Australian Government

Department of Health

Office of the Gene Technology Regulator

GENE TECHNOLOGY TECHNICAL ADVISORY COMMITTEE

INFORMATION FOR NOMINEES

Introduction

Nominations are invited for membership of the Gene Technology Technical Advisory Committee (GTTAC) for 2020-2023.

In order to assist nominees, the following information is provided in this document:

- An overview of the national regulatory scheme for gene technology;
- Information on the functions and work of GTTAC; and
- Information on the requirements for appointments to GTTAC.

Nomination forms are available on the OGTR website and must be submitted by **21 June 2019**.

Overview of the Regulatory Scheme

The development and use of genetically modified organisms (GMOs) in Australia is regulated under the *Gene Technology Act 2000* (the Act) and corresponding State and Territory legislation. The implementation of the scheme is overseen by the Legislative and Governance Forum on Gene Technology (the Forum), which comprises Ministers from all Australian jurisdictions. The Gene Technology Regulator (the Regulator) is an independent decision maker who administers the legislation and has extensive powers to monitor and enforce the legislation.

The Act regulates all dealings (e.g. research, breeding, propagation, production, transport, disposal and import) with live viable organisms that have been modified by techniques of gene technology. The Act prohibits any dealing with a GMO unless the dealing is:

- licensed by the Regulator;
- an Exempt dealing;
- a Notifiable Low Risk Dealing (NLRD);
- included on the GMO Register; or
- specified in an Emergency Dealing Determination (EDD).

The licensing system is based on rigorous scientific risk assessment and extensive consultation with a wide range of experts, agencies and authorities. Licences may be issued for Dealings Not involving Intentional Release (DNIR), Dealings involving Intentional Release (DIR) or Inadvertent Dealings.

The Act establishes two committees to provide advice on request to the Regulator and the Forum:

- GTTAC, which provides scientific and technical advice; and
- the Gene Technology Ethics and Community Consultative Committee (GTECCC), which provides advice on ethical issues and matters of general concern to the community regarding GMOs.

The Gene Technology Technical Advisory Committee

Function

GTTAC provides scientific and technical advice on request to the Regulator or the Forum on the following:

- gene technology, GMOs and GM products;
- applications made under the legislation;
- biosafety aspects of gene technology; and
- the need for policy principles, policy guidelines and codes of practice in relation to GMOs and GM products, and the content of such principles, guidelines and codes.

Licence applications are assessed on a case by case basis. The Regulator's decision whether to issue a licence is based on a Risk Assessment and Risk Management Plan (RARMP) prepared in accordance with the Act. A key function of GTTAC is to provide expert scientific advice to the Regulator on applications and on RARMPs.

Further information on the Regulator's approach to preparing RARMPs can be found in OGTR's *Risk Analysis Framework*. RARMPs for DIR licence applications are available as part of the GMO Record. In addition, Communiqués from previous GTTAC meetings are available on the GTTAC Communiqués webpage.

Composition

GTTAC is appointed by the Commonwealth Minister responsible for gene technology. Up to 20 members can be appointed to GTTAC, and the membership must include a Chair, a layperson and at least one person who is a member of GTECCC.

With the exception of the layperson and GTECCC cross-member, a GTTAC appointee must have skills or experience in one or more areas below, as per subsection 100(5) of the Act.

Required skills and experience for GTTAC members

(a)	molecular biology	(k)	clinical medicine
(b)	ecology	(l)	biochemistry
(c)	plant, microbial, animal or human genetics	(m)	pharmacology
(d)	virology	(n)	plant or animal pathology
(e)	entomology	(o)	botany
(f)	agricultural or aquacultural systems	(p)	microbiology
(g)	biosafety engineering	(q)	animal biology
(h)	public health	(r)	immunology
(i)	occupational health and safety	(s)	toxicology
(j)	risk assessment		

In considering the appointments to GTTAC, the Minister must ensure, as far as practicable, that among the members as a whole there is a broad range of skills and experience in the specified areas.

The Australian Government has committed to achieving and maintaining equal gender representation on Government boards and committees.

Role of the Chair

The GTTAC Chair is appointed by the Minister with the agreement of a majority of jurisdictions. Nominees may express interest in the role of the GTTAC Chair.

The GTTAC Chair has a number of additional responsibilities and the workload and level of commitment required is greater than for other members. Responsibilities include conducting meetings in an orderly and proper manner (and in accordance with the legislation, the Operating Procedures and the terms of the request from the Regulator or Forum).

Indicative workload

The workload of GTTAC depends on the number of applications received for which the Regulator must seek GTTAC's advice. GTTAC advice may also be sought on draft technical documents and in relation to reviews of gene technology legislation.

GTTAC meets approximately 3-5 times per year via face-to-face meetings held in Canberra or by videoconference using facilities located at the Department of Health's State Offices around Australia.

It is expected that GTTAC members will dedicate time to preparing for and attending meetings and videoconferences. Members are expected to read meeting papers in detail in order to provide advice to the Regulator. These can be lengthy documents, requiring a substantial amount of time for consideration. A greater level of commitment will be required for the Chair of GTTAC as well as for the member(s) holding joint membership between GTTAC and GTECCC.

The administrative aspect of GTTAC's work requires use of email, electronic documents, and a secure online platform to enable transmission of confidential information. Members will be expected to electronically download agenda papers and to print any hard copies they require.

Remuneration

Members of GTTAC are part-time office holders under the jurisdiction of the Remuneration Tribunal. The Remuneration Tribunal determines sitting fees for Committee work and other entitlements such as travel allowance.

All members receive travel allowance and reimbursement for additional travel costs, noting that flights and accommodation are organised and paid for by the Department of Health.

Note that full-time Commonwealth employees are not entitled to receive sitting fees. Whether a State employee can receive sitting fees is a matter for the relevant State Government (refer to the Remuneration Tribunal Frequently Asked Questions).

Declaration of Interests

The Gene Technology Regulations 2001 (the Regulations) state that before appointing a person as a member of GTTAC, 'the Minister must obtain from the person a declaration setting out all direct or indirect interests, pecuniary or otherwise, that the person is aware of having in a matter of a kind likely to be considered at a meeting of the Committee'. The nomination form asks for a brief indication of possible conflicts of interest. Nominees should note that, if they are shortlisted, they will be asked to supply a detailed Declaration of Interests as required by the Regulations.

GTTAC members are also required to lodge a meeting-specific Declaration of Interests in relation to the items on the agenda prior to each meeting of the Committee.

Deed Poll

Appointees to GTTAC will be required to sign a *Deed of undertaking in relation to confidential information and conflict of interest*. The Deed includes an agreement to indemnify the Commonwealth against any liability incurred by the Commonwealth as a result of the member's

failure to comply with confidentiality and conflict of interest requirements. A copy of the Deed is available on request from the OGTR.

GTTAC agenda papers frequently include material that has been declared Confidential Commercial Information (CCI) under the Act. Criminal penalties may apply to any breach of confidentiality involving CCI information.

Further information

Further information on any of the above can be obtained from the OGTR website or by contacting the OGTR on (free-call) 1800 181 030 or via email to ogtr@health.gov.au.