

EPA Communiqué

November 2016

The Board held its 97th regular meeting on Tuesday 8 November 2016 Meeting 97 in Hobart.

Annual Fee Remission Scheme

The Board is able to approve full or partial remission of the variable component of annual fees and has developed guidelines to ensure a consistent approach to such fee remissions. In his 2016 Statement of Expectation the Minister requested the Board undertake a review of the effectiveness of the current scheme and amend it if necessary following the review. At its November meeting the Board considered and approved the Terms of Reference for a review of the fee remission scheme which will be undertaken by staff of EPA Tasmania.

The Board also considered and approved several amendments to the 2015 guidelines for special fee remissions which can be granted in exceptional circumstances. Prior to the amendment these could only be granted retrospectively. The Board approved an amendment to reduce the administrative workload for EPA Tasmania and applicants where it can be demonstrated that the circumstances justifying a remission are likely to continue for a further 12 months. A second amendment was made to better facilitate case by case consideration of applications.

Grants from the Environment Protection Fund

Upon application and in accordance with the Act, the Board is able to make grants from the Environment Protection Fund. The Board had previously requested a paper to enable it to agree on the principles that should underpin consideration of applications to use the fund. The principles set out in the paper were agreed and strengthened to include that the Fund should not generally be used to fund activities or programs that the Government would normally be expected to fund. The Board requested EPA Tasmania to prepare a formal policy for Board sign-off.

Savage River Remediation Program

As a follow-up to considering the 2016-2017 budget for the Savage River Remediation Program, the Board reviewed a previous Board decision from 2013 regrading funding of bunds to collect drainage from the Old Tailings Dam (OTD). The Board noted that the bunds are an essential feature of the strategy to treat acid drainage from the OTD but, given the substantial cost, requested that the contract to undertake these works be referred back to the Board before signature.

Assessment of quarry expansion at Nabowla

The Board considered the draft Environmental Assessment Report (EAR) and proposed permit conditions concerning the proposed expansion of the Fairbanks Quarry at Nabowla. The Board considered a number of environmental issues raised in representations and discussed the most significant environmental issues, including:

- vegetation clearance and the quarry footprint
- the alleged exceedance of production limits
- air quality
- the lack of a quarry plan
- the location of the crusher.

The Board concluded that the quarry expansion could proceed in an environmentally acceptable manner subject to compliance with the permit conditions contained in the EAR. It adopted the draft EAR and permit conditions subject to several amendments to address issues raised in the discussion.

Statement of Intent

During October the Minister provided the final 2016 Statement of Expectation to the Board. The Board considered a draft Statement of Intent and agreed on several minor modifications. The Board requested the Chair finalise the Statement of Intent and forward it to the Minister. It will also be published on the EPA web-site.

Governor's Environmental Scholarships

The EPA has been a long term sponsor of these scholarships which provide funding for Honours students at UTAS working on environmental projects. The Board agreed to approve funding of the scholarships from the Environment Protection Fund for a further three years.

EPA Strategic Plan

The Board considered the final draft of the EPA Strategic Plan 2016-19 and, subject to some minor modifications approved its publication on the EPA web-site with an invitation for any interested parties to provide feedback or comments. A media release is also to be prepared and publicised.