



# Information Pack

## Southern eDNA Society (SeDNAs) General Meeting

**Wednesday 1<sup>st</sup> Feb 2023, 1.5hrs (8.30am AWST, 11.30am AEDT, 1.30pm NZDT)**

**Zoom meeting:** <https://us02web.zoom.us/j/84136825234>

### Meeting purpose

Provide an overview and answer any questions about the *Southern eDNA Society's* formalised structure and next steps to finalise

### Key Outcomes:

- Announcement of Board member role and selection process including invitation to nominate via online form
- Online poll to confirm timeframe and location of next eDNA conference – suggestion being 2 years and hosted in NZ.
- Highlight areas that need further engagement to progress

### Other knowledge sharing and updates:

- SeDNAs incorporation as a company
- Introduction of draft Action Plan
- Initial membership ideas
- SeDNAs involvement at Hobart conference

### Agenda

1. Welcome (5 min)
2. Incorporation and constitution overview - (20 min)
3. Draft Action Plan & Goals (20 min)
4. Roles, Expectations, and nomination announcement and process (20 min)
5. Membership – considering some initial ideas (10 min)
6. eDNA conference – presence at Hobart, eDNA conference 2.0 – when, where (10 min)
7. Close (5 min)

**Meeting hosts** Helen Barclay, Xavier Pochon and Anastasija Zaiko.

## Contents (supplementary reading / for your reference)

- Action plan & goals (Draft) – what we want to be working on & achieving – page 2
- Call for SeDNAs Board Members Nominations – page 7
- SeDNAs constitution (Draft) – the rules for governing our society – page 9

## ACTION PLAN & GOALS – DRAFT

### Agenda Item 3

- This is a draft template (originally compiled by Ana, Helen & Xavier) to assist with developing a 2-year action plan for SeDNAs.
- It's important that we have clear direction as a group and also to have something tangible to present to delegates at the conference, helping to build the picture of who SeDNAs is and inspiring involvement (e.g. potentially a 'working group' approach continues) and/or support (e.g. membership).
- The Goals have been drafted based on reviewing outputs and priorities voted on at the NZ workshop September 2022 ([to be uploaded to website](#)).
- It's a draft and thus feedback is welcomed before the Board endorses the plan.
  - **There is currently a lot of work needed to achieve the goals drafted for the 2 year period.** It's anticipated that the Board may reduce the number of goals in the period to ensure it's achievable - anticipating that we will start small and grow. However, the more involvement we can get the more we can achieve.
  - The Actions listed in this document are examples to bring the Goals to life – its intended that they will be refined e.g. changed or in some cases reduced to ensure achievable.
  - We need input from others to refine Actions - ideally input from those amazing people who will be leading actions under a Goal and the teams they will pull together.
- **What is it to be a leader of a goal?** The Board will be approaching people to gauge interest (and likewise welcomes expressions of interest) on leading Goals over the next two years. In particular, people who have proven very active so far in SeDNAs or associated groups like the Conference organising committee and seminars. We welcome new interest too. A 'leader' position shouldn't mean you do everything; however a leader will need to take responsibility for the goal and engaging others. It is likely a leader will have the most involvement in actioning a goal, however we encourage effective delegation of tasks and assigning tasks for other team members for driving a particular action.
- **Working groups** – We started SeDNAs with a working group structure and we anticipate our new Action Plan direction to refresh our focus and groups. Some existing SeDNAs working groups align with proposed goals, primarily:
  - Communications working group = Goal 2
  - Standards and Best Practice Group = Goal 4
  - Comparisons with traditional methods = could be somewhat reflected as an action in Goal 4.
  - The data management group doesn't clearly connect with a Goal as it stands, however, discussions to date suggested that this group hadn't gained traction as a standalone focus for SeDNAs.

## DRAFT ACTION PLAN (2023-2025) – (to be finalised & approved by Board)

### MISSION - Why we exist

SeDNAs is a group of researchers, industry professionals and students passionate about eDNA and are working together to:

*Promote eDNA best practice (excellence) through collaboration between science, industry and community groups, to advance methods for government, private and community sectors.*

Note: while this mission statement has been developed collaboratively and then slightly tweaked based on feedback at the NZ workshop this is still subject to modification and will need approval by SeDNAs Board.

### Who do we help?

Our management group and networks consist of professionals who are leaders in eDNA research and application across Australia and New Zealand.

We bring together people interested in developing eDNA methods and using eDNA in real world situations - from eDNA scientists and experts through to environmental practitioners, industry professionals, students and communities learning about eDNA for the first time.

eDNA can help a wide range of industries, including (but not restricted to) biodiversity conservation, biosecurity and agriculture. The natural environment is a key stakeholder to benefit from the use of eDNA as a tool that is revolutionising measurement and monitoring.

### How do we help?

- Educational resources and activities to help people learn about & apply eDNA
- Hosting events to share and collaborate around eDNA methods and topics
- Promoting eDNA stories to advocate for its application
- Collaborating with First Nations people to help ensure that eDNA develops and is applied with consideration and respect to Country and Culture in Australia, New Zealand and beyond
- Keeping people abreast of eDNA happenings by sharing news and success stories
- Helping people find work in eDNA through sharing job opportunities and early career exchanges and support
- Developing and promoting standards and best practices in eDNA application for research and management purposes
- Expanding frontiers of eDNA technologies and applications by facilitating scientific collaboration and liaising with industry partners

**PURPOSE GOAL 1: We will involve First Nations people to guide the direction of SeDNAs and to help foster eDNA adoption with respect to Country and Culture. LEADS: Alejandro Trujillo Gonzalez (Australia) and open vacancy for New Zealand lead**

Action Lead(s)	Action/deliverable Item	Due date
*	Define and finalize tangible actions for the 2-year plan ( <i>example actions are below</i> )	Mid 2023

*	Create a short document (convention) on how SeDNAs will engage with first nations people in Australia. Setting the basis for a new Indigenous working group.	
*	Create a short document (convention) on how SeDNAs will engage with Māori communities in NZ. Setting the basis for a new Indigenous working group.	
*	Communicate launching of SeDNAs across iwi and first nation community groups in Australia and New Zealand	
*	Organise a special session on first nations/iwi led eDNA research at next conference	

\*Example actions suggested based on the outcomes of the NZ workshop discussions – to be refined

**PURPOSE GOAL 2: We will further develop an online knowledge hub to help raise awareness of eDNA generally across government, industry and community in Australia and New Zealand** **LEADS: Open vacancy for Australia and New Zealand leads**

Action Lead(s)	Action/deliverable Item	Due date
TBD	Define and finalize tangible actions for the 2-year plan ( <i>example actions are below</i> )	Mid 2023
*	Create realistic strategy around the website / knowledge hub (e.g. long-term vision to keep news/blogs/etc up-to-date; functionality and offering of website; target audiences; key content to develop)	
*	Appoint person(s) responsible for updating site/other social media channels & outline key content generation expectations.	
	Search for funding to further design a website that is user friendly/functional or for specific content development (e.g. Illumina has mentioned interest in video development)	
*	X content pieces developed (e.g. Communicate exciting new research or citizen science projects such as via The Conversation, writing blogs, video)	

\*Example actions suggested based on the outcomes of the NZ workshop discussions – to be refined

**PURPOSE GOAL 3: We will upskill eDNA researchers, enabling and inspiring them to be the best. LEADS: open vacancy for Australia and New Zealand lead (ideally – ECRs)**

Action Lead(s)	Action/deliverable Item	Due date
Maarten/TBD	Define and finalize tangible actions for the 2-year plan ( <i>some example actions below</i> )	Mid 2023
*	Seeking funding for ECR scholarships/ professional exchanges, setting up comms networks between labs to facilitate this	

*	eDNA summer school – could be aligned with the next eDNA conference	
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\*Example actions suggested based on the outcomes of the NZ workshop discussions – to be refined

**PURPOSE GOAL 4: We will build linkages with people in industry, government and community through education/upskilling and best practice guidelines.\*\* LEADS: open vacancy for Australia and New Zealand leads**

Action Lead(s)	Action/deliverable Item	Due date
TBD	Define and finalize tangible actions for the 2-year plan ( <b>example</b> actions are below)	Mid 2023
*	Update best practice guidelines and actively promote their application through SeDNAs communication channels and by implementing them across SeDNAs community research	
*	Develop educational / comms material around comparison of eDNA with conventional methods to help orienting industry in this space	
*	If deemed valuable seek funding for dedicated case studies to demonstrate comparability of eDNA approaches with traditional techniques, and validation of the protocols	
* **(maybe for future plans)	Participate in policy interaction events (e.g. Science Meets parliament) to enhance SeDNAs visibility as the expert body and lobby eDNA application across industry/government organisations	
* ** (maybe for future plans)	Organise and run informational/educational workshops aimed at end-users rather than researchers. Seek funding/sponsorship opportunities to support this	

\*Example actions suggested based on the outcomes of the NZ workshop discussions – to be refined

\*\* There is a lot in this goal and the actions will likely need to be reduced/clearer focus of the goal.

**PURPOSE GOAL 5: We will run the 2nd eDNA conference.**  
**LEADS: open vacancy for Australia and New Zealand leads**

Action Lead(s)	Action/deliverable Item	Due date
TBD	Agree on time and venue	March 2023
*	Engage organizing and scientific committee	
*	Engage company to assist with conference logistics	
*	Explore opportunities of widening the audience to include researchers from beyond Aus/NZ. The first conference already had interest from researchers in Indonesia, Japan, Thailand, etc. Trying to communicate more broadly or maybe even	

	<i>getting specific sponsorship for bursaries from developing countries.</i>	
*	<i>Actively promote and seek sponsorship</i>	
*	<i>Organize and run the conference and side-events</i>	

\*Example actions – to be refined

**BUSINESS GOAL 1: We will establish and run SeDNAs as an incorporated entity, laying the foundations for an enduring successful Not-for-Profit. LEADS: Helen, Xavier, Anastasija**

Action Lead(s)	Action/deliverable Item	Due date
Helen, Xavier, Anastasija	Establish best course of action to finalise Incorporation (including assistance with doing so, funding to support incorporating costs, and constitution)	Feb 2023
Helen, Xavier, Anastasija	Organize extended management group meeting and Board elections	Feb 2023
TBD by the board	Finalize incorporation, appointment of office bearer roles (e.g. president), Action Plan/Goals, and organise key meetings and governance tasks for upcoming 2 years.	March/April 2023

**BUSINESS GOAL 2: We will create our membership offering and build our membership numbers to fund activities. LEADS: TBD by the board**

Action Lead(s)	Action/deliverable Item	Due date
TBD	Develop initial membership offering to be launched at Feb 2023 conference	Feb 2023
TBD	Develop ongoing membership offering and implement	ongoing
TBD	Oversee the incoming membership funds and manage responsibly to support SeDNAs goals and activities	ongoing
TBD	Engage an accounting/management company to help with administrative matters	March 2023

## BOARD MEMBER OPPORTUNITY

### Agenda item 4

#### Call for Southern eDNA Society (SeDNAs) Board Member Nominations

##### Background to the opportunity

It has been 2.5 years since the first seed was sown for a collaborative group to help foster eDNA research and adoption in Australia and New Zealand. Since this time a number of workshops have been held identifying a common purpose for collaboration, along with a management group and working groups to help pursue this. Amongst new networks being formed and efforts to establish our group, SeDNAs has: helped with developing best practice guidelines; established a website to form the basis for knowledge sharing, and; collaborated with the eDNA conference committee to deliver seminars.

While an action plan is still being developed and to be endorsed by the new Board, over the upcoming years it's anticipated SeDNAs will help with: developing and promoting best practice in eDNA application for research and management purposes; providing educational resources and activities for applying eDNA; collaborating with First Nations people to support eDNA evolving with consideration and respect to country and culture, and; expanding frontiers of eDNA technologies by facilitating scientific collaboration and liaising with industry partners. A key output of the group will be the organisation and oversight of the eDNA conference.

If you are passionate about eDNA, believe in what SeDNAs is trying to achieve, and are excited about the idea of driving SeDNAs direction and activities please consider this leadership opportunity.

##### Formalising our group

Despite SeDNAs collaboration predominantly being online due to Covid, we have built traction and gained the interest of ~50 people who have put their hand up to get involved. A NZ based workshop helped to forge connections across the Tasman and build momentum. The decision was made to formalise our group and establish an independent not-for-profit organisation. Further discussions have put us on a course of becoming a membership based society. We expect income to assist with SeDNAs operation and activities to primarily come from membership and sponsorship.

The establishment of SeDNAs as an independent not-for-profit organisation (Charity Company Limited by Guarantee) is in final stage of implementation. Not-for-profit organisations are run by a board or committee that is made up of people appointed or elected in accordance with the organisation's rules. We are seeking for up to 8 active Board members (Directors) to be elected to form the inaugural management Board. The Board members will ensure we stay focused on SeDNAs objectives, ensuring the Society is operating in alignment with its main mission, manage its finances effectively and comply with the legal, operational and ethical requirements of SeDNAs (Please visit the following links for [good governance](#) and [responsibilities](#) of Board Committee members). We propose that this new Board supersedes the current SeDNAs Management Group and will be regularly re-elected by the SeDNAs members (the frequency of elections to be defined and prescribed in the constitution of the Society). An initial task of the Board in 2023 will be to elect the Office Bearer roles according to the SeDNAs upcoming constitution, which we anticipate to be a SeDNAs president, vice president, secretary and treasurer. The Board will meet quarterly and it is expected that Board members also take leadership roles or at least be actively involved in implementing the SeDNAs work i.e. overseeing

the Purpose Goals (please refer to the Action Plan draft document). Therefore, being a Board member implies certain time commitment.

### **What does it mean to be a SeDNAs board member?**

We are still in early stages of establishing an organisation and we need people who can bring the right energy and passion in our start up days. We need to be flexible, strategic and able to learn so that we can grow in a way that is valuable for our members and for the cause we are pursuing. We are small so we all need to be willing to roll up our sleeves when needed, change direction when needed, support each other, collaborate and enjoy working together. We are voluntary so we will need to ensure our plans are achievable – start small and grow from there. We want diversity of perspectives and experience. We welcome anyone to nominate themselves. During this election cycle, we expect more nominations coming from the research community given existing participants, but we hope that the following election will provide extra encouragement for industry professionals, ECRs, and/or indigenous people at various career stages to also nominate.

#### *Basic criteria for nominations are:*

- Passion for our mission
- Willing to and can commit the time (quarterly 1h30 meetings + at least 5h per month).
- Willingness to undertake some leadership roles in the operation of organisation
- Board experience or no board experience (but strong motivation to learn)
- Valuable perspective and/or skill sets for the Society (we need a range of skills across our Board members to run our organisation initially such as management, administration, business, stakeholder relationships, industry knowledge, facilitation, eDNA technical skills and scientific skillsets, engagement and communication skills, First Nations knowledge and connections, advocacy, etc - ideally coming with a range of perspectives and experiences)
- Leadership - with strong experience or at least strong aptitude and motivation to lead
- Collegial attitude and high ethical standards

#### *Initial tasks for Board members (2023-2024):*

- Nominate and Appoint SeDNAs President, Vice-President, Secretary and Treasurer
- Secure leaders positions for each purpose and business goals
- Oversee the good functioning of purpose and business goals
- Help coordinate the next eDNA conference with organizing committee



## DRAFT CONSTITUTION

### Agenda item 1

After an initial conversation with Moores Lawyers who are assisting us with company incorporation, we have received a first draft of the constitution (further below). It now needs to be reviewed by elected Board and finalised. Below is a quick summary of key areas to be tailored in the constitution, and notes about relevance for SeDNAs.

Topic	Notes	Decision
Name of company	We need to add the work Limited or Ltd. Whatever the company is called there can still be a different name used in practice eg an acronym	Decision: Southern Environmental DNA Society Ltd
Initial members	We need to appoint initial members upon incorporating. While directors on the Board can vote on matters like strategy Members also have legal rights e.g. to vote on things like winding up organisation and changing constitution.	All initial Board members to be ordinary members. Ability to add members as we grow our membership base.
Minimal fee payable by members if company needs to be wound up and pay debts	This is relevant in company constitutions but typically members aren't aware of this when they sign up. It is extremely rare to be acted upon	Agreed to \$10 minimum to be written into consent form to be signed by members
Membership class (different voting rights)	Relevant if we want different members to have different voting rights. Discussed the possibility of considering industry members/sponsors as a different class e.g. perhaps don't have voting rights	Initially agreed to not have any different classes, but we can consider further (e.g. do we want industry members to have right to vote).
Membership costs and categories	We can stipulate this in the constitution but this will then lock us in. We can keep it broad.	Agreed to keep it broad and brief. Important to be nimble in these early days.
Disciplinary procedure	We could be prescriptive around how to deal with issues e.g. disagreements/issues between board members or keep it broad - the latter being more recommended for us.	
Circular resolutions	Ways to make decisions quickly not requiring a meeting and formal voting at Board meeting. So instead an email could be sent around with a decision to vote on via return email.	Needing a threshold of 75% Yes for decision to be passed (lawyer recommended this higher threshold given there isn't a chance for discussion in a meeting)
Quorum	How many people we need in a board meeting to hold a board meeting and make decisions. Fairly standard to base this on a majority	Agreed to make this majority of board members
Making Board decisions	Discussed that decisions are based on majority, but if it is an even split we can write it into our constitution that we can allocate an extra vote to the Chairperson.	Agreed to have an action orientation with decision making and for Chairperson to have extra vote if needed.
Office Bearers roles & election.	Discussed that we envisage Office member roles like President, Vice, Secretary and maybe	Agreed - Board elects roles.

	treasurer. AGM - members elect specific roles or members can elect the board (and then the board elects president etc)	This will allow the board to discuss and consider who is best placed for the roles, and this seems most appropriate for us right now.
The Board election and term	As per above ordinary members can elect the board - we would hold an election and call for nominations leading into the end of a term. We like the idea of a fairly short term of 2 years - helps to ensure injection of new energy and ideas and could be most practical for attracting some board members like ECRs	Agreed 2 year time frame for reelection. In the future we could amend the constitution to actually have a cap on how many terms someone could serve.
Criteria for joining the board	There are some standard terms in the constitution around this e.g. alignment for the purpose.	Agreed we don't want to be too specific in the constitution here - nothing to specify at this stage
Role terminology & details	E.g. President or Chair Lawyer recommended President to help distinguish between the role of the meeting Chairperson (who is normally the President)	Agreed with President terminology Agreed to keep office member role details minimal in the constitution at this stage to give us flexibility. Policies can be set up later to explain what is required of the Office Bearer roles.
Our question about running elections	Should we disclose voting results etc - lawyer said there is no legal requirement about how to approach this. We can choose whether we do so or not.	We don't intend to make public number of votes etc but rather focus on who has been elected