



# HEPA Strategic Plan 2022 – 2025

October 2021

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HEPA

## About HEPA

We are an informal, self-authorising alliance of heads of environment protection regulators in Australia and New Zealand.

## Our purpose

Our purpose is to provide collective leadership across all jurisdictions in Australia and New Zealand to protect the environment and our communities. A strong commitment to collaboration underpins our purpose. We aim to achieve our objectives and outcomes by aligning and coordinating our regulatory approaches to significant environmental protection issues wherever possible.

## About this strategic plan

Our strategic plan sets out how we share our knowledge, experience and insights to drive strategic interventions to address significant environmental issues. Collectively we will focus our efforts on four main objectives to deliver positive environmental outcomes and contribute to overall economically sustainable development.

## Our objectives 2022 – 2025

1. Contribute to a circular economy by collectively ensuring sustainable and environmentally sound waste and resource recovery management.
2. Increase protection of our environment and communities from harmful substances.
3. Identify emerging environmental issues for collective action.
4. Promote regulatory excellence through shared regulatory knowledge and practice.

## Our regulatory context

As regulators we play a critical role in delivering state and national policy outcomes. Environmental protection policy is not static. Within our jurisdictions we each administer and enforce different environmental laws for the benefit of the environment and the health of our communities. Our current national policy settings include commitments to:

- Climate Resilience and Adaptation (Aus)
- Emissions reduction (Aus) and emissions trading (NZ)
- National Waste Policy targets (Aus)

Collectively we acknowledge the interconnection of our environmental protection work to these initiatives and to the broad aspirations set out in the United Nations Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs).

The SDGs cover many environmental domains including natural resource management, climate change, air quality issues, water-related issues, marine issues, biodiversity and ecosystems, circular economy, and the environmentally sound management of chemicals and waste.

Although our remits differ, we are committed to our purpose of demonstrating collective leadership on issues of national and international importance that will deliver positive environmental outcomes. HEPA is acutely aware of rapidly evolving government policy around climate change and will examine opportunities for environmental regulatory tools to support governments' climate change goals.

We also recognise the need to be flexible, adaptable and agile in how we regulate to achieve the breadth of environmental policy objectives now and as they inevitably change into the future.

## Our approach

Working together and proactively sharing our accumulated knowledge and experience is an important way for HEPA to achieve its objectives and build our collective regulatory capability. We work together to:

- Understand current and emerging issues of environmental significance that may have impacts across our geographic boundaries and our individual jurisdictions.
- Informally share information, insights and learnings about environmental issues and regulatory approaches through case studies and reviews.
- Pursue opportunities to align standards and regulatory approaches, and to support and influence national environmental protection policies and management plans.
- Build our regulatory capability and ensure we have the shared scientific knowledge, technical expertise and cultural awareness to make informed regulatory decisions.

## Activity focus areas 2022–2025

To deliver outcomes effectively and efficiently in line with our objectives, we have identified four focus areas per Table 1 below.

Table 1. Focus areas and outcomes

Focus area	Outcome
Waste and resource recovery management	A collective contribution to the achievement of a circular economy by aligning, as far as is practicable, our regulatory approaches to improve compliance and support the achievement of National Waste Policy (NWP) targets.
Harmful substances	Reduced environmental and human health impacts from legacy contaminants through improved treatment and disposal options, and environmentally sound management of emerging harmful chemical substances.
Horizon scanning for emerging issues	A shared understanding of emerging global and local environmental issues and opportunities of mutual interest and regulatory responsibility, to influence behaviour change.
Regulatory practice	Improved capability as environmental regulators to: <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• deliver nationally consistent regulatory approaches to significant environmental harms based on sound evidence and advice; and</li><li>• communicate clearly and engage with our communities.</li></ul>

Coordinated activity across these focus areas will include a combination of:

- Direct action - with different member agencies taking a lead role to coordinate HEPA's collaborative efforts.
- Advocacy by HEPA members - communicating and raising awareness of HEPA's objectives within our spheres of influence.
- Advice and guidance shared between member agencies.
- Commission research of collective interest about emerging environmental issues and opportunities to help identify where to align and focus our regulatory efforts.

Table 2 on the next page identifies the various activities that HEPA will direct its attention to over the lifecycle of this strategy.

Table 2. Focus areas for 2022-2025

Focus area	Delivery mode	Activity areas	Objectives			
			1) Waste and resource recovery	2) Harmful substances	3) Emerging issues	4) Regulatory excellence
<b>Waste &amp; Resource Recovery management</b>	<b>Advice and guidance</b>	Support initiatives for waste data consolidation within and across jurisdictions to track waste more consistently, efficiently and effectively between and across borders.	✓			✓
	<b>Direct action</b>	Align, as far as is practicable, waste classifications, including for e-waste and organics.	✓	✓	✓	✓
	<b>Advice and guidance</b>	Develop nationally consistent regulatory guidance on management of agreed high priority wastes including combustible waste, e-waste and organics.	✓	✓	✓	✓
	<b>Advocacy</b>	Align Container Deposit Schemes to achieve efficient and effective outcomes across Australia and to avoid cross border issues.	✓		✓	
	<b>Advocacy</b>	Advocate for the benefits of a national circular economy and promote product stewardship as a national objective by collaborating on a narrative for change and developing common principles.	✓		✓	
	<b>Advice and guidance</b>	Share and consolidate current knowledge to identify gaps and solutions to minimise stockpiling	✓		✓	
	<b>Commission research</b>	Commission work to: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>understand the key drivers for community participation for Container Deposit Systems to understand the most effective levers to improve recovery outcomes.</li> <li>investigate alignment of container approval application processes through a single point of entry for beverage manufacturers/suppliers.</li> </ul>	✓		✓	✓
<b>Harmful chemicals</b>	<b>Direct action</b>	Develop and support coordinated implementation of the: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>PFAS NEMP 3.0</li> <li>Intergovernmental Agreement on a National Framework for Responding to PFAS contamination.</li> </ul>		✓	✓	
	<b>Direct action</b>	ICHEMS implementation of National Standards for Industrial Chemicals.		✓	✓	✓
	<b>Direct action</b>	Identify and consolidate sources of information and intelligence across industry, academia and government to form a collective understanding of the next focus area for coordinated action to reduce the impact of harmful chemicals.		✓	✓	✓
	<b>Direct action</b>	Work together to align the standards and protocols to more effectively manage historic or legacy contamination through the National Contaminated Environments Network (NCEN).		✓	✓	✓
	<b>Commission research</b>	Build our collective capability to provide science advice by commissioning research to understand the potential environmental impacts of EU policy on Australia and New Zealand.		✓	✓	
<b>Horizon scanning for emerging issues</b>	<b>Advocacy</b>	Influence behaviour change by directly engaging with industry and academia and investing in research to influence the subject matter focus of future legislation.	✓	✓	✓	✓
	<b>Commission research</b>	Build our shared understanding of the emerging global and Australasian environmental issues that will require a coordinated regulatory protection approach.	✓	✓	✓	✓
<b>Regulatory excellence</b>	<b>Direct action</b>	Innovate our regulatory practice through adoption of networked data systems and artificial intelligence by: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Developing and sharing networked waste tracking lifecycle data to better understand material flow and market drivers, and</li> <li>Establishing information sharing partnerships with industry, academia and community action groups to help democratise access to information about environmental protection.</li> </ul>	✓		✓	✓
	<b>Advocacy</b>	Maximise our existing regulatory peer networks such as the Australasian Environmental Law Enforcement and Regulators network (AELERT) to build a shared and better aligned technical regulatory capability.		✓	✓	✓
	<b>Advice &amp; guidance</b>	Share best practice engagement frameworks and processes that promote the inclusion of social and cultural knowledge into evidence based decision making.	✓	✓	✓	✓