

# **PROPOSAL FOR A WESTERN PACIFIC NAVAL SYMPOSIUM ENVIRONMENTAL WORKING GROUP**

## **INTRODUCTION**

1. A proposal for a Western Pacific Naval Symposium (WPNS) Environmental Working Group (EWG) was raised as an agenda item at the 2010 WPNS Workshop held in Sydney. Australia presented on the potential benefits of an EWG including sharing of environmental compliance information, measures to mitigate environmental impact of naval activities, and results of research programs. Delegates agreed that Australia should propose a way ahead for an EWG at the 12<sup>th</sup> Symposium in September 2010.
2. The 12<sup>th</sup> Symposium considered Australia's submission for establishment of links through an email exchange between environmental experts in member navies, and for establishment of an EWG as a specific WPNS collaborative initiative.
3. The EWG proposal was widely endorsed at the 12<sup>th</sup> Symposium and it was agreed that the Royal Australian Navy would prepare a submission with draft Terms of Reference for the 2011 Workshop, and if endorsed at the Workshop, a formal proposal should be brought to the 13<sup>th</sup> Symposium in 2012 to inaugurate this initiative.

## **EWG OBJECTIVES**

4. Environmental issues can impact on naval activities in a number of ways, including financial impacts (e.g. need to modify ships to meet internationally endorsed waste emissions targets), training impacts (e.g. constraints on timing or location of specific military activities), and reputation (e.g. negative public perception of the environmental impact of naval activities).
5. The proposed EWG would foster cooperation between member navies on environmental matters, focusing on maritime environmental issues with regional implications for member states.

6. The EWG could specifically address issues of regional relevance and issues of specific relevance to a member navy. Environmental issues identified previously by the WPNS Workshop to be of particular interest to member navies include:

- a. impacts of climate change, including sea level rise, ocean acidification, temperature change, and effects on human health;
- b. unsustainable fishing practices, illegal fishing, and impacts on fisheries from a changing climate;
- c. biosecurity, particularly the transfer of marine pest species and pests impacting on crops and livestock;
- d. implications of compliance with International Conventions such as the International Convention for the Prevention of Pollution from Ships (MARPOL 73/78);
- e. disposal of ship-related hazardous materials and sea dumping of wastes; and
- f. proliferation of marine reserves and managing impact on navy capabilities including training and access to marine reserves.

7. The EWG could also discuss environmental compliance challenges and options for member navies, and thereby:

- a. facilitate alignment of environmental impact mitigation measures between member navies;
- b. identify opportunities for collaborative projects to address environmental issues of relevance to regional navies; and
- c. share relevant research information and outcomes to facilitate interoperability among member navies.

## **EWG REPORTING AND INFORMATION SHARING**

8. The EWG would report meeting outcomes to the WPNS Workshop, and provide specialist advice and/or recommendations to the WPNS on environmental matters and potential initiatives.

9. The EWG may consider setting up a website to facilitate member contact and information exchange, to support the ongoing series of formal group meetings.

### **ACTION REQUIRED OF THE 2011 WPNS WORKSHOP**

10. This document discusses a potential role and the benefits of a WPNS EWG and email contact group of subject matter experts from member navies, and presents draft Terms of Reference (TOR) for consideration, and if appropriate, endorsement by the 2011 WPNS Workshop.

11. This document recommends, subject to 2011 WPNS Workshop agreement, that Indonesia host an Environmental Seminar for WPNS member navies in early 2012 to consider how best to implement an effective EWG structure to support the broader WPNS Workshop goals.

12. The outcomes of the Environmental Seminar would be reported to the 2012 WPNS Workshop for consideration and if appropriate, taking forward as a formal EWG proposal to the 13<sup>th</sup> Symposium to inaugurate the initiative.