



**ESA Position Statement  
Protocols**

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As endorsed by ESA Council in 2000**

**1. Who should be involved in developing a position statement?**

This can be an individual or a group of individuals, although someone needs to be identified as the coordinator for each position statement, who would be the first point of contact.

The coordinator must have some familiarity with the issues they are writing about, but does not have to be 'established' in their career. For example, the position statement on Environmental Impact Assessment was developed by Kirsten Benkendorff, a PhD student, who found it a very useful learning experience.

If the coordinator wants to involve others in writing the initial draft, a call for people to assist will be made in the Bulletin and, at the same time, on the ESA electronic discussion list. This will help ensure that the request reaches people not on the discussion list, and those who read the discussion list but not the Bulletin. If there are no offers of assistance forthcoming, then the coordinator should write the draft position statement themselves and circulate it for comment.

**2. Where drafts and the final version of the position statement should appear.**

The first draft of the position statement should appear in the Bulletin and, at the same time, on the electronic discussion list. This will help ensure that all members see the draft, for the reasons given in point 1.

If the comments are received, and the position statement is revised, then the second (and usually final draft) can be distributed solely on the list server and also sent directly to the people who have provided comments.

The final endorsed version of the position statement should be published in the Bulletin, on the discussion list and on the ESA web site. Reference to the presence of the endorsed statements on the website should be included in each Bulletin so that new members are aware of their existence and where they can be found.

A limited number of hard copy versions of the endorsed position statements should be printed so they can be distributed on request. However, downloading the statements from the web site should be encouraged.

**3. How many draft versions?**

A minimum of two draft versions of the position statement is required (see point 2 above). The first one would generally elicit the most comment, and the second revised version would usually invoke only minor comments. When the final version of the position statement is put up for endorsement, the opportunity for major changes has passed and only minor changes to wording are possible.

Where possible, it would be useful to hold a meeting to discuss the position statement – the best venue being the annual meeting of the society. However, depending on the stage of development of a position statement, this timing may not always be suitable. If this is the case, then the proponent could hold a meeting of local interested members and/or ask for further feedback via the email list.

**4. Format and length**

A position statement should convey the major issues in concise and clear language. A summary of the main issues and recommendations is needed, with a more detailed justification following. The position statements

that have been endorsed to date have ranged between 1100 and 1650 words in length, certainly anything longer than this would be discouraged. Subheadings are useful to guide the reader through the position statements. Selected references can be included, but it must be appreciated that these can become quickly dated.

#### **5. A reasonable turn-around period**

If a position statement takes more than 18 months from the draft stage to endorsement, then it will be deemed inactive and taken off the list of 'active' statements.

#### **6. Provision of comments from members**

ESA members will have at least two opportunities to comment on a position statement. If these opportunities are not acted on, then it will be assumed that there are no problems with the draft position statements – which will then be put up for endorsement. At this stage, the opportunity to recommend anything other than minor wording changes will have passed.

#### **7. Endorsement and ratification of position statements**

Endorsement of the position statements should occur at the Annual General Meeting of the Society where it is possible to judge whether a majority of members (at that meeting) support the statement. However, where this requirement significantly delays the endorsement of the position statement (i.e. there is a need to wait more than 6 months), then a 'vote' should be conducted on the ESA discussion list.

Once the position statement is endorsed, it then needs to be ratified by the ESA Council at the earliest possible opportunity.

#### **8. Updating position statements**

Given that our understanding of issues can change as new knowledge becomes available, position statements should be reviewed every 5 years after the anniversary of their endorsement. A call would be made on the electronic discussion list for comments, and if major changes are made then the position statement would need to be endorsed again. Up until that point, the original position statement would still be valid. The Vice President responsible for position statements (see point 11) would oversee this process, in collaboration with the original coordinator of the position statement if they are still a member of the society and interested in being involved.

#### **9. Identifying new issues**

For position statements to be effective there is a need to be proactive in the identification of issues. This way, the society will already have an endorsed statement available when issues gain a higher profile. The Vice President responsible for position statements (see point 11) would oversee this process by suggesting new topics for position statements (i.e. on genetically modified organisms; environmental weeds) and calling for new issues/coordinators from the membership.

There is also scope for symposia held at annual meetings of the society to be used to provide a focus on relevant issues, which are then developed into position statements.

#### **10. Publicising position statements**

Once a position statement has been endorsed, it is critical to publicise its availability to maximise its usefulness. As well as publishing it in the society's publications and web site (see point 2), strategic use of the media and other avenues should be considered. For example, the Australian Wildlife Management Society recently publicised their position statements on the electronic information bulletin LAWNinfo. Press releases are another option, as long as they are carefully targeted.

#### **11. A Vice President for Position Statements**

The Society has three Vice Presidents who have agreed to identify special roles and responsibilities to enhance their contribution to the Society. One of those positions will focus on the oversight of position statements, including the identification of new issues, tracking the progress of 'active' statements, overseeing the publication and publicity of endorsed position statements and coordinating the update of position statements over 5 years old. This person could also be the contact for queries on different position statements and put the person requesting information in touch with the coordinator and/or provide information on how to access the position statement. This may seem like an unnecessary step, but there will always be a VP with this responsibility, whereas the coordinator may leave the society, move onto other things etc.