

Cocos (Keeling) Islands Community Reference Group

Expression of Interest

What is the Community Reference Group?

The CKI Coastal Hazard Risk Management and Adaptation Plan (CHRMAP) looks at how erosion, flooding and sea level rise might affect the islands over time. The CHRMAP was published in April 2026 and is available on the department's [website](#).

The Community Reference Group will provide local knowledge, raise community issues, and support communication between the community and the Government on options to manage coastal erosion and flooding.

The Community Reference Group will not make decisions for Government or Shire. It will help the Government and Shire understand what's important to the community.

How to apply

If you want to be in the Community Reference Group, please email cocos.engagement@infrastructure.gov.au by 6 November 2026, with your answers to these questions:

1. Why do you want to be in the Community Reference Group?
2. What specific issues or projects interest you?
3. What skills or experience do you have that may help the Community Reference Group?

Please also provide your **age**, **gender**, connection to Cocos (Keeling) Islands (for example, current or previous resident on Home/West Island), and if you are representing any **community organisation or business**. This will help the group to have a diverse mix of members.

Who can express interest?

Anyone in the community can nominate to join the Community Reference Group. We are seeking a mix of members from Home and West Island, including elders and senior community members, adults, young people (<25), women and men, community organisation representatives, local service/business perspectives and residents

What membership involves

The Community Reference Group will meet around three times per year. Meetings may be held on Home Island and West Island separately, particularly at the beginning.

Meeting dates will consider local events, travel arrangements, and cultural/religious events (for example, Ramadan). Language and accessibility support will be arranged where required.

Membership is voluntary and unpaid. A person under 18 may apply – parental or guardian consent and other child-safe arrangements may be required.

How members will be selected

Expressions of interest will be assessed based on connection to the CKI community, local knowledge or relevant experience, and ability to attend and participate respectfully.

For more information, please email cocos.engagement@infrastructure.gov.au.

The draft Terms of Reference are on the next page.

Draft Terms of Reference

Cocos Keeling Islands Coastal Hazard Risk Management and Adaptation Plan (CHRMAP)

Community Reference Group (CRG)

October 2026

Members

Background

The Cocos (Keeling) Islands (CKI) Coastal Hazard Risk Management and Adaptation Plan (CHRMAP) is a long-term plan that considers coastal hazard risk on CKI and establishes the framework for how to consider future responses and adaptation. It identifies a number of potential actions to support future planning and decision-making by the relevant government and statutory bodies, informed by the community and key land managers and authorities over time, based on ongoing data gathering and analysis.

About the Community Reference Group (CRG)

Purpose

The CRG has been established to help support the implementation of the CKI Coastal Hazard Risk Management and Adaptation Plan (CHRMAP).

The CRG brings together people from across the community to share local knowledge, community values and ideas, and to help government understand local priorities as the project moves forward. The CRG will be an advisory body consisting of up to thirty members representing community members, groups and stakeholders/organisations who live and work on, or have strong ties, to CKI.

Role

The CRG provides advice and feedback to the project team and government agencies involved in delivering the CHRMAP.

The group will:

- share local knowledge and experience;
- identify community priorities and concerns;
- discuss opportunities and challenges;
- help communicate project information to the wider community; and
- encourage community participation in the CHRMAP implementation process.

The CRG is an advisory group. It does not make decisions or determine government policy.

Feedback, input and suggestions from the CRG will be communicated to the project team and government decision-makers, through observer members, in writing on an ad hoc basis and through publicly available meeting

summaries. CRG advice will be incorporated as an important source of the CKI community opinion(s), similarly to consultations with the islands' various interest groups.

Membership and what is expected of members

Membership will seek balanced participation across Home Island and West Island and across different community interests and experiences. Membership may include:

- Indian Ocean Territories Administrator
- One Shire of CKI Elected Member
- Two representatives from the Elders Group
- One representative from the Seniors Group
- One representative from Kebudayaan Pulu Kokos (PKPK)
- One representative from the CKI Islamic Council
- Representatives from other relevant stakeholder groups
- Eight – twelve representatives from the broader community; and
- Two youth representatives from the school population.

The Shire of CKI Chief Executive Officer and DITRDSCA and DPLH representatives (the project team) will attend CRG meetings as observer members. The project team is responsible for coordinating the CHRMAP implementation project and responding to CRG advice. They may provide information and respond to questions at the Chair's invitation. They do not participate as community members or determine the CRG's advice.

Government officers, Shire representatives and technical specialists may attend as observers or resource members.

Potential members are those who registered their interest with the project team for ongoing engagement and others to be reached through drawing on existing community networks supported by an open expression of interest process, with final membership determined by the project team. Members must consent to participate and be able to commit their time and conduct as outlined in these Terms of Reference.

It is anticipated that group members will need to:

- Attend and participate in all meetings;
- Advise the Chair if they cannot attend a meeting(s).
- Represent the interests and views of the community (if representing a community group), or in the case of individuals, to present their own views where appropriate;
- Restrict debate to relevant issues and items;
- Members nominated by an organisation should make clear when they are speaking on behalf of that organisation and when they are expressing a personal view;
- Share relevant information with their community networks where appropriate; and
- Comply with these Terms of Reference.

The group will have up to thirty members and all members will need to meet the following criteria:

- Ability to commit to and attend the first two meetings and thereafter remain committed to meetings scheduled at least three months in advance, or adequately hand over membership to an equivalent community representative as proxy, or adequately hand over membership to an equivalent community representative as a new permanent member, subject to prior approval of the Chair or project team.
- Be able to receive meeting information by email or another agreed method.
- Have the capacity to understand and share project information and issues, supported by appropriate translation services if required.
- Be connected to their community and neighbours.
- Agree to comply with the Terms of Reference.

Chairperson

The CRG Chair will be an independent facilitator selected by the project team. The Chair's role is to:

- Support respectful and productive meetings
- Maintain neutrality and manage actual or perceived bias
- Make sure everyone has an opportunity to contribute

- Assist CRG members to navigate sensitive discussions

How it will work

The CRG does not need to agree on every issue. Different opinions are valuable and will be shared with decision-makers where appropriate.

Where there are strong differences, the Chair will aim to articulate the diversity of views in feedback provided to government. This could be, for example, in the form of noting whether views are held by particular sectors of the community, or by describing without attribution the range of views and concerns raised by the CRG. The Chair will be expected to use their best judgement to relay information faithfully and objectively.

CRG members will also be encouraged to consult broadly with the CKI community and bring relevant community views back to future meetings.

Members are expected to represent the views of their stakeholder group AND their individual views and observations when participating in the CRG. This includes members with professional or elected representative roles. The Chair will remind members to clearly state when they are speaking on behalf of their group or organisation and when they are speaking as individuals.

Meeting summaries will record key themes, areas of agreement and material differences of view. Where appropriate, a summary may note that a view is associated with a particular community sector without identifying individual members.

Observer members (SoCKI CEO and DITRDCSA and DPLH officials), elsewhere described as the project team, may participate in meetings to the extent of providing their professional expertise upon the Chair's request (e.g. to explain government processes and provide the CRG with information relating to ongoing activities), and to ask clarification questions of the Chair and CRG members. Note – the SoCKI CEO will be an observer, and an elected official will speak on behalf of SoCKI as a CRG member.

The CRG membership and operation will reflect and recognise the unique cultural context of CKI and relevant considerations. Meetings may include separate Home Island and West Island sessions, small-group discussions or other formats that support participation. Anonymous feedback and separate youth engagement may also be used where appropriate.

CRG outcomes will be made publicly available (see Keeping the Community Informed)

Timeframe and Frequency of Meetings

The CRG is expected to meet approximately three times each year. Additional meetings may be held where required.

Meeting dates will be set in advance where practicable and will take account of Ramadan, school holidays and local events.

Conduct

Group members are bound by the following Code of Conduct:

- **Respect:** At all times physical or verbal threats or abusive language will not be tolerated and can result in immediate removal from the meeting and reference group.
- **Have constructive discussions:** Listen and don't talk over others. Raise issues and offer solutions in equal measure. Be willing to challenge and be challenged about views/issues without making personal attacks.
- **Be effective:** Be concise in presenting views. Help each other stick to the agenda and timeframes. Avoid bringing up the same topic if the matter has already been discussed.
- **Be honest & open:** You don't need to be an expert to have a view. It's okay to get something wrong or to correct someone in a respectful way.
- **Support the group:** Ensure everyone has a chance to talk. Seek to understand others, before presenting your view. Support the fair recording of both shared and differing views.
- **Confidentiality:**

- Group members are free to discuss the outcomes and approved meeting summaries with other people, however the specific views and opinions of other reference group members are considered 'in-confidence' and not to be shared outside the reference group meetings.
- Project documentation and project information that is shared with the reference group and not yet in the public domain is to be considered confidential and not for circulation outside the group.
- Any information made available to members that is identified as commercial-in-confidence, private and confidential, or generally of a confidential nature, must not be provided or allowed to be provided to third parties.

Governance

- **Delegation of powers:** The CRG acts in an advisory nature and is not a decision-making body.
- There is **no quorum required** for the CRG to meet or provide advice. Similarly, the CRG is not required to reach a consensus or fixed majority position on topics of discussion.
- **Sub-committees:** the CRG is able to establish sub-committees to discuss and report back to the whole on specific issues (e.g. island-specific topics, interest-based groups to support technical discussions)
- **Attendance:** Members are expected to be present at all CRG meetings and the meetings of their sub-committees. If they cannot attend, they must advise the Chair.
- **Privacy:** Membership (but not contact details) of this group will be publicly available. Members are free to share their own contact details but not those of other members of the group.
- **Conflict resolution:** Unresolved matters and differing views will be recorded and provided to the Project Team. The CRG is not required to resolve every difference of opinion.
- **Terms of Reference:** These proposed Terms of Reference will be discussed and adopted at the first meeting of the CRG. The Terms of Reference will be reviewed as required and can be amended in consultation with the Reference Group and project team. Any changes to the terms of reference need to be made public within one week of the changes being approved.
- **Payment:** No sitting fees will be paid to CRG members.

Conflicts of Interest

The Chair of the Reference Group will provide the opportunity for members to identify any actual, perceived or potential conflicts of interest at the beginning of each meeting. The Chair will determine the action taken by the member to manage the conflict of interest.

Keeping the community informed

CRG meeting summaries and outcomes will be made publicly available following each meeting, including through publication on Australian Government, Shire or other approved community channels. Outcomes will be reported without identifying individual members' perspectives. A suggested agenda for the next meeting will also be made public at this time.

Media and Communications

Note – this includes mainstream media, social media and other public communications channels

- Members should avoid publicly commenting on matters under consideration by the CRG in a manner that may undermine the integrity of the consultation process or create the perception that outcomes have been predetermined.
- Members are entitled to hold and express their own views but should not represent those views as those of the CRG unless authorised to do so
- Members must not represent themselves as speaking on behalf of the CRG unless authorised
- Members must not publicly attribute views or comments to other CRG members
- Media enquiries relating to the project should be directed through to DITRDSCA
- Confidential project information should not be shared publicly.