



Branches of the Institute – role and functions

November 2016
David Clarke

1. Introduction

In 2011, the Safety Institute of Australia established a national company limited by guarantee, and in doing so began a process of translating a number of management and funding controls from states and territories – many of which functioned as incorporated associations - to the national office.

Since that time, the branches have been evolving in their function and focus.

Branches remain central to the ability of the organisation to deliver services to members. Member surveys describe *networking*, and *engaging with fellow professionals* and *getting access to local CPD activities*, as important parts of their member experience, and branches continue to have a critical role to play in the delivery of these, not only within capital cities but also in support of regional activities within their states and territories.

This document outlines the role of branches within the broader functions of the Safety Institute of Australia, providing an overview of areas or work that branches are urged to focus on.

2. Role of the SIA Board

The SIA's board's key responsibilities are to:

- Set the strategic direction for the Institute through the development of a strategic plan which outlines how the organisation will undertake its activities in pursuit of its core purposes;
- Determine overall organisational policies which govern practice;
- Employ and oversee the performance of the Chief Executive, against an operations plan which is articulated against the strategic plan; and
- Oversee/monitor and exercise stewardship for the finances of the organisation.

The Board is made up of:

- 9 members each holding three year terms
- The College of Fellows Chair; and
- 2 Independent Directors appointed by the board.

3. Role of the SIA CEO

The CEO's role is to harness and utilise human, technical and financial resources of the Institute to best achieve the strategic goals of the organisation, working within any policy/ operational limitations provided by the board.

The CEO is accountable to the board for *all* of the operations of the Institute, and has management responsibility for all of those operations.

In the case of the SIA, its resources also include a large volunteer workforce operating through Branches, the College of Fellows, and a range of special committees. The CEO draws on the support of key people in these groups to assist in management and leadership, as well as undertaking a range of functional activities.

4. Key member-sourced groups that assist in the achievement of the strategic objectives of the SIA

The national office staff team is relatively small, and given the wide ranging community of interest that the SIA represents, it cannot get its tasks done professionally and effectively without the active support and engagement of a wide range of members, working across key committees and groups, each showing initiative to assist the Institute. These groups include:

4.1 The Australian OHS Education Accreditation Board (AOHSEAB)

AOHSEAB has a largely independent board, which oversees Accreditation of higher education. The CEO remains responsible for the budget performance of AOHSEAB, and so works closely with the AOHSEAB Chair, Board, and Registrar to ensure the program is maintained. AOHSEAB is not separately incorporated, and is therefore a part of the SIA. As a financial cost centre of the SIA, the SIA financially underwrites its work.

4.2 OHS Profession Certification Governance Committee (CGC)

The Certification program also has a largely independent committee overseeing the governance and development of the program. As with AOHSEAB, the CEO remains accountable for its overall financial and operational performance, and so works closely with this committee to develop the program.

4.3 The College of Fellows (COF) and its various committees

Fellows of the Institute represent a network of senior health and safety people amongst the membership, who:

- (a) Provide expert guidance and advice to the CEO in a range of matters; and
- (b) Assist in the oversight of some of the key operational elements of the Institute.

The College of Fellows Executive has members who each chair a committee which has an interest in an area of SIA interest/operations. Committees formed, or in development, currently include:

- Ethics of the OHS profession – reviewing our code of ethics and ethical framework;
- Mentorship – overseeing the mentor program, including vetting prospective mentors;
- Standards committees- overseeing SIA member participation on Standards Committees;
- Awards – overseeing criteria and framework for SIA awards;
- Policy – Overseeing SIA contribution to a range of regulatory and other policy submission, as well as assisting the CEO to develop SIA position statements.

The College is not separately incorporated and does not have a governance role, but the College Chair is elected by the Board Chair, and is a member of the SIA Board, and the Board may delegate some governance duties to the College Chair and Executive, from time to time. The College Executive is best described as functioning as a board sub-committee.

4.4 State/Territory Branches

Branches are the most broadly based and critical regional membership networks of the SIA. They provide a range of functions, designed to bring members together, utilise the combined resources and expertise within each region, and overall, to provide a regional member experience.

Because of its scale, the SIA only has one national office, and this makes the branches even more important, in that they have strong knowledge of relevant State/Territory and regional issues.

In the conduct of their activities, branch roles are linked to the key pillars of the SIA strategic plan:

- **Capability:** Branches provide advice and input into the SIA's work to build the capability of the profession;
- **Policy and research:** Branches provide advice and input into state-based policy and research issues, and support research networking and engagement;
- **Engagement:** Branches assist the national office in the establishment and maintenance of stakeholder relationships in each state/territory;
- **Member services:** Branches have a leadership roles in the delivery of events/activities for members, and provide advice to national office in the provision of member services in their state/territory.

The role of Branches is outlined in more detail in the following material:

5. The role and activities of Branches

5.1 The role of branches

SIA state/territory Branches are regional membership networks of the SIA.

The role of each Branch is to:

- (a) Provide a range of activities/ functions which bring members together to
 - Provide a regional member networking experience; and
 - Provide CPD opportunities
- (b) Utilise the combined expertise of members within each region to input into policy
- (c) Establish and maintain relationships with a range of stakeholders who the SIA can work with to achieve its overall goals; and
- (d) Actively promote membership of the SIA.

These activities are overseen by a branch committee.

In the conduct of their activities, branches are linked to the key pillars of the SIA strategic plan:

- **Capability:** Branches provide advice and input into the SIA's work to build the capability of the profession;
- **Policy and research:** Branches provide advice and input into state-based policy and research issues, and support research networking and engagement;
- **Engagement:** Branches assist the national office in the establishment and maintenance of stakeholder relationships in each state/territory;
- **Member services:** Branches have a leadership roles in the delivery of events/activities for members, and provide advice to national office in the provision of member services in their state/territory.

5.2 Branch Committee activities

5.2.1 Overview

The branch committee carries out its role by:

- Creating working groups which can focus on key areas of work;
- Building an annual work plan around the activities of the branch and any working groups it forms to get the planned work undertaken. This could be done by simply combining the work plans *developed* by the working groups, or alternatively the committee may *establish the work plan for* the working groups
- Meeting regularly to review ongoing progress toward annual work plan goals, and identify any changes needed to the work of the branch
- Providing annual plans to the national office, and ongoing progress reports each quarter, which are combined by the CEO and included in their reporting to the board of the SIA and
- Being responsible for the maintenance of the Branch section of the website. This includes each working group taking an interest in ensuring that the branch section of the website reflects the work they have been doing, and are planning to do.

The detailed activities of the branch and its working groups are outlined on the following page:

5.2.2 Branch activities in detail, mapped against the SIA Strategic plan

Strategic objectives linked to the role of SIA Branches	
Capability	
Objective	Branch activity
1.2 Provide Professional development opportunities	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Support and promote the SIA national mentoring program • With national office guidance, conduct and analyse a coordinated annual state/territory based member training and development needs survey, and input results into the creation of an annual events program
1.3 BOK	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Explore the application of BOK content in the programming and delivery of events and CPD
1.4 Certification	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Actively promote certification at events and with members, strategic partners, regulators and industry
1.5 Innovation	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Provide specific events and opportunities for new ideas – forums, think-tanks/ discussions • Support and foster new ideas and innovative thinking
Policy/research	
Objective	Branch Activity
2.1 and 2.2 Build advocacy capability (policy agenda) and deliver advocacy	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Take on a role in maintaining relationship with regulators, working with the CEO • Run policy forums on policy issues of specific regional interest, linked to the policy agenda (seek regulator partnerships in delivery) • Coordinate policy submissions in relation to state/territory and regional issues
2.3 Research agenda	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Promote the SIA research agenda within relevant state/territory research institutions
2.4 Research partnerships	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Support the development of networks which share emerging knowledge and research including providing a platform for pure research and workplace applied research.
Engagement	
Objective	Branch Activity
3.1 Build shared coalitions of interest	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Seek and establish shared event delivery with CPD partners (corporates and other peaks/other agencies with similar CPD interests) • Locate and Engage with Partners to prosecute the SIA policy and research agendas
3.2 Promote a focus on Shared values	
3.3 Grow branch activity building vibrant networks	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Promulgate and support health and safety professional networks within regions • Create networking events which bring people together • Engage with universities, VET and other training organisations, regulators and industry to source and engage new members
3.5 Provide all members with a range of opportunities for professional networking and engagement	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Build an annual state/territory and regional network and events calendar which provides a range of networking and other events to connect members
Member services	
Objective	Branch Activity
Objective 4.1 - Ensure continuous improvement in the quality of products and services for members	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Seek to continually improve the offering to members through the quality, content, and frequency of activity.
4.3 Keep members up to date with current best practice in OHS for people working at all levels	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Build discussion about best practice into events, including running events for people at ALL levels
4.4 Provide an events program that will enhance professional development	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Build an annual state/territory and regional network and events calendar which contains high quality CPD opportunities

6. Branch Committee working group structure(s)

Branches are urged to split their work into three key functional areas, and consider creating working groups which look after these areas:

1. Events and member networking, growth and support
2. Stakeholder engagement; and
3. Policy.

Some branches may wish to combine the work of these committees.

7. Branch Work Focus areas

7.1 Focus area/working group area 1: Events and member networking

The following activities are commonly coordinated by an events and member networking working group

Creating and running an events calendar

Each Branch creates an annual events program, informed by a coordinated annual state/territory based member training and development needs survey. When doing so, they consider the following:

- Having a focus on high quality CPD
- Building discussion about best practice into events
- Running events for people at ALL levels
- Providing specific events and opportunities for new ideas – forums, think-tanks/ discussions
- Running policy forums on policy issues of specific state/territory/regional interest, linked to the policy agenda (seek regulator partnerships in delivery)
- Adding networking events which bring people together
- Exploring the application of BOK content in the programming and delivery of events and CPD

Looking for shared event delivery with CPD partners (corporates and other peaks/other agencies with similar CPD interests)

(a) Creating and supporting *member networking events* as part of the events calendar, and support for *health and safety networks* across the state/territory.

Each branch promulgates and supports health and safety professional networks within their state/territory and regions. This includes:

- Supporting the development of networks which share emerging knowledge and research including providing a platform for pure research and workplace applied research;
- Supporting and fostering new ideas and innovative thinking;
- Where sub-regions or regional networking groups exist, the Branch takes an active role in supporting those.

The creation and oversight of the Branch Events calendar is done in collaboration with the SIA national office, which has an oversight of the national program. National office augments locally created events, with other events such as speaker tours, webinars or special events

7.2 Focus area/workgroup area 2: Stakeholder Relationships

This group develops and maintains relevant relationships in their region, in concert with the SIA CEO. These can include:

- Taking on a role in maintaining relationship with the state/territory regulators;
- Creating and maintaining strategic partnerships with organisations that share SIA values and can assist in prosecuting the policy and research agendas, and promote programs such as Certification. This can include formal establishment of strategic partnerships if agreed with the CEO
- Sourcing Corporate members
- Establishing links with educational institutions in the state/territory/region, and encouraging and educating students on the opportunities available through membership.

7.3 Focus area/working group area 3: Policy

This group takes on a strong role in developing policy submissions on a range of regulatory and other matters within their region. In doing so, the group works closely with the national office and College of Fellows who also have a role to play in submissions.

Where branches have localised expertise and willingness to lead, they are invited to lead and coordinate submissions.

Most submissions involve

- (a) a member consultation process; and
- (b) publishing of the submission on the SIA website.

Submissions are signed by the Branch Chair and/or the College of Fellows Chair, and/or the SIA CEO, by agreement with the CEO.

This branch function may also involve engagement with national office on specific policy statements produced by the SIA.

8. Overarching interests and focus for all branch groups

When undertaking the work of *Events and Member Networking*, *Stakeholder Engagement*, and *Policy*, all branch representatives, members, sub-committees and working groups are asked to undertake their roles with the following in mind:

(a) Promoting SIA membership

- Ensuring that non-members who participate in activities are offered membership;
- At events where committee members speak on topics, talking about the value proposition of membership, and inviting people to be part of the Institute; and
- Ensuring that all new members receive direct contact from the Branch chair or their delegate, welcoming them to the SIA and orienting them to branch activities.

(b) Promoting the strategic agenda and programs of the SIA

Each branch has a role to play in forwarding the SIA agenda, by:

- Supporting and promoting the SIA national mentoring program;
- Promoting the SIA Research Agenda;
- Promoting the SIA Policy Agenda;
- Promoting certification at events and with members, strategic partners, regulators and industry;

- Promoting other programs such as mentoring, Accreditation of Higher education, and the OHS Body of Knowledge; and
- Supporting all forms of engagement which promulgate innovation and new ideas.

(c) Growing Branch activity and improving the quality, content and frequency of services and offerings

- Welcoming new contributors to the work of the branch. Providing something for everybody - being inclusive not elitist;
- Seeking to expand the number of opportunities available to members; and
- Exploring the use of ITC to improve connectivity especially for younger members.

9. National office engagement

The general theme in regard to support from the national office is one of cooperation and support for branches to do their work.

Branches are provided significant latitude and initiative in the undertaking of their work, however there is also a need for a consistent approach across different states and territories, and so national office provides guidance to branches on issues such as:

- Events: Titling, Pricing, Processes, Merchandising and Discretionary expenditures;
- Stakeholder engagement: Formal MOUs, and conditions associated with contra arrangements and shared activities;
- Policy submissions: CEO approval of papers prior to submission. The CEO is ultimately accountable for the content and quality of submissions, and may be required to speak to them.

National office staff:

- **The Chief Executive** of the SIA:
 - Engages with Branch Chairs, and provides ongoing advice and support when requested to assist the Chairs to successfully deliver on branch growth and development;
 - Has the responsibility to agree on sign off for policy submissions
 - Has the responsibility to sign off on MOUs and strategic partnerships, and so at the right time, is included in their development
- **The Events Manager** of the SIA assists branches with the creation and administration of events
- **The Membership Coordinator** of the SIA assists the branch with issues associated with membership generally
- **The Finance manager**, resolves any issues associated with ticketing and payments.

10. Reporting

National office to branches

- The CEO reports to the branches on the operations of the SIA, and progress toward strategic objectives.
- The CEO, Chair or Board members may deliver presentations for branches at events on request from time to time, generally upon request from the branches.
- National office will provide data to the Branches on training needs and other surveys which relate to the operations of the branch.

- The membership coordinator will provide regular membership reports to the Branch including information on all new members in the state/territory.

Branches to national office

Branches are requested to provide the following:

- The Branch program of planned activity in each of the areas of Events and Networking for members, Stakeholder Engagement, and Policy, by 1 June each year, for the following financial year. This plan contributes to organisational budget planning for the following year; and
- The branch Report on the previous financial year's program of activities, within a common reporting format, by 15 July of each year. This report contributes to the Annual report of the SIA.

11. Branch office holders Roles and responsibilities

Chair

The Chair of each state/Territory branch

- Convenes meetings of the branch committee
- Represents the branch in meetings and at functions from time to time
- Convenes Branch chairs meetings
- Provides advice to, and receives advice from, the Chief Executive from time to time
- Ensures that the working groups are functioning and effective

Deputy Chair

Carries out the role of the chair in their absence.

Secretary

Ensures that minutes of meetings are kept. Minutes should contain time of meeting, agenda, brief overview of discussions, record of any decisions. And clear notarisation of action items, including by when and by whom.

Working group chairs

Chairs of working groups

- Convene working group meetings,
- Monitor performance against plans
- Provide reports either directly to national office or to the branch chair, on activities and progress toward goals

12. Branch contacts for the National office

The branch Chair should not have to be the sole point of contact for the National office. To ensure clarity of communication between national and branches, each branch is requested to identify:

- (a) A primary contact person for general matters (this person may or may not be the Branch Chair)
- (b) Contact person for each of the three Branch focus areas: Events and networking, Stakeholder engagement, and Policy submissions. The relevant person may be the Chair of each working group

13. Commitment required from Committee members:

Branch committee members, as well as sub-committee or working group members, commit to participating in their committees in accordance with the frequency and type of meetings as determined by the Branch.

Members commit to actively assisting with and participating in events and activities, as per their focus area of involvement, and being a part of the process of leading the branch's activities in that area. If a member cannot be active in their assistance, they should consider whether being part of the committee/working group is right for them. Committees do not work successfully when the larger part of the work is left to few.

Members commit to upholding the philosophy and organisational culture of the SIA, based on collaboration, integrity, openness, listening to others, doing what we say, and expressing leadership through contribution and service. Senior members commit to supporting and mentoring younger members, and younger members commit to listening to and respecting those with greater experience.

14. Capabilities sought for members involved in building and delivering branch activities

Overview

The most important theme relating to Branch volunteers at the SIA is *giving members the chance to participate through leadership and contribution*.

Therefore, it is NOT critical to choose people with ready-made capability in terms of already existing knowledge and expertise. Any member enthusiastic enough to want to contribute should if possible have a place found for them to do that.

Having said that, the people working in the Branches need the *collective capability* to deliver the kinds of work programs that can deliver a high quality member experience. This requires the right mix of skill, experience and commitment of time and energy.

Therefore, while they would not exclude less experienced people, branches should actively seek to include amongst their number, people with the following capabilities.

Events and member networking program:

- People who work across the range of OHS functions on the group - from HSRs through to Chartered professionals;
- People with good knowledge of the range of current practice issues at all levels of the profession (Programmed activities should seek to address the needs of all members.) and an awareness of emerging knowledge, and innovation;
- Connections to companies that can offer venues.

Stakeholder engagement

- Experience in dealing with government and other related institutions and the capability to represent SIA views and policies in a professional manner.
- Connections and/or credibility with Higher education institutions in the region/state and ability to deliver information sessions to students;
- Willingness and capability to engage corporate members at a high level, and discuss ways to include corporate members in the activities of the branch. This may include participation on committees.

Policy

Submission coordinators should have

- strong written skills, and experience in preparing submissions based on a variety of feedback;
- Ability to analyse and synthesise a wide range of feedback;
- An understanding of current SIA policies related to given submissions in order to ensure that they are reflected in submissions.

Other knowledge and capability sought amongst branch committees:

Ideally, within each branch, there should be at least one person with high level knowledge of SIA programs such as Certification, the Mentorship program, Accreditation, the OHS BoK, and the capability of educating people about these programs in presentations. This would include capacity to do presentations to students about the SIA and its programs.