Position Description

Independent Chair

NRM Regions Australia

Organisation	NRM Regions Australia
Position	Independent Chair
Tenure	**Two-year term, renewable for a maximum of three terms by mutual agreement**
Time Commitment	Approximately 4 days per month (fluctuating month-to-month), including board meetings, committee work, and in-person stakeholder engagement
Remuneration	Around $30,000 negotiable (per annum plus super) + out-of-pocket expenses
Location	Remote / flexible; travel required for in-person meetings and site visits
Classification	Non-executive, independent

About NRM Regions Australia

NRM Regions Australia is the national peak body representing the network of regional natural resource management (NRM) organisations across Australia. It provides a unified national voice for regional NRM bodies, facilitating collaboration, knowledge exchange, and policy advocacy on issues relating to land, water, biodiversity, and sustainable resource use.

Operating at the intersection of government, community, and environment, NRM Regions Australia plays a pivotal role in shaping national approaches to environmental stewardship, agricultural sustainability, and climate adaptation. The organisation works closely with federal and state governments, research institutions, the agricultural and environmental sectors, Indigenous land managers, and local communities to deliver outcomes of national significance.

Purpose of the Role

The Independent Chair provides strategic leadership, governance stewardship, and an independent perspective to the NRM Regions Australia Board of Directors. The Chair is responsible for ensuring the Board operates effectively, acts with integrity, and discharges its fiduciary and legal obligations in a manner consistent with the organisation's mission and values.

The Chair leads a values-driven, high-performing board, fosters constructive relationships among directors, and serves as the primary interface between the Board and the Chief Executive Officer. The role demands a demonstrated capacity to navigate complex multi-stakeholder environments, balance competing interests, and maintain an unwavering focus on mission outcomes.

Key Responsibilities

Board Leadership and Governance

- Chair all meetings of the Board of Directors and ensure they are conducted with rigour, efficiency, and proper process.
- Set the agenda in collaboration with the CEO and Company Secretary, ensuring strategic priorities are appropriately reflected in Board deliberations.

- Foster a culture of open, constructive debate, inclusive decision-making, and collective accountability.
- Ensure the Board fulfils its legal, regulatory, and constitutional obligations.
- Lead the annual Board performance review and director development processes.
- Ensure effective committee structures are in place and that committee outputs are appropriately integrated into Board deliberations.
- Foster a culture of constructive challenge, psychological safety, and high-quality deliberation to support effective board decision-making.

Strategic and Mission Stewardship

- Champion the mission, vision, and values of NRM Regions Australia across all Board activities and external representations.
- Contribute to the development and implementation of the organisation's strategic plan, ensuring alignment between strategy, risk, and resources.
- Provide independent judgement on matters of strategic significance, including partnerships, advocacy priorities, and organisational positioning.
- Monitor the external environment — including policy, funding, and regulatory trends — and assist the Board in anticipating strategic risks and opportunities.

CEO Relationship and Oversight

- Develop and maintain a productive, trust-based working relationship with the Chief Executive Officer, characterised by mutual respect and clarity of role boundaries.
- Provide appropriate support, guidance, and constructive challenge to the CEO in the delivery of organisational strategy.
- Lead the CEO performance review process and ensure robust accountability mechanisms are in place.
- Act as the primary escalation point for matters requiring Board attention between scheduled meetings.

Stakeholder Engagement and Advocacy

- Represent NRM Regions Australia at the national level, including with federal government ministers, departments, and cross-sector bodies.
- Build and sustain relationships with regional NRM organisations, and key sector stakeholders.
- Support the organisation's advocacy agenda and, where appropriate, provide an independent voice on matters of national policy significance.
- Engage constructively with Indigenous stakeholders and support the embedding of First Nations perspectives in governance and strategic decision-making.

Risk, Finance, and Compliance Oversight

- Ensure the Board maintains effective oversight of organisational strategic risk, including financial, operational, reputational, and environmental risks.
- Provide oversight of the integrity of financial reporting, risk management, internal controls, and audit processes, working closely with the CEO, Finance team, and external auditors as appropriate.
- Ensure compliance with all applicable legislative, regulatory, and funding obligations, including obligations stemming from the organisation’s not-for-profit and deductible gift recipient status.
- Model and promote ethical conduct, transparency, and accountability at the highest level of the organisation.

Person Specification

Essential Qualifications and Experience

- Demonstrated experience at board level, including prior experience as a chair, deputy chair, or committee chair of a complex organisation.
- A track record of effective leadership in environments characterised by multi-stakeholder complexity, including government, community, and sectoral interests.
- Substantive knowledge of natural resource management, environmental policy, land and water management, or a closely related field.
- Demonstrated ability to build cohesive, high-performing boards and to manage conflict constructively.
- Experience engaging with government at a senior level, including ministers, secretaries, and department heads.
- Strong financial literacy, with the capacity to interpret and interrogate complex financial and risk information.
- Genuine commitment to environmental stewardship, sustainable resource management, and regional community wellbeing.
- Does not hold a board, executive or other paid or unpaid role within a regional NRM organisation.

Desirable Attributes

- Board or Executive management experience with an Australian not-for-profit organisation.
- Experience with membership-based peak bodies, national associations, or federated governance structures.
- Experience with or understanding of the NRM, sustainable agriculture and/or environmental sectors.
- Understanding of Australian government funding frameworks, including grants administration and Commonwealth-state funding arrangements relevant to the NRM sector.
- Familiarity with Indigenous land management, cultural heritage, and the governance principles underpinning respectful First Nations engagement.
- Formal governance qualifications, including completion of the Australian Institute of Company Directors (AICD) course or equivalent.
- Experience in advocacy, policy development, or public affairs at a national level.

Personal Qualities

- High integrity, independence of mind, and the courage to challenge respectfully when required.
- Exceptional interpersonal and communication skills, with the ability to build trust across diverse constituencies.
- Strategic acuity, balanced with pragmatic judgement and a grounding in operational realities.
- Cultural sensitivity and a demonstrated commitment to inclusion and equity.
- Collaborative leadership style, with a genuine orientation toward collective achievement rather than individual recognition.
- Capacity to act as an effective ambassador for the organisation's mission with conviction and authenticity.
- Demonstrated emotional intelligence, including the capacity to manage boardroom dynamics, encourage respectful challenge, and maintain productive governance conversations through complexity and disagreement.

Governance Context

The Independent Chair is appointed by the Board in accordance with the Constitution of NRM Regions Australia. The Chair is subject to the same duties and obligations as all Board directors, including fiduciary duties of care, diligence, loyalty, and disclosure. Directors are expected to act in the best interests of the organisation as a whole, independent of any factional, regional, or sectoral interest.

NRM Regions Australia is committed to the highest standards of corporate governance and expects all directors, including the Chair, to uphold the organisation's Code of Conduct, conflict of interest policy, and confidentiality obligations at all times.

The Chair does not hold an executive function and does not direct operational activities of staff. Authority over operational matters is delegated to the Chief Executive Officer within the limits established by the Board.