

## **IRSEA PRIORITIES FOR 2021–2022 CONSULTATIVE PAPER**

### **INTRODUCTION**

The IRSEA Executive Committee has developed a set of priorities for the Institute that are to be addressed in 2021–22. This paper presents these priorities and the actions to be undertaken to achieve them.

It is requested that members review the priorities and actions and provide any comments or feedback to Graham Dawson ([grahamd48@gmail.com](mailto:grahamd48@gmail.com)) no later than 17 August so that the paper and the feedback can be discussed in the online member meeting planned for 20 August.

### **CONTEXT AND BACKGROUND**

At its June meeting, the IRSEA Executive Committee considered three priority areas to be addressed by the Institute during 2021 and 2022. The three issues were.

1. Improve the dialogue and the professional relationship between IRSEA and the Department of Education (DoE) so that IRSEA members can contribute more effectively to the community discourse on education issues and contribute to policy development across the education sector.
2. Increase IRSEA membership, particularly among DoE and TAFE senior officers nearing or commencing retirement.
3. Improve communication and interaction with IRSEA members.

There was agreement among Executive Committee members that these were important priorities, and actions to address these issues were considered. As a result of these discussions the President developed a discussion paper for Executive Committee members which, after internal consultation, was endorsed. That paper provides the basis for this wider Consultative Paper, which sets out below the priorities and the actions to be implemented to achieve them.

### **PRIORITY 1**

#### **STRENGTHEN RELATIONSHIPS WITH DoE AND CONTRIBUTE MORE EXTENSIVELY TO THE DISCOURSE ON EDUCATION ISSUES**

Strong relationships have been established with senior DoE personnel and the Executive Committee believes that it is important to reaffirm and build on these relationships. In particular, efforts should be made to engage more fully with all Deputy Secretaries within the new DoE structure.

The Executive Committee is also of the view that IRSEA members have extensive expertise and knowledge that could be utilised more extensively to contribute to discussions on education issues and policy development. This has two aspects.

1. Contributing to DoE consultative processes and policy development within DoE and TAFE.
2. Contributing to the community discourse on wider education issues.

Attempts have been made by previous Executive Committees to address the first issue but they have not been as successful as hoped. The current Executive Committee is of the view that these previous efforts should be revisited and a series of new actions be implemented.

It was agreed that IRSEA should request of relevant senior DoE officers that the Institute be included as one of the entities that would be routinely approached for comment as part of the Department's consultative processes when new policies and programs are being formulated.

While the relationship with the DoE is of prime importance to IRSEA, the Institute could also contribute more effectively to the wider community discussion on education issues.

This could be achieved in part by establishing relationships with other relevant state and national education bodies, such as the NSW Education Standards Authority, the Australian Institute for Teaching and School Leadership, and Australian Curriculum.

The nature and extent of such relationships needs to be determined by the Executive Committee but could include:

- providing the relevant bodies with information about IRSEA;
- providing a link to these groups on the proposed IRSEA website; and
- requesting that IRSEA be invited to participate in the consultation process in relevant areas.

It is also proposed that a moderated *Forum* section be included as part of the IRSEA website that is being developed. This section would provide a space for members to present personal views on a range of educational issues and has the potential to generate wider interest among members in contributing to the discussion and debate on a range of educational issues.

The proposed actions to address this priority are presented below.

*Please note that the timeframes presented in the plans for each option may be affected by COVID-19 regulations.*

#### **Proposed Actions Priority 1**

Action	Responsibility	Timeframe
1. Meet with IRSEA contact officer from DoE to discuss options for IRSEA engagement and dialogue with the DoE and the contribution of IRSEA to policy development and debate. This meeting should also be used to identify issues within the DoE that may affect IRSEA's capacity to engage in policy development and consultative processes.	Graham Dawson Lindsay Wasson	September 2021
2. Following the initial meeting with the DoE contact person, follow-up meetings be held with the Deputy Secretaries School Performance (North and South) and the Deputy Secretary Learning Improvement.	Graham Dawson Lindsay Wasson	September 2021

Action	Responsibility	Timeframe
3. The Executive Committee consider options for engaging more widely in community discussions on education issues and engaging with other relevant education bodies.	Executive Committee	October 2021
4. The Executive Committee consider the feasibility and desirability of developing and publishing official IRSEA position statements on select education issues.	Executive Committee	October 2021
5. IRSEA to include links to DoE website and other relevant education bodies and organisations on its proposed website	Ray Gillies Website Sub-Group	October 2021
6. IRSEA to request DoE to place a link to the IRSEA website on its website.	Graham Dawson	October 2021
7. The proposed IRSEA website to include a moderated forum section where members could contribute to discussions on educational issues.	Ray Gillies Website Sub-Group	October 2021

## PRIORITY 2

### MEMBERSHIP RENEWAL

The Executive Committee agreed that membership renewal was a high priority. It was noted that without ongoing renewal, IRSEA will not be able to contribute to policy dialogue and its impact on the public education debate will cease.

Members noted that previous actions to renew and increase membership had included seeking the support of the DoE to distribute information about IRSEA and member application forms to DoE personnel nearing retirement. This approach has merit and will continue to be pursued. However, because of privacy concerns, it has not proven to be as effective as hoped and will be supported by other strategies.

In addition to using the DoE or TAFE to provide information about IRSEA to potential members, it is proposed that the same information be conveyed directly to DoE and TAFE officers nearing retirement by IRSEA members who know them personally. The Executive Committee will provide members implementing this strategy with relevant materials and information and it is hoped that this approach will overcome DoE/TAFE privacy concerns.

Additional strategies to complement these two actions could include.

1. Individual IRSEA members approaching potential members directly to provide information about IRSEA and inviting them to join.
2. Using the proposed website to promote the purpose and mission of IRSEA, and to provide information about IRSEA and online opportunities to join IRSEA.
3. Providing the option of no-cost honorary or associate membership for senior officers approaching retirement as a precursor to full membership. This idea is currently being developed in more detail and will be considered by the Executive Committee in the near future.

The IRSEA constitution includes provision for former TAFE senior officers to join the Institute but very few have in fact joined. It may be necessary for the Executive Committee to consider strategies to communicate with former TAFE senior administrators with a view to increasing their membership in the organisation.

## Proposed Actions Priority 2

Action	Responsibility	Timeframe
1. IRSEA representatives meet with senior DoE personnel to discuss strategies for contacting senior officers who are nearing retirement to provide them with information about IRSEA and invite them to join, initially as associate members, and eventually as full members.	Graham Dawson Lindsay Wasson	September 2021
2. Lindsay Wasson to prepare a briefing about options for associate or honorary IRSEA membership for the consideration of the Executive Committee and members	Lindsay Wasson	August 2021
3. The Executive Committee to consider strategies to communicate with former TAFE senior educational administrators about membership of IRSEA.	Executive Committee	October 2021
4. Executive Committee Executive members to advise of personal contacts within the DoE who could be used to share information about IRSEA to potential members.	Executive Committee Graham Dawson Alan Mills	September 2021
5. Executive Committee to write to all IRSEA members asking them to provide information about and invite eligible colleagues to consider joining IRSEA.	Graham Dawson Brian Davies Alan Mills	September 2021
6. IRSEA to conduct an audit of membership database to ensure its currency and accuracy.	Graham Dawson Alan Mills	September 2021
7. In designing the IRSEA website, ensure that the site includes publicly accessible information about IRSEA, its purposes and mission, and the capacity to submit a membership application online.	Ray Gillies Website Sub-Group	October 2021

### **PRIORITY 3**

#### **COMMUNICATION WITH MEMBERS**

The Executive Committee indicated that building on current communication strategies with members was important to:

- ensure continued engagement with members;
- promote the recruitment of new members; and
- encourage members to continue to support and promote Stewart House and public education.

To this end, the current communication strategies – the newsletter, luncheon meetings, and email communications – will continue but be enhanced through the establishment of an IRSEA website.

It was noted that IRSEA needs to be clear on the purpose of the website to ensure that it meets member requirements. Agreement about the purpose of the website will facilitate its design and parameters.

It is proposed that the website serve the following purposes.

1. Provide a vehicle to communicate issues and activities to current members.
2. Provide a public face for IRSEA, including details about its purpose, mission, objectives and activities.
3. Promote debate and dialogue about current issues affecting public school education and act as a forum for the discussion of such issues.
4. Support the welfare of current members.
5. Provide a repository for key IRSEA documents and publications.
6. Promote support for Stewart House.
7. Promote IRSEA to potential future members and to facilitate membership.

It will be particularly important for the website to promote the purposes and mission of IRSEA, to both current and potential future members. The website, together with all other IRSEA communication strategies and tools, should be explicit about the purposes and mission of the Institute and the benefits of becoming a member.

To achieve these purposes, it is considered important that the website have both a public face that presents information about IRSEA and a password protected area that allows current members to access information and debate educational issues.

Government restrictions and personal health concerns about COVID-19 have restricted the conduct of luncheon meetings over the last year. However, such face-to-face meetings are a vital means of communicating with members and potential members. If COVID-19 restrictions and concerns ease in 2021 and 2022 the Executive Committee will seek to invigorate the luncheon meetings and use these as a forum to address important current issues in public education.

It is proposed that the Executive Committee will establish a theme for presentations at luncheon meetings for 2021–22 and invite a range of respected and influential educators, commencing with the Deputy Secretary School Improvement (South), to address this theme.

Given concerns that the quality of public education, as measured by international testing programs, has declined over the last ten years, it is proposed that the theme for 2021–22 be

“NSW Public Education: Improving Student Achievement and Public Confidence” and that the Deputy Secretary be invited to address this issue at the December lunch meeting.

It may also be desirable to use the agreed annual theme to invite articles for the newsletter from both members and non-members.

Because some members find it difficult or may be reluctant, given the situation with COVID-19, to attend the face-to-face luncheon meetings, the Executive Committee will examine the feasibility and cost of streaming the presentations as on-line webinars. It could also be possible to open such webinars to potential future members as well as current members.

### Proposed Actions Priority 3

Action	Responsibility	Timeframe
1. Current communication strategies be maintained and enhanced with the development of the IRSEA website.	Executive Committee	Ongoing
2. A sub-group of the Executive Committee to meet with Ray Gillies to support the design and development of the website.	Ray Gillies Website Sub-Group	Ongoing from August 2021
3. If considered necessary by the sub-group and the Executive Committee, funding be allocated to support the design, establishment and maintenance of the website.	Executive Committee Ray Gillies Website Sub-Group	Ongoing from August 2021
4. The Executive Committee seek to reinvigorate luncheon meetings and invite presenters to address an agreed theme during 2021–22.	Executive Committee John Allsopp	Ongoing from December 2021
5. The Executive Committee examine the cost and feasibility of presenting luncheon meeting presentations as on-line webinars.	Executive Committee John Allsopp	October 2021
6. If the Executive Committee agrees to establishing a theme for 2021–22, this theme be used as a basis for some articles for the newsletter.	Executive Committee Syd Smith	Ongoing from October 2021

**NEXT STEPS**

Members are asked to review the Consultative Paper and provide feedback to Graham Dawson (grahamd48@gmail.com) by 17 August 2021. The responses and the ideas presented in the Consultative Paper will be discussed further at the online meeting scheduled for 20<sup>th</sup> August 2021.

Following the review of responses from members a final plan for the achievement of priorities will be developed, endorsed by the Executive Committee, shared with members and be implemented from August 2021.

**Dr Graham Dawson**  
**On behalf of the IRSEA Executive Committee**

**5<sup>th</sup> August 2021**