



AAG
Australian
Association of
Gerontology

AAG Divisions Engagement Project (DEP) Implementation Plan

This is the proposed implementation plan for the AAG Divisions Engagement Project. It has been developed by Keryn Curtis with input from AAG National and the AAG Board.

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A. EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

AAG has evolved substantially in the last decade with impacts on the role and nature of the state and territory division committees. Keryn Curtis, a communication and engagement specialist who is also a long term AAG member and co-chair of the NSW Division, was appointed by the AAG board to take the temperature of the division committees and make recommendations to foster better engagement and build positive ongoing relationships throughout the Association.

The research found strong loyalty, enthusiasm and commitment but a lack of clarity around roles and relationships, a desire for more professional support and the need for more and better communication. In the report, released on 4 Feb 2021, Keryn Curtis proposed a number of recommendations to address the findings.

The responses and actions proposed in the recommendations include introducing or formalising consistent terms of reference as well as administrative tools for the divisions; creating pathways for education, training, mentorships and orientation; enabling opportunities for local engagement and advocacy; and implementing good communication protocols, including between divisions themselves and with the board and national office. The recommendations are not 'imposed' but involve the active, collaborative participation of division committee members and other members. Implementing the recommendations includes the establishment of two key structures:

1. *A Division Engagement Project Steering Group* - responsible for strategic direction and implementation of the recommendations. Made up of 12 people including AAG President, CEO, Membership manager, Keryn Curtis and the two co-chairs of each working group.
2. *Four working groups* (each having two co-chairs) that can collectively undertake the workload:
 - 1) *Roles and structures* – focusing on division committee roles, structures, terms of reference
 - 2) *Training and development* – focusing on division training, development & mentoring
 - 3) *Planning and direction* – focusing on division committee planning, administration and future direction
 - 4) *Communication and engagement* – focusing on how divisions communicate and engage with internal and external audiences

An online workshop was held on 3 March 2021 for members wishing to participate in the process and feedback has been incorporated into this implementation plan, including the proposed timeline. Most participants wanted the project to be as flexible as possible to fit in with members' busy schedules but completed in 2021. The proposed plan and timeline presented here includes specific dates but makes clear that, within the boundaries of meeting two key board meetings, dates and other details will be set by each working group. It was particularly useful to nominate dates for the first two Steering Group meetings [14 May and 11 June] to assist potential co-chairs considering nominating for a co-chairing role.

Nominations to the working groups and co-chair roles will open 9am Thursday 8 April and close 5pm Thursday 29 April 2021. See full proposed project timeline and terms of reference for the Steering Group and the working groups from page 6. The completed project will be formally launched at the 54th AAG Conference on 9 November 2021.

This plan includes two appendices:

- 1) the full recommendations of the Division Engagement Project (DEP) Report; and
- 2) feedback from the 3 March workshop

B. BACKGROUND

In 2020, in response to initiative from the AAG Board, AAG contracted Keryn Curtis (who is also co-chair of the NSW Division) to undertake a *research project* to investigate and understand the role and purpose of AAG divisions. The project has been an opportunity for AAG to work collaboratively with the divisions to explore their role and purpose, understand their needs and challenges, and define a new mutually productive and beneficial relationship that will ensure the whole organisation continues to thrive in the future.

In the Division Engagement Report from the research component of the project released on 4 Feb 2021, Keryn Curtis made a number of recommendations for actions to address the identified challenges [see *Appendix 1 for a summary of the recommendations*]. The full report is [downloadable on the AAG website, under the Membership tab: Division and member only resources](#).

An online workshop was held on 3 March 2021 to enable questions and feedback on the report and the proposed recommendations. Seventy-five AAG members registered and it was attended by more than 50 members from across every state and territory division. [See *Appendix 2 for a summary of the feedback from the workshop*.]

Broad support was demonstrated for the report at the workshop. The recommendations and additional feedback from the workshop have been incorporated into this paper and the implementation plan.

Note, while it is important to have clear structures and processes to achieve the outcomes, many members involved in the workshop expressed concerns about their limited time commitments and preference to keep the process as informal and flexible as possible.

C. CONTEXT

AAG has seen some big changes in the last decade which have been largely very positive. We have grown substantially in both size and influence and, with that, have moved to a national, centralised governance with a (small) national team of employees. On the one hand, this has been welcomed by many members in the state and territory divisions who have burnt the midnight oil in decades past, planning and running conferences and writing discussion papers on their weekends.

However, as the dust settled on these changes - with the creation of a policy team and the centralised running of the national conference and other functions - the ongoing role of divisions was not clear. This project is an opportunity for AAG members to consciously take stock of their divisions and to re-think and redefine their identity and role in the future of AAG.

D. BROAD FINDINGS OF THE RESEARCH

The full report of the research project contains detailed findings and many direct quotations from the survey and one on one interviews. However, it is possible to summarise the key findings in the following way:

- We are very loyal, passionate and committed to AAG – that’s why we care.
- We are different to the majority of professional associations which tend to unite people who work in the same profession or role or come from the same discipline. What unites us is a shared goal to ensure that older people get the same opportunities as other people and other age cohorts to a good experience of life right to the end of their life course. And we recognise

that no single discipline or role or job can do that alone. It can only be achieved when all the myriad players, roles and professions work together in an effective and consistent way.

- We want our Association to work effectively and collegiately, and we all have ideas.
- Perhaps the biggest issues for us are:
 - lack of a clear understanding about roles, structures, processes, expectations etc. Many of us feel we are muddling through and don't really know if we are doing what we should be doing or if there are other things we should be doing or if we can do it better. Clear, accessible documentation is needed.
 - We want to have more to do with each other – we want better communication; more opportunities to hear other perspectives, other ways of doing things.
 - We want to learn from each other – whether researchers understanding policy or policy makers understanding practitioners, or young members simply wanting experience at chairing meetings! We also want to know how other Division committees do things and to be able to share ideas.
 - We have a lot to give and we want to be relevant – we want our voices heard in bigger/wider settings.

E. KEY RECOMMENDATIONS

Full recommendations are at Appendix 1. Key recommendations in brief are:

1. ***Establish an AAG Division Engagement committee [Steering Group]***
Establish a committee made up of representatives from each division, national office and the Board to progress and implement these and other recommendations.
2. ***Formalise the role and structure of the Divisions***
Develop a terms of reference for divisions with some clear guidelines but also flexibility to suit different sized jurisdictions and different group needs.
3. ***Orientation process and materials for committee members***
As part of developing a terms of reference for the divisions, include a template for orientation or 'onboarding' of all new members
4. ***Offer pathways to training and developing committee members in key areas***
Enable committee members to develop specific skills to be more effective in their AAG roles or in new AAG roles they wish to develop.
5. ***Develop a planning framework for division functions and activities***
Provide a simple template for enabling divisions to plan their year on an annual or two yearly basis.
6. ***Establish a mentoring/buddy system for new/younger committee members***
Ideas and suggestions included in recommendations

7. Develop strong **relationships and communication between the division committees and the AAG Board**
Ideas and suggestions included in recommendations.
8. Develop strong **relationships and communication between the division committees and National Office**
Ideas and suggestions included in recommendations
9. Foster strong **relationships and communication between the division committees themselves**
Ideas and suggestions included in recommendations

F. IMPLEMENTATION FRAMEWORK

In order to carry these recommendations forward, Keryn Curtis has recommended the establishment of two key structures:

3. A **Division Engagement Project Steering Group** [to be known as the **DEP Steering Group**]
- responsible for strategic direction and implementation of the recommendations ie. The committee described in recommendation 1.
4. **Four DEP working groups** that can collectively undertake the work:
 - i **Roles and structures** [Division roles, structures, ToR & orientation]
- dealing predominantly with recommendations 2 and 3 - terms of reference for the divisions
 - ii **Training and development** [Division training, development & mentoring]
- dealing predominantly with recommendations 4 and 6
 - iii **Planning and direction** [Division planning and direction]
- dealing predominantly with recommendation 5 – work with national office to work out a planning framework for the divisions – how can divisions meet the AAGs national goals? what needs to be included, what tools are needed; how often it will be updated? To include financial planning as well.
 - iv **Communication and engagement** [Division communication and engagement]
- dealing predominantly with recommendations 7,8,9

G. PROJECT PLAN

The following timeline and dates are *indicative* but, in several cases,, as shown, dates are specifically chosen to fall in advance of scheduled AAG board meetings. Final dates and timelines will need to be proposed and agreed by the DEP Steering Group and the working groups, noting that working groups in particular will operate according to the capacity of their respective members and may progress and complete their work according to different timelines.

1. Proposed timeline

Milestones	Proposed Timing 2021
Initial planning workshop	3 March 2021
Project implementation proposal – draft plan circulated	Thursday 8 April 2021
Open nominations to join working groups (including nominations for co-chair roles)	Thursday 8 April
Close nominations to join working groups (including nominations for co-chair roles)	Thursday 29 April - 5pm
Implementation plan agreed and working group nomination and selection process completed; members of working groups informed of their successful selection status; co-chairs informed of their successful nomination.	Friday 30 April 2021
Public notification of membership of each working group, including co-chairs, added to AAG Member website	(by) Friday 14 May 2021
Convene DEP Steering Group to establish time frame and agree expected deliverables and success indicators for each working group and any budget requirements for 2021/22	Friday 14 May 2021
Convene first meeting of working groups	Friday 28 May 2021
Working groups present proposed action, timelines and budget requirements to 2nd meeting* of DEP Steering Group (timed for 23 June AAG Board meeting)	Friday 11 June 2021
Working groups present progress (which may be advanced/almost complete, depending on the group) to 3rd meeting of DEP Steering Group	Friday 6 August 2021 (or first week)
Working groups present progress update/completed work to 4 th meeting of DEP Steering Group	Friday 1 October 2021` (or before 6/10)
Keryn Curtis and Steering Group liaise with working groups as required to finalise outputs (timed for 20 October AAG Board meeting)	(by) Friday 15 October 2021
Steering group presents results and marks completion of the project at the 2021 AAG Conference	Tuesday 9 November 2021
New ToR and systems in place for 2022	From November

*5 x Proposed DEP Steering Group meetings 2021:

- 14 May – inaugural meeting to agree processes, goals, expected deliverables etc
- 11 June – working groups present proposed action and timelines
- 6 August – working groups present progress (which may be advanced/almost complete, depending on the group)
- 1 October – working groups present progress update/completed work
- Early November – final meeting to approve completed work and conference presentation

2. Draft Terms of reference for the DEP Steering Group and Working Groups:

2.1 Draft TOR - DEP Steering Group

Objective:

- to ensure the effective and successful implementation of the Divisions Engagement Project within the agreed timeframe.

Purpose:

- Provide strategic direction and leadership for the whole project, drawing together the different components of work being undertaken by each of the working groups.
- Broaden exposure of the different working groups - to each other, to AAG National and to the Board – and ensure the different/related areas of work are both complementary and consistent.
- Establish success indicators for the project and propose budgets
- Oversee implementation of the different elements of work
- Review outcomes of the project and establish ongoing review mechanisms and protocols for the future.

Proposed membership:

- 12 people – AAG President (or nominee); the two co-chairs of each of the four working groups; CEO, James Beckford-Saunders; Membership manager, Michael Tan; and project consultant, Keryn Curtis
- Representation: ideally the DEP Steering Group will have at least one representative from each state and territory division. This is possible from across the 8 co-chairs positions but Keryn Curtis (NSW division) and President, Marguerite Bramble (Tasmania) should be included as representation.

Chairperson:

- The AAG President (or nominee) will chair the meeting
- As the project consultant, Keryn Curtis will facilitate the DEP Steering Group
- The chair and project consultant will coordinate with members to establish an agenda for each meeting
- Draft documentation of meetings will be delegated by the chair to another member of the Steering Group but will be finalised and distributed by the chair.

Terms

- Meeting dates will be agreed in advance at the first meeting
- Meeting quorum is half of the members
- At least one representative from each working group must be in attendance to have a quorum. If neither of the co-chairs is able to attend, then a substitute representative should attend.
- Meetings will be conducted via Zoom and be between 1 to 1.5 hours in length, depending on the agenda.

- Decisions will be made by consensus (ie. members are satisfied with the decision even though it may not be their first choice). If not possible, the chair will propose next steps.
- Documentation of meetings will be limited to key decisions and actions – not formal minutes.
- The DEP Steering Group will exist only for the length of the project
- This Terms of Reference may be amended, varied or modified in writing after consultation and agreement by members.

Expectations of members:

- Willingness and availability to participate in a minimum of five formal meetings as well as possible smaller, informal meetings if required.
- Willingness and capacity to undertake tasks required to prepare for meetings including advance reading of materials.
- Willingness and capacity to work collaboratively within agreed timeframes toward mutually agreed outcomes.

2.2 Draft TOR - DEP Working Groups

Objective:

- Effectively and successfully complete the work as described and agreed for each group and deliver results/report to DEP Steering Group within agreed timeframe.

Purpose:

- Define and agree the tasks required; and a process and timeline for undertaking them, including allocated tasks.
- Undertake the specific tasks required to achieve the end products, in the timeframe agreed.
- Contribute to the DEP Steering Group

Proposed membership:

- a minimum of 8 members but ideally 10 – one representative from each state and territory division, plus Keryn, plus national office representative.
- no maximum number is imposed, however, these are working groups and all members will be expected to actively participate in the committee and undertake to share the workload.
- a cross section of members including representatives from each state and territory division and *ideally* from different disciplines, backgrounds and career points.

Nomination process:

- National office will circulate a call for nominations to those members who participated in the 3 March workshop and others who could not attend but have expressed interest in participating in the project. In addition, the nomination process will be promoted more widely in Thursday Three (15 April)
- Nominations will be open: 9am Friday 16 April to 5pm Monday 26 April
- Nominees will be asked to indicate if they would also be willing to be a co-chair (being informed of the workload and requirements).

Chairs:

- There will be two co-chairs of each working group
- The co-chairs will be responsible for ensuring the working group achieves its purpose within the agreed timeframe.
- Co-chairs will automatically be part of the DEP Steering Group as representatives of the working group
- Co-chairs will self-nominate when working group nominations are sought, as described above. Selection process will be similar to that used to nominate and support the Special Interest Group (SIG) convenors. It will be facilitated by national office and, in this case, in conjunction with Keryn Curtis and the AAG President, to aim to achieve broad representation across all divisions on the DEP Steering Group.
- Co-chairs must be willing to commit to the workload required to both chair the working group and contribute to the DEP Steering group and its requirements - NOTING that members of all groups will be able to influence and agree these workloads and timeframes

Terms

- Meeting dates and proposed way forward will be agreed by consensus at the first meeting
- Meeting quorum to be agreed by group, depending on numbers
- Meetings will be conducted via Zoom, unless otherwise agreed, and be contained to a length of time agreed by the working group members, depending on the agenda.
- At least one co-chair of the working group must be in attendance to have a quorum.
- Decisions will be made by consensus (ie. members are satisfied with the decision even though it may not be their first choice). If not possible, the co-chair will propose next steps.
- Documentation of meetings will be decided by the working group members but should be kept informal ie. limited to key decisions and actions. The focus should be on getting the task completed, rather than the meeting process.
- The working groups will exist only for the length of the project
- These Terms of Reference may be amended, varied or modified after consultation and agreement by members.

Expectations of working group members:

- Willingness and availability to participate in scheduled meetings as collectively agreed in order to get the work done; recognising that the work may require working independently or in small groups smaller with informal meetings and other contact as required.
- Willingness and capacity to undertake tasks required to prepare for meetings including completing tasks and reading any materials required.
- Willingness and capacity to work collaboratively within agreed timeframes toward mutually agreed outcomes.

3. Outline of core focus for the four working groups:

Following is a brief outline of the anticipated focus for each working group, based on the Divisions Engagement Project Report. It should be considered a guide. It is not intended to be conclusive or exclusive of other ideas and it should be noted that there may be some overlap of interest between groups. Members of the working group should agree the actual tasks and proposed outcomes at the first meeting of the working group and consider any liaison required with other working groups.

1. Roles and structures working group:

This group will be responsible for agreeing a nationally consistent *terms of reference* for Division committees with some universal terms and guidelines but also flexibility to suit different sized jurisdictions and different group needs. This group will work with some proposed templates, especially leveraging the work already undertaken in the Victorian division to develop a ToR and other division documentation.

Outputs of this group to be agreed by the group but would include developing national *documentation* of, for example:

- purpose; goals; requirements; non requirements of Division committees under constitution and by-laws;
- optimal size and structure for committee; frequency of meetings; chairing protocols
- office holder roles; skills required; expectations of the position (recruitment guidelines?)
- terms and timelines for appointment for Division committees
- expectations of all committee members including attendance and participation
- onboarding/orientation process for new members.

This working group should also address the extent to which divisions participate in state and territory-based policy work and potential advocacy activities. [See also communication and engagement working group.]

2. Training and development working group

This group will develop a proposal and guidelines for enabling Division committee members to develop specific skills to be more effective in their AAG roles, in new AAG roles they may wish to develop, or to generally be more effective in their gerontology careers. Depending on the division, this may involve formal training but may also involve strategic buddying programs. Skills areas might include specific practical skills around chairing meetings or writing minutes but might also include more professional skills such as grant writing, policy work; understanding the media; public speaking; and advocacy.

It will need to consider questions including, how such a program might operate, how formal or informal it needs to be, how it would work and be promoted, what resources would be required. Who will it be provided to? Committee members? Or wider Division? Can it be offered across different divisions? Can different Divisions offer particular skills and training to others?

3. Planning and development working group

This group will develop a consistent framework to enable Divisions to plan across the course of each year in line with AAG goals. This group will work with National Office to establish/improve a planning protocol and template for key dates and recurring events (this has been done before) and work with the AAG's financial adviser to develop a simple budget planning tool that will work for all divisions. This group should also consider key points in the annual schedule for membership recruitment and what steps might be taken to optimise those opportunities, so they become part of the annual planning process. Attracting and recruiting new members should be part of the planning objectives for each division

It will need to consider questions like: when do divisions need to start planning for the year ahead? What information do they need in order to plan? What are the key milestones and trigger dates and times? What platforms and tools are best? What resources are needed? How frequently should planning take place? How can plans be shared easily with committees and other division members?

4. Communication and engagement working group

This group will develop a proposal for ensuring strong internal and external relationships for Divisions.

It will need to consider options for strong internal communication between:

- the division committees and the AAG Board
- the division committees and AAG national office
- the division committees themselves

It will also look at ways that Divisions can communicate and engage effectively externally - with their state and territory networks. For example, what relationships can/should the Divisions actively pursue with their state and territory governments, with local advocacy organisations, NGOs and educational institutions? What resources might be required? What skills might be required of those members involved? Which divisions can we learn from?

Appendix 1: Report recommendations

The section below is copied 'directly' from the Report. It is the recommendations section of the report and provides context for the concept of the Steering Group and the four working groups. For more information, please refer to the full report.

The Way Forward

Following are a number of recommendations arising from this research which are intended to address the challenges facing AAG and its divisions. Many have come directly from the study participants. There should be a separate project to review, refine and implement responses to this exercise, recognising that – for a range of reasons - not all recommendations will be able to be implemented.

Likewise, the responses will need to be flexible to accommodate the specific settings and conditions that prevail in different divisions.

These recommendations should be seen as a guide for the way forward. Division members should have the opportunity to actively participate in the response process. It should not be decided by the board or national office but through effective consultation and agreement.

Priorities to include:

1. Establish an AAG Division Engagement committee

Establish a committee made up of representatives from each division, national office and the Board to agree a way forward with these recommendations.

10. Formalise the role and structure of the Divisions:

Develop a Terms of Reference for Divisions with some clear guidelines but also flexibility to suit different sized jurisdictions and different group needs.

To include, for example: purpose; goals; requirements; non requirements; optimal size and structure for committee; recruitment guidelines; reporting under constitution; terms of appointment; options for frequency of meetings; skills required for different office holder roles;

expectations of office holder roles; expectations of all committee members including attendance and participation expectations and membership building. Enshrine an orientation process.

11. Orientation process and materials for committee members

As part of developing a terms of reference for the divisions, there should also be a template for orientation or 'onboarding' of all new members (and for existing members too as many are just as in the dark.)

The orientation template needs to be developed carefully in consultation between the divisions, national office and the board but should include:

- I. A procedure for onboarding
- II. A hard copy/downloadable orientation information pack.

As well as including the Terms of Reference for the Division Committee and a short history of AAG, it should give advice on what to expect, some FAQs, links to useful resources (eg chairing meeting protocols), opportunities for training and mentoring and the names, contact details and role descriptions of key people in the state/territory division and in national office.

12. Offer pathways to training and developing committee members in key areas

Enable committee members to develop specific skills to be more effective in their AAG roles or in new AAG roles they wish to develop. This may involve formal training but may also involve strategic buddying programs. Skills areas might include specific practical skills around chairing meetings or writing minutes but might also include more professional skills such as grant writing, policy work; understanding the media; public speaking; and advocacy.

13. Develop a planning framework for division functions and activities

Provide a simple template for enabling divisions to plan their year on an annual or two yearly basis, drawing on the goals of the national organisation, addressing state or territory issues and incorporating a calendar with known dates, milestones and events.

The framework would suggest structures such as sub committees with particular roles and goals and allow for budget planning.

"It would be good to develop a plan for the State each year based on meeting AAG goals nationally but with state goals. And to put roles/expectations and names against the plan and follow them up. And have a back-up plan so it doesn't just fall off the agenda!"

14. Establish a mentoring/buddy system for new/younger committee members

To be agreed as a divisional initiative or possibly a cross-divisional/national initiative. Matching people from different divisions also enables cross divisional knowledge sharing and relationship building, which members almost universally want.

15. Develop strong relationships and communication between the division committees and the AAG Board by:

- Ensuring the Divisions are informed about what is being discussed and agreed at the Board level. While the Division board member has this role, it is impossible to ensure consistency. A simple approach would be to circulate the board report to Divisions following every board meeting. It might be additionally delivered as a briefing from the CEO

- Create a clear mechanism for divisions to contribute questions to the board. Ensure that divisions know this mechanism and how to use it.
- Having the President attend at least one division meetings each year and be available for 'getting to know you' and Q and A.

16. Develop strong relationships and communication between the division committees and National Office by:

- Engaging with divisions more on a consultation basis when planning and making decisions. Consider establishing a group of division reps who can be called upon to participate in major planning meetings. Or seeking input in writing via a simple template.
- Having the CEO attend two division meetings each year and be available for 'getting to know you' and Q and A.
- Reviewing and improving the processes and templates used for things like organizing events or doing budgets to make them clearer/more flexible (eg the events template too formulaic and doesn't make sense in many instances).
- Incorporating a news item about a division into Thursday Three on a regular rotational basis - potentially every third week? Have a schedule and ensure divisions know when their time comes up. This can include 'getting to know you' type articles about the committee and key members or their activities.
- Dedicating a staff member in national office to developing the relationships and systems to support the divisions and possibly the SIGs too in these and other areas.
- Involving representatives from the divisions in a workshop every three years to touch base and ensure national and division goals are aligned and new ideas explored. This could take place at the annual conference workshop.
- Doing a skills audit of division members and making it searchable by keywords with a view to establishing *policy reference groups* on particular topics that can provide input to the policy team. Updated every two years.
- Working with the Divisions to identify better ways to link the Divisions together – brainstorming and consulting
- Investigating different forms of communication – Facebook groups, WhatsApp

17. Foster strong relationships and communication between the division committees themselves by:

- Looking for opportunities to share ideas and knowledge between divisions
- Enshrine, support and promote the Division Workshop meeting at every conference; don't let them slip. Consider giving the organizational task to the host state or territory division with an expectation that they will coordinate with other divisions to establish an agenda, plan the workshop and any other elements (eg. Social component).

- Facebook or WhatsApp group? A Google Teams chat room for divisions to share information
- Annual zoom meeting with other Divisions once a year – as a partner event to the annual conference workshop – set an agenda; encourage each division to prepare a short update; enable participants to ask questions, explore ideas, take initiatives offline etc.

Appendix 2: Feedback from the workshop:

Following is an overview of the discussions and feedback received from the workshop held on 3 March 2021 about the Divisions Engagement project and the recommendations for taking the project forward in 2021.

The context for the meeting included an assumption that participants had read the Report and were broadly familiar with the issues and recommendations. A number of the questions that arose related to participants not having read the Report and being unclear about the background or context to parts of the discussion.

Note that the proposed area of focus for each Working Group (with reference to numbered 'recommendations' 2-9) refers to the numbered recommendations in the Report. The specific recommendations were not discussed in detail at the workshop.)

A. General comments and feedback from the workshop for the record *[and Keryn's brief responses where relevant]*:

- Some confusion expressed about purpose of the project generally – is it about improving/restructuring AAG or Division engagement or both?
[The project is about Division engagement; however, as explained in the report, Divisions are in fact, collectively, the AAG membership; so engagement inevitably involves feedback about the Association generally and ultimately contributes to the improvement/evolution of AAG as a whole.]
- Some confusion about whether this project is about building better engagement for the divisions generally (the state and territory membership) or the Division management committees.
[The project has specifically focused on the management committees as the 'unit of representation' for each division and its membership; and the mechanism for establishing direction and focus for the division. We know that many division members – especially in the larger membership divisions of NSW and Victoria - think of themselves as AAG members and do not don't necessarily think of themselves as belonging to a division per se. If division committees are better engaged in the organisation and have clarity of direction and a sense of purpose and agency, this will inevitably build and enhance engagement within the divisions and their membership. And it will likely foster increased interest and participation among division members in being active in the committee. While the expectation is that the committees will participate strongly in the Divisions engagement project activity, it has been deliberately made open to all division members who are interested in participating.]
- Confusion about difference between steering groups and working groups
[This is explained in the Report but is also explained above. However, the groups and process

can be challenged or tweaked – this was indeed part of the process]

- A question about the existence of Divisions generally
[This is briefly explained in the background of the Report and can be followed up separately with AAG National; the future role of Divisions is indeed central to the Divisions Engagement process.]
- Comment that AAG is really helpful to particular individuals who work mostly within their own discipline or profession but with few colleagues who have the same interest in older people. AAG provides the collegial network that would otherwise be difficult to achieve or be entirely missing.
- Concerns from several people about the time that will be needed to be involved in the project and how time poor people generally are.
[Of course! The important thing is that everyone has the ‘opportunity’ to participate. If you do not have time to be actively involved, for example as a member of a working group, then you might want to make an arrangement to provide your ideas or comments verbally or by email etc to someone who does have the time to be involved and who can ensure your views are communicated.]
- Also noted particular time challenges for people in smaller divisions (NT, Tas, ACT especially) where there are less members to share the participation time.
[Concerns noted – aim is to ensure voices of all divisions are included and it will be part of the project’s MO to ensure that this happens in a way that works for everyone concerned.]
- Comment about need/desire to use some of the division budget for administrative support for the divisions – to ensure the work gets done when division committee members are time-poor. Suggestion to consider a ‘virtual secretariat’ resource (with the cost shared among all the state and territory divisions) to assist with administrative tasks like writing minutes, distributing information, finding resources.
[This is precisely an issue for the working groups.]
- Comment about AAG providing a ‘brains trust’ - enabling the ability to connect quickly with interprofessional colleagues when you have a quick question and need to find some evidence or to just identify the best place to go to get the right information. Important function for members to access and expand their networks, to get timely information for people who are time poor and perhaps working in relative isolation.
[In the context of this project, this comment relates to the ability of members to communicate easily with other members and is within the proposed purview of the working Group on ‘Division communication and engagement’ - dealing predominantly with recommendations 7,8,9]
- Comment about the *special interest groups (SIGs)* being an important opportunity for networking and trying to influence policy but sometimes access to the broader membership expertise is required, beyond the membership of a particular SIG. How can the Divisions work better together nationally on the policy front?
- Further to the role of SIGs, the idea of having a searchable ‘interest’ function for members was discussed by several participants - to make it easier to reach out to people with an interest in a particular issue. Comment referred to an idea for something like an ‘AAG Linked In’ form of technology. Another participant suggested it could be an internal database

function for members, where individuals self-enter details about their areas of interest and other information. *[This 'skills audit' concept is one of the ideas in recommendation 8 of the report - ways to develop the relationship between the division committees and national office.]*

- Related to the above, one participant referred to the function embedded within the website of the Australian College of Nursing (ACN), that enables members to post questions online and seek feedback from the membership. Suggestion that AAG might investigate this function too. Other participants were strongly supportive of this kind of connection function for AAG.

[See comment above. This concept is discussed in recommendation 8 but is relevant to consideration by all the working groups - it is about access to information about members and the opportunity for communication, networking and professional development.]

B. Specific comments and feedback re the Divisions Engagement project and the proposal for steering group and working groups:

- **Names/division of labour of working groups.** It was generally agreed the **four working groups** were a good way of dividing the different tasks and the workload across the interested membership to take it forward. Even though some people felt it would be good to be able to participate in all of them...
- **Division representation across the working groups:** It was widely agreed that there should be at least one representative from each state and territory division in each working group so that they could report to the division executive committee and the committee would have a good overview of what was happening in each working group. It was suggested that the person/rep from the division would, ideally, be a member of the division executive committee; but if not, they would have to agree to report to the committee at committee meetings and/or in other forms of communication during the course of the project.
- **Another representation-related issue** discussed was representation of SECG members and ATSI members in groups. Discussion seemed to settle on trying to accommodate as much diversity as we can under broad representative membership across the divisions, which shouldn't be difficult.
- **Size of working groups:** There was some disagreement about the maximum number of people in each working group. Some wanted to keep them small (around six) but others suggested 8-10 or more members to enable greater participation, representation and diversity of ideas. In reality, if there is to be at least one representative from each Division on each working group, then 10 is the minimum – assuming that Keryn and one of either Michael or James is also included. Several people expressed concern that too-small groups would limit the diversity of participation and ideas.
- **Steering Group:** general agreement that it should be made up of Board representative, CEO/Nat Office representative, Keryn Curtis plus two representatives from each working group (the co-chairs).
- Questions about **nominations process for co-chairs** of the working groups. Proposal to use similar process to that used to nominate and support the SIG convenors with nomination process to be facilitated by national office in conjunction with Keryn Curtis and AAG President.

- **Timing of the project:** Some differences of opinion about the timing of the project. General agreement for a 12-month time frame – or at least until the end of 2021 – to enable ‘the maximum opportunity for creative responses, new ideas etc’. It was proposed to give the division committees the role of seeking engagement from their divisions. “This is an opportunity to have grass roots engagement through the Divisional committees.”

ENDS