

## IRSEA – a ‘MEMBER VALUE’ ORGANISATION

### *Recognition, Responsibility and Reward*

#### Issue:

- Why join IRSEA?
- What value does it have for me?
- Is there any point in becoming or remaining a member?

To be blunt, these are important questions without persuasive answers. Confronted by this stark reality, the Executive Committee has been in the process of recasting IRSEA as a more dynamic, more engaging and more influential organisation for its members. However, we cannot hope to fulfil these aspirations without offering compelling answers, clearly and unambiguously, in a membership value-package we can first design, communicate, and then deliver, to current and prospective members.

#### Comment:

The questions above have exercised the minds and driven much of the focused work of the Executive Committee during 2021 and early 2022. The questions bear on issues such as recruitment, membership growth, the quality of the membership experience, and the very rationale for the existence of the organisation. They also require of the Institute a clearly articulated suite of personal and professional advantages IRSEA membership confers on, or provides to, its eminent membership.

The member-value proposition set out below is an attempt to answer some of these questions and to demonstrate why and how membership can be an attractive, enjoyable and enriching experience, both personally and collectively, while offering a range of opportunities for the intellectual engagement and educational influence of members and the Institute itself.

Crucially, IRSEA needs to become, what is termed in the literature, a **‘member value organisation’**. Such an organisation is committed to member centricity where:

- personalised, ‘customer’ or member experience is provided in line with each member’s hopes, expectations and needs; and
- **perceived member value** and **actual member value** are identical.

This paper sets out IRSEA’s **‘Member Value’** proposition within the following structure: *Recognition, Responsibility, and Reward*.

## Recognition

Building on the '**Member Value**' organisation model alluded to above, this section posits the view that '**members value an organisation that values them**'. The foundation arguments for this notion were canvassed in the *Associate and Honorary Membership* paper approved in large part by members of the Executive Committee and by the broader membership in October 2021. They reflect widespread practice in clubs, organisations and associations and are validated in the literature as noted above.

The writers of this paper therefore propose a structure for the valuing and recognition of members by first providing formal recognition of members in a suite of ascending accreditations, awards and insignia to confirm and attest to their certified membership, achievement, and value as members.

- **Associate IRSEA Membership Certificate:**

Framed and presented to identified retiring senior educational administrators, and those who have signalled their intention to retire, in a formal ceremony (if so desired by the recipient) during an IRSEA luncheon meeting. Associate Membership would follow identification, nomination, seconding and approval of such individuals.

- **IRSEA Membership Certificate:**

Framed and presented to all full members (current and newly approved) in a formal ceremony as part of a luncheon meeting.

It is also proposed that two additional insignia of membership be presented concurrently:

- IRSEA Pin (modelled on the old IISSEA pin in the possession of Lindsay Wasson)
- Name Badge (if desired)

- **Honorary Membership Certificate:**

As outlined in the already approved *Associate and Honorary Membership* paper, this category of certification is to be awarded to those current senior educational administrators who have made significant contributions to the operational success of IRSEA and are seen as champions of the organisation.

In addition, individuals from other organisations who have been deemed by the Executive Committee and approved by the President as worthy of this honour, will also be offered this category of membership.

Fittingly, these senior officers and individuals should also be awarded their framed Honorary Membership Certificate in a formal ceremony.

- **Certificate of Appreciation:**

This certificate is awarded to any IRSEA member, or Honorary Member who, in the estimation of the IRSEA Leadership Group of President, Vice President, Past President and Secretary, deserves one-off recognition for specific acts or tasks undertaken that are broadly seen as enhancing the organisation and making a significant contribution to member-value. The recent award of a Certificate of Appreciation to Ray Gillies for his exceptional work on the IRSEA Website illustrates how this certificate can work in practice.

- **Outstanding Service to IRSEA Award:**

One of the great benefits of membership of IRSEA is the opportunity to engage with and contribute to the organisation and its members in ways that advance its mission and objectives. However, many members, over many years, have made exceptional and often long-term contributions to the organisation and have done so with perhaps insufficient formal appreciation and recognition. This paper proposes that such outstanding individuals who, for no personal benefit apart from the satisfaction of doing good work for others, have brought great thinking, leadership and extraordinary value to IRSEA, should be accorded IRSEA's second highest honour – The **Outstanding Service to IRSEA Award**.

Nominations will be sought from the full membership, considered by the Executive Committee, and approved by the President. Once again, presentation of this framed certificate will be conferred during a formal ceremony such as a luncheon meeting.

- **Life Membership:**

IRSEA's highest and rarest award, **Life Membership**, is reserved for those few members who, by their dedicated commitment to IRSEA; their long-term and outstanding contribution to the membership; and their profound and positive impact on the life of the organisation, are broadly and unequivocally acknowledged as deserving of this recognition.

Life Members will receive a prestigious certificate and a unique badge in honour of their elevation to this category of recognition at a suitable ceremony attached to an IRSEA luncheon or function. Life Members will pay no further annual subscriptions and will be accorded adjunct status to the IRSEA Executive Committee.

## Responsibility (and Professional Participation)

The IRSEA Mission Statement is clear about one of our central purposes as an Institute - that we will deploy our ***‘intellectual capacity and educational expertise for the betterment of public education in NSW and beyond’***. To date, this has been difficult to devise and execute. Our internal structures have not been fully aligned to manage this broad aim, nor have we developed the degree of recognition, professional acceptance and formal relationships, particularly with the DoE, that are required to achieve our ends.

**Structures:** This paper proposes a set of sub-committee structures to facilitate the greater participation of members in the advocacy, response, and educational influence domains of IRSEA. Sub-committees will attract broader member participation in the organisation and enhance member value and experience through such engagement. Sub-committees can be standing committees and specific issue/special purpose designed.

In addition to the current and well-functioning **Website Sub-Committee** (Standing sub-committee), the following additional sub-committees are suggested:

- **Media:** (Standing sub-committee)

A dedicated group of media-savvy and media-skilled members will: promote IRSEA; provide support, commentary on, and endorsement of, valued DoE initiatives and strategies; and comment on broader educational issues compatible with both IRSEA's Mission and the values of a desired, progressive educational agenda.

- **Policy and Program:** (Standing Sub-Committee)

This group will coordinate the development by specific policy and program teams, of well researched and evidence-based responses to educational developments, both requested by the DoE or other educational agencies.

This major sub-committee will have a special remit to coordinate contributions and input into DoE thinking, policies, directions and implementation. The success of this group and other strategic policy-aligned groups, in particular, the DoE Liaison sub-committee outlined below, will depend on bringing together the most highly attuned and influential members of IRSEA in a powerful coalition of steely aspirants committed to educational excellence and equitable outcomes.

Specific policy and program teams established to support this function can cover critical areas such as:

- **Curriculum/Learning**
- **Aboriginal Education**
- **Multicultural Education**
- **Behaviour**
- **Welfare**
- **Educational Structures**
- **Professional Learning**
- **Disability Education**
- **Leadership**
- **Assessment** and so on.

Importantly, membership of the Policy and Program sub-committee and related teams may also involve participation in consultation, roundtables, forums, and think-tank processes initiated by the DoE or other agencies.

- **Newsletter and Publications:** (Standing Sub-Committee)

**Newsletters** may contain educational articles by members or DoE staff by invitation. Personal reflections and stories by members provide interesting reading. Celebrating members' successes, welcoming new members and adding information about their career background and farewelling members who have passed away. The newsletter will be the funnel of information about proposed happenings, meetings and social events.

**Publications** may be more formal documents discussing particular events, DoE directions/strategies and commentary about educational areas. The aim would be to keep members up to date on current educational thinking and discourse. There will be close liaison with the **Media Sub-Committee** providing an opportunity to broadcast its findings and commentary.

- **DoE Liaison** (Standing Sub-Committee)

A small group with direct contact with the DoE to continue viable dialogue and keep a focus on what IRSEA can provide in discussions through the extensive experience of its members. This committee will have a database showing the background and expertise of members and propose the appropriate member to participate in selected think tanks, roundtables and forums. It will be up to selected members to agree to participate depending on their availability and situation.

## **Membership and participation of IRSEA sub-committees**

After discussion at executive level, individual members may be approached to join or form a committee by the president. Initially this will be the decision of each member.

However, members will be encouraged to consider participation in a committee or leadership of a particular sub-committee when it's evident they have the background and skills to do so.

## Reward

The membership of an organisation that connects former colleagues and encourages the intellectual exchange of ideas offers great opportunities and value to members. There are additional rewards for our membership in the form of authentic collegiality, support, and new experiences, new ideas, and new adventures. These rewards build on the impressive foundations that IRSEA has developed and maintained for its members over many years.

### Current Reward Provisions

- **Luncheon Meetings:**

Regular luncheons where collegiality, reunion and friendship are foremost and where guest speakers are invited to challenge and stimulate intellect, will still be a major reward element. The COVID experience and the use of technology has broadened the opportunities for more to attend virtually. This is of specific interest to many members who have either moved interstate, to rural areas or who are no longer able to make a journey into the city.

- **IRSEA Website:**

Communication with our members is of great importance so the ongoing presence of our website will connect members and provide some interesting reading. The variety of the material will be dependent on the interest of the members and, in many cases on their submissions and request for articles.

- **IRSEA Newsletter:**

The IRSEA newsletter is an important and popular membership entitlement that rewards our members with current education topics, past recollections and a welfare section that allows us all to have the opportunity to support and connect with former colleagues.

- **Strong Welfare Strategies:**

The Institute has developed a strong welfare and support structure where member care and support are foremost. Our welfare program is focused on ensuring member connectedness, communication, direct personal support (either remotely or face-to face), and coordinating the Institute's engagement with members and their families in time of illness, loss and bereavement.

## **Proposed Initiatives**

To engage with all members and further attract members who are close to retirement, the Institute will offer:

- **Lecture Series:**

An interesting lecture series that may focus on a particular theme, informed by member interest, where members can physically attend or, where a Zoom connection can be an option.

- **Guest Speakers:**

Guest speakers who are invited to face-to-face luncheons with a specific topic that connects with the interests and background of the IRSEA membership.

- **Social Events:**

A range of social events that may include:

- Online wine tastings with a limited number of participants.
- Wine tasting events at various locations around NSW organised with the assistance of members in specific wine tasting areas. Possible locations may include the Hunter Valley, Orange, Mudgee, Young, even Canberra.
- Walking events at varied locations around Sydney and in rural areas, once again organised through the assistance of country and regional members.
- Movie festivals or one-off cinema experiences with tickets offered to members
- Trivia Evenings in person or join by Zoom

The Institute aims to create broad member value through its enhanced suite of Reward offerings. The importance of responding to member requests and suggestions is paramount in personalising the Reward programs and provisions. There are, of course, many intrinsic and powerful rewards that are the simple consequence of Institute membership.

Connection with former colleagues, associates and newly-made friends is at the very heart and the fundamental *raison d'être* of IRSEA. IRSEA promotes a Member Value ethos and is committed to providing a membership experience that is both rewarding and fulfilling. If membership can be exciting and future-leaning, with a suite of options to achieve broad-based connection with pride in membership, the future of the organisation is well assured.

## Concluding Comments

**'Member Value'** of IRSEA derives from a multifaceted suite of advantages, options, benefits and opportunities for members and prospective members. The concept of **Member Value** underpins and imbues the total package.

Our organisation must be attractive, lively, motivating, and enjoyable. It must respond to members' needs and aspirations. It must cater to a membership with a broad spectrum of needs, interests and expectations. In so doing we will design and deliver tailored programs, events, inputs and activities that engage and stimulate while also creating a sense of momentum and purpose for all members.

Both the perceived and the actual IRSEA **member value** depend on the degree to which a personalised culture is developed within the organisation. For instance, Associate Members, before they retire, should be linked to a suitable full member to help 'case-manage' their experience with IRSEA and help them through the transition to full membership and then orientation to the broader membership and the Institute itself. We need to show we care. We need to imbue our organisation with a sense of belonging, sharing, and authentic collegiality. We need to ensure that all members – our veteran members of an older demographic through to our youngest recruits - find a fulfilling purpose in the Institute and realise significant value through the very positive experience of their membership.

We will move forward with the clear and demonstrable commitment that **Member Value** is the cornerstone of our operation and the reason for its very existence. And we will move forward with the unwavering belief that our unique and eminent membership is made up of passionate, actively engaged, highly invested advocates of public education who see IRSEA as a dynamic and nimble collegial group that mirrors, elevates, and enhances their special attributes and dispositions.

We commend this paper to you.

**Lindsay Wasson**

**Janina Sulikowski**

**Kerryanne Knox**

23 March 2022