptance of Terms of Reference provisions	5
2.2. Conflict of Interest.....	5
3. Review of the Council	7
4. Communications protocols	7
5. Revision of Terms of Reference	7
5.1. Version control.....	7
Appendix A – Communication protocols	8
A.1. Communication and public comment.....	8
A.2. Public comments and representing the Department.....	8
A.3. Talking with the media	9
A.4. Working with stakeholders.....	9
A.5. Confidential information	9
A.6. Raising concerns	10

1. Terms of Reference

1.1. Introduction

The 10-Year Science and Technology Plan (the Plan) was released by the former Department of Jobs, Tourism, Science and Innovation, now the Department of Energy and Economic Diversification (the Department), to enhance and leverage the State's scientific and technological capabilities to drive economic growth, societal well-being and environmental sustainability.

The Plan addresses key challenges such as the global energy transition, decarbonisation, food security, and health, with the aim to position Western Australia as a leader and preferred location to conduct research and innovation.

The delivery of the Plan will be led by the Department. The establishment of a Science and Technology Council of Western Australia (the Council) will promote cross-disciplinary collaboration and provide strategic advice to the Department on science and technology opportunities and challenges.

1.2. Purpose

The Council will be responsible for providing independent feedback and advice to the Department on important science and technology issues facing Western Australia.

1.3. Scope and responsibilities

The Council will provide advice to the Department on:

- horizon scanning and identification of long term and emerging scientific and technological developments;
- scientific and technological issues of relevance to Government policy or priorities;
- Western Australia's science ecosystem, including issues relating to science engagement, research capability, collaboration opportunities (including international opportunities), science, technology, engineering and mathematics (STEM) education and workforce skills;
- tracking the Government's objectives as set out in the Plan; and
- supporting connections between industry, academia and government on research and issues associated with science and technology.

Council members will act as ambassadors for science and technology in Western Australia and champion the State's capabilities.

The Council will not undertake its own research nor direct the Department to undertake research. The Council may make recommendations to the Department to undertake studies or analysis.

1.4. Accountability

The Council is appointed by the Director General of the Department and is accountable to the Director General in the performance of its functions. The Council may be altered or disbanded at the Department's discretion.

The Council will report through the Chair to the Minister for Science on an as needs basis. The Minister and/or their staff may also attend Council meetings.

1.5. Membership

The Council will have a diverse membership, which will include:

- Western Australia's Chief Scientist (Chair);
- the Deputy Director General of Industry, Science and Innovation within the Department (ex officio); and
- up to fifteen (15) expert members.

Each of the fifteen (15) members will be experts in science and technology fields, and will represent at least one of the following areas:

- university;
- research institution or collaboration entity;
- industry;
- small business or startups;
- not-for-profit sector;
- regional or remote;
- Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander;
- youth (aged 18-30); and
- another underrepresented group (e.g. culturally and linguistically diverse, recent migrant, person living with a difference of ability).

Appointment

Any appointment to the Council will be made through an open Expression of Interest (EOI) process. A list of suitable members will be maintained over time and may be drawn upon

instead of instigating a new process. Members of the Council will be appointed at the discretion of the Minister for Science.

Member Term

Member appointment to the Council will be for a two (2) year term, with the possibility of reappointment for one (1) additional year.

Remuneration

Membership to the Council is on a voluntary basis.

1.6. Operating procedures

Meetings

The Council will meet up to four (4) times per year.

In the absence of the Chair a Deputy Chair will be nominated.

Actions arising from meetings will be progressed by relevant Council member/s, as agreed by the Council.

Attendance and proxies

Council meetings will be in person in Perth. For members unable to attend in person, a video conference option will be made available.

Council members are expected to attend all meetings and nominations of proxies are not permitted. Members who are unable to attend a scheduled meeting are expected to review the papers and provide any feedback or comments to the Secretariat prior to the meeting.

The Chair, in consultation with the Secretariat, may invite additional individuals with appropriate expertise to attend specific meetings as co-opted members.

Quorum

A quorum for meetings will be the Chair and two thirds of the appointed members. If a quorum is not achieved, a decision to continue with the meeting will be made at the discretion of the Chair.

Agenda

The agenda for each meeting will be developed by the Department, in consultation with the Chair, and circulated to members with any supporting material at least one week in advance of meetings.

Out-of-session matters

Where appropriate, some activities may be undertaken through out-of-session correspondence. Out-of-session items will be formally noted at the next scheduled meeting.

Secretariat support

Secretariat support will be provided by the Department. This will include development and distribution of agendas, communiques, supporting material for meetings, coordinating meetings, taking meeting minutes and recording actions arising.

The Department will keep records, including of meeting documentation; correspondence; and the conflict-of-interest register. The files are the property of the Department and must be preserved in accordance with the *State Records Act 2000* and the *Freedom of Information Act 1992*.

2. Integrity Governance

2.1. Acceptance of Terms of Reference provisions

Before performing any role of the Council, members (and co-opted members) are to read, understand and agree to the provisions in this Terms of Reference by completing and signing a *Conflict-of-Interest* register.

2.2. Conflict of Interest

Each member of the Council is responsible for identifying and disclosing their own conflicts of interest to the Chair. An interest is a personal connection or involvement with something or someone that might reasonably be thought to compromise that person's impartiality in carrying out their professional duties. An interest is anything that can have an impact on an individual or group.

Interests may be personal, related to family members or close associates, and may be financial, commercial, employment-related or political in nature. Interests may be direct or indirect, pecuniary or non-pecuniary.

A conflict of interest is a conflict between someone's professional responsibilities (e.g. as a Council member) to act in the public interest and their personal interests.

There are three (3) main types of conflicts:

- actual conflicts of interest: these involve a direct conflict between professional duties and other private interests;

- perceived conflicts of interest: these can exist where it appears that other interests could improperly influence a professional duty, whether or not this is the case; and
- potential conflicts of interest: these arise when private interest could conflict with professional duties in the future.

Where it is deemed that a conflict of interest exists, a decision will be made on how this conflict is managed in accordance with the Department's *Conflicts of Interest Management Framework*.

The Secretariat will record disclosures in the conflicts of interest register.

Code of Conduct

Members of the Council will adhere to the Department's Code of Conduct and will ensure the below:

- provision of independent advice with full disclosures of interest, including current business dealings with the State Government while they are on the Council; including applications for grants, awards programs or bids for paid-for services to the Department;
 - if this is contravened, or likely to be so, then the member must step down from the Council.
- disclosure of any conflicts of interest;
- discussions and issues to remain confidential, unless expressly indicated;
 - confidentiality is to be managed in accordance with the Department's Code of Conduct Policy.
- personal prejudice will not influence their role on the Council. Members should be aware of how their own biases (conscious or unconscious) could affect their role;
- knowledge or information obtained whilst on the Council is not used for any personal or professional gain;
- feedback is to be provided within requested timeframes;
- resolution of dissenting issues shall be achieved by a vote of members present and the Chair shall have the casting vote;
- the Council, through or at direction of the Chair, can co-opt or seek advice on an as-needed basis.

In the event a member of the Council fails to adhere to the code of conduct or attendance criteria, their position on the Council may be subject to revocation. This decision shall be made by the Minister for Science in consultation with the Department following due process and consideration of the circumstances.

3. Review of the Council

Three (3) years after its establishment, a review of the council will be undertaken by the Department, to examine its operational effectiveness, its efficiency, and its impact on the implementation of the 10-year Science and Technology Plan (and associated Action Plan). The Department will be responsible for initiating and managing this process.

4. Communication protocols

Members of the Council will comply with the communication protocols set out in **Appendix A**.

5. Revision of Terms of Reference

The Terms of Reference will be reviewed every two (2) years. The Secretariat will be responsible for initiating and managing this process.

5.1. Version control

Version	Date approved	Description
V0.1	September 2024	Document developed
V1.0	August 2025	Endorsed by Chair
V1.1	October 2025	Endorsed by Council

Appendix A – Communication protocols

The below document sets out the protocols for members of the Science and Technology Council of Western Australia (the Council) to communicate between the Council and stakeholders, in their capacity as a Council member. It sets out the communications path internally and externally, and accepted processes for approving and disseminating information.

The following processes only extend to communications undertaken in relation to the role as a member on the Council. The below does not apply to communications carried out for matters not related to the Council.

All queries in relation to communication protocols should be directed to the Secretariat in the first instance.

Communications refer to:

- personal interactions (telephone calls, meetings, conferences);
- electronic media (emails, social media, messaging);
- written documents (letters, reports, briefings, papers); and
- industry consultative forums and group activities.

A.1. Communication and public comment

In member's capacity on the Council, members will adhere to applicable legal requirements, policies, and all other lawful directives regarding communication with Parliament, ministers, ministerial staff, lobbyists, the media, members of the public, or any other entity, group or person. These include:

- *Public Sector Commissioner's Circular: 2009-10 Communication Arrangements between Ministers and agencies;* and
- *Public Sector Commissioner's Instruction No 16 – Government representatives contact with registrants and lobbyists.*

The Council may develop its own public communique for release, should the Council wish to publicise any outcomes that arise from the meeting.

A.2. Public comments and representing the Department

A comment is considered 'public' if it is reasonable to expect it could reach the wider community, for example via the internet or social media, in a speech or to the media.

Generally the Chair is responsible for making public statements on matters related to or on behalf of the Council, however members may occasionally be asked to represent the

Council in a public setting. Comments need to reflect that operational responsibility lies solely with the Department.

A communique will be developed following Council meetings which outline public messages which all members can take an active role in sharing with their networks. Members act as ambassadors for science and technology in the State and are encouraged to engage regularly with their networks to seek insights and share key messages.

Comments and behaviour should be consistent with the objectives of the Council, be ethical and demonstrate the level of probity expected in the public sector.

Council members should not publicly share personal views on Council discussions, or outcomes, speculate on future directions or criticise any political parties.

A.3. Talking with the media

The Secretariat follows the Department's Communications Protocol which the Council must adhere to. All liaison regarding media is managed by the Department's Corporate Communications Media Advisers. This includes all contact with journalists and ministerial media advisers.

If a Council member is contacted directly by a ministerial media adviser, they must refer the request to the Department's Corporate Communications email media@jtsi.wa.gov.au and advise the Secretariat.

A.4. Working with stakeholders

Information flows between the Council and stakeholders are 2-way and should include the Council receiving feedback from stakeholders.

As Council members are appointed to represent larger cohorts it is expected that members will need to consult with their networks and remain informed. When communicating with stakeholders on matters related to the Council, comments and behaviours should be consistent with the objectives of the Council, be ethical and demonstrate the level of probity expected in the public sector.

A.5. Confidential information

Section 81 of the *Criminal Code* makes it illegal for public officials to disclose confidential information and prohibits them from publishing or communicating any facts or documents that came to their knowledge or possession by virtue of their position as a Council member and which it is their duty to keep confidential.

The Council's *Code of Conduct* and *Communications Protocols* outline the Council's approach and responsibilities in relation to confidentiality.

Any private use of information obtained in an official capacity that it is not already in the public domain is likely to be inappropriate as it has the potential to conflict with a member's official duties as Council member or compromise confidentiality.

The Council may be subject to the *Freedom of Information Act 1992* which provides public access to government documents, subject to certain restrictions, to promote accountability and transparency.

Given the nature of Council member communications and that it may often include email contact and use of personal email accounts, particular care is required with information provided to members electronically (for example, ensuring that confidential information from earlier email conversation threads is not forwarded on unintentionally).

A.6. Raising concerns

Council members have several avenues for raising concerns about decisions and actions that may be contrary to the Council's public duty or potential misconduct by Council members and management.

Depending on the nature of the matter, the first step is to raise concerns with the Secretariat, and for matters relating to management, also with the Department's Deputy Director General of Industry, Science and Innovation, or another relevant public sector agency representative.

Where concerns relate to improper conduct, members may wish to make a Public Interest Disclosure in accordance with the *Public Interest Disclosure Act 2003*.

Misconduct should be reported to the Corruption and Crime Commission (serious misconduct) or the Public Sector Commission (minor misconduct) in accordance with the *Corruption and Crime Commission Act 2003*.

Any information about actual or potentially corrupt or illegal activities should be disclosed to the Director General of the Department, and if necessary, the Corruption and Crime Commission.