1. Role of AEEYSOC

The Australian Education, Early Childhood and Youth Affairs Senior Officials Committee (AEEYSOC) is directly responsible to the Standing Council on School Education and Early Childhood (SCSEEC) for the execution of Council decisions. Specifically, AEEYSOC:

- provides policy advice to SCSEEC;
- supervises and coordinates SCSEEC’s work across its advisory bodies and working groups;
- resolves operational and policy issues before progressing matters raised by ministerial authorities and companies to SCSEEC; and
- manages and coordinates jurisdictions’ funding contributions for nationally agreed projects and initiatives, through the SCSEEC Secretariat.

The Standing Council is responsible for establishing AEEYSOC’s Terms of Reference, which are to be reviewed approximately every three years as part of the SCSEEC review and evaluation required by the Council of Australian Governments (COAG) – refer to section 12 of the SCSEEC Operating Protocols.

2. Membership

AEEYSOC comprises Chief Executive Officers (CEOs) for school education and early childhood and care in Australia and New Zealand; the Chairs of any standing committees established by the senior officials group (if not a CEO); and representatives from each of the senior officials’ groups supporting the Standing Council on Community, Housing and Disability Services (SCCHDS).

3. Chairing

AEEYSOC’s chairing arrangements mirror the SCSEEC chairing cycle as follows:

2013  New South Wales
2014  Australian Capital Territory
2015  Queensland
2016  Northern Territory
2017  Tasmania
2018  South Australia
2019  Australian Government
2020  Victoria
2021  Western Australia

In any year, the position of Deputy Chair is held by the next year’s incoming Chair. The position of Chair is assumed by the Deputy Chair if and when the Chair is unable to attend meetings, or is temporarily absent, and the Chair has determined that his/her proxy (refer to section 6.1) will not assume chairing responsibilities.

The Chair is responsible for convening meetings, including setting dates and venues.

4. Working groups

AEEYSOC, on behalf of SCSEEC, is responsible for establishing working groups as needed. In doing so, it is important that any proposed working groups add strategic value to the achievement of SCSEEC priorities.

AEEYSOC is responsible for the operation of all SCSEEC working groups, with reference to SCSEEC as needed.

Working groups are responsible for providing annual work plans to AEEYSOC for approval (where appropriate), and for regularly reporting to AEEYSOC on progress. Additionally, changes to the Terms of Reference of working groups should be approved by AEEYSOC.

The SCSEEC Secretariat, on behalf of AEEYSOC, is responsible for providing working groups with advice covering matters including membership and consistency of planning and reporting.
5. AEEYSOC meeting arrangements

5.1 Frequency of meetings

AEEYSOC is required to meet at least two weeks in advance of Standing Council meetings to preview Council agenda papers and, where possible, resolve outstanding issues and arrive at final wording for the recommendations on each agenda item.

Additional meetings are also scheduled as required to discharge AEEYSOC’s role in the management of Council’s work.

At the end of each year, the SCSEEC Secretariat will prepare, in conjunction with the incoming Chair, a schedule of meetings for the following year, for AEEYSOC’s approval, taking into account the scheduling of Council meetings. It is the responsibility of the Chair and the Secretariat to ensure that meeting dates are set that enable a clear majority of AEEYSOC members to attend.

In accordance with COAG guidelines, AEEYSOC will utilise the TelePresence network as much as possible to transact their business.

5.2 Location of meetings

Taking into account ease of access and cost, the location of AEEYSOC face-to-face meetings is at the discretion of the Chair, and is generally restricted to the capital cities of Australia.

5.3 Development and circulation of meeting agendas

Items for inclusion on an AEEYSOC meeting agenda are nominated by AEEYSOC members, or by officials acting on behalf of members, through the SCSEEC Secretariat. On behalf of the Chair, the Secretariat calls for agenda items; sets the date for the final submission of agenda items; and compiles and circulates draft agendas to AEEYSOC members.

Pre-SCSEEC AEEYSOC meeting agendas should be limited as much as possible to consideration of the SCSEEC agenda items.

A paper should be provided for each AEEYSOC agenda item.

5.4 Meeting papers

Papers for AEEYSOC meetings should be provided to the SCSEEC Secretariat in accordance with the due dates circulated by the Secretariat, but generally will be required at least two weeks (10 working days) prior to the meeting date. This includes SCSEEC papers for pre-SCSEEC AEEYSOC meetings. (Note that the due date may vary depending on the frequency and type of meetings).

AEEYSOC papers that are not received by the established due date will be deemed to be late, and the agreement of the meeting to consider these items will be sought.

National Project Fund bids should be prepared on the project fund template and accompanied by a covering paper.

5.5 Classification and circulation of documents

Consistent with the Handbook for COAG Councils, documents prepared for AEEYSOC should be treated as confidential, unless otherwise agreed by AEEYSOC, and only distributed on a strict need to know basis. The AEEYSOC Chair may limit circulation of confidential papers.

The SCSEEC Secretariat will circulate information, including meeting papers and meeting arrangement notifications, to AEEYSOC members and/or their nominated recipients. The number of nominated recipients on the AEEYSOC distribution list should be kept to a minimum. The Secretariat will undertake a review of its email distribution list at least once a year.

6 Meeting attendance and speaking rights

The AEEYSOC Chair is responsible for making key decisions in relation to the structure and content of meetings, and for chairing meetings in accordance with these protocols. The SCSEEC Secretariat will work with the host jurisdiction in arranging the meeting.

6.1 Meeting attendance and quorum

If an AEEYSOC member, including the Chair, is unable to attend a meeting, they may nominate as proxy a senior official to attend on their behalf.

For the purposes of determining whether an AEEYSOC meeting can proceed, a quorum will be taken to mean at least five Chief Executive Officers from different jurisdictions present. New Zealand, non-CEO members and representatives from each of the senior officials’ groups supporting the Standing Council on Community, Housing and Disability Services (SCCHDS) are not counted for the purposes of an AEEYSOC quorum.
Members may invite a small number of senior officials to accompany them to AEEYSOC meetings, as deemed necessary, recognising that large numbers of additional officers may be difficult to accommodate and add to the meeting costs for jurisdictions.

Members of the Council’s ministerial authorities and companies (ACARA, AITSL, ESA and ACECQA) will be invited to attend AEEYSOC meetings as observers for items that relate to the business of their organisation, and other items as determined by AEEYSOC and/or the AEEYSOC Chair (or their proxy).

Attendance of guests at AEEYSOC meetings is at the invitation of an AEEYSOC member, with the approval of the Chair. Guests’ attendance at AEEYSOC meetings is limited to specific items that relate to the business of their organisation.

7 AEEYSOC decision-making

In accordance with COAG guidelines, only significant intergovernmental work should be progressed through the Council system, with all other work delegated to senior officials. COAG expects that Standing Councils remain focused on the issues of the most strategic importance, with items of a procedural or technical nature delegated to senior officials to determine.

Within this context, SCSEC is primarily tasked with setting the strategic agenda and prioritising areas for reform, in line with COAG priorities. AEEYSOC is responsible for providing policy advice to SCSEC and in dealing directly with policy and program development and implementation. It is for this reason that AEEYSOC maintains oversight and coordination of SCSEC working groups and delegates to them on issues of an operational nature.

AEEYSOC will make decisions on the basis of consensus wherever possible. New Zealand abstains from decision-making on matters that could intrude on the central functions of the development and coordination of policy, problem solving and joint action by jurisdictions under the Australian federation.

Non-CEO AEEYSOC members and representatives from each of the senior officials’ groups supporting the Standing Council on Community, Housing and Disability Services (SCCHDS) do not have decision-making rights on AEEYSOC.

Important, AEEYSOC has decision-making authority for those matters for which it has sole responsibility, including operational and budgetary management of Council matters, and any policy matters for which Council has delegated decision-making authority to AEEYSOC.

In this regard, AEEYSOC’s agreement to progress items to SCSEC for consideration and/or decision does not necessarily constitute AEEYSOC’s endorsement of the recommendations, or a commitment to the recommendations by any one jurisdiction.

8 Discussion and resolution on agenda items

Unless otherwise agreed, the order of dealing with items will be as listed on the agenda. For each item, the Chair will:

1. Ask the proposer or originator of the paper to introduce the item by drawing to members’ attention only the key aspects requiring consideration – noting that the meeting will generally take the papers as read.

2. Invite general discussion from other AEEYSOC members – noting that a key responsibility of AEEYSOC is to resolve, where possible, operational and policy issues, particularly in respect to papers going to SCSEC for consideration.

3. Give the proposer of the item the right of reply.

AEEYSOC papers only

4. If amendments are proposed, ask AEEYSOC to consider (in order raised) each amendment.

5. Ask the proposer(s) of the amendments to explain their proposals and seek reactions generally from members.

6. Seek a reaction from the proposer of the original recommendations, who may:

   a  support amending the original recommendations, which would mean the amended recommendations could be put to the meeting for decision;

   b  not support amending the original recommendations, in which case, the Chair asks the meeting to decide whether the original recommendations should be amended and put to the meeting for decision.

If accepted by the meeting, amended recommendations become the resolution.

If the meeting does not agree to amend the original recommendations, the Chair proceeds with the original recommendations.

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7. If necessary, a matter may be sent back to the developer of the paper for further work. If so, the matter will be considered again at a future meeting or out of session.

8. Should a matter remain unresolved, it may also be forwarded to SCSEEC for consideration.

**SCSEEC papers only**

9. If amendments are proposed, ask AEEYSOC to consider (in order raised) each amendment.

10. Ask the proposer(s) of the amendments to explain their proposals and seek reactions generally from members.

11. Seek a reaction from the originator of the paper, who may:
   a. support amending the paper
   b. support in-principle amending the paper, with a view to consulting the appropriate Minister or board.
   c. not support amending the original recommendations, with a view to consulting the appropriate Minister or board.

   In the case of papers proposed by Ministers and/or Ministerial authorities and companies, if accepted by the meeting, the proposed amendments are recorded as AEEYSOC’s advice to the proposer(s).

   In the case of papers proposed by SCSEEC working groups, AEEYSOC is required to agree to a working group paper being forwarded to SCSEEC for consideration.

**9 Records of meetings**

The SCSEEC Secretariat is responsible for the production and distribution of draft minutes to AEEYSOC members within five working days of the meeting.

Comments and suggested amendments to the draft minutes are then provided to the Secretariat. Members of Ministerial authorities and companies (ACARA, AITSL, ESA and ACECQA) will be provided the opportunity to give feedback on AEEYSOC minutes regarding agenda items related to their organisations’ business only.

On receipt of comments and suggested amendments, the Secretariat, on behalf of the Chair, revises the draft minutes as appropriate, and forwards the final draft minutes to AEEYSOC members, showing in tracked changes all proposed amendments and indicating the proposer.

The final draft minutes are considered and ratified by AEEYSOC at the next major meeting.

**10 Out of Session processes**

The Out of Session (OOS) process is used when work needs to be progressed outside AEEYSOC meetings, so that jurisdictions and other bodies (proposers) do not have to wait for the next meeting to have their issue considered, particularly if the issue is urgent.

Out of Session papers are handled in accordance with the following protocols:

1. The response time is limited to 15 working days for all non-urgent items.

2. For urgent items, a 10 working day (or less) response time limit applies, depending on the urgency of the item.

3. Once the due date is reached, the item will be officially closed and responses received sent to the proposer so they can action the item; any late responses will be forwarded to the proposer to consider at their discretion.

4. If a majority of responses has not been received by the due date, the SCSEEC Secretariat will liaise with the jurisdictions yet to respond, and when a majority is received, responses will be forwarded to the proposer and the item closed.

5. Once all responses are received or the item is closed, the Secretariat provides the proposer of the item with the responses. If any dissenting views or comments have been received the proposer is asked to contact those jurisdictions with a view to achieving consensus. Once consensus is achieved, the proposer notifies the Secretariat of the final decision.

6. Matters unable to be resolved through an OOS process are referred to an AEEYSOC meeting for resolution.

7. For jurisdictions’ information, once an item has been closed, a summary of responses is circulated to the key contacts in each jurisdiction.

8. A list of decisions made Out of Session will be provided at each AEEYSOC meeting for noting in the meeting record.
Officially closing the item once the due date has been reached, or once a majority of responses has been received as soon as possible after the due date, means that OOS items are not left open indefinitely, and proposers can move forward with most responses, but still consider late responses which do not agree with the recommendations, or provide further comment or advice, at their discretion.

As a general rule, items for information or for noting should be progressed OOS. Such items do not require a formal response – that is, they are automatically ‘No response required’ items, unless the proposer specifically asks for responses to be provided for the record.

11 Communication

11.1 Consultation with stakeholders and the public

AEEYSOC may undertake public or targeted stakeholder consultations as part of its decision making processes. Only those documents agreed for public release can be provided for consultation purposes. Under no circumstances are Council or AEEYSOC meeting papers or minutes to be provided for this purpose.

The status of any documents released for public consultation should be made clear.

11.2 Communication with AEEYSOC and the AEEYSOC Chair

All communication with AEEYSOC should be directed to the Secretariat, marked to the attention of the SCSEEC Secretary. The SCSEEC Secretary also manages all communication with the AEEYSOC Chair.

11.3 Communication with other COAG Standing Council senior officials’ groups

The AEEYSOC Chair, or the SCSEEC Secretary on behalf of the Chair, is responsible for communication with other Standing Council senior officials’ groups in respect to Council-related business.

In particular, the SCSEEC Terms of Reference requires SCSEEC to work closely with the Standing Council on Tertiary Education, Skills and Employment (SCOTESE), which has responsibility for tertiary education and apprenticeships. As a consequence, AEEYSOC is expected to work closely with the SCOTESE National Senior Officials Committee (NSOC). Additionally, AEEYSOC ensures that other relevant senior official committees are included in discussions and policy development where necessary, to reflect the broader SCSEEC remit for early childhood and youth policy, for example, the senior officials’ groups supporting the Standing Council on Community, Housing and Disability Services (SCCHDS) and the COAG Working Group on Indigenous Reform.

11.4 Publications

There are two main categories of reports produced under the auspices of SCSEEC:

1. Reports officially endorsed by a SCSEEC resolution and hence carrying the full authority of SCSEEC, eg, the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Education Action Plan Annual Report.

2. Other reports not specifically endorsed by SCSEEC but approved by AEEYSOC as suitable for circulation as a contribution to public information, or some other similar purpose. Such documents may acknowledge the auspices of the relevant working group or agency, but this wording should not imply full SCSEEC endorsement.

AEEYSOC may delegate to working groups the authority to approve certain reports for circulation or publication as a contribution to public information, or for some other similar purpose. Such arrangements may only be approved in circumstances where the information contained in reports is deemed to be low risk, non-controversial and/or routine in nature. Authority for such arrangements requires an AEEYSOC resolution.

AEEYSOC will promote streamlined arrangements for approval of reports for publication.

11.5 Freedom of Information

If an AEEYSOC member receives a Freedom of Information request for a document to be made public, SCSEEC operational processes require that all jurisdictions should be consulted regarding the release of the document. The SCSEEC Secretariat will put in place processes to ensure this occurs.