



## Conflict Management Plan

### CONFLICT MANAGEMENT PLAN – DR NICK AUSTIN

#### 1. BACKGROUND

- 1.1. Dr Nicholas Richard Austin is appointed as the Acting Chief Executive Officer of the Australian Centre for International Agricultural Research (**ACIAR**) (the **ACIAR Appointment**).

#### Other appointments

- 1.2. Dr Austin is also appointed to each of the following roles:
- 1.2.1. Deputy Chair – Zero Net Emissions from Agriculture Cooperative Research Centre (**ZNEAg CRC**). ZNE-Ag CRC is a multi-stakeholder approach to transitioning Australian agriculture to net-zero, healthy, resilient, and profitable food systems by 2040;
  - 1.2.2. Non-Executive Director – Bill & Melinda Gates Agricultural Innovations LLC (**Gates Ag One**). Gates Ag One is a US-based agtech startup dedicated to advancing the lives of small-scale producers in low-income countries through agricultural innovation;
  - 1.2.3. President – Policy Advisory Council (on International Agricultural Research). The Policy Advisory Council provides expert advice on development priorities and food security needs of Australia's regional partners;
  - 1.2.4. Chair – Agriculture and Food Forum, Academy of Technological Sciences and Engineering (**ATSE**). ATSE is a Learned Academy providing impartial, expert, evidence-based advice to achieve sustainable solutions and advance prosperity;
  - 1.2.5. Member – Australian Agriculture Sustainability Framework (**AASF**). AASF is a national, industry-led initiative that provides a common language to describe sustainability in Australian agriculture. AASF is supported by the Department of Agriculture, Fisheries & Forestry;
  - 1.2.6. Member – Gulbali Institute Advisory Board. The Gulbali Institute is the focal point for Charles Sturt University's (**CSU**) agriculture, water and environment research;
  - 1.2.7. Member – Australian Water Partnership (**AWP**) Technical Advisory Panel. The AWP is funded by the Australian aid program and works with partners across the Indo-Pacific region to support climate-resilient water management;
  - 1.2.8. Member – NSW Department of Primary Industries and Regional Development (**NSW DPIRD**) Research Advisory Board. The Board provides advice on priorities for the State's agriculture, biosecurity, forestry and fisheries research;
  - 1.2.9. Non-Executive Director – One Basin Cooperative Research Centre (1Basin CRC) - an industry-led, collaborative partnership established to build a more productive, resilient and sustainable Murray–Darling Basin for current and future generations.

(collectively, the **Other Appointments**).

#### Reason for potential conflict

- 1.3. The potential for conflicts of interest (actual and perceived) exists between the ACIAR Appointment and the Other Appointments because:

1.3.1. ACIAR facilitates agricultural research partnerships, and commissions and funds research in agricultural and related fields in partner countries, while

1.3.2. each of those entities to which Dr Austin is appointed through the Other Appointments (**Other Entities**) represent stakeholders in international agricultural research who in some cases may directly or indirectly may collaborate with or receive funding from ACIAR in respect of international agricultural research.

Consequently, actual, potential or perceived conflicts may arise where:

1.3.3. decisions made by ACIAR could benefit or disadvantage any of the Other Entities, or

1.3.4. information received or held by ACIAR could be used to benefit any of the Other Entities or be used by any of the Other Entities to disadvantage ACIAR.

## **Obligations**

1.4. Dr Austin is subject to statutory obligations regarding the disclosure and management of conflicts of interest including under the *Public Governance, Performance and Accountability Act 2013* (Cth), the *Public Service Act 1999* (Cth) and the *National Anti-Corruption Commission Act 2023* (Cth). Nothing in this Conflict Management Plan limits or reduces Dr Austin's legal obligations with respect to conflicts of interest.

## **2. PURPOSE**

2.1. This Conflict Management Plan has been issued in consultation with Dr Austin to:

2.1.1. ensure that the integrity of the work of ACIAR is not adversely impacted by any actual, potential or perceived conflicts arising as a result of Dr Austin's Other Appointments

2.1.2. support the maintenance of confidentiality of Confidential Information, including Relevant Information (as defined below)

2.1.3. assist Dr Austin comply with his statutory obligations with respect to disclosure and management of conflicts of interest, and

2.1.4. ensure Dr Austin can carry out his ACIAR Appointment impartially and be seen to do so.

## **3. CONFLICT MANAGEMENT PRINCIPLES**

3.1. This Conflict Management Plan adopts the following principles.

3.1.1. **Transparency** – Dr Austin will declare and document all relevant interests.

3.1.2. **Separation** – Dr Austin will recuse himself from discussions or decisions relating to any Other Entity, or in which any Other Entity has a relevant interest, and will not access Relevant Information.

3.1.3. **Accountability** – All conflict management actions will be recorded and auditable.

3.1.4. **Review** – This Conflict Management Plan will be reviewed every 6 months or earlier if circumstances change.

## **4. CONFLICT MANAGEMENT STRATEGIES**

### **Assessment of likelihood of conflict**

4.1. Of the Other Appointments, the likelihood of a conflict is considered:

4.1.1. **low** in respect of Dr Austin's appointments with ZNE-Ag CRC, 1Basin CRC, Gates Ag One, ATSE, and AASF.

4.1.2. **very low / non-existent** in respect of Dr Austin's appointments with the Policy Advisory Council and (in view of the steps taken by Dr Austin set out in paragraph 4.3 below) the AWP.

## **AWP**

- 4.2. It is acknowledged that Dr Austin has suspended his participation with the AWP Technical Advisory Panel for the period of his ACIAR Appointment.

## **CSU / NSW DPIRD**

- 4.3. Dr Austin will recuse himself from any deliberations involving contracts for CSU or NSW DPIRD if workable (or else put other management arrangements in place to manage any perceived conflict, which may include pausing involvement with CSU and/or NSW DPIRD).

## **General strategies**

- 4.4. Acknowledging the likelihood of conflicts as assessed in paragraph 4.1 above, Dr Austin will adopt conflict management strategies as follows.

<b>Conflict type</b>	<b>Conflict management action</b>
Decision making on project or activity commissioning or funding, contracts, or policies reasonably likely to affect an Other Entity	Dr Austin will not participate in any decision-making that is reasonably likely to affect an Other Entity. Such decisions will be made by other ACIAR personnel.
Access to Relevant Information	Dr Austin will not be provided with access to Relevant Information and will be excluded from internal briefings or internal memoranda on or containing Relevant Information. Where possible, Dr Austin's access to information systems containing Relevant Information will be restricted or, where this is not possible, his access to such systems will be appropriately monitored and confidentiality obligations shall apply as set out below.
Participation in inter-agency or stakeholder meetings	Where meetings concern any Other Entity, Dr Austin will declare his interest at the start of the meeting and withdraw if required.
Ongoing disclosure	Dr Austin will update his statement of interests immediately upon any change of circumstances.

## **Confidentiality**

- 4.5. Without limiting any confidentiality obligations imposed on Dr Austin in connection with his ACIAR Appointment, Dr Austin must ensure any Confidential Information (including Relevant Information) to which he has access is not disclosed or used for any purpose other than as required in connection with his ACIAR Appointment.

## **Disclosure of Other Appointments**

- 4.6. Dr Austin must disclose his Other Appointments to the Minister for Foreign Affairs, as a standing interest, in the form prescribed by the Australian Public Service Commission.

## **Authorisations or delegations**

- 4.7. Where Dr Austin is precluded from decision-making due to a conflict, suitable ACIAR personnel will be authorised to, or delegated relevant powers, functions or duties to, make relevant decisions in accordance with relevant legislation and policies. Delegations will be documented and published internally.

## **Record-Keeping**

- 4.8. All disclosures, recusals, authorisations, delegations, and other conflict management steps will be recorded in ACIAR's Conflict of Interest Register.

## 5. OTHER PAID WORK

- 5.1. It is noted that under s 28 of the *Australian Centre for International Agricultural Research Act 1982*, the ACIAR CEO must not engage in paid work outside the duties of the CEO without ministerial approval. The CEO will therefore seek approval from the Minister for Foreign Affairs where any of the other Appointments are paid appointments.
- 5.2. Noting that the CEO Appointment is otherwise a full-time position, should any of the Other Appointments require Dr Austin to be temporarily absent from the CEO Appointment, Dr Austin will not be paid under the CEO Appointment in respect of such temporary absences for either volunteer or paid employment.

## 6. SUPPORT IN RELATION TO COMPLIANCE

- 6.1. If Dr Austin has any questions or concerns about, or becomes aware of a breach of, this Conflict Management Plan, he should contact ACIAR's legal representative promptly.
- 6.2. Dr Austin may also seek assistance from ACIAR's legal representative if he requires advice on any individual circumstance relating to this Conflict Management Plan

## 7. COMMUNICATIONS

- 7.1. This Conflict Management Plan will be communicated to:
  - 7.1.1. the Commission for International Agricultural Research, and
  - 7.1.2. The Minister for Foreign Affairs.

## 8. DEFINITIONS

- 8.1. **Confidential Information** means any information received or obtained Dr Austin in connection with his ACIAR Appointment other than information that is:
  - 8.1.1. in the public domain, other than as a result of any breach of any obligation of confidence owed by Dr Austin
  - 8.1.2. known by Dr Austin before he receives or obtains it in connection with his ACIAR Appointment
  - 8.1.3. lawfully obtained by the Dr Austin other than in connection with his ACIAR Appointment, or
  - 8.1.4. independently developed by Dr Austin.
- 8.2. **Relevant Information** means any Confidentiality Information that relates to any of the Other Entities.

SIGNED



Dr Nicholas Richard Austin

Date

30 April 2026