# Australian National Soils Information System

# Terms of Reference for the Consultative Group

## 1. Purpose

CSIRO is managing delivery of a significant program of activities ($15M over 2 years) that will develop the Australian National Soil Information System (ANSIS). ANSIS activities are being undertaken in the context of the overarching National Soil Strategy (NSS) governance and coordination mechanisms. The NSS’s vision is to ensure Australia’s soil resources are recognised and valued as a key national asset.

In the ANSIS Project as part of Governance a Consultative Group is established to provide expert knowledge that informs the ANSIS Project Coordination Team, and relevant ANSIS Project Activity Teams, on strategic aspects of project design and delivery. The Consultative Group will also be responsible for reviewing and refining these Terms of Reference (ToR) .

The ANSIS Consultative Group reports to the ANSIS Project Coordination Team.

## 2. Role

The role of the ANSIS Consultative Group is to:

1. Provide strategic and operational advice/recommendations to the ANSIS Project Coordination Team, and relevant ANSIS Project Activity Teams, on the needs and priorities for information products and services.
2. Provide recommendations to the ANSIS Project Coordination Team around data sharing agreements required nationally to deliver ANSIS.
3. Enable exchange and dialogue between key sector representatives to inform workplans and product development.
4. As requested by the ANSIS Project Coordination Team, provide advice and recommendations in relation to other matters that may include:
	1. formal fitness-for-purpose reviews of ANSIS products and outputs
	2. future development and direction of ANSIS, including identifying potential expansions; developing new projects; and identifying synergies with existing groups and committees
	3. feedback on the operations, management, and impact of ANSIS*.*

## 3. Authority

The Consultative Group reports to the ANSIS Project Coordination Team. The Project Coordination Team forms part of the ANSIS Project Management Committee which reports to the National Soil Information System (NSIF) Consultative Group – formed by the National Soil Strategy (NSS) Steering Committee under the auspices of DAFF. The Consultative Group is an advisory body which will provide strategic and operational recommendations.

## 5. Operating Protocol

### 5.1 Governance

The ANSIS Consultative Group is formed from representatives of the Project Coordination Team and each ANSIS Partner and invited key stakeholders. Each ANSIS Partner or key stakeholder nominates one representative to the Consultative Group. These roles may be specified as per contractual agreements and/or through Terms of Reference.

### 5.2 Chair

CSIRO will perform the role of Chair of the Consultative Group. The Chair will convene meetings and be responsible for interacting and liaising with the Project Management Team, Project Activity Teams and the Consultative Group. The Chair will appoint a Deputy Chair from among the Consultative Group members to perform essential duties in the Chair's absence. The Chair will be responsible for business papers, minutes, agendas, and reporting.

### 5.3 Membership

The Chair and all members of the Consultative Group serve in an advisory capacity. The nomination of members will be based on their experience, expertise, and their partnership representation. Proxies or alternates for meetings are permissible and requested when a member is unable to attend a meeting. The size of the Consultative Group will be determined by the scale and scope of ANSIS and may fluctuate depending on the work programme at any point in time.

### 5.4 Scope

The Consultative Group is responsible for providing advice on specific points and underlying parameters to be used for designing and implementing ANSIS. If consensus on a recommendation is unable to be made a summary reflecting all perspectives, including multiple recommendations, is to be provided to the Project Coordination team.

### 5.5 Term of Office

The term of office for members is 12 months (or until completion of ANSIS project, whichever occurs earliest). The default is for members’ term to automatically renew. The ANSIS Project Coordination Team is able to terminate the operation of the Consultative Group when the group’s activities are no longer required.

### 5.5 Group Meetings

* Meeting frequency – as required with a maximum duration between meetings of two (2) months. At initial establishment of the Consultative Group, meeting frequency is envisaged to be more frequent as work programmes, data layers and delivery timeframes are determined.
* Quorum – greater than 30% of the ANSIS Consultative Group membership
* Pre-meeting – Unless otherwise agreed upon through discussion with the secretariat and other members of the Consultative Group, Consultative Group members should submit , via the TEAMS site , any agenda items to the secretariat at least one week prior to the next scheduled meeting. One week before each scheduled meeting, the TEAMS site will be updated with the Agenda and any attachments for the meeting . These Agenda and any attachments should include:
	+ any specific items where recommendations are being sort that will be asked to be made in session;
	+ other documents to be considered at the meeting (if any – it is not a regular meeting requirement for members to provide business papers).
* On the TEAMS site the following information will be available:
	+ Agenda’s
	+ Minutes
	+ Action Table
	+ Papers
	+ Other information beneficial to the Consultative Group
* During meetings – the Chair will conduct the meeting according to the agenda, encouraging all members to provide input throughout the meeting. The Chair will also ensure any recommendations are adequately confirmed by the members. At the first meeting of the Consultative Group, a standing agenda should be agreed upon by Consultative Group members that covers key recurring issues, while allowing time for general discussion and emergent issues. A standing agenda will include (but not be limited to):
	+ reviewing the status of action items from previous meetings;
	+ progress report of key ANSIS deliverables and project risks;
	+ communications update;
	+ ANSIS matters of relevance to all represented groups at the meeting; This may include:
		- NSS Updates
		- DAFF Updates
		- Soil Advocate updates
	+ discussion on other documents to be considered (if any);
	+ confirmation of date, time and venue for next meeting.
* The first meeting of the Consultative Group should also review, discuss, and determine key operational matters including (but not limited to):
	+ the ToR for the group, and what additional items should be added to the ToR (if any);
	+ the development of activities to provide long term confidentiality, conflict of interest, and privacy instruments for the Consultative Group.

### 5.6 Confidentiality

Consultative Group members will not directly or indirectly disclose to any person any Confidential Information which may have been presented to or discussed in the Group.

Consultative Group members are required to abide by existing confidentiality requirements and definitions, as per contracts/agreements.

As ANSIS develops over time, the Consultative Group must continue to develop and refine its confidentiality mechanisms, beginning at its first meeting.

### 5.6 Conflict of Interest

Individual members and the Consultative Group as a whole undertake to, as soon as possible, disclose any direct or indirect pecuniary or other interest that they have, or may have, in a matter that is being considered, or about to be considered by the Group. To avoid any perceived or actual conflict of interest, they will disclose the nature of the interest at the Group’s meeting. Any conflict shall be recorded and the Chair will determine whether members remain present during discussion on that matter.

Consultative Group members are required to abide by existing conflict of interest requirements and definitions, as per contracts/agreements.

As ANSIS develops over time, the Consultative Group must continue to develop and refine its conflict of interest mechanisms, beginning at its first meeting.

### 5.7 Amendment, Modification or Variation

A formal review of governance arrangements will take place within twelve months of commencement of operations. These ToR may be amended, varied or modified at any time within that period, in consultation with the ANSIS Consultative Group members and the ANSIS Project Coordination Team.