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ANZPAA
Australia New Zealand
Policing Advisory Agency



ANZPAA NIFS Groups Terms of Reference

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Contents

1. Introduction	3
2. Purpose	3
3. Role	3
4. Scope	3
5. Functions	3
6. Establishment process	4
7. Groups	4
8. Membership	5
8.1. Composition	5
8.2. Member Responsibilities	5
8.3. ANZFEC Agency Lead	6
8.4. ANZFEC Agency Observers	6
8.5. External Observers	6
8.6. Endorsed External Representatives	6
8.7. Mentors	7
8.8. ANZPAA NIFS	7
9. Chair and Deputy Chair	7
9.1. Chairing Responsibilities	8
10. Meetings	8
10.1. Meeting frequency	8
10.2. AGM In-person meetings	8
10.3. AGM Agenda and Minutes	9
11. Planning, Reporting and Requests	9
11.1. Group Resources and Templates	9
11.2. Governance and Timelines	9
12. Decision-Making	10
12.1. Product Approval	10
13. Grievance and Dispute Resolution	11

1. Introduction

The Australia New Zealand Policing Advisory Agency National Institute of Forensic Science (ANZPAA NIFS) has established discipline and functional advisory groups to support delivery of the ANZPAA NIFS Strategy and Annual Plans approved by the Australia New Zealand Forensic Executive Committee (ANZFEC) and the Australia New Zealand Policing Advisory Agency (ANZPAA) Board.

The groups provide expert advice and collaborate on initiatives that support strategic priorities and strengthen forensic science capability across Australia and New Zealand.

Groups are self-driven and self-managed, with strategic direction and taskings from ANZFEC and ANZPAA NIFS, which also provides systems support (e.g., sharing IT platform).

This document sets out a standardised Terms of Reference to ensure the effective operation of the groups and support members in fulfilling their roles and responsibilities.

2. Purpose

- Provide expert advice and undertake work to support proactive, future-focused risk mitigation, capability development, and address strategic priorities in forensic science

3. Role

- Act as an advisory body to ANZPAA NIFS and its governance bodies, ANZFEC and the ANZPAA Board, providing guidance in line with strategic direction and taskings
- Escalate significant issues and offer recommendations to support informed decision-making
- Coordinate activities that strengthen forensic science capability across Australia and New Zealand, ensuring alignment with strategic priorities

4. Scope

- Applies across agencies represented on ANZFEC
- Support initiatives aligned with the ANZPAA NIFS Strategy, Annual Plans and ANZFEC priorities
- Focus on forensic science practices, capability development, emerging risks, and innovation
- Excludes operational decisions or direct implementation of initiatives within ANZFEC agencies

5. Functions

- Identify emerging trends, technologies, opportunities and risks relevant to forensic science
- Facilitate knowledge sharing and collaboration across agencies
- Develop and support resources to promote effective forensic science service delivery
- Propose and coordinate capability enhancement activities, including training, workshops, and research

6. Establishment process

- Identify and document the purpose, scope, resource requirements and expected outcomes of the proposed group
- Submit a formal request to ANZPAA NIFS outlining the need, opportunities and risks, alignment to strategy and priorities, type of group, proposed membership and any extraordinary governance arrangement
- Proposals can be submitted by either an ANZFEC member or by existing groups with the support of their Chair and ANZFEC Mentor
- ANZPAA NIFS will coordinate presentation of the proposal to ANZFEC for approval
- Once approved, ANZPAA NIFS will call for members and may appoint an inaugural Chair for a specified term

Disbandment

- Groups may be periodically reviewed by ANZPAA NIFS and ANZFEC, and only active, productive, and strategically aligned groups will be maintained; inactive, unproductive, or redundant groups or groups with unfilled Chair roles will be disbanded
- Formal requests to disband groups can also be submitted to ANZPAA NIFS, providing sufficient information to facilitate ANZFEC's evaluation and decision

7. Groups

- This Terms of Reference applies to standard group types; only in exceptional cases, supported by a persuasive business case, will extraordinary groups and bespoke Terms of Reference be considered
- The ANZPAA NIFS website hosts the list of established discipline and functional-based groups, including any extraordinary naming, terms of reference and governance arrangements

Group Type	Description	Chair/ Deputy Chair	Mentor	NIFS
Specialist Advisory Group (SAG)	A discipline or function-based standing group established to provide expert advice to ANZPAA NIFS and ANZFEC and carry out assigned tasks as directed. Must hold an AGM, in-person or virtually.	Appointed by Official Members	Appointed by ANZFEC	NIFS Advisor or Point of Contact (POC)
Technical Advisory Group (TAG)	A sub-discipline or sub-function-based standing group established to provide expert advice to ANZPAA NIFS and ANZFEC and carry out assigned tasks as directed. Must hold an AGM, virtually.	Appointed by Official Members Deputy Chair Optional	The SAG Chair may appoint a mentor from Official Members	POC
Project Working Group (PWG)	A group formed for up to a two-year term to achieve a specific goal, producing a final report or deliverables. The group is normally formed under a SAG; however, in critical circumstances it may be established directly under ANZPAA NIFS and report to ANZFEC.	Appointed by the sponsoring body Deputy Chair Optional	The Chair of the sponsoring body may appoint a mentor from its membership	POC

Group Type	Description	Chair/ Deputy Chair	Mentor	NIFS
	<p>To extend the term, a request must be submitted to ANZPAA NIFS for ANZFEC approval and subject to effective productivity.</p> <p>Must hold an AGM, virtually.</p>			
Peer Network (PN)	<p>A self-managed peer network discipline, function or task-based discussion group that has no support from ANZPAA NIFS, except for keeping a member list and provision of IT sharing and communication platform. No reporting is required.</p> <p>The group must identify a sponsoring ANZFEC member to raise any critical issues or proposals on their behalf.</p>	Optional and managed within the group	Nil	POC

8. Membership

8.1. Composition

- The Group Members comprise:
 - Official Members (Decision-Making Authority)
 - ANZFEC Agency Leads
 - ANZFEC Endorsed External Representatives
 - Other Members (Contribute Critical Advice)
 - TAG or PWG Chairs, where applicable
 - ANZFEC Mentor, where applicable
 - ANZPAA NIFS Advisor, where applicable
- ANZFEC Agency Observers and External Observers are subject to conditions outlined below

8.2. Member Responsibilities

- Act in the best interests of forensic science for all ANZFEC agencies
- Attend meetings and actively participate in discussions
- Communicate using the official group list to ensure up-to-date contacts
- Complete any required preliminary work, including reading meeting papers
- Contribute to the group’s action plan by undertaking agreed tasks
- Advise the Chair in advance of any proxy arrangements
- Consult within their agency to inform discussions and agency positions
- Communicate meeting outcomes to relevant managers and colleagues within their agency and/or jurisdiction
- Declare and manage actual, potential, or perceived conflicts of interest

- Uphold professional conduct and maintain confidentiality

8.3. ANZFEC Agency Lead

- An ANZFEC agency may appoint one Agency Lead representative to each ANZPAA NIFS group relevant to their service
- Members appointed for a term determined by the ANZFEC agency
- ANZFEC agency members appointed based on:
 - relevant subject-matter expertise and professional experience
 - a balance of technical, operational, policy, and strategic perspectives

8.4. ANZFEC Agency Observers

- Observer participation is subject to:
 - endorsement by their ANZFEC Agency
 - may contribute to discussions when invited by the Chair or their Agency Lead but do not have decision-making authority
 - the Chair has discretion to limit observer participation to ensure discussions are effective, inclusive, and allow an equal voice across agencies, and manage room capacity for in person meetings
 - must comply with the same confidentiality, conflict of interest, and conduct requirements as outlined under **Member Responsibilities**

8.5. External Observers

- The Chair and Mentor may invite external observers on a case-by-case, agenda-specific basis to attend a Group meeting
- The Chair, Mentor and ANZPAA NIFS reserve the right to ask external observers to leave a meeting if the Chair was not adequately notified in advance of their attendance
- If regular attendance is agreed as beneficial, a formal request must be submitted to ANZPAA NIFS, who will advise on the ANZFEC approval process
- Observer arrangements last a maximum of two years and may be revoked at the Chair and Mentor's discretion
- External observers are non-voting but may participate in discussions and contribute to action plans when invited
- A registration fee may be charged for non-ANZFEC representatives attending in-person meetings or workshops to recover costs outside the ANZPAA NIFS budget

8.6. Endorsed External Representatives

- Where no ANZFEC agency provides a service in a jurisdiction relevant to a group's subject area, an external representative (e.g., a university-based specialist) may be endorsed by an ANZFEC agency to represent that jurisdiction
- Endorsed external representatives have decision-making authority and may hold Chair or Deputy Chair roles

- Appointments are reviewed by the Chair and Mentor every one to two years, in consultation with the endorsing ANZFEC agency where required, and may be withdrawn at the discretion of that agency
- The endorsement process and conditions are outlined in the application form on the ANZPAA NIFS website (refer <https://www.anzpa.org.au/nifs/services/groups>)

8.7. Mentors

- ANZFEC Mentors are nominated, appointed, and periodically reviewed by ANZFEC Members
- ANZPAA NIFS may provisionally appoint an ANZFEC Member or NIFS Representative to unfilled mentor roles until confirmed by ANZFEC
- Mentors are appointed based on willingness and capacity to serve for the agreed term
- ANZFEC Mentors are non-voting members whose role is to:
 - Represent ANZFEC at Group meetings, providing updates as required
 - Arrange a proxy mentor in consultation with ANZPAA NIFS if unavailable
 - Provide strategic guidance to ensure action plans align with ANZPAA NIFS Strategy, Annual Plan, and ANZFEC priorities
 - Review requests, workshop proposals, and AGM meeting agendas with the Chair before submitting to ANZPAA NIFS
 - Advocate for the Group at ANZFEC meetings
 - Monitor Chair and Member performance, providing coaching and encouragement as needed
- The SAG Chair and ANZFEC Mentor can appoint a SAG Mentor to participate in their TAGs and PWGs, fulfilling a role similar to that of an ANZFEC Mentor as relevant

8.8. ANZPAA NIFS

ANZPAA NIFS must balance support for multiple advisory and working groups with the ongoing activities and projects of its ANZFEC approved work program. Accordingly, NIFS will allocate support to groups based on critical activities, resourcing, and alignment with strategic objectives.

- ANZPAA NIFS will appoint an **ANZPAA NIFS Point of Contact (POC)** as a designated liaison for communication, coordination, guidance and information flow between the group and ANZPAA NIFS
- ANZPAA NIFS will appoint an **ANZPAA NIFS Advisor** to provide strategic support on a needs and temporary basis
- Where appointed, an ANZPAA NIFS Advisor will attend the Annual General Meeting (AGM) and additional meetings where specifically needed

9. Chair and Deputy Chair

The Chair and Deputy Chair roles require commitment but are highly rewarding, offering leadership development, collaboration with colleagues across agencies, and the opportunity to lead strategic initiatives in forensic science.

- The Chair and Deputy Chair are official members (i.e., ANZFEC Agency Lead or ANZFEC Endorsed External Representatives), serve a two-year term, and may be nominated for an additional term

- Official Members appoint the Chair and Deputy Chair by consensus or vote if multiple nominations are received
- ANZPAA NIFS, in consultation with the Mentor, may provisionally appoint unfilled Chair or Deputy Chair roles or appoint PWG chairs
- Chair and Deputy Chair share responsibilities as agreed, e.g., jointly developing agendas, overseeing tasks, or having the Deputy Chair manage minutes while the Chair focuses on strategic matters
- The Deputy Chair acts in the Chair's absence, assuming all responsibilities as required

9.1. Chairing Responsibilities

- Secure agency approval and support before assuming the role
- Maintain appropriate separation between agency representation and impartial meeting chairing
- Ensure **Meetings, Decision-making, Planning, Reporting, and Request** requirements are met, including developing agendas and workshop proposals with the Mentor (refer sections below)
- Oversee and manage completion of action plans in a timely manner
- Advise members when Chatham House Rules apply, allowing use of information without attributing comments or positions
- Manage conflicts of interest in consultation with the Mentor and ANZPAA NIFS as appropriate
- Ensure a minute-taker is identified, including seeking volunteers from members or their agencies
- Identify and work with a host agency contact to coordinate meeting rooms and technology. The host agency contact will also be responsible for liaising with ANZPAA NIFS to coordinate associated meeting arrangements
- Chairs and Deputy Chairs will participate, by invitation, in Chair briefings, strategic workshops, and ANZFEC reporting sessions, either virtually or in person, as required

10. Meetings

10.1. Meeting frequency

- An Annual General Meeting (AGM) must be held each year, with minutes formally documented
- The Chair is encouraged to convene additional virtual meetings as required to support delivery of the group's action plan, with outcomes, tasks and responsibilities recorded as appropriate

10.2. AGM In-person meetings

- In-person AGM meetings are encouraged, with members expected to attend in person subject to necessary travel approvals to support effective, focused, and high quality face-to-face engagement
- In-person AGMs require prior approval from the ANZFEC Mentor and ANZPAA NIFS. Application forms can be found on the ANZPAA NIFS website (refer <https://www.anzpaa.org.au/nifs/services/groups>)
- Meetings are encouraged to be held in diverse locations to enable facility tours, host agency observer participation, and share travel costs

- The feasibility of in-person meetings depends on the availability of a suitable host agency or jurisdiction with adequate facilities, technology, and catering, as well as considerations such as members' ability to travel, financial constraints, travel time, and time zone challenges for virtual participants
- A virtual option must be available wherever possible to support participation from all members
- The Chair may limit in-person observer attendance based on room capacity

10.3. AGM Agenda and Minutes

- The Chair sets agendas in consultation with the Mentor and Deputy Chair where they have been appointed
- Guest speakers may be invited by the Chair to provide expert input on specific topics to support informed decision-making
- The Chair, in consultation with the Mentor, may ask representatives or observers from non-ANZFEC agencies to leave meetings during specific agenda items, depending on the sensitivity of the topics
- Minutes will capture attendees, key discussions, decisions, actions, and responsible members
- Final minutes will be provided to ANZPAA NIFS as an official record of the meeting

11. Planning, Reporting and Requests

11.1. Group Resources and Templates

- Resources, including templates and Terms of Reference, are available on the ANZPAA NIFS website and are updated periodically; please refer to the site for the most current information:

<https://www.anzpaa.org.au/nifs/services/groups>

11.2. Governance and Timelines

Item	Template	Governance and Notes	Timelines*
AGM Application	Yes	Chair/Deputy → Mentor Endorsement → ANZPAA NIFS Approval (e.g., catering costs)	Submit at least 8 weeks before AGM date
AGM Agenda (includes standing agenda items)	Yes	Chair/Deputy → Mentor Approval → ANZPAA NIFS Review	Distribute the agenda with the invitation at least 6 weeks before the AGM to allow members to seek travel approvals and plan attendance; issue revised agendas as required
AGM Minutes	Yes	Assigned Minute Taker → Chair/Deputy Review → Group Members Review → ANZPAA NIFS	Distribute draft within 4 Weeks following AGM
Group Action Plan	Yes	Chair/Deputy → Group Members Review → ANZPAA NIFS	Distribute draft within 4 Weeks following AGM
Group Workshop Proposals	Yes	Assigned Author → Chair/ Deputy/ Mentor Approval → ANZPAA NIFS → ANZFEC	On ANZPAA NIFS request (normally June)

Item	Template	Governance and Notes	Timelines*
ANZFEC Report	Yes	Chair/Deputy → Mentor Review (if required) → ANZPAA NIFS	On ANZPAA NIFS request (normally June)
ANZFEC Verbal Report & PowerPoint	Yes	Chair → ANZPAA NIFS → ANZFEC <i>Note: In-person attendance is encouraged for annual ANZFEC verbal updates</i>	On ANZPAA NIFS request (normally July)
ANZFEC briefing paper raising issues, making recommendation or seeking approvals of products	Refer ANZPAA NIFS	Assigned Author → Chair/Deputy/Mentor Review → ANZPAA NIFS → ANZFEC Decision	Aligning to ANZFEC in-session or out-of-session paper timeframes (consult ANZPAA NIFS)

* Indicative timeframes are subject to change and will be updated as advised by ANZPAA NIFS

12. Decision-Making

ANZPAA NIFS Groups include representation from all ten jurisdictions, encompassing the Australian states and territories, the Commonwealth, and New Zealand. The number of ANZFEC agencies within each jurisdiction varies. In this context, the following outlines a decision-making process designed to ensure fair and consistent decisions that strengthen forensic science for all ANZFEC agencies.

- Decisions are made by consensus of Official Members wherever possible to promote collaborative outcomes
- Where consensus cannot be reached, decisions may be made by a formal vote of Official Members
- Each agency has one vote; where agencies have multiple representation, they are requested to agree on a single position before voting
- Significant decisions may be escalated to ANZPAA NIFS or ANZFEC for consideration if required

Quorum

- A quorum is achieved when at least 75 per cent of Official Members or proxies are present
- Official Members may attend via videoconference and be counted toward quorum
- Where quorum is not reached at a meeting, decisions may be formalised via email with the non-attending Official Members as required to achieve quorum

12.1. Product Approval

- Groups may develop products to promote capability enhancement, such as effective practices, shared resource material or information flyers. To ensure these products are approved at the appropriate level, it is important to consider their potential impact, risk, and organisational sensitivity
- Groups must consult ANZPAA NIFS on governance pathways, document type, available templates, permissible intents, and required disclaimers before commencing work on any product

13. Grievance and Dispute Resolution

- Raise concerns in the first instance with the Chair and/or ANZFEC Mentor for informal resolution
- Where unresolved, escalate the matter to ANZPAA NIFS for review by the relevant ANZFEC members
- If still unresolved, ANZPAA NIFS may escalate to the ANZPAA CEO and in extraordinary circumstances raise with relevant ANZPAA Board members
- Manage all matters in a timely, confidential and respectful manner, consistent with procedural fairness

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The National Institute of Forensic Science is a directorate within the Australia New Zealand Policing Advisory Agency (ANZPAA NIFS).

ANZPAA is established by a Memorandum of Understanding between the following members: Victoria Police; Australian Federal Police; Australian Capital Territory Policing; New South Wales Police Force; New Zealand Police; Northern Territory Police; Queensland Police Service; South Australia Police; Tasmania Police and Western Australia Police, collectively, the 'Members of ANZPAA'.

The Australia New Zealand Forensic Executive Committee (ANZFEC) is established by a Service Level Agreement between the 'Members of ANZPAA' listed above and the following agencies: ACT Government Analytical Laboratory; ChemCentre Western Australia; Forensic Science Queensland; Forensic Science Service Tasmania; Forensic Science SA; National Measurement Institute; New South Wales Health Pathology; New Zealand Institute for Public Health and Forensic Science Limited; PathWest Laboratory Medicine, Western Australia; Forensic Pathology and Coronial Services; and Victorian Institute of Forensic Medicine.

References in this notice to ANZPAA are references to the Members of ANZPAA.

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Acknowledgments

This document was prepared by ANZPAA NIFS.

ANZPAA acknowledges Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islanders are Australia's first peoples and the traditional owners and custodians of the land on which we work. ANZPAA is committed to fulfilling the principles of New Zealand's founding document The Treaty of Waitangi (Te Tiriti o Waitangi). Central to the principles is a common understanding that all parties will relate and participate with each other in good faith with mutual respect, co-operation and trust. This document is committed to fulfilling the intent of international treaties and human rights legislation applicable to the various jurisdictions in which we operate, our obligations to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples, and the principles of the New Zealand (Aotearoa) Treaty of Waitangi (Te Tiriti o Waitangi).