



Terms of Reference

Working Party for the AusPollen Aerobiology Standard

Background

Despite the high prevalence of allergic rhinitis and asthma, Australia has not until recently established processes for a standardised national airborne pollen and spore monitoring program for public health purposes. Standardisation will improve the consistency of processes employed between pollen and spore monitoring sites and enhance the reliability of data, enabling better comparability between information from different locations across the continent.

The Australian Airborne Pollen and Spore Monitoring Network Interim Standard and Protocols document (Version 2, Beggs, Davies, et al., 2018) articulates best practice for pollen and spore monitoring. This Interim Standard and Protocols document can be adopted and implemented nationally by all current and future aerobiology research projects as well as for Australian monitoring and forecasting services. The Interim Standard and Protocols document was prepared on behalf of the National Health and Medical Research Council AusPollen Partnership Project (AusPollen 2016), led by Queensland University of Technology entitled “AusPollen: Implementation of a standardized national pollen alert system for better management of allergic respiratory health”, and as part of the Victorian Department of Health and Human Services Victorian thunderstorm asthma pollen surveillance (VicTAPS) program led by the Bureau of Meteorology. The stakeholder group providing input to the development of the Standard and Protocols document included The AirRater Project (University of Tasmania). This Interim Standard and Protocols document will be revised and updated as necessary, by this Working Party and in consultation with the stakeholder group, so it remains relevant, best practice and practical.

Since the inception of the AusPollen Partnership in 2016, the number of active pollen and spore monitoring sites in Australia has grown from several operating sporadically to 25 sites, including the AusPollen Partnership Project sites, the ARC Discovery Project sites (Sydney and Brisbane), the AirRater sites in Tasmania, and the Victorian Thunderstorm Asthma Pollen Surveillance (VicTAPS) network. Together, pollen and spore monitoring sites of these projects form the broader AusPollen Aerobiology Collaboration Network.

There is a need to establish an enduring quality framework for pollen and spore monitoring for Australia into the future. Well-established pollen and spore monitoring networks exist in Europe (European Aerobiology Society, 2017, European Aerobiology Network, 2017) and North America (National Allergy Bureau, 2017a) with capabilities and processes to ensure quality of airborne pollen and spore data. The International Association for Aerobiology and European Aerobiology Society run two pollen and spore monitoring courses: the European Course on Basic Aerobiology and the European Course on Advanced Aerobiology (European Aerobiology Society 2017; International Association of Aerobiology 2015b, 2015a). In the United States of America, counters undertake one of the basic aerobiology courses offered and, following examination, can become certified

separately as a pollen counter or as a spore counter by the National Allergy Bureau (NAB 2017b, 2017c).

Following the international models whereby the European Aerobiology Network and the US NAB are affiliates of the European Academy of Allergy and Clinical Immunology or the American Academy of Allergy Asthma and Immunology respectively, the AusPollen Aerobiology Collaboration Network is establishing this AusPollen Aerobiology Standard Working Party under the auspice of the Australasian Society of Clinical Immunology and Allergy (ASCIA). The Working Party will be jointly affiliated with the Australasian Aerobiology Association (AAA).

Purpose

The purpose of the AusPollen Aerobiology Standard Working Party is to provide a national working group capable of ongoing oversight for pollen and spore monitoring in Australia and to ensure quality and consistency of pollen and spore data collected across Australia by implementing and performing core functions necessary for delivering standardised pollen and spore monitoring for public health and research purposes.

Membership

AusPollen Aerobiology Standard Working Party will be comprised of individuals who are members (or associate members) of both or either AAA or ASCIA. Individuals who are actively engaged and experienced in diverse aspects of generating, or in utilising pollen and spore aerobiology data, can nominate to become members of the Working Party. Based on capacity to contribute, the membership may include individuals who use the pollen and spore concentration information such as consumer representatives, or health professionals involved in care of allergy and /or asthma patients, and/or scientists who engage in pollen and spore forecasting and dissemination of pollen and spore information. A requirement will be that members of the Working Party who are directly involved in pollen and spore monitoring, or those who train pollen and spore counters, are /or become certified pollen and spore counters of the network. Membership of the Working Party will be merit-based. The Working Party will have between 6 and 12 members at any given time and a quorum for decision making will be two thirds of current members. Members will be asked to submit a declaration of perceived and actual conflicts of interests that will be made publicly available.

Roles to be established

Chair

Deputy Chair (to be nominated and chosen as needed)

Secretary

Treasurer (to be nominated and chosen as needed)

General members

Diversity

The Working Party adheres to the principles of diversity and inclusion such that all individuals who are engaged in pollen and spore monitoring from different organisations and different states and who are affiliated with different projects have opportunity to contribute. Membership of the Working Party should ensure it benefits from broad representation between; Australian states/territories, organisations, projects, gender, and career stage. Ideally, the Working Party

should not contain more than one member from the same organisation at a given time unless a particular member brings unique and important attributes to the group.

Appointment to Working Party

When positions become available on the Working Party, nominations for new members will be sought via email invitations, ASCIA newsletter, local conferences and by any other relevant means deemed appropriate by the Working Party.

Renewal

Principles for the Working Party are stability and renewal so that there is a balance between expertise and fresh ideas and energy. Ideally, turnover within any year should be no more than one third of members. Members can serve for a maximum of two three year terms to a total of six years on the Working Party after which time, they should resign from the Working Party. After one full term (three years), should a vacancy on the Working Party become available, then past members can re-nominate.

Tenure

Three year term with option for one term renewal.

Meetings

Preferably quarterly to half yearly but no less than annually.

If feasible, face to face meeting should occur once per year, perhaps during the annual ASCIA meeting. Interim meetings can occur by video or teleconference.

Members who are unable to attend the face to face meetings may connect by video or teleconference, if those facilities are available.

Members should attend 60% of meetings over their tenure.

Functions

The Working Party will be responsible for:

- i) setting criteria for and evaluating compliance with the Standards and Protocols document,
- ii) training and certification of individuals registered for counting pollen and spores,
- iii) registration of new Australian pollen and spore monitoring sites,
- iv) auditing of pollen and spore monitoring sites,
- v) periodic review of the Standard and Protocols document,
- vi) oversight and evaluation of pollen and spore forecasting within Australia,
- vii) establishing standards for information technology in disseminating pollen and spore data,
- viii) evaluation of benefit of pollen and spore information to health professionals and consumers.

Lines of Reporting

Following international models, this AusPollen Aerobiology Standard Working Party reports to both the Council of the Australasian Society of Clinical Immunology and Allergy and the Australasian Aerobiology Association (AAA). A brief an annual update will be submitted to each organisation annually in June.

Review of Terms of Reference

The Terms of Reference of this Working Party will be reviewed by the ASCIA Council in three years and every five years thereafter.

Modification history

Version 1.0 Draft 11 February 2018

Version 2.0 Draft 04 March 2018

Version 3.0 Final 22 August 2019

References

AusPollen 2016 NHMRC AusPollen Partnership Project. The Australian Pollen Allergen Partnership: Towards a Standardized National Pollen Count Network. <https://www.auspollen.com.au/>

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Glossary

Name	Description
AusPollen Partnership	NHMRC funded Partnership Project 2016-2020 (GNT1116107)
AusPollen Aerobiology Collaboration Network	Network of pollen monitoring sites in Australia that are managed by various organisations are affiliated informally and are listed on the National Environmental Monitoring Site Register.