



ENGINEERS
AUSTRALIA

GUIDANCE FOR NATIONAL CONGRESS NOMINEES

Role Description for National Congress delegates

The role of the National Congress Member is to bring to the Congress a thorough understanding of the workings, interests and aspirations of the Engineers Australia units from where they were elected. Working alongside other members, Congress members will combine the broad collective knowledge from across various units and guide the strategic direction of Engineers Australia.

The role of National Congress Members is to act in the best interests of the organisation as a whole, rather than as advocates of units acting in the best interest of those units.

Delegates offer counsel and a range of views to the Board which carries the policy and governance responsibilities across Engineers Australia.

Congress members act as a sounding board for wider member opinion. This adds to the role Congress membership plays in providing non-partisan experience to Congress as a whole. Congress members also bring broad networks to share the views and insights of the emerging leaders in and outside the organisation.

In addition to their contribution in this strategic advisory role, as a National Congress member, individuals are encouraged to contribute to those Committees and Working Groups of Congress or other groups which most closely reflect their expertise and interest. Thus, enabling National Congress members to take a more direct and individual role in the governance of Engineers Australia.

Member input into National Congress meetings is valued. The Congress is facilitated by a relatively structured agenda, based largely on input from Congress members, including Directors. Rules of debate will normally be observed, to allow adequate discussion and individual contributions, and to deliver meaningful outcomes.

Some specific responsibilities of congress member include:

- Consult four times per year with each of the groups for which you are a delegate, to provide quarterly information and to receive feedback.
- Attend Congress meetings and, when relevant, communicate in the congress, the ideas and concerns of the groups for which you are a delegate.
- Write, present, gain feedback and support for any papers to be submitted to Congress, and follow up on any actions following the presentation of the papers to Congress.
- Handover, including briefing, introductions and follow up actions with an incoming Congress member.

National Congress Principles

1. Each member of National Congress is elected by a unit or group of the organization, creating a broad collective knowledge and diversity in Congress.
2. The role of National Congress members is to act in the best interests of the organization as a whole, rather than as advocates of units acting in the best interest of those units
3. National Congress (on behalf of members and for the benefit of the profession) is responsible for the composition of the Board via election of directors, so must carry some responsibility for the performance of the Board. So delegates to National Congress should have a good appreciation of:
 - a. how governing boards benefit from diverse and skilled directors, well-led,
 - b. how well the credentials being sought in Board nominees match the challenges faced by Engineers Australia to continue as a viable member-based professional association delivering on its Royal Charter obligations, and
 - c. how to assess reasonably the performance of the Board each year in delivering on Engineers Australia's stated priority programs and strategies.
4. National Congress should include delegates who are conversant with the diverse governance framework of Engineers Australia, and possibilities to make its various responsible parts able to contribute more effectively with well-devolved authority, so that the implications of constitutional change can be subject to informed debate.
5. National Congress should include delegates who have comprehensive and contemporary experience across the areas of engineering practice, and so are able to give context to how issues of professional and ethical conduct need to be managed for the reputation of the profession.
6. National Congress should include delegates who can comprehend where there may be opportunities for more effective engagement by the Board with its various responsibilities across the five broad strategies defined in the Royal Charter.
7. Groups responsible for election of delegates to National Congress should consider the gender, age, occupational category, and geography mix in Congress.
8. Groups responsible for election of delegates to National Congress should consider candidates with the communication, listening and consultation skills appropriate for the effective functioning of that body.
9. Existing membership by colleges, divisions and associated bodies should be kept under review to avoid loss of diversity, and perhaps viewpoints, across the membership of National Congress.