



NATIONAL SEARCH AND RESCUE COUNCIL

National Search and Rescue Council Charter

CHARTER of Council administration processes and formal arrangements

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Version: 3.0

The purpose of this Charter is to document in detail how the National Search and Rescue Council operates, including its key business processes in order to fulfil its functions as described within the Inter-Governmental Agreement on National Search and Rescue Response Arrangements (IGA).

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1. Purpose of the Council

- 1.1. The purpose of the National Search and Rescue (NatSAR) Council is to ensure an efficient and effective search and rescue service is provided within the Australian search and rescue region that meets both international obligations and domestic requirements.
- 1.2. The Inter-Governmental Agreement on National Search and Rescue Response Arrangements (IGA) puts in place arrangements between the Commonwealth and State/Territory SAR Authorities on the coordination of search and rescue in the Australian region.

2. Objectives of the Council

- 2.1. As outlined within the IGA Terms of Agreement, the Council member organisations agree that the NatSAR Council will be the national coordinating body for search and rescue response arrangements in Australia, with the following functions:

- Oversee the implementation of search and rescue arrangements within Australia's search and rescue region for consistency with the National Search and Rescue Response Arrangements;
- Sponsor and promote the development and use of the National SAR Manual, which details agreed search and rescue response and coordination arrangements in Australia; and
- Promote the ongoing effectiveness of the cooperative arrangements between the SAR Authorities.

(IGA, 2017)

3. Operation of the Council

Council membership

- 3.1. The NatSAR Council meets annually and consults out of session when necessary to discuss current and relevant issues within the SAR community.

The National SAR Council is to be chaired by AMSA and the Secretariat for the National SAR Council is also provided by AMSA to facilitate the implementation of the IGA.

(IGA, 2017)

NatSAR Council Secretariat – The Council Secretariat performs the day-to-day functions to deliver Council business in support of the national SAR system. This includes coordinating the administrative arrangements for meetings, working groups, action items and other Council initiatives.

NatSAR Council Chair – The Council Chair is appointed to represent the broad interests of the national SAR system as outlined in the IGA, providing an impartial view on Council business.

- 3.2. Membership of the NatSAR Council comprises representatives from each of the following SAR Authorities in Australia:

- I. the Australian SAR Authority (AMSA),
- II. each of the State and Territories SAR Authorities, and
- III. the Australian Defence Force.

(IGA, 2017)

- 3.3. Representatives from each jurisdiction as above will include:

NatSAR Council Delegate – is responsible for representing their authority’s strategic interests in SAR (marine, land and aviation) and providing a conduit for formal decision making through their organisational structure.

NatSAR Council Members – work through their respective delegate as determined through their organisational structure to provide operational expertise for SAR and administrative support to Council business through the secretariat.

NatSAR Council Observers – are invited by the Council to participate in Council business and nominally will be provided with all information and opportunities in line with members, unless otherwise determined on a case by case basis.

Changes to NatSAR Council membership

- 3.4. It is the jurisdictions’ responsibility to ensure continuous nomination of appropriate search and rescue delegates and members; and where possible, have an overlap in attendance for continuity purposes.

Council membership proposals

- 3.5. Membership proposals outside of the three SAR Authorities are to be directed to the NatSAR Council Secretariat in writing for consideration at the next NatSAR Council convening.
- 3.6. The decision of the Council will be confirmed and formally recorded in the meeting minutes.
- 3.7. The outcome of the proposal will be communicated via written correspondence from the Council Chair.

4. Council roles and responsibilities

NatSAR Council Secretariat duties

- 4.1. Provided by AMSA, the key duties performed by the Secretariat are:
- Develop and manage the NatSAR Council’s strategic and administrative framework.
 - Monitor domestic and international SAR obligations through AMSA’s role as the Australian SAR Authority.
 - Maintain domestic and international linkages with the SAR community.
 - Manage and coordinate correspondence on behalf of the Council, including public enquiries received through the NatSAR Council website ‘contact us’ page.

- Facilitate all NatSAR Council meetings, including Working Groups and other Council initiatives.
- Facilitate and manage Council meeting administrative arrangements.
- Maintain and manage the amendment process for the NatSAR Council Manuals.
- Manage updates and information sharing on the NatSAR Council website.
- Manage and coordinate the Australian SAR Awards program, including hosting the National SAR Awards event.

NatSAR Council Chair duties

4.2. Provided by AMSA, the key duties performed by the Chair are:

- Chair the convenings of the NatSAR Council or appoint an appropriate delegate to act on their behalf.
- Represent the NatSAR Council's broad interests of the national SAR system in line with the obligations outlined in the IGA.
- Correspond with Police Commissioners and other external organisations to represent the Council's position on important initiatives and ongoing business.

NatSAR Council delegate and member duties

4.3. Provide relevant meeting material in liaison with the Secretariat, including jurisdictional SAR statistics, reports, papers for discussion etc.

4.4. Review relevant material ahead of meetings in order to make important Council decisions and provide comment and feedback on Council issues.

4.5. Appropriate representation at NatSAR Council meetings is the responsibility of Council delegates to ensure their respective jurisdiction's views are represented. If for any reason a jurisdiction cannot be represented, members will need to advise the Secretariat ahead of the convening and ensure the official meeting outcomes once confirmed are appropriately reviewed and discussed as required with the Secretariat.

4.6. As indicated in the IGA, each member organisation of the NatSAR Council will fund their respective member's costs and expenses incurred in the course of Council business, unless otherwise agreed.

5. NatSAR Council annual meeting cycle

NatSAR Council 12 month meeting cycle

- 5.1. **Teleconference 1** – Typically held in March following the previous year’s annual meeting, the purpose of the 1st Teleconference is to discuss Council business plan progress, arrangement regarding the next annual meeting and Council administration.
- 5.2. **Teleconference 2** – Typically held in July, the purpose of the 2nd Teleconference is to socialise annual meeting documents that require NatSAR Council members’ input and/or feedback and the 1st draft annual meeting agenda.
- 5.3. **Teleconference 3** – Typically held in September, the purpose of the 3rd Teleconference is to finalise jurisdiction reports, papers, other documentation and meeting arrangements ahead of the annual meeting.
- 5.4. **NatSAR Council annual meeting** – Typically held in October as a two-day meeting, held over two full days or three days (one full day and two half days, from Wednesday to Friday), the annual meeting allows members to discuss in person, topical issues that impact SAR, including the provision of advice and direction on strategic topics and make important decisions that contribute to the ongoing development of the national SAR system. It also provides the opportunity to review Council achievements in the previous 12 months and plan the next year’s business objectives. The annual Australian SAR Awards event is normally hosted during the second evening (Thursday) of the annual meeting.
- 5.5. **Teleconference 4** – An optional teleconference typically held following the annual meeting and before the Christmas break, the purpose of this teleconference is to finalise the annual meeting report and outcomes for reporting requirements to the Police Commissioners or equivalent.
- 5.6. **Dedicated Working Groups** – When necessary, the Council can agree to establish ongoing or ad hoc working groups that specify particular objectives to resolve particular issues or initiatives identified by the Council. Working Group members are generally appointed on a voluntarily basis attracting people with particular subject matter expertise and operate on behalf of the Council. Each working group will have an appointed Chair and operate under a Terms of Reference, using a template agreed to by Council, to set out the scope, objectives and how the working group will operate. Recommendations and outcomes will be reported to the Council as an ongoing update until agreed to conclude/finalise.

Information sharing

- 5.7. The Secretariat facilitates many platforms for the NatSAR Council to utilise when information sharing and storing meeting documentation:

NatSAR Council website (public view)

This is the Council’s public facing website, which hosts all published documentation such as the NatSAR Manual, strategic documents, meeting reports etc., which are updated on a regular basis, following the annual meeting.

NatSAR Council member's area

The member's area of the NatSAR Council website has restricted access requiring a username and password login. This SharePoint platform allows members to share relevant information and documents through the Secretariat for member's review and information.

NatSAR Council email distribution list

The NatSAR Council email distribution list is maintained by the Secretariat and is used for everyday business and circulating information on both a group and individual basis. The distribution list is updated on an ongoing basis as new working groups form and new members join.

Meeting documentation

- 5.8. Utilising both the members' SharePoint site and email, the NatSAR Secretariat is responsible for supplying the relevant documentation ahead of, and following each NatSAR Council convening. This includes the meeting agenda, action table, previous meeting minutes/outcomes, and other documentation relevant to Council business.
- 5.9. Following each Council convening, the Secretariat is responsible for keeping a record of meeting minutes and outcomes for circulation and confirmation with the Council. This is typically provided to the Council in draft, two weeks following a teleconference (unless otherwise agreed). Members then have the opportunity to review and provide any feedback regarding the minutes, out of session with the Secretariat.
- 5.10. Once finalised, the meeting minutes are published within the members' SharePoint site as finalised.
- 5.11. Following the NatSAR Council annual meeting, the Secretariat is responsible for providing the draft meeting report. The report is typically circulated within 6 - 10 weeks of the meeting where members can provide feedback and/or comment.
- 5.12. Once agreed, the official report is finalised and published on the NatSAR Council website for public view.

Rotational hosting arrangement

- 5.13. The current agreement for the NatSAR Council annual meeting includes a rotational arrangement with hosting responsibilities shared between the States and Territories, when face-to-face meetings permit, over an eight year cycle.
- 5.14. The current hosting rotation exists as follows:
 - Western Australia, WA Police
 - Australian Capital Territory, AFP
 - Northern Territory, NT Police
 - South Australia, SA Police
 - Victoria, VIC Police
 - Tasmania, TAS Police
 - New South Wales, NSW Police
 - Queensland, QLD Police

- 5.15. Any changes to the above rotation will need to be agreed by the Council and accompanied by a letter from the Council Chair to confirm the arrangement with the respective Commissioners of the parties involved. This will involve a consultation period to brief the hosting state on the hosting requirements.

Hosting State duties

- 5.16. Typically the hosting State will liaise with the Secretariat to confirm meeting arrangements.
- 5.17. Cost associated with meeting venue hire and other meeting costs such as catering, is normally borne by the hosting state unless otherwise agreed.

6. Council Strategic Documents

- 6.1. In order for the Council to fulfil its responsibilities as outlined in the IGA, the Secretariat has developed the Council's strategic framework consisting of a number of documents. Listed below are the strategic documents currently used by the Council, including a short description on their use and purpose.

Business Plan

The purpose of the business plan is to define the priorities and actions for the next two years to achieve the intended objectives in the Strategic Outlook. Objectives and actions are based on a risk review during the annual meeting. The actions highlighted in this Business Plan allow the NatSAR Council to understand what needs to be executed to translate strategy into operation.

Performance Report

The purpose of the Performance Report is to provide a summary of the Council's key achievements during the last financial year against the objectives and priorities set out in the Council Business Plan. The information has been drawn from completed items that are tracked through the NatSAR Council action plan and other activities that have been substantially progressed since the last annual meeting.

Action Plan

The purpose of the action plan is to document and track progress of action items that have resulted from Council meetings. The action plan is updated on a regular basis and each entry includes the responsible agency, update on progress and status of completion.

Council Charter

The purpose of the Charter is to document in detail how the NatSAR Council operates, including its key business processes in order to fulfil its functions as described within the Inter-Governmental Agreement (IGA).

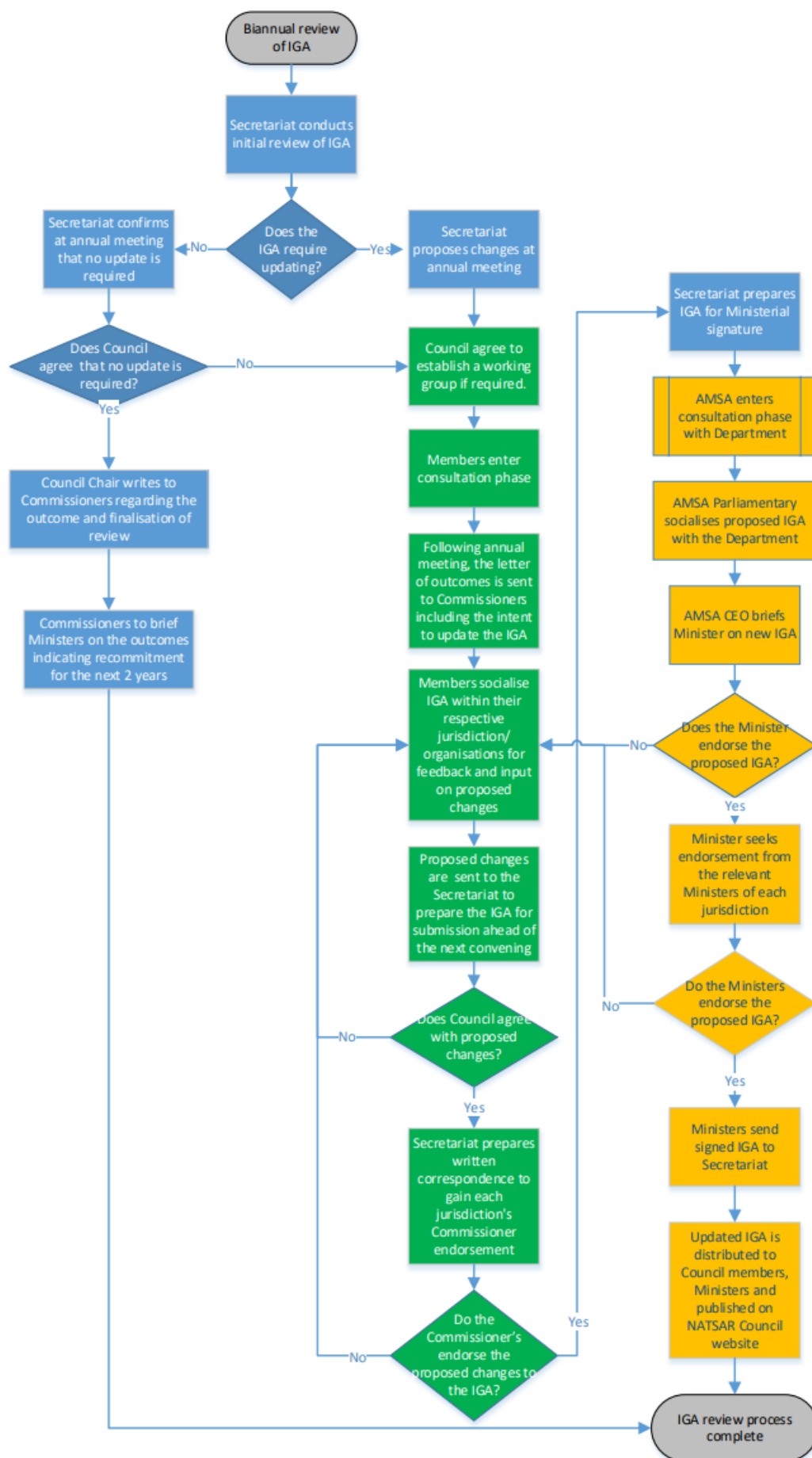
NatSAR Council Project Plan

The purpose of the NatSAR Council project plan is to document and track the 12 month calendar cycle of NatSAR arrangements. This document is used by the Secretariat to

ensure a consistent and well-coordinated approach to Council business in the lead up to the annual meeting.

7. Inter-Governmental Agreement Review Process

- 7.1. The IGA review process (described over page) will be coordinated by the NatSAR Council Secretariat every 2 years to ensure the document is kept current and clearly stipulates the roles and responsibilities of each SAR Authority within the National Search and Rescue Response Arrangements.



8. NatSAR Manual amendment process

- 8.1. As per the IGA, a primary role of the Council is to sponsor and promote the development and use of the National SAR Manual, which details agreed search and rescue response and coordination procedures in Australia.
- 8.2. In order to maintain a current manual, the Secretariat manages a review and amendment process as part of the NatSAR Council annual meeting cycle each year.

Amendment process:

- I. Anyone can propose NatSAR Manual amendments to the Secretariat via the online form available on the NatSAR Council website.
- II. Secretariat collates proposed amendments and records them in the NatSAR Manual amendments schedule.
- III. The amendments schedule is submitted as a paper ahead of each NatSAR Council annual meeting.
- IV. Council members review the amendments and provide any feedback or comment during the NatSAR Manual amendment agenda item at the annual meeting.
- V. Agreed amendments are included in the next Manual edition, which is published following the annual meeting (typically in February).
- VI. Amendments that require further input are discussed out of session with the relevant parties and re-submitted to the next Council convening or teleconference. This process will continue until the Council collectively agrees to the amendments.

Note 1: Minor changes:

Minor changes that include typos or grammatical amendments that do not change the context of the information, are updated at the discretion of the Secretariat.

Note 2: If no amendment is required:

If Council agrees that no update or amendment is required, the NatSAR Manual will remain in place for a further cycle.

9. Australian SAR Award program

Australian SAR Award hosting arrangements

- 9.1. Every year during the NatSAR Council annual meeting the Council hosts the Australian SAR Award dinner to present awards for 'outstanding contribution to search and rescue or the saving of a human life within the Australian region'.
- 9.2. In total, the following award categories are available to the Council, should suitable nominations be made:
 - **Professional** Australian SAR Award
 - **Professional** Australian SAR Commendation
 - **Non-professional** Australian SAR Award
 - **Non-professional** Australian SAR Commendation
 - **Long serving contribution** Australian SAR Award
 - **Long serving contribution** Australian SAR Commendation
 - **Recognition of long standing Council members** NatSAR Council Award

Award criteria

- 9.3. Nominations are made from organisations or members of the general public in support of the Australian search and rescue community.
- 9.4. The awards are open to an individual, group or organisation and may relate to a particular search and rescue event or a sustained contribution to the SAR system over a period of time.
- 9.5. Nominations can be for both those who are professionally trained in SAR; or non-professional volunteers or members of the public and others who are not formally trained.
- 9.6. Nominations are open all year round and the incident should refer to one that has occurred during the financial year period (1 July to 30 June).
- 9.7. Nominations close on the 1st August ahead of the next NatSAR Council annual meeting (typically in October) to allow for Council members to vote and complete related award administration.

Nomination instructions

- 9.8. Access the Australian SAR Award nomination form from the NatSAR Council website at www.amsa.gov.au/national-search-and-rescue-council
- 9.9. Complete and submit the online nomination form and upload any supporting documentation.

Council voting process

- 9.10. Nominations are circulated to the relevant jurisdiction's Council delegate to ensure the jurisdiction is supportive and aware of sensitivities involving the nomination(s). In the circumstance where the jurisdiction is not supportive of a nomination, it will be withdrawn from the pool of nominations.

- 9.11. The nominations and award summaries are prepared by the Secretariat and circulated to the Council delegate(s) of each State and Territory Police service, the AFP, the ADF and AMSA. Council delegates are encouraged to liaise with all relevant parties within their respective organisations to reach a consensus vote that represents an organisational view.
- 9.12. Each jurisdiction has the opportunity to exercise the following votes:
- One vote worth 2 points for the full Australian SAR Award (professional)
 - One vote worth 2 points for the Australian SAR Award (non-professional)
 - One vote worth 2 points for the Australian SAR Award (long serving contribution)
- 9.13. Each jurisdiction has the opportunity to exercise discretionary votes as followings:
- One vote worth 1 point for a commendation recognition in each of the above three categories. Jurisdictions are not required to make a commendation vote and is up to the discretion of the jurisdiction whether one of the nominees is deserving of recognition.
 - **Caveat** - In the circumstance where a small number of nominations are made in a single category, the Secretariat will consider a discretionary vote appropriate. This will avoid a mandatory vote of 2 points when there is a limited pool of nominations that may not be worthy of national recognition. In this circumstance, if the majority Council vote of two-thirds in favour of the nomination, will be presented.
- 9.14. The Secretariat collates all votes to determine the successful recipients.
- 9.15. Once determined, the Secretariat will contact the organisation/person that nominated the successful recipient and subsequently notify the recipient(s) of the outcome.
- 9.16. If the voting process indicates a draw between 2 or more nominations, the Secretariat will re-approach Council to vote between the two nominations to ensure one nomination is recognised as the winner.
- 9.17. If the Council does not agree an appropriate nomination is worthy of national recognition, the category will not be awarded.
- 9.18. Jurisdictional police agencies may be required to contact the recipients or people affected by a sensitive nomination being awarded, such as incidents involving fatalities, serious injury, investigation etc. This will avoid any implications or insensitivities following the media announcements.
- 9.19. If a SAR Award Event is being held that year, the Secretariat will also invite the successful recipients to officially receive the award at the SAR Awards Event.
- 9.20. Unless announced previously through other channels (such as a Ministerial announcement) the award recipients will be officially announced to the Council on the first day of the NatSAR Council annual meeting and through media channels to the public immediately following the event. If Council is not meeting face-to-face that year, the Secretariat will determine the preferred announcement date.

SAR Award Event

- 9.21. On behalf of the Council, the Secretariat is responsible for arranging the National SAR Awards dinner, which is held on the second evening of the meeting schedule. This includes arranging the awards and associated travel and accommodation for the SAR Award recipient(s) and appropriate media coverage.
- 9.22. The event is primarily funded by AMSA, unless cost sharing has otherwise been agreed.
- 9.23. Once the awardees are confirmed, the Secretariat will make travel and accommodation arrangements for their attendance to the dinner event unless otherwise agreed.
- 9.24. AMSA funds the cost associated with awardees attending the event but if the number of awardees exceeds AMSA's capacity to cover costs, a representative(s) from that respective crew/organisation will be asked to attend to accept the award on their behalf.
- 9.25. If a SAR Award Event is not held that year, the Secretariat will determine a suitable date for award announcements and will arrange associated media coverage.

10. NatSAR Managers Course

Purpose

- 10.1. The purpose of the course is to qualify search and rescue managers from either of the three Search and Rescue (SAR) Authority agencies with responsibilities for SAR coordination in SAR management through study and attainment of the Advanced Diploma of Police Search and Rescue Management.
- 10.2. The course is instrumental in maintaining a consistent approach to coordination of SAR response operations across Australia, ensuring that all Australian states and territories maintain contemporary best-practice approaches to SAR management and increases each jurisdiction's capacity to deliver state or territory based SAR courses.

Course operation

- 10.3. The National Search and Rescue Managers Course (NatSARMC) is held on an annual basis over two weeks in Canberra and is managed primarily by the Directing Staff members and the Course Director.
- 10.4. The course is currently delivered under the Queensland Police Service RTO with administrative support provided by AMSA. Queensland Police is responsible for assessing and issuing the qualification once obtained.
- 10.5. Each year, the NatSAR Council Chair writes to the Police Commissioners/equivalent to invite two students from each jurisdiction to participate. It is a requirement for nominated students to have a reasonable level of SAR experience to ensure they are able to complete the course work i.e. completion of your respective state or territory SAR course.
- 10.6. Course costs are initially paid by AMSA and evenly distributed across the number of students attending the course. The approximate course costs is around \$4,500.00 per student inclusive of travel, meals and accommodation.

- 10.7. One qualified Directing Staff member is invited from each jurisdiction to assist in facilitating the course. The course encourages continuity with Directing Staff members to ensure a consistent approach is taken each year. All associated costs of the Directing Staff are absorbed within the course administration fees.

Roles and responsibilities

- 10.8. **Course Director** – The Course Director manages the preparation and facilitation of the course in liaison with the Directing Staff. The Director is usually re-appointed every two years. The intention is for the Assistant Director to take over the Director position to ensure continuity and succession planning is in place.

- 10.9. The main responsibilities of the Course Director include:

- Draft formal correspondence for the course
- Prepare course material and joint instructions for students and Directing Staff
- Prepare and assess pre-course exercises
- Organise and manage the two week course schedule, including lectures timings, presentations and activities
- Prepare student and Directing Staff evaluations
- Make preparations for the course formal dinner
- Prepare the course report to Council
- Facilitate course certificates
- File all student course material as per training requirements
- Complete all student assessments for Advanced Diploma (averages about 8-10hrs per student, 15-17 students per year)
- Complete RTO paperwork
- Issue Diplomas

- 10.10. **Assistant Director** – The role of the Assistant Director is to share and assist the Director in the above responsibilities to ensure they are able to take on the Director position when required.

- 10.11. **Directing Staff** – Directing Staff are required to assist the Course Director as necessary to complete the above tasks. Directing Staff main responsibilities include assisting in the delivery of the course components and being an aid to the students as required.

- 10.12. **Students** – Students are nominated annually and are required to have the necessary pre-requisites and complete the pre-course material ahead of the course commencement. Students are required to part-take in the two week course and complete the necessary post course assessment and evaluation requirements to obtain the qualification.

- 10.13. **Secretariat** – The NatSAR Council Secretariat (AMSA) assists with administrative tasks of the course. This includes, coordinating travel and accommodation arrangements, preparing certificates and invitations, etc.

Reporting

- 10.14. Directing Staff are required to conduct an annual review of the NatSARMC following its delivery to focus on national consistency of SAR training.

- 10.15. The SAR Technology Working Group utilises the NatSARMC as a ‘test bed’ to evaluate technology against Australia’s SAR capabilities that may be useful or relevant at a national level. This information is reported back to Council via the Council Course report.
- 10.16. Any updates, outcomes and recommendations from the review will be presented as part of the NatSARMC update in the Course Director’s Report at the NatSAR Council annual meeting.

Attachment 1: History of rotational hosting arrangements

Year	Location	Dates
1976	Melbourne, DOT (ATG)	December
1977	Canberra, DOT (STG)	6-7 December
1978	Adelaide, SA Police	5-6 December
1979	Hobart, TAS Police	27-28 November
1980	Brisbane, QLD Police	25-27 November
1981	Sydney, NSW Police	25-26 November
1983	Melbourne, VIC Police	8-10 February
1984	Canberra, Defence	18-20 September
1985	Perth, WA Police	3-5 September
1986	Darwin, NT Police	19-21 August
1987	Adelaide, SA Police	29 September - 1 October
1988	Hobart, TAS Police	20-22 September
1989	Brisbane, QLD Police	31 October - 2 November
1990	Sydney, NSW Police	23-25 October
1991	Melbourne, VIC Police	22-24 October
1992	Canberra, AFP	27-29 October
1993	Perth, WA Police	27-29 October
1994	Darwin, NT Police	17-19 August
1995	Adelaide, SA Police	27-29 September
1996	Hobart, TAS Police	19-21 November.
1997	Brisbane, QLD Police	18-20 November
1998	Sydney, NSW Police	10-12 November
1999	Melbourne, VIC Police	12-14 October
2000	Canberra, AFP	14-16 November
2001	Perth, WA Police	11-12 September
2002	Darwin, NT Police	10-11 October
2003	Adelaide, SA Police	13-14 November
2004	Hobart, TAS Police	18-19 November
2005	Brisbane, QLD Police	17-18 November
2006	Sydney, NSW Police	16-17 November
2007	Melbourne, VIC Police	15-16 November
2008	Canberra, AFP	13-14 November
2009	Perth, WA Police	12-13 November
2010	Darwin, NT Police	13-15 October

Year	Location	Dates
2011	Adelaide, SA Police	15-17 November
2012	Melbourne, VIC Police	16-18 October
2013	Hobart, TAS Police	6-8 November
2014	Sydney, NSW Police	1-3 October
2015	Brisbane, QLD Police	14-16 October
2016	Western Australia, WA Police	19-21 October
2017	Australian Capital Territory, AFP	18-20 October
2018	Northern Territory, NT Police	12-13 September
2019	South Australia, SA Police	10-11 September
2020	Hosted via video conference due to COVID 19	7-8 October
2021	Hosted via video conference due to COVID 19	20 October
2022	Melbourne, VIC Police	19-20 October*
2023	Tasmania, TAS Police	TBC
2024	New South Wales, NSW Police	TBC
2025	Queensland, QLD Police	TBC

* subject to Victorian Police Commissioner approval