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## APECS Oceania

## 2021 – 2023 Strategic Plan

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OCEANIA



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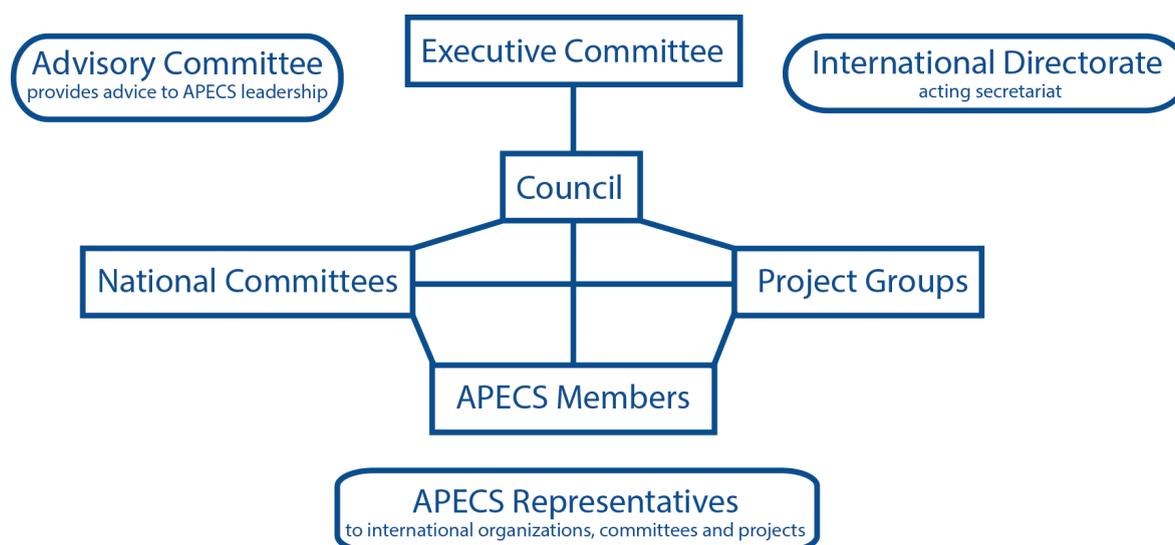
Previous page: picture by APECS Oceania member Alex Aves (@Alex\_Aves1), winner of the Field Work Photo Competition during Polar Week in March 2020.

## 1. Introduction

The APECS Oceania 2021-2023 Strategic Plan provides a strategic direction and focus for APECS Oceania for general operations and to provide value to the APECS Oceania membership. The APECS Oceania Strategic Plan was developed to operate underneath the [APECS International 2021-2025 Strategic Plan](#), of which APECS Oceania is a national committee, and provide specific guidance with a greater focus on Oceania and the needs, challenges and wants of the Oceania membership.

## 2. About APECS Oceania

APECS Oceania is a national committee of the APECS for Australia and New Zealand. APECS Oceania was founded in 2012 and has over 200 members (October 2020) from 47 institutions and 37 research disciplines. APECS Oceania is a subsidiary of APECS International Executive Committee and Council (Figure 1) with National Representatives (see below for more detail) liaising between APECS International and APECS Oceania.



**Figure 1:** APECS International Governance Figure.

APECS Oceania is coordinated by an Executive Committee and Council. The strategic vision and direction for APECS Oceania is led by the APECS Oceania Executive Committee. The APECS Oceania Executive Committee is composed of a President, Secretary, Treasurer, National Representatives (up to 2) and Senior Officers. The APECS Oceania Council assists APECS Oceania with ongoing or once-off projects, including: acting as ‘Project Leaders’ for individual projects, assisting with grant applications, and providing feedback and event records appropriate for dissemination to APECS International. There are no limits to the number of positions in the APECS Oceania Council and will be dependent on the number of project groups active in a term (October to October). The APECS Oceania Council is also composed of the APECS Oceania Social Media Coordinators who promote APECS Oceania through a regular presence on social media, including via Twitter, Facebook, Instagram, and

the APECS Oceania website. There is no limit to the number of Social Media Coordinators, ideally 2-3 with a support team/back-up team to cover busy periods or periods when the Social Media Coordinators are unavailable. Role descriptions for APECS Oceania Executive Committee, Social Media Coordinators and council are available [here](#).

### **3. About our consultation process**

In order to find out exactly what our members want, need and are missing from APECS Oceania, we consulted our membership base through a variety of channels. We received a range of valuable feedback which has been carefully integrated into our planning.

A membership survey was conducted from 22<sup>nd</sup> July – 20<sup>th</sup> August 2020, via Google Forms and emailed to all APECS Oceania members. This survey was anonymous and text answers allowed people to be as open as possible. Whilst only 7 responses were received, the fact that members were able to answer questions in their own words, meant many valuable insights were gained which were instrumental in guiding the strategic planning process and developing APECS Oceania's priorities for the next 3 years.

The answers obtained in the survey were then used to generate a number of polls, which were posted on the APECS Oceania Facebook and Twitter pages. These allowed members to vote for the option/s which most applied to them. Whilst the poll responses also provided important insights, the similarly low engagement (approximately 10 responses per poll), highlighted that boosting member engagement is a key target area for the future.

On 9<sup>th</sup> September 2020, a strategic planning workshop was held via Zoom and all members were encouraged to attend. This was attended by 7 members. This workshop was an opportunity for a deep-dive into the strategic plan and to ensure all of the feedback received in the survey and polls was integrated. The aims of the workshop were achieved; establishing a vision statement and mission statement for APECS Oceania and determining what actions need to be taken to achieve the set goals.

As part of the AGM on the 15th October a second strategic planning workshop was held to gain membership feedback on the draft strategic plan including if the coverage of the priorities was appropriate, the language used in the plan suitable and the actions achievable in the timeframe of the plan. To allow feedback from any members who were unable to attend the AGM, the draft strategic plan was circulated to the membership with a survey to gain feedback. Once this feedback was incorporated, the plan was finalised and advertised to the APECS Oceania membership and through the usual APECS Oceania communication channels.

## 4. Our vision and mission

APECS Oceania is the local chapter of APECS International. An interdisciplinary organisation working across countries and regions, APECS provides a platform for promoting collaborations and exchange among its members and with the wider polar research community, endeavouring to create a continuum of leadership in polar sciences. The goals of APECS include creating opportunities for the development of innovative, international, and interdisciplinary collaborations among current early career polar researchers as well as recruiting, retaining, and promoting the next generation of polar enthusiasts.

In developing our strategy, APECS Oceania has aimed to contribute to the work of APECS International in such a way as reflects the local goals and priorities of ECPS in Oceania.

## 5. Our strategy

Based on our vision, mission, and the results of our consultation, APECS Oceania has identified five focal areas that will inform our 2021-23 strategy.

1. Viable Career Paths
2. Diversity and Collaboration
3. Skill Development
4. Strengthening Relationships with the Polar Sector
5. Getting People Involved

### 5.1 Research as a Viable Career Path

Insecure employment, a limited-supply of polar-focused jobs, and highly competitive short-term funding environments significantly impact opportunities for Polar Early Career Professionals (ECPs) within the Oceania region. The lack of funding within the sector limits the scope and availability of projects for future honours, masters and PhD students; training opportunities for ECPs and their ability to secure stable employment. This trend has been exacerbated by recent impacts of COVID-19 across both research and tourism sectors, with significant job cuts, freezes on new recruitment and renewal of contracts and reduction in project funding across Australian and New Zealand Research Institutions.

A number of structural barriers in place compound these difficulties:

- It is easier to get funding for things like equipment, conference attendance, travel etc than for actual salaries
- Many Postdoctoral Funding Schemes are highly competitive with low success rates, with many being out of reach for recently completed PhD students (e.g. the Australian DECRA program)
- Principal Investigators cannot be paid salary in grant applications

This naturally pushes ECPs to work large amounts of overtime and take on additional workloads in order to get ahead, and results in compromised wellbeing (especially increased stress and anxiety), poor work-life balance and potentially toxic relationships with peers.

However, there are emerging opportunities through large-scale research projects coming online including Australian Antarctic Program Partnership (University of Tasmania), Securing Antarctica's Environmental Future (SAEF) (Monash University) and Australian Centre for Antarctic Science (ACEAS) (University of Tasmania) which were funded by the Australian Government in 2020. These large-scale projects will provide a number of PhD and postdoctoral opportunities for Polar ECPs.

### **Actions by APECS Oceania:**

1. Advocate for the strengthening of ECP career paths, including by making submissions to polar sector consultations on behalf of ECPs Make submissions to polar sector consultations on behalf of ECPs
2. Work with the polar sector to identify, investigate, create, and raise awareness of ECP funding opportunities.
3. Seek and create networking opportunities to connect ECPs with future potential employers/funders
4. Address issues specific to post-PhD ECPs by:
  - Advocating for a positive change for ECP employment and performance requirements
  - Supporting ECPs to prioritise well-being and work-life balance and embodying these values ourselves
  - Working to create a network of supportive, like-minded ECPs in similar positions

## **5.2 Diversity and Collaboration**

A goal of APECS Oceania is to develop a community that connects and supports ECPs. To achieve this goal we need plans and policies in place to ensure everyone feels welcome, that we are deliberately and thoughtfully inclusive, respectful, and that we remove barriers that prevent involvement or contribute to people feeling isolated within the APECS community. This includes raising awareness of time zone differences and how these impact Oceania in being able to participate in meetings, online conferences and events. Often international online events occur at 4am Australian or New Zealand time and without alternative times people are excluded from participating.

Diversity across cultures, disciplines, gender, sexuality, ethnicity, experience, ability, and background enhances APECS Oceania and the polar sector as a whole through the contributions of multiple viewpoints and new ideas. Promoting inclusivity and collaborations

across disciplines can provide opportunities and empower people, and actionable policies are needed to ensure that diversity is achieved and change enacted.

**Actions by APECS Oceania:**

1. Develop and implement a diversity and collaboration plan within APECS Oceania in consultation with our membership and key representative groups. This will involve:
  - Defining what terms like diversity and collaboration mean for us
  - Identifying key issues and developing strategies to address them
  - Identifying existing efforts that we can link into
  - Exploring the option of an internal code of conduct

### **5.3 Skill Development**

A key result of the APECS Oceania member survey was that our members are interested in opportunities to develop relevant skills, including research communication, effective collaboration, working with policymakers, career planning etc. The highly competitive job market (see 5.1) and pressure for high performance (see 5.4) further accentuate the need for diverse skill sets, where appropriate training may not be available to all ECPs at their home institutes. An aim of APECS Oceania is to help provide platforms for skill development, while also giving ECPs the opportunity to network and develop their profile as experts.

One of the key ways we will support skill development of our members is through the launch of an APECS Oceania seminar series. Following the success and enthusiasm from the APECS SCAR2020 Workshop and a desire for more regular APECS events and engagement locally, the online seminar series will be held monthly. Guided by our APECS Oceania members, some of the seminars will focus on ECP skills development across communication, presentations, and transitioning from students to ECPs and employment.

We also aim to provide opportunities to facilitate skill development in other forms, such as in-person workshops, or social media roles within the committee.

**Actions by APECS Oceania:**

1. Run a 2021 (and beyond) seminar program that runs monthly and online (live and recorded) with one focus being on skill development and ECP presentation opportunities.
  - a. COVID-19 has led to an online conference and communication world where ECPs skills in organising, running, and contributing to online events and through social media are needed and valued. Additionally, infographics, videos, and platforms like YouTube and twitter are useful for promoting research, developing a professional profile, networking, and developing collaborative opportunities.

- b. Align with strategic direction key areas, e.g., showcase research from a range of disciplines and methods, diversity, inclusion, future career directions, multi-discipline research opportunities like SCAR and other research groups ECPs can become involved with.
  - c. APECS members can suggest presenters and useful skills they would like covered in the series.
- 2. Work to provide opportunities for ECPs to present and discuss their research within the APECS community and learn skills for presenting well across a range of platforms.
  - a. Research communication not only includes presenting at conferences and within your research discipline, but to the general public, organisations, journalists, and interest groups through social media, presentations, and invitations to participate/contribute.
  - b. Some of these opportunities may be through APECS events during Polar Week or the NZ Antarctic Festival
- 3. Host APECS Oceania skills workshops in collaboration with polar events, such as the Antarctica NZ conference, polar week, or a second APECS Oceania symposium.
- 4. Provide opportunities to learn about knowledge communication managing and using social media effectively through APECS Oceania council positions and involvement in running the APECS social media.

#### **5.4 Strengthening relationships with the polar sector**

ECPs are often not considered as a key stakeholder in processes and decision-making within high levels of the polar sector, such as within National Antarctic Programs, government committees and national and international policy bodies. Yet, today's ECPs are the polar leaders of the future and it is important that we have a chance to influence and feed into decisions that will impact our careers and lives. APECS Oceania is well positioned to play a key role in facilitating ECP involvement with such decision-making instruments. We aim to establish ourselves as a community of active, engaged and influential researchers within the polar sphere.

##### **Actions by APECS Oceania:**

1. Create opportunities for APECS Oceania members to network and collaborate with senior researchers and professionals, who may be able to facilitate opportunities to be involved in decision-making. Opportunities may take some of the following forms:
  - a. Inviting guests to speak (e.g. online seminars, skill sessions) about decision-making instruments for the polar community and how to be involved, thus creating a two-way learning opportunity where ECPs are also able to advocate for further ECP involvement.
  - b. Networking events with invited senior members of the polar sector (e.g. social events, symposia, conference workshops)

2. Make contact with relevant Oceania institutions and bodies to advocate for ECP representation on committees and involvement in decision-making processes (e.g. Australian Antarctic Science Foundation, Antarctica New Zealand, Australian Antarctic Division)
3. Position APECS Oceania as an interested and active stakeholder by contributing to community consultations and responding to calls for input into planning and engagement processes (e.g. the APECS Oceania submission to the 'Australian Antarctic Science Strategic Plan' in 2019)
4. Work with key organisations (such as the Australian Antarctic Division and Antarctica NZ) and research initiatives (such as SAEF and ACEAS) to create further opportunities and implement mechanisms for ECP involvement in decisions and projects, rather than waiting for an invitation at later stages
5. Celebrate and promote ECP involvement in projects and processes where they have had the chance to contribute to decision-making or community engagement, thereby helping to normalise ECP involvement as a standard to be achieved.

## **5.5 Getting People Involved**

APECS Oceania is a volunteer organisation, running solely on the skill, effort, and passion of our members. This isn't always easy; early career researchers can struggle to find the time to volunteer, and our members have told us that being spread across thousands of kilometres and multiple countries can make it difficult to connect. We want to make it easier for people to get involved with APECS Oceania, and to foster more engagement with ECPs from across the spectrum of disciplines, geographic area, and career/study stage.

### **Actions by APECS Oceania:**

1. Focus on running smaller events more frequently.
2. Connect more with undergraduate students at the very start of their polar careers, and seek the help of universities to do this.
3. Work with APECS International to better understand our number of active members and learn more about people's preferred communication methods.

## 6. Strategic Plan at a glance

### APECS OCEANIA 2021-2023 Implementation Plan

1. Viable Career Paths	2. Diversity and Collaboration	3. Skill Development	4. Strengthening Relationships with the Polar Sector	5. Getting People Involved
<p><b>1.1</b> Advocate for the strengthening of early career professionals (ECP)* career paths, including by making submissions to polar sector consultations on behalf of ECPs i.e. comment into the Australian State of the Environment Report</p> <p><b>1.2</b> Work with the polar sector to identify, investigate, create, and raise awareness of ECP funding opportunities.</p> <p><b>1.3</b> Seek and create networking opportunities to connect ECPs with future potential employers/funders</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Establish a mentoring program within APECS Oceania</li> </ul> <p><b>1.4</b> Improve the work experience of post-PhD ECPs by:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Conduct a workshop to identify the key challenges being faced by post-degree ECPs</li> <li>- Use the outcomes from the workshop to develop actions to: advocate for a positive change for ECP employment and performance requirements; support ECPs to prioritise well-being and work-life balance and embody these values ourselves; create a network of supportive, open-minded ECPs in similar positions</li> </ul>	<p><b>2.1</b> Establish a diversity, equity and inclusion project group within APECS Oceania to develop and implement a diversity and collaboration plan within APECS Oceania in consultation with our membership and key representative groups.</p> <p>This will involve:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Defining terminology in an APECS Oceania context i.e. diversity and collaboration</li> <li>- Developing an appropriate plan to identifying key issues and developing strategies to address them i.e. workshop</li> <li>- Investigating, identifying and link existing efforts</li> <li>- Exploring the option of an internal code of conduct for diversity, equity and inclusion in APECS Oceania.</li> </ul> <p>Key actions for this item will be reviewed and re-defined after the diversity, equity and inclusion project group develops a plan for diversity, equity and inclusion in APECS Oceania. Expected time frame for this plan is by the end of 2021.</p>	<p><b>3.1</b> Run regular online seminar program from 2021 onwards with one focus being on skill development and ECP presentation opportunities.</p> <p><b>3.2</b> Provide opportunities for ECPs to present and discuss their research within the APECS community and learn skills for presenting well across a range of platforms.</p> <p><b>3.3</b> Host APECS Oceania skills workshops in collaboration with polar events, such as the Antarctica NZ conference, polar week, or a second APECS Oceania symposium.</p> <p><b>3.4</b> Provide opportunities to learn about knowledge communication and managing and using social media effectively through APECS Oceania council positions and involvement in running the APECS social media.</p>	<p><b>4.1</b> Create opportunities for APECS Oceania members to network and collaborate with senior scientists. This may involve:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Establishing a mentoring program (1.3)</li> <li>- Enabling representation of ECPs on committees (4.2)</li> </ul> <p><b>4.2</b> Make contact with relevant Oceania institutions and bodies to advocate for meaningful ECP representation on committees and involvement in decision-making processes, including:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Providing support for ECP representatives on how to engage and be influential on committees</li> </ul> <p><b>4.3</b> Position APECS Oceania as an interested and active stakeholder by contributing to community consultations</p> <p><b>4.4</b> Work with key organisations and research initiatives with a polar and cryosphere remit, to create further opportunities for ECPs</p> <p><b>4.5</b> Develop and implement ways to celebrate and promote ECP involvement in projects and committees, thereby helping to normalise ECP involvement as a standard to be achieved</p>	<p><b>5.1</b> Focus on running smaller events more frequently e.g., monthly webinars</p> <p><b>5.2</b> Develop and implement strategies to connect more with undergraduate students at the very start of their polar careers and seek the help of universities to do this to create awareness of APECS and APECS opportunities for undergraduate students early in their careers</p> <p><b>5.3</b> Develop and implement strategies for connecting with groups that are currently underrepresented in APECS Oceania to understand and address barriers to participation</p> <p><b>5.4</b> Work with APECS International to better understand our number of active members and learn more about people's preferred communication methods e.g., through membership surveys</p>

\*"Early Career Professionals" are used instead of the more common terminology "Early Career Researchers" to remain inclusive of non-research based polar and cryosphere early career personnel.

## 7. Appendices

### 7.1 Definitions

- **Early Career Professional (ECP):** APECS Oceania welcomes early career members from all disciplines with an interest in Polar and Alpine regions and the wider cryosphere. This includes researchers (from disciplines greater than just science), policy makers, artists, tourism operators, logistical managers, educators etc. Thus, APECS Oceania are using “Early Career Professionals” rather than “Early Career Researchers” to be inclusive of all current and potential future members. Early Career Professional is an individual within the early stages of their career.
- **Stakeholder:** any groups or individuals who have the potential to be impacted by, or contribute to, APECS Oceania’s aims and actions.