



## PLANT BREEDER'S RIGHTS CONSULTATION GROUP

### Meeting Summary from 10 March 2026

The **Plant Breeders Rights Consultation Group (PBRCG)** met on Tuesday, 10 March 2026 in the Melbourne Intellectual Property Office and via Microsoft Teams. The Chair opened the meeting, delivered an Acknowledgement of Country, and welcomed all participants. Attendances and apologies were noted. Members endorsed the Minutes of the last meeting, which was held on 14 October 2025.

The Chair's update included an introduction to the new Chief of PBR, Tim Gillet, noting that he will lead and manage PBR examination, support PBR modernisation and is the point of contact for members requiring support. Members were also advised that the Director General of IP Australia will be leaving in March, with Margaret Tregurtha appointed as Acting Director General until a permanent replacement is found. Operational priorities were outlined, including a focus on PBR production, building long-term capability to support and train new examiners, and uplifting quality assurance and mentoring to improve consistency in examination. Finally, members were informed that IP Australia has published its Artificial Intelligence Transparency Statement, [Accountability and reporting | IP Australia](#).

The Customer Experience Group provided an update outlining that Online Services is the primary portal for managing IP rights and that the recent introduction of multi-factor authentication (MFA) was required to meet government security standards. There was user feedback on accessibility challenges and advice that alternative authentication options are being explored to improve usability while remaining compliant. Future work to digitise PBR forms and improve data flows between systems was noted which could enable integration with business-to-business APIs for high-volume users, as well as a customer data remediation project to improve data management across the agency. Stakeholders reiterated the need for collaborative workflows when completing PBR forms, and it was confirmed that alternative PDF forms will remain available.

The Policy and Stakeholders Group provided a verbal update covering Indigenous Knowledge and trade policy matters, noting that a new Treaty on IP, Genetic Resources and Associated Traditional Knowledge was [concluded at WIPO in May 2024](#), signed by the Government in 2024, and is progressing through the treaty-making process towards ratification. It was advised that IP Australia is considering possible changes to patents and trade marks laws to improve the assessment and protection of Indigenous Knowledge, including measures to prevent misappropriation of language or imagery in trade marks and options for source disclosure requirements in the patents system. On trade policy, it was confirmed that Australia remains committed to concluding a Free Trade Agreement with the European Union and an update was also provided on the Comprehensive and Progressive Agreement for a Trans-Pacific Partnership (CPTPP), with the ninth commission meeting held in Melbourne in November 2025 and outcomes reflected in a [joint ministerial statement published by DFAT](#). Further information is available via [IKproject@ipaaustralia.gov.au](mailto:IKproject@ipaaustralia.gov.au).

Information was provided about public consultation that has been launched on proposed administrative and technical changes to IP legislation, including PBR, with proposals introducing a six-month non-extendable grace period for PBR renewal fees, and removing the mandatory herbarium deposit requirement for new native plant varieties. The consultation is open until 2 April 2026, with opportunities for submissions or survey responses via the IP Australia website. It was noted that while the current consultation focuses on streamlining and productivity-enhancing changes, other PBR policy issues, including essentially derived varieties (EDVs), remain under consideration, with options such as targeted consultations and workshops being explored, and stakeholders encouraged to provide evidence of productivity impacts to support future reforms. PBRCG members are to consider further input or next steps on these policy issues.

A verbal update was provided outlining recent changes and priorities within the PBR examination team, including the introduction of new and experienced delegates and noting trainee examiner progression to grant delegation is supported through a competency-based training programme. Over the next 12 months, the focus will be on continuing to deliver quality and timely examination services, while implementing broader system and process changes. Updates were also provided on addresses for service, with related administrative functions moving to a central administration group to improve consistency, accuracy and centralised handling of enquiries via the PBR mailbox. While overall system metrics are strong, it was acknowledged that stakeholders can experience individual case-level issues, with improvements underway to better manage status enquiries and maintain continuity. Outstanding refunds were noted as a current issue, with work in progress to clear backlogs, alongside

ongoing compliance work in the oppositions area. Stakeholders were encouraged to make contact as needed, with enquiries directed to the appropriate area.

The Chair outlined proposed updates to the Terms of Reference, including adding Australian Crop Breeders to ensure continuity of representation and New Zealand Intellectual Property Attorneys as a new member. It was suggested that engagement with other industry bodies, such as horticulture sector organisations, may help encourage broader participation in the PBRCG. The updated Terms of Reference were endorsed and will be circulated after the meeting, with an action to include information about the PBRCG in future stakeholder communications to invite participation.

The Chair and members farewellled Andrew Cecil formally acknowledging his significant contribution to the PBRCG, highlighting his passion, energy and strong commitment to collaboration and the sharing of information and knowledge, particularly in relation to PBR reform. His support and guidance on PBR matters, and engagement with Australian Crop Breeders, QPs and industry more broadly were specifically recognised, along with his strong advocacy for effective engagement between IP Australia and industry. The Chair and members expressed their sincere appreciation for his contribution.

The **next PBRCG** meeting is scheduled for 2 September 2026 and will be via Microsoft Teams. Members are invited to suggest discussion topics, case studies or guest speakers, including potential international issues affecting the IP system, with an action for members to contact the PBRCG team with ideas for future meetings.

Meeting Summaries of all our Consultation Groups can be found on our website: [Consultation Groups | IP Australia](#). For further information, please contact [mdb-pbr-consultationgroup@ipaustralia.gov.au](mailto:mdb-pbr-consultationgroup@ipaustralia.gov.au).