

AGM Questions 2021

Document updated 22 February 2022



ENGINEERS
AUSTRALIA

QUESTION	RESPONSE
Group 1 – Questions asked and answered at the AGM 2021	
<p>The Australian on the 8th of December had a story 'Critical engineering graduate shortage set to worsen'. How will EA contribute to resolving this issue?</p>	<p>CEO: We've been looking at a number of avenues to address that issue. The first one is to understand the scale of it, so we've initiated some research to really understand what is the number of engineers that we need for Australia for now and the future. Additionally, there are around 6000 engineers being graduated out of our universities each year.</p> <p>So we're really saying to solve this we need to do a number of things: we need to work with the universities, to make sure that the engineers that are coming out of our domestic system are boosted; we're looking at how can we enable migrant engineers who are in-country to have a pathway to employment, and we're starting to partner with some employers to at least start a pilot program; and we're also looking at what are the opportunities for engineers who've maybe left the profession to be engineering returners.</p> <p>But this is something that all of us – whether it's as Engineers Australia or as members – we can all say 'What role can we have to especially help people be effective in the workplace?'. We recognise that this is one of those problems that's emerged, and this is some work that we've been doing with government, with universities and with companies as well.</p>
<p>Given the obvious strong financial performance over the last two years, is there any consideration to reducing membership fees rather than banking profits?</p>	<p>NP: This is a question that the Board and Audit and Risk Committee consider very carefully every year. As you see, we're actually making investment in the modernisation of EA this year. That's a significant investment that our members are calling upon us to make to make EA the sort of organisation it's meant to be. And when you look at the cost of factors like digitalization, extending and modernising our offices to enable EA to provide better services to its members – these are not insignificant investments. We have enjoyed, for several years now, real successes as an organisation, and that's both a contribution of good governance and focus on our costs with appropriate strategic investment improving our services to members that results in increased membership. Having said that, all</p>

	<p>organisations are required to look at the applicable circumstances during difficult years. I would encourage you to look at our P&L and our turnover and the sort of investments in staff that we make each year.</p> <p>So, we are constantly looking at the question of member fees and particularly what is the value for money proposition for our members, How do we increase the value and the member experience? It's not been the Board's view other than last year where we maintained the same level of fees – mindful of the hardship conditions – to reduce fees. EAs focus has been on delivering good value and increasing value for our members.</p> <p>Perhaps an indicator of, if you like, hardship around fees is the proportion of people who exercise that opportunity that exists around our fees to have a different fee structure under circumstances of hardship. I believe the number of members who were seeking to exercise that hardship option was very little different last year in a year that we expected a higher number of requests and EA was paying very close attention to this issue.</p> <p>CEO: A lot of the surplus that we've achieved has been driven by our education arm, Engineering Education Australia, and in the results for the parent company last year there were a number of unique circumstances – notwithstanding that, we absolutely have a commitment to investing in the organisation and investing in our members, e.g., the Perth relocation is a very important investment for our staff and members in WA.</p> <p>In terms of the number of people who have accessed the hardship allowance – in the 2020 Financial Year it was around 2.6% of our 105,000 memberships, and in 2021 it was around 1.6% of 105,000 members.</p>
<p>Aside from the financial details. Are there any opportunities to reduce the footprint associated with our built environment facilities in capital cities and apply greater services for regional areas? Noting that engineers in these areas are often involved in carbon intensive industries such as mining?</p>	<p>One of the ways we're looking at how to reduce footprint is to increase the area in our capital cities that is available to our members and to encourage staff, as we've done for nearly the last 18 months, to look at flexible working arrangements. By not increasing the number of desks when we bring in extra people, we are able to release space for our members to use so that we're not increasing our footprint. We're looking at everything from</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • how do we reduce our footprint around printing, • how do we reduce our footprint around travel, • how do we look at those opportunities to have a scheme where we plant trees, • working with electricity providers that are using green energy. • when do you need to travel and when do you not need to travel

	<p>We are looking at all of the responsible things that we can do as a building user or owner to ensure that we are reducing our footprint.</p> <p>We've seen right now that the CPD online is getting into our regional areas and that's going to be important in the coming years as well. Identifying what worked in these last 18 months – 2 years when we were able to engage with our regional groups and how do we continue with that.</p>
<p>NSW Building Commissioner, David Chandler, has been critical of Engineers Australia citing what he sees as design failings by engineers (in high rise buildings). How has EA responded to David's criticisms?</p>	<p>CEO: The questioner has rightly pointed out that David Chandler has been very critical of Engineers Australia. We're doing a number of things in addition to my personally meeting with David Chandler and his team. We're very active through our fantastic engineering volunteers on the six pillars of his reform agenda. We're working with different individual working groups that the Building Commissioner has set up around fire engineering, a waterproofing guideline, engineering professional guideline – we're very actively embedding that. We're wanting to make sure that we keep that dialogue open. It is appropriate for a building commissioner who is heavily committed to the consumers to raise issues with us and by working together we can identify the areas that we need to improve. We have been working with the Civil and Structural Colleges and have been workshopping about what they see as opportunities for the profession and for us as Engineers Australia to be part of raising the standards – and I think things like Chartered are an important part of that. But also recognising that it is an ecosystem that these buildings are being built in and helping the Building Commissioner work with us to solve the problems that we can solve – but we're only part of the solution; we're not <i>the</i> solution.</p>
<p>How does Engineers Australia see its relationship with adjacent fields and professional societies, such as for Software Engineering and the Australian Computer Society? How is this relationship expected to change over the next few years, and how does this play into EA's plans to achieve its strategic goals? What will EA do to further engage and collaborate with adjacent professions?</p>	<p>NP: It's an excellent question, if I could take that as, rather than just ACS, as a question about partnerships.</p> <p>One of the things the Board has been talking very clearly about is how do we advance our strategic priorities and how do we get more front-footed around issues on which we need to advocate and drive change. In that conversation, our primary interest is to actually deliver a benefit and have an impact. In order for us to achieve that, it's done through partnerships.</p> <p>Whether that's the Business Council of Australia, the Australian Computer Society – whoever that partnership is – those are the things we should be open to. Because ultimately our interest is in advancing engineering practices, issues in the engineering workforce, and issues in the interests of society and that may very well be done more impactfully and efficiently through partnerships. As a principle, they're certainly things we're open to doing.</p>

	<p>The other point we're keen to make here to is that we need to be more active in terms of stretching and challenging the thinking that is occurring and we're not the lone ranger on all things clever in this space. We have a lot to contribute but we all know in our own workplaces that multi-disciplinary teams invariably bring great richness to the table in terms of perspectives, and really understanding where we can provide a unique contribution but where also the team can be more effective as well. It's basically part of a mature approach for us to be open to partnerships as well.</p>
<p>With significant travel savings achieved in this FY due to increased use of technology during COVID, what is EA's long-term plan in terms of face-to-face meetings versus technology?</p>	<p>NP: We don't currently have a long-term plan in relation to that but it's certainly a topic that we will be discussing. There is an interesting tension there. Certainly, as President I hear very frequently people saying, 'We want to see you, where are you?' and they want to see us as EA out in amongst our communities, out amongst industry, out amongst government. So, there are obviously pressures on us to be present and visible around the country. We can balance that however as well by our Board, executive team and senior office bearers also being the face of EA.</p> <p>We have all learnt over the past two years how to work differently, and I don't think we will be reverting to the same level of travel for Board and committee meetings and the like that we did previously. Not only is this going to reduce our carbon footprint, which is an important contribution, but it reduces our costs which means we can reinvest in other ways, and it saves us time. In practical ways it is also allowing us to spend time in workshops and discussions with our members which we might not otherwise have had. So, we have certainly seen a variety of upsides to not travelling as much but I think we need to continue to find that balance.</p>
<p>How does EA intend to achieve some of the recommendations put forward in the recent Skilled Migrant Engineer Participation Report to ensure the migrants on arrival can integrate effectively into the profession (especially the women engineers)?</p>	<p>CEO: I'm really pleased to see the traction that that report has received. We're trying some things because we don't know that they'll necessarily be exactly the right answer.</p> <p>We're starting with a pilot of our Pathways to Employment program. As a result of the media that we received following the release of that report, there has been the opportunity to experience working in Australia. Because, as the report points out, for many employers, they are looking to the ideal (i.e., my ideal employee has local experience, knows local standards, has local networks) and we're trying to break that down into what can we do. I would say that for the employers his is the opportunity as a profession to work together for the benefit of those migrant engineers.</p>
<p>What is EA's strategy towards a National Registration Scheme?</p>	<p>CEO: It's something that we've advocated for recognising: where the jurisdictional responsibilities sit for registration. They sit with the States. Therefore, in that context we have to say what could we do, who</p>

	<p>can we influence, to make sure we can get some sort of mutual recognition of registration because it's a cost to businesses, it's a burden on individuals.</p> <p>That's still a work in progress. The registrations scheme in QLD has been in place since the 1920s, in NSW and VIC that scheme is in place, and we are having discussions with the ACT and the WA Governments regarding the introduction of registration schemes in the respective jurisdictions. We went to the Commonwealth Government around this time last year and continued to push for them to take a role in a national registration scheme. Last week or two weeks ago, I was with the Building Ministers' Meeting talking on the importance of this, the importance of getting some consistency because it doesn't help the nation, it doesn't help the consumers of our services if there is an inconsistent approach across the States and Territories.</p>
<p>I understand that EA submitted renewal of assessment scheme to BPEQ which includes assessment of Geotechnical Eng. When can we expect an outcome? If the application is sitting for ministerial approval for an infinite time, what is EA position on that?</p>	<p>Yes – we can confirm that a renewal application was submitted to BPEQ and this did include assessment for Geotechnical Engineering. This application has now been approved, and we are working with the BPEQ to announce when this will be effective from.</p>
<p>Group 2 – Questions asked at AGM 2021 for answering post-AGM</p>	
<p>Finance/Fee</p>	
<p>I note the previous reply on financial position but sitting on \$63m cash seems to indicate missed opportunities to provide more/better services to members.</p>	<p>We have enjoyed, for several years now, real successes as an organisation, and that's both a contribution of good governance and focus on our costs with appropriate strategic investment improving our services to members that results in increased membership. Having said that, all organisations are required to look at the applicable circumstances during difficult years. I would encourage you to look at our P&L and our turnover and the sort of investments in staff that we make each year.</p> <p>So, we are constantly looking at the question of member fees and particularly what is the value for money proposition for our members, how do we increase the value and the member experience? It's not been the Board's view other than last year where we maintained the same level of fees – mindful of the hardship conditions – to reduce fees. EAs focus has been on delivering good value and increasing value for our members.</p>

Is there any special scheme for young engineers to reduce or compensate membership fees?	Engineering students can access the benefits of EA membership for free throughout their course. Engineering graduates can then access heavily discounted membership for 3 years after their graduation - \$190 per year for new graduates, compared to \$574 for professional engineer membership.
Can the fees be reduced for those unemployed?	EA has a concession rate available for unemployed engineers or anyone facing hardship. In FY2020, 2.6% of our 105,000 memberships accessed the concession rate, and in FY2021 1.6% of 105,000 members accessed the concession rate.
Members	
How does the 90% retention rate compare to prior years?	<p>Recent retention rates amongst paying members are:</p> <p>2021-22: 91.56%</p> <p>2020-21: 91.52%</p> <p>2019-20: 91%</p> <p>2018-19: 91%</p> <p>2017-18: 90%</p> <p>2016-17: 90%</p> <p>Our steadily increasing retention, including throughout the COVID-19 pandemic, demonstrates the ongoing value of EA membership through recognition of competence, access to engineering knowledge and skills and a growing community of 109,000 engineers.</p>
What's the role of the different colleges?	<p>Engineers Australia's nine colleges set professional standards and provide continuing professional development (CPD) for members through regular conferences and publications. They also contribute to a wide range of other EA activities such as policy and media.</p> <p>Every EA member belongs to at least one college (based on their engineering qualification) and each college is led by a College Board, comprised of members. Colleges also have regional branches across Australia.</p>
State restrictions permitting, can EA resume in-person member networking events (particularly in Perth, WA)?	As the COVID-19 situation continues to evolve across Australia, EA continually reviews its position, with the priority being keeping our people safe in the workplace as well as complying with any government regulations.

	<p>We recognise that part of the value offered by Engineers Australia is the opportunity to meet, network and share experiences face to face.</p> <p>At the time of writing (4 February 2022) face to face events are permitted in WA, with proof of vaccination required to attend the EA office.</p> <p>The Engineers News email each Tuesday lists face to face events, with a longer searchable list on the EA website.</p> <p>We regularly review the COVID-19 situation on a State-by-State basis and will update members as changes occur.</p>
General/Governance	
<p>Has the list of Congress members left out the representative of National Committees, approved by congress in 2021?</p>	<p>Yes, this was an oversight and will be rectified when the 2022 list of Congress Delegates is finalised.</p>
<p>In regard to membership numbers, have any members lost their membership due to disciplinary proceeding (e.g. breach of code of ethics)?</p>	<p>Yes. One member has had his membership status cancelled pursuant to General Regulation 2.20</p>
<p>I would like to challenge the restatement of our Purpose which appears to reference 'great engineering'. Our Purpose remains embedded in our Royal Charter as being "... for the benefit of</p>	<p>The restating our purpose in a contemporary manner emphasises "Advancing Society through great engineering" focuses on the societal impact. We are agreeing with the questioner – our purpose is about societal impact – and this is clearly understood in the contemporary expression of our purpose.</p>

community" and not for great engineering.	
Diversity of the board is important - should EA consider having some non-engineers (Eg HR / Organisational Psychology / Change experts) on the board in order to offer diverse perspectives towards our goals?	The EA Board also understands the importance and opportunity afforded to a Board when the Directors bring their diverse perspectives to the Board. In 2021, the EA Board used the appointed position on the Board to appoint a director with a background in digital marketing in a fintech company.
Governance - At present volunteers are required to write to the CEO regarding any potential conflicts of interest (real or perceived). When will EA develop a practical process for volunteers to manage conflicts of interest so that technical groups and societies may function in a more practical and ethical manner?	This matter will be referred to the Board Governance Committee for its consideration.
Migrant Engineers	
Who are the hosting companies that are piloting this program to employ migrant engineers?	At this stage the pilot program Pathways to Employment is still under development. A cross functional working group has been created that includes members from Professional Diversity, Communications and Marketing, MSA, Events, Divisions, EEA, Media and Business Development to develop the pilot program. Industry partners will then be invited to participate in the pilot program.
How about for members of EA that are located outside Australia who are interested to migrate to Australia – are there any plans for them or helping them on how they can proceed to work in any part of Australia?	EA is developing a Migrant Engineer Welcome Pack, which will contain the essential information when arriving in Australia, EA membership benefits included local division embedment into Australian workplace and engineering communities and networking.

Would EA consider opening up orientation centres in overseas cities as part of the Skilled Assessment 2 program at the Australian High Commission or consular offices. This could encourage more accurate assessment of applicants for Skilled visas.	EA is not considering offshore orientation or assessment centres at this time. In the current environment access to online tools and resources will be most universally accepted. Skilled assessment applications can be undertaken online, and our assessor team has representation from over 15 countries. Skilled assessment is only one aspect of a visa application.
External	
Does EA have any overseas cooperation with similar organisations? If it does, what does an Australian engineer need to provide to be recognised by these organisations	Yes – EA engages with many international professional bodies to facilitate the mobility of engineers. EA is a member for four international mobility agreements through the International Engineering Alliance (https://www.ieagrements.org/). Each of these agreements include an international register to streamline recognition. To apply to be on the EA section of these registers, you need to be Chartered and have at least seven years engineering experience, with two years in a substantive technical/leadership role.
Climate Change/ Voice	
Is EA interested or concerned about the recent Abolishment of Building Queensland and the lack of independent governance in place in Queensland given the current infrastructure pipeline and climate concerns?	Yes. EA submitted a letter to the Committee Secretary Legal Affairs and Safety Committee of QLD Parliament seeking clarification on governance, independent review, registration and business case analysis in April 2021. You can read the letter here .
I'd like to ask what is the primary purpose of engineering, is it just to make business and money and	As the Engineers Australia purpose states "Advancing Society through great engineering", engineering contributes to societal outcomes – such as create a safe, fair, effective society and economy.

<p>construct or is it innovation and leading the way for new ideas and technology, I am having a problem in getting Engineers to discuss new technologies currently under research or in trial</p>	<p>Contributions will come from both established engineering and new (and exciting) engineering endeavours.</p>
<p>What is EA's view towards the application of modular integrated construction in the building sector?</p>	<p>It is an innovative solution, yet equally it poses challenges for engineer's design process and construction stage engagement, in particular, off site supervision. When it comes to product traceability and compliance, we encourage more digital innovations to be utilised for better quality management of modular building elements.</p>
<p>Why does EA charge before nomination approval for global talent independent visa? ACS charges if nomination application is successful. Also, can EA be nominator for startups?</p>	<p>The assessment fee covers the cost of the assessment required in order to approve or decline the application. Re: start-ups – the global talent visa is for individuals. Engineers Australia may consider nominating engineers working in start-ups if their achievements are internationally recognised as exceptional and outstanding and are at the cutting edge of innovation within one of the 10 target sectors.</p>
<p>Group 3 – Questions asked at the AGM 2021 covered in the FAQ Document</p>	
<p>It is important for EA to establish whether it is a not-for-profit organisation. Does EA need to review the fee structures and how it can be used to encourage more engineers to join and participate in the skills assessment pathways instead of acquiring new office spaces?</p>	<p>Engineers Australia's for purpose status is at the forefront of the decisions we make. The most recent decisions about property (Brisbane and Market St Sydney) were to create member lounge facilities.</p>