



Regional consultative committee

Working with regional representatives

The National Radioactive Waste Management Act 2012 (the NRWM Act) requires the Minister for Resources and Northern Australia (the Minister) to establish a Regional Consultative Committee (RCC) following the identification of a suitable site for the National Radioactive Waste Management Facility (the facility).

Amendments to the NRWM Act, introduced to Parliament on 24 February 2020, maintain the RCC.

The RCC will be a consultative committee, comprising regional representatives appointed by the Minister. A definition of 'regional' for the purpose of the committee has not yet been determined.

The primary function of the RCC will be to facilitate communication between the

government, the operator of the facility and persons living in, or near, the region where the facility is located.

Communities are at the core of the NRWM project. As such, the RCC will play a critical role in ensuring that the views of all members of the host community are heard.

The RCC will play a similar role to the current consultative committees, facilitating constructive dialogue between the government and the community about the ongoing establishment of the facility. Once operational, the RCC will have the additional role of facilitating communication between the government, the community and the facility operator.

[Story continues on page 2.](#)

From page 1.

A large part of the RCC's role will also be to assist the community leverage benefits available as part of the Community Development Package. It will have a role in setting grants guidelines for the \$8 million Community Skills and Development Program, and will be able to recommend activities to be funded through the \$3 million quarantined for the host community from the Indigenous Advancement Strategy. It will also be one of the representative bodies that could be consulted to inform funding decisions.

While a separate 'community controlled' entity will be established to administer the \$20m community fund, the RCC could play a role in determining the membership of the entity established for the fund.

It is envisaged that regulations under section 22 of the NRW Act will be put in place to prescribe the RCC's strategic priorities, that

members are appointed by the Minister, the number of members, maximum membership term, remuneration and other similar issues.

Following the identification of a suitable site, the department will consult with members of the community selected to host the facility on membership, functions and governance arrangements for the RCC.

Once members have been appointed to the RCC more specific operating terms of the RCC will be settled by the members. These terms may include things like: where and how often the RCC meets, specific roles for members and the Chair, and how the RCC reports to the government and the community.

This approach provides a strong governance framework in which the RCC will operate while providing the committee the power to determine its own processes and procedures.

Questions for committee members

- What would be an appropriate definition of 'regional' for the purpose of the RCC?
- What kind of involvement should the RCC have in the community-controlled entity responsible for the \$20m fund?
- What should the RCC functions and strategic priorities be?
- What skills or capabilities should RCC members have?
- How often should the RCC meet?
- How should the RCC report to government?

Funding

- **\$8m Community Skills and Development Program:** \$2m in grants over four years aimed at maximising the benefits from the construction and supporting long-term operation of the facility and will be available once a site is declared. The RCC will have a role in setting grants guidelines.
- **\$3m from the Indigenous Advancement Strategy:** grants over three years that are aimed at strengthening skills and training for the local Aboriginal community and cultural heritage protection. These grants will be delivered through the National Indigenous Australians Agency and be available once a site is declared. The RCC will be able to recommend activities to be funded under the strategy.
- **\$20m Community Fund:** Funding will be received once the facility has been issued its operating licence. The fund may contribute to projects such as: health services, agriculture R&D, infrastructure, and further development of the indigenous economy. The RCC will not be directly responsible for the fund, but could have a role in determining the membership of the entity established for the fund.