

IFA / AFG Victorian Branch

Options for future structure and arrangements

Background

In January 2019 the IFA and AFG merged to become one entity. This action was approved by both IFA and AFG Boards.

For ease of discussion, the entity will be referred to as IFA/AFG. In the next 12 months the name of the entity will need to be re-considered.

Around the same time, IFA/AFG entered into an arrangement with Professionals Australia to undertake the 'back of office' functions of IFA/AFG. Back of office functions include:

- accounting
- annual reporting
- membership and recruitment
- monthly national newsletters
- supporting state based branches (Note that IFA previously referred to state / territory divisions. It is proposed, under the new arrangements, that these geographic descriptors will be referred to as 'branches'.)

IFA/AFG Victorian Branch has sought and obtained Board approval to develop options for the future structure, role and functions at and within the Victorian Branch. These arrangements may, in the future, inform arrangements in other State and Territories.

Terminology

Proposal 1: Refer to the entity as the “Institute of Foresters Australia / Australian Forest Growers” (or “IFA/AFG”) until a more substantive name is adopted.

Proposal 2: Refer to the geographic descriptors as “Regions” unless or until a more substantive descriptor is adopted.

Past arrangements of IFA

IFA previously operated at a national and a state (or territory) divisional level. The Victorian Division variously:

- Operated a Divisional Committee with a Chair, Secretary, Membership Officer; Media Officer and Events Officer.
- Eleven Divisional meetings were held annually.
- Issued periodic newsletters
- Arranged for events, guest speakers, field trips and professional development activities
- Acted for the IFA on matters of advocacy.

The IFA focus was heavily slanted to public land forest policy and state government forestry policy. This included issues such as:

- Regional Forest Agreements
- Advocacy in respect to timber harvesting on public land
- Advocacy in respect to National Park management
- Advocacy in respect to Fire management
- Forestry education
- Professional development
- Urban forestry

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- Plantation forestry
- Farm forestry.

Past arrangements of AFG

AFG operated at a national level and at a regional level. AFG membership focussed on owners and managers of forests, including privately owned forests and plantations and farm forests.

Regions had a high degree of autonomy. At least one current AFG grower group is an incorporated body.

It is understood that at least one grower group held its own funds (generated principally by subscriptions to the grower group). Some of these funds may have been transferred to the national AFG accounts.

AFG grower groups have particularly close relationships with Land Care Australia. Some grower groups also have members who represent farm forestry issues on specified Local Government Areas.

It is understood that some members of grower groups pay membership dues. Some of these grower group members were not necessarily (former) AFG members.

Regions adopted local names, such as:

- Gippsland Agroforestry Network
- Farm Forestry North East
- Ballarat Tree Growers Group
- Otway Agroforestry Network

The focus of regions was variously:

- Promoting forestry and tree growing on private land (including corporately owned land and privately owned farms)
- Advocacy in respect to plantations, tree growing and farm forestry
- Increasing the knowledge of farm forest growers through activities such as:
 - mentoring
 - case studies
 - field days
 - workshops
 - maintaining web sites
 - local advocacy.

Options for the future arrangements

Option 1: A simple “add-together”

Under this option, the status quo would be largely maintained. That would result:

- A state focussed committee which is Melbourne based and Victorian policy focussed, and
- Regional committees that maintain their local (regional) focus on farm forestry.

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Advantages of Option1:

- + minimal change

Disadvantages of Option 1:

- fails to take advantage of the positive synergies between former IFA and AFG members
- potential for gaps and overlaps in activities
- the relationship between the regional committees and state committee are not clearly defined.
- potential for 'stove-piping' of issues
- potential that former AFG members feel left out of state based issue development.

Option 2: An integrated tiered committee structure

Under this option, there would be three tiers of committee:

- National
- Branch (State)
- Regional.

The State Branch Committee would have a broader membership than is currently the case. The State level committee would draw at least one member (nominated) from each Regional Committee, in addition to having Melbourne based membership.

Each Regional Committee would nominate one member to the State Branch Committee.

Members of the State Branch Committee would meet either face to face or via the 'Go To Meeting' technology (teleconference).

Advantages of Option 2:

- + better integration and joining up of Regional Committees and State Branches
- + allows regional issues greater visibility at State level
- + greater depth of committee membership at both State and Regional level
- + allows for special interest / activity committees.

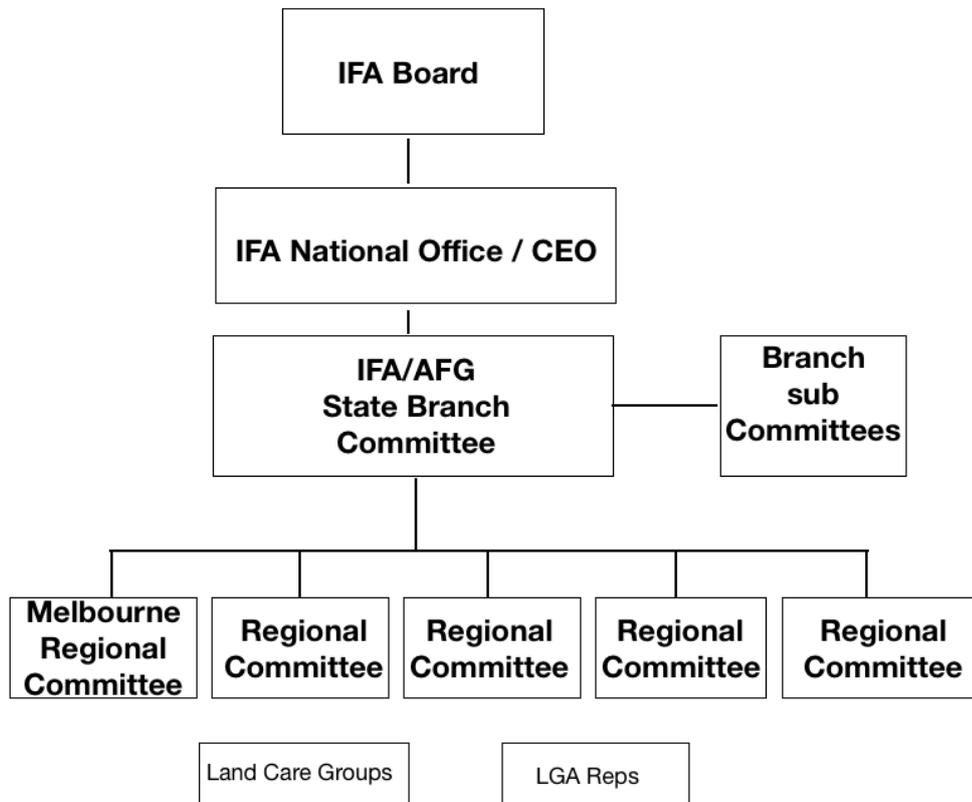
Disadvantages of Option 2:

- may result in fewer options for Melbourne based members who want to get involved in Regional activities

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IFA/AFG Option 3 for Victorian Branch Committee



- Regional committee nominees to the State Branch have an additional workload.

Option 3: Integrated Committee structure plus Melbourne Region

This would be option 2 but with the addition that the geographic area around Melbourne could be a Regional Committee. Option 3 is depicted above.

Advantages of Option 3:

- As per Option 2 plus
- Enables Melbourne based membership to get involved in Melbourne Regional activities.

Option 4: Two tiered structure

Under this option there would be only two tiers:

- National Office
- Regional Committees

Advantages of Option 4:

- + minimises overall workload which is concentrated to a few congestion points.

Disadvantages of Option 4:

- Greater importance and frequency of communication between National and Regions.

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- If applied nationally, the structure would be overly flat, resulting in an overload at the national level. (Could be alleviated somewhat by Board Sub Committees).
- There is a risk that this would lessen the IFA/AFG focus at a State or National level.

Proposal

Four options are presented for consideration by members.

Members may:

- Support one of the 4 options, or
- Support one option but with amendment, or
- Support none, or
- Propose some other option (including an existing option that is modified).

Proposal 3: It is proposed that the 4 options be circulated for comment by IFA/AFG members for a period of 4 weeks (this will include the date of the forthcoming Victorian Branch Annual General Meeting).

Proposal 4: At the conclusion of the consultation period, the preferred option(s) will be communicated back to Victorian Branch members for further comment on the implementation of the preferred option.

Proposal 5: Following feedback from the Victorian Branch members, a proposal will be submitted to the IFA/AFG Board. This communication will include:

- implementation steps
- unresolved issues .

Conclusion

This paper proposes structure options for the IFA/AFG at state and regional level. Preferred option(s) will be put to the IFA/AFG Board for decision.

Further work is required to incorporate the IFA and AFG aims and values. Work is also required on the value proposition for current and prospective members.

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IFA/AFG Victorian Branch**

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