

National Soils Advocate

Terms of Reference

August 2020

Introduction

1. The Prime Minister announced the re-appointment of the National Soils Advocate on 18 July 2019, to progress the national objective to protect, restore and maintain the health of the Australian agricultural landscape and support a food secure nation and sustainable farming communities.
2. This recognises the important role soils play in underpinning sustainable productivity and improving the resilience of Australia's farms.

Specific Functions

The National Soils Advocate will:

3. Increase awareness of, and advocate for the importance of conserving and improving agricultural soil and landscape conditions to:
 - a. Benefit the environment;
 - b. Enhance agricultural productivity and realise continuing economic benefits; and
 - c. Secure sustainable food production systems.
4. Engage with the agricultural sector, through clear objectives and visible communications when advocating the improvement and maintenance of the health of the Australian agricultural landscape.
5. Increase the knowledge, expertise and resources of farmers and broader agricultural stakeholders, based on existing and emerging relevant soil science, to improve soil health through better management of the landscapes and improved integration of the management of soil, water, vegetation and livestock assets.
6. Undertake a global advocacy function, to bring together and share knowledge, expertise and resources on the critical role soils play to underpin sustainable productivity and meet global challenges, including food security and adapting to a changing climate.
7. Work with and coordinate across relevant Commonwealth, state and territory government portfolios to contribute to the fulfilment of the national objective of restoring and maintaining the health of the agricultural landscape, including:
 - a. Education and training of farmers, agricultural college and university graduates, school students and the Australian public;
 - b. Science, research and development, using data collected through national soil monitoring and research programs, to increase carbon levels, organic nitrogen and water in soils to ensure maximum microbial health and function;
 - c. Improving food nutrition through soil health enhancement; and
 - d. Improving soil moisture management.

8. Contribute expertise and advice to relevant ministers, including the Deputy Prime Minister, and Ministers for Agriculture, Drought and Emergency Management; Resources, Water and Northern Australia;; Environment; Health; Energy and Emissions Reduction; Foreign Affairs; Defence; Indigenous Australians; Industry, Science and Technology; and Education, in meeting the Government's objective to restore and maintain the health of the agricultural landscape.
9. Provide quarterly written updates to the Prime Minister and Deputy Prime Minister.
10. Undertake other activities as needed and agreed with the Commonwealth Government.
11. Ensure the above is carried out in line with normal Commonwealth Government decision making and accountability principles, including that Cabinet and Ministers will develop, implement and set policy and programs in accordance with their portfolio responsibilities.
12. Though appointed to this role by the Commonwealth Government, the National Soils Advocate is independent and will not speak on behalf of the Government.