

Policy Title – Community of Interest – Terms of Reference

Version: 1	Approved by: CEO
Effective Date: 1 st April 2016	Administered by: Program Manager - Research
Review Date: 1 st April 2018	

Purpose

A Community of Interest (COI) is a high level technical and advisory group (or groups) that seek to clarify the requirements for and secure the funding of initiatives on significant industry research areas within the water industry.

A well-formed COI will comprise industry and academic experts and employ a facilitated process to match research themes against work completed and underway, thereby helping to more clearly specify the gaps capable of being addressed by research and other non-research activities.

In Scope

A well-functioning COI will be one that is industry-driven, works on high-impact subject areas and produces research investment cases that are easily justified (return on investment) as they have a strong chance of meeting an existing or future industry need (research value).

COIs assist in generating formal problem statements/ proposals or requests for funding (RFF) which if formed into research projects and delivered, are capable of leveraging individual company contributions through the WaterRA project delivery model to deliver more than each individual contributor could achieve on their own.

Out of Scope

The COI is not intended to

- comprehensively map every issue in an interest area (just issues of relevance to water utilities)
- answer every research question in that area
- address questions of academic curiosity

Significant industry research areas within the water industry

How do we establish interest areas?

- WSAA National Urban Water Research Strategy
- WaterRA Staff interviews with Industry members about their research preferences
- From the COI Process
- From Board Advice (e.g. recommendations from the Strategic Advisory Committee)
- Characterisation of similar utility businesses to see what common issues they have (e.g. bulk water supply, retail water supply, catchment owners, etc.)
- Historically revealed preferences from Industry Workshops, Research Blueprint consultations
- Other approaches from collaborators internationally (e.g. GWRC, WaterRF etc.)

Duration and Funding

- COIs will be commenced once the business need is identified and re-convened only as required.
- WaterRA will resource and administer the activities required to support each COI (such as Issue Scoping Workshops or Problem Definition Workshops) on a direct cost (excluding

WaterRA staff salaries and associated on-costs) recovery basis for members. Direct costs will include:

- Any external facilitation costs (professional fees) required;
 - Travel and accommodation expenses for WaterRA staff and external facilitators;
 - Venue hire;
 - Food and catering; and
 - Support services costs (eg. printing, provision of wifi).
- Where non-members specifically request to have such activities provided to them as a service, these services will be provided to the non-members on a direct cost (excluding WaterRA staff salaries and associated on-costs) recovery basis plus a flat management fee.
 - Research projects are classified as pay for use activities under the membership fee structure and will require additional funding from participants or interested parties and incur an upfront management fee per cash contributor.

Participation

1. The participants of a COI includes:
 - a. Industry member representatives with expertise in the interest area with a directive to fund research in this area to match their company priorities.
 - b. Non-member representatives with expertise in the interest area with a directive to fund research in this area to match their company priorities.
 - c. Research member representatives with expertise in the interest area (by invitation only).
 - d. Regulator representatives (by invitation as required).
 - e. WaterRA CEO, WaterRA Research Program Staff (as required).
 - f. Session Facilitators (as required).
2. As the output of the COI process is member funded, participation in the COI is on the basis of merit and ultimately determined by the WaterRA CEO.
3. Participants of the COI must:
 - a. Understand the strategic implications and outcomes of problem statements generated through the COI process and ensure the requirements of WaterRA and its members are met.
 - b. Have a broad understanding of project management issues and the approach being adopted so as to provide guidance to the project proponents and users of the project's outputs.
 - c. Be impartial at all times and act in the best interest of WaterRA.
 - d. Declare any potential conflicts of interest prior to making comments regarding an interest area or suggesting a course of action that may lend itself to a biased outcome (e.g. selection of one project team over another to complete a work package).
 - e. Work together as a team to achieve the objectives of the COI.

Functions

4. The COI will examine the sub-issues within the interest area and assign them into one of the following categories recommended for development:
 - a. into a problem statement to later become a project managed by WaterRA.
 - b. into a problem statement for later submission to a Nationally Competitive Grants Scheme (e.g. ARC, NHMRC).
 - c. as a Knowledge Transfer activity.
 - d. as a Student Project.

- e. as a Non-R&D activity (e.g. where knowledge around an issue exists but requires some amendment or refinement to enable better use by water businesses).
 - f. as a sub-contracted activity (e.g. consultancy).
 - g. as an alternative activity to be managed by another entity as appropriate and as agreed (eg. WSAA, GWRC, AWA)
5. The COI will develop sub-issues within the interest areas into the categories in item 4 above, to later become projects managed by WaterRA as appropriate.
 6. Problem statements/ proposals or RFFs generally detail issues to be addressed, industry needs, funding allocation to the issue by industry, proposed category for development (e.g. ARC linkage), COI members to be involved on the selection panel convened by WaterRA as well as other logistical issues.
 7. The COI may also provide advice on general issues relating to the WaterRA research program and relevant policies and procedures.

Meeting Procedures

8. The WaterRA CEO or delegate has the authority to call COI meetings and the meeting duration will be dependent upon the number of sub-issues that are under consideration.
9. The COI will meet only once, unless otherwise required. Requests for additional meetings can be made to the WaterRA CEO.
10. Meetings will in general be held face to face but may be convened via other effective and efficient means as convenient to the COI.
11. WaterRA will provide secretariat support for meetings, including distribution of meeting papers and taking minutes.
12. WaterRA will arrange for external experts, as required, to review sub-issues at the request of the COI.
13. WaterRA will circulate meeting papers prior to a COI meeting to allow participants enough time to assess the proposals against the selection criteria and document their assessment.

Approved

Paul Pretto
CEO

Date 1 April 2016

Committee Function	Community of Interest (COI)
Generate Ideas	Yes A core COI function is a specialist group convened to identify and hone project proposals/ Problem statements/ Requests for Funding/ Requests for Proposals
Science Quality	Yes Provide input for WaterRA consideration
Science Scope	Limited Provide input for WaterRA consideration
Science Communication	Limited Provide input for WaterRA consideration
Research Processes & Documentation	Nil
Board Interaction	Nil
Staff Interaction	Yes Provide input for WaterRA consideration