DELEGATES AT INTERNATIONAL MEETINGS

1 BACKGROUND

This Guide has been prepared by Standards Australia to assist delegates to effectively participate at international standardisation meetings. Standards Australia seeks to ensure that delegates are familiar with the protocols and operation of meetings, and may provide further briefings to delegates as required. Delegates are also encouraged to read SDO Guide 1 - International Standardisation.

2 THE DELEGATE'S ROLE

The role of the delegate is, in co-operation with nominees of Standards bodies of other countries, to develop an International Standard or technical document. Ideally, an International Standard should be one that can be adopted in every country. From the Australian point of view, International Standards should be suitable for acceptance as Australian Standards.

Compliance with the International Standards of ISO and IEC, as is the case for Australian Standards, is strictly voluntary (only when Standards are cited by regulators do they become mandatory requirements). Standards will be used by industry, national Standards bodies, and government regulatory agencies only if they meet the needs of the countries involved. A Standard that does find worldwide acceptance will eliminate one more barrier to the free flow of international trade.

Delegates are nominated because they are considered to be one of the experts best able to represent Australian interests in the deliberations of an ISO/IEC committee, primarily because of their expertise in the field of activity of the committee. They have indicated a willingness to serve, they have demonstrated an ability to represent the Australian position on issues of concern, their employer has indicated a willingness to commit their time, and their employer or nominating organisation is willing to offer financial support for their attendance at the meetings. Also, they will normally have had experience on Australian Standards development committees.

Finally, they have been accredited as a delegate by Standards Australia, after seeking endorsement from the Australian mirror group. Only accredited delegates may take part in ISO/IEC Technical Committee, Project Committee and Subcommittee meetings.

3 WHO DO DELEGATES REPRESENT?

On an ISO/IEC committee, delegates represent Australia through Standards Australia. They do not represent a professional or technical society or industry association, even if such an organisation has initiated and co-funds their participation in Australian standardisation. They do not represent their company or department, or a personal viewpoint. (The only exception to this is members of Working Groups; here delegates are chosen for their technical expertise). Above all, they do not represent the Australian Government, even if they are an employee of it. ISO, IEC and Standards Australia are non-government organisations and none is legally authorised to commit the Australian Government to anything or to act on its behalf.
As the Australian member of the international committee, regardless of the size of the delegation, Standards Australia has only one vote. This means that the Australian delegation must always speak as one in negotiations with the other members. The positions of the delegation members must be unified and must be agreed upon before the meeting takes place.

If there is more than one delegate, the Australian mirror group will appoint a delegation leader, known as Head of Delegation. The leader will be the delegation’s principal spokesperson.

It is also often desirable to present a common view from Australia and New Zealand, but this is normally achieved separately by the two Standards organisations, each of which has a separate voice and vote in ISO/IEC work.

For ISO and IEC operations to remain effective, all communications must be between member bodies. Neither delegates nor their organisation should establish direct liaison with ISO/IEC member bodies, or with ISO and IEC. Communications are more effective if channelled through Standards Australia. Of course, in the case of nominated members of working groups, communication directly among members in carrying out business assigned to a working group is more effective and is encouraged.

4 TRAVEL ARRANGEMENTS AND FUNDING

Delegates make their own arrangements for travel and accommodation (though convenient accommodation for meetings is usually proposed by the meeting organisers). Delegates are responsible for seeking their own independent advice on issues such as the desirability of travel to the countries involved, any necessary visas, travel and medical insurance.

Partial financial assistance may be available through Commonwealth government funding via the National Standards Office, but the delegate’s employer or industry organisation normally contributes part of the costs. Delegates should see SDO Procedure 3 – Nomination and Funding to Attend International Meetings more information.

5 FAMILIARISATION

The delegate’s first task is to familiarise themselves with the past work and present activities of the ISO/IEC committee.

Due to the time and expense involved in conducting international meetings, most ISO/IEC work is carried out by correspondence. The relevant Australian mirror group takes part in this work, and shortly before an ISO/IEC meeting it will meet to establish the Australian position on agenda items. The international delegate will generally be asked and expected to attend this briefing either in person or via video/teleconferencing.

It is probable that the ISO/IEC meeting has been called because one or more proposals are approaching the voting stage. The Australian delegation must ensure that it clearly understands the Australian viewpoint as determined by the Australian mirror group.

Delegates should become thoroughly familiar with the content of any Australian proposal to be considered at the meeting. (Similarly, they should also be familiar with the Australian position on other countries’ submissions.) At the meeting, delegates may be called upon to defend Australian proposals, and are also expected to do so in conversations with delegates from other countries.

ISO publishes Directives on Technical Committee work and Guidance for delegates and experts. These may be found at the links below.
Directives on technical committee work: http://www.iso.org/directives

Guidance for delegate/experts:

6 AT THE MEETING

At the ISO/IEC meeting the delegation will have the opportunity to put Australia’s point of view when the appropriate item on the agenda is being considered. Where there is more than one delegate, the delegation leader is the official spokesperson, but may feel that another delegate is technically better informed, or for some other reason better qualified to speak on a particular point. In that case the leader may, after asking to speak, authorise that other delegate(s) speak on the subject in question. Whoever speaks must speak for the entire delegation. Any differences that may exist among the members of the delegation must be settled before any delegate speaks at a committee meeting. (Ordinarily, this is done in private; differences should not be aired in front of delegates from other countries.)

The Australian position will be decided upon by the corresponding Australian mirror group and this should not be departed from. If during a meeting a point on which the Australian position is not clear is raised, the delegation leader may request more time in which to formulate an opinion and recommend that the issue be deferred to later in the meeting or be handled by correspondence so that the Australian mirror group may be consulted.

The purpose of having an Australian delegation at the meeting is to press for adoption of the Australian viewpoints on proposed international Standards. The best way to gain acceptance of that point of view is to present arguments based on technical merits (rather than use arguments based on tradition, economic or cultural grounds).

7 LANGUAGE

The official languages of ISO are English and French and in the case of IEC, English. Technical meetings will usually be conducted in English (and sometimes French) for ISO meetings, and English for IEC meetings.

Translation from English into French and vice versa, where provided at ISO meetings, is normally on a consecutive basis.

8 INVITATIONS FOR MEETINGS

A formal invitation to host an ISO or IEC technical committee or subcommittee meetings in Australia may not be issued without prior written agreement from Standards Australia. For more information see SDO Guide 1 - International Standardisation.

9 ACCEPTING SECRETARIATS

During organisational planning meetings of ISO/IEC technical committees, delegates may be asked to volunteer to accept the secretariat of a subcommittee or convenorship of a working group on behalf of the member bodies they represent.
A delegate may only indicate that Standards Australia will be consulted regarding the possibility of Australia providing a secretariat. If there has been no prior consideration of the question, the Australian delegate shall not indicate likely acceptance or otherwise of secretariat responsibilities. Administration of a secretariat carries responsibilities from both Standards Australia Operations and the National Mirror Committee of experts requiring:

- Managerial experience in co-ordinating and expediting work programs;
- Strict neutrality;
- A mechanism for maintaining close liaison with other ISO/IEC technical committees, member bodies, other international organisations, governmental bodies and regional organisations;
- Adequate resources, inducing a high capability in electronic communication and document management; and
- Adherence to the ISO/IEC Directives on meetings, minutes, documents, and reports.

Member bodies holding technical committee secretariats are totally responsible to ISO or IEC for their effective operation. Subcommittee secretariats, also administered by member bodies, are responsible for the management and internal co-ordination of their programs and are accountable to the parent technical committee and to the Central Secretariat of ISO or Central Office of IEC for efficient operation.

Standards Australia will accept a secretariat only if it is satisfied that the necessary financial support is available from organisational and industry bodies and that acceptance is in the national interest. Acceptance of the secretariat of a working group carries the responsibility of provision of a convener. Therefore, in undertaking to consider the possibility of accepting the secretariat of a working group, the availability of a suitable Australian convener must be considered.

10 INITIATING MEMBERSHIP OF SUBCOMMITTEES OR WORKING GROUPS

An Australian delegate may only indicate at an ISO/IEC meeting that Standards Australia’s agreement to membership of a subcommittee or working group will be sought. Membership of subcommittees and working groups is dependent on the expertise in, and support for, the work of the subcommittee (or working group) in Australia. If agreed to, Standards Australia will confirm Australia’s membership to the relevant secretariat, or working group convener, in writing.

11 REPORTING ON THE MEETING

It is the delegates’ or delegation leader’s responsibility to prepare a comprehensive account of the meeting for the appropriate Australian mirror group (the report should also be copied to Standards Australia). The report should summarise results and emphasise accord with, or variance from, Australian opinions and practices and the potential effect on Australian interests. The extent of Australian participation in the deliberations and its effectiveness should be recorded. This may include criticism of, or comment on, the conduct of the meeting, participation by other countries, and the overall value of the activity.

Where a number of delegates attend, each delegate should prepare a report on the meetings from the delegate’s perspective. This report may augment the leader’s report, and also serve as a report to the delegate’s employer. It should be noted that where delegates are supported by Commonwealth funding, such reports prepared within four weeks of returning to Australia are a condition of funding and attendance at future meetings.