



Annual Activities Report

FINANCIAL YEAR 2020 -2021

STANDING COMMITTEE OF OFFICIALS (SCO)

SCO Secretariat: c/- Electrical Safety Office Qld

GPO Box 69, Brisbane Qld 4001

✉ eess.secretariat@oir.qld.gov.au

Prepared for: EESS Ministerial Oversight Committee (MOC)
Reviewed by: EESS Standing Committee of Officials (SOC)
Author: SCO Secretariat
Date Approved: July 2022

Message from the SCO Chair

Donna Heelan, Executive Director,
Electrical Safety Office, Queensland



This is the second annual report of the activities overseen by the Standing Committee of Officials (SCO) for the Electrical Equipment Safety System (EESS). This report covers the financial year 2020-2021 and gives electrical safety regulators the opportunity to highlight activities undertaken to improve consumer electrical equipment safety throughout Australia and New Zealand.

As we reflect on 2020-2021, we can be confident in knowing that while there have been challenges, there has also been significant work undertaken by regulators to keep consumers safe.

While COVID-19 puts uncertainty into our lives, activities related to the EESS have highlighted the importance and relevance of moving to a uniform national approach to electrical equipment safety for consumers and industry. Some highlights from works progressed by the EESS SCO in 2020-2021 included:

- Check testing for this period was conducted on 142 models of 7 different types of in-scope electrical equipment. The equipment was tested to determine compliance with selected parts of their relevant safety standards.
- Approval of the build of the new EESS IT Platform / Database project for certification, registration data storage and information sharing. User registration processes and certification functionality were developed during 2020-2021 with implementation for 2021-2022. Initial planning for the development of the second phase for registration functionality and data / information sharing and communications functionality was also undertaken. The project is still ongoing.

- An increase in the number of point-of-sale audits at physical stores increased in 2020-2021 with 208 audits undertaken. With a further 289 audits of responsible suppliers.
- The number of equipment examinations increased by approximately 17% with 190 equipment examinations completed.
- The development of 17 information bulletins and general guidance documents by the Equipment Working Group to assist industry with a consistent approach to specific safety standards and certification requirements.
- Increased engagement with industry and stakeholders strengthening relationships and resulting in 5,053 email enquiries and other contacts. This is a significant increase (nearly double) in the number of points of contact made from the previous year.
- There were 3,575 registered responsible suppliers and 40,908 equipment registrations (including individual models and families of many models of types of equipment) as of 30 June 2021, which is a significant increase from the previous year.

Ensuring safe equipment is being supplied has always been a priority for the EESS, however there is still some unsafe electrical equipment entering the market. Action by suppliers and regulators to remove unsafe equipment has resulted in 24 equipment recalls being undertaken in 2020-2021.

Looking forward to 2021-2022, I am confident the hard work that SCO, along with each jurisdiction's electrical safety regulator, will continue to improve compliance to the EESS to ensure safe electrical equipment is sold in Australia and New Zealand.

Table of Contents

Introduction	5
Compliance and engagement activities	6
Check testing	6
Audits	8
Recognised External Certification Schemes	10
Industry Events Highlights.....	11
SCO Groups and committees.....	12
Standing Committee of Officials (SCO).....	12
SCO Equipment Working Group	12
EESS related activities – operational functions.....	13
General	13
EESS registration and certification database updates	13
EESS website	13
Common Certification Scheme.....	13
Projects.....	14
EESS IT platform development.....	14
Online Sales Research Project	14

Introduction

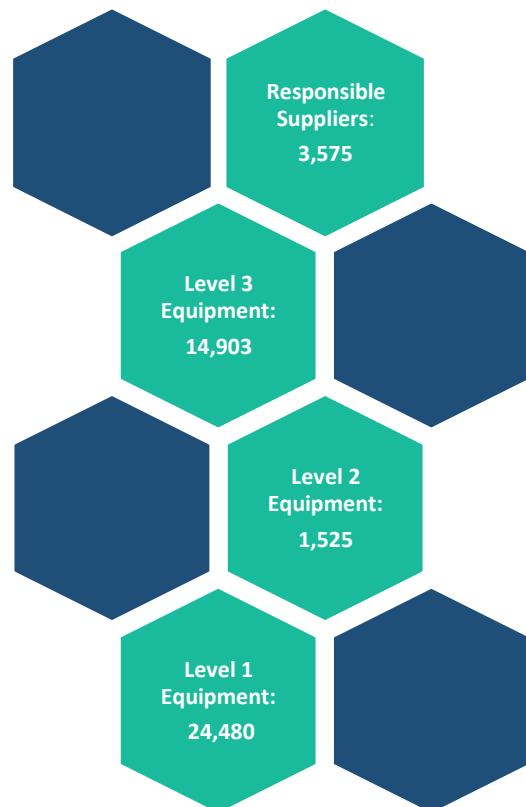
This report is prepared by the Standing Committee of Officials (SCO) of the Electrical Equipment Safety System (EESS), as required under the intergovernmental agreement (IGA) between signatory Ministers of the EESS.

This Annual Activities Report 2020-2021 highlights the EESS related activities that occurred between 1 July 2020 and 30 June 2021.

SCO members are appointed by Ministers responsible for electrical safety who have signed the agreement to progress the EESS. This includes agreement to:

- progress the co-ordination of, and co-operation on, electrical equipment activities for the uniform interpretation and application of electrical safety requirements in participating jurisdictions;
- co-ordinate approaches to investigations and compliance activities (such as recalls, check testing, audits, prohibitions, cancellations of registrations); and
- share information between jurisdictions.

The SCO oversee the day-to-day operation and administration of the EESS on behalf of the Ministerial Oversight Committee (MOC). However, to support the aim of all regulators to ensure supply of safe electrical equipment, the SCO participants include representatives of all electrical safety regulators in Australia and New Zealand.



This representation has all jurisdictions working to develop and implement strategies and activities to ensure, wherever possible, there is a uniform and consistent approach to electrical equipment safety requirements.

In addition to reporting on details required by the IGA, this report highlights the various activities and accomplishments through 2020-2021.

Compliance and engagement activities

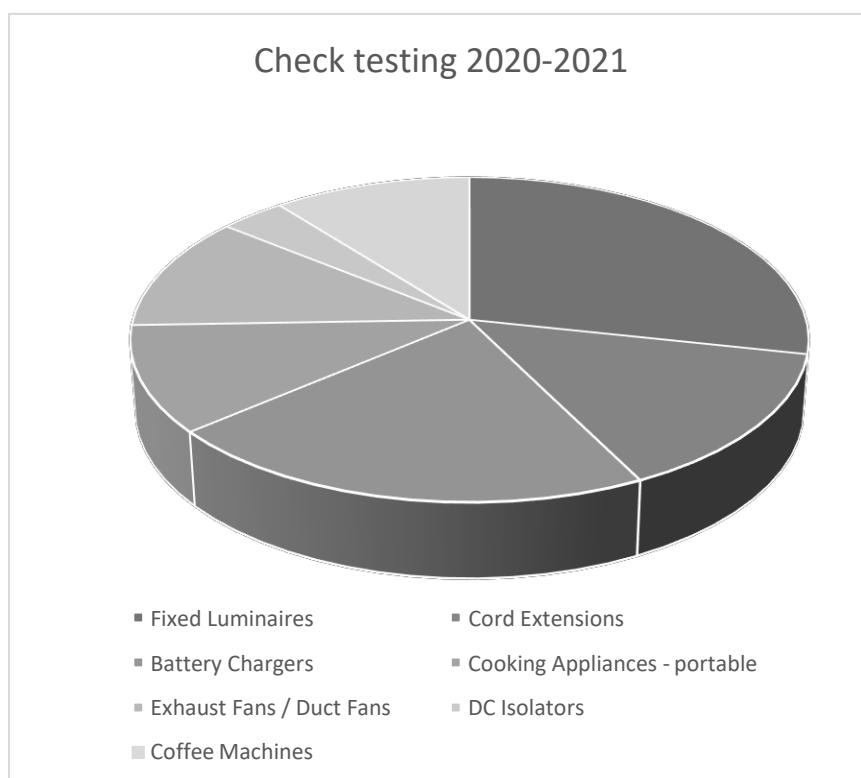
Check testing

Check testing is a regulatory activity, where electrical equipment is purchased at a retail level and tested to the relevant safety standard to assess compliance. These are the same electrical items, from the same retailers, that the general consumer could purchase. Equipment is selected using a combination of audit, incident data and intelligence from the electrical industry.

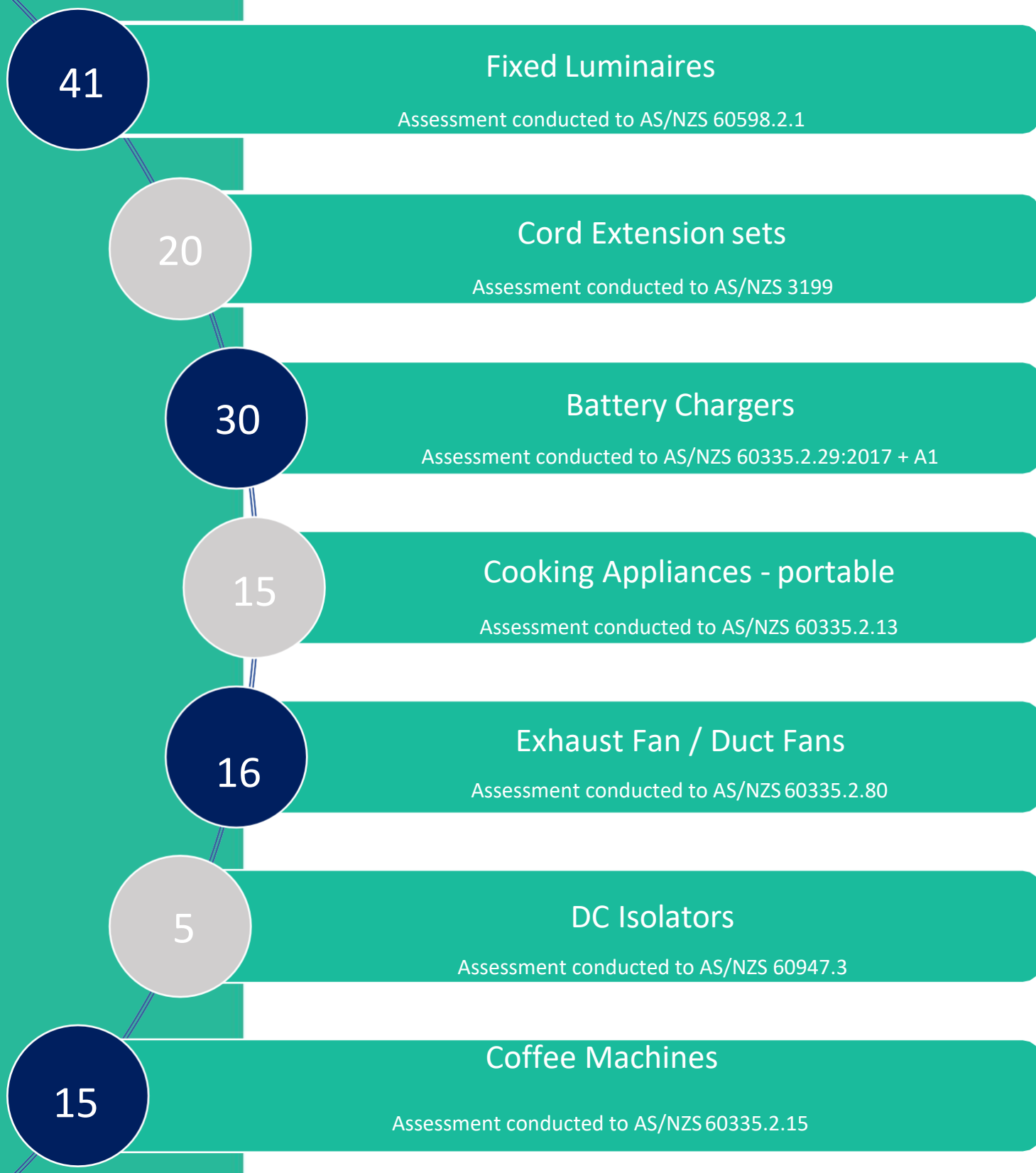
Tests to be conducted are selected by the SCO Equipment Working Group based on the severity of consequences if non-compliant results are returned. Tests typically include checking for exposure to live parts, risk of fire, and other electrical or mechanical hazards. The equipment types chosen for testing are approved by SCO.

The supplier registration fees for EESS are used in part to fund the purchasing and testing of equipment from the marketplace. Regulators use accredited test laboratories to assess if the equipment complies with the relevant safety standards for the tests conducted.

Check test results are reported separately for each year so findings are not repeated in this report. The following details the equipment check tested in 2020-2021.



For the 2020-2021 financial year check testing of the following equipment was conducted:



Note: These numbers identified in the circles are the number of models tested.

Audits:

An audit is an activity where a regulator carries out a series of inspections of a supplier of equipment against selected compliance criteria. Audits are conducted on responsible supplier registration details, on equipment for sale in both online retailers and traditional bricks and mortar shops.

The national registration database assists auditors as a compliance tool. It helps inspectors quickly confirm if the equipment they are inspecting has been supplied by a registered responsible supplier and registered in accordance with legislative requirements.

Equipment examinations are classified as audits in this report; while they may have been initiated by a complaint or an incident, the same process is used to verify compliance to EESS requirements as for audits.

Recalls are similarly classified as audits in this report as the same process of verifying compliance with EESS requirements occurs. Recalls may be initiated from an audit, a check test, an equipment examination or from a responsible supplier identifying an issue and acting proactively.

The following page outlines the activity and outcomes for responsible supplier and store audits, examinations and recalls.

Responsible supplier audits:

289
audits conducted

Non-compliances identified:

- level 3 equipment listed as level 1
- no Australian phone number
- post box as address

Outcomes:

Required responsible supplier required to correct registration details

Point of sale audits:

208
audits conducted – online
and traditional bricks and
mortar stores

non-compliances identified:

- equipment not being registered or certified
- no RCM
- responsible supplier not registered
- equipment not electrically safe
- equipment did not meet the relevant standard

Outcomes:

Suppliers were contacted to rectify the non-conformances, with a number of notices issued for breaches of EESS related regulations.

Equipment examinations:

190
Electrical equipment
examinations completed

Equipment is examined by a regulator as part of an investigation process. These could be due to a complaint, fire, or shock incident.

Results of examinations:

Risk of Shock - 50
Risk of Fire - 120
Other - 20

Examination outcomes can result in stop sales, prosecution or infringement notice, other regulatory notices requiring action by supplier, removal of equipment from sale and recalls as relevant to the risk identified.

Recalls:

24
Recalls of electrical
equipment

Details of recalled equipment can be found at www.recalls.gov.au

Results of examinations:

Risk of Shock - 17
Risk of Fire - 5
Other - 2

Responsible suppliers are required to take action to provide effective removal or rectification of the recalled equipment. Regulators monitor the recalls to ensure the supplier is taking appropriate action and to consider any further regulatory action required.

Recognised External Certification Schemes (RECS)

Under the EESS, private companies can be declared as a Recognised External Certification Scheme (RECS). RECS are declared by an electrical safety regulator (in conjunction with all EESS regulators) as being able to issue certificates of conformity in accordance with relevant legislation, subject to meeting and following the regulators requirements. This includes having independence from other parts of the design, manufacture, consulting, testing or supply chain to avoid any conflicts of interest, suitable competence and on-going skills maintenance, adequate resources, and an understanding of the EESS. RECS are required to issue certificates in accordance with the published Equipment Safety Rules an information bulletins or general guidance documents as issued by EESS regulators. To ensure RECS are compliant with requirements, including issuing certificates which meet the criteria of the Equipment Safety Rules, audits are conducted by electrical safety regulators.



New applications from organisations not previously accredited

4 applications are ongoing
1 application has been refused

Applications from organisations previously accredited:1

RECS are declared for five years.



RECS surveillance audits: 5

A RECS surveillance audit is conducted on the certifier, reviewing various processes and procedures. These audits may look at staff training records, certification procedures, and compliance to other items as detailed in the Equipment Safety Rules.

RECS certification file audits: 46

RECS are required to submit a random selection of certification files they issue (chosen as random, by the regulator) for review. These audits are to check the requirements for certification have been met, and the certificates are issued in accordance with the Equipment Safety Rules.

Engagement Activities

Engagement activities are undertaken by regulators to provide equipment safety advice and information to the community, electrical industry, and other stakeholders. Engagement activities occur using different media to create general and targeted messages. Activities can include presentations to stakeholder meetings including industry associations, meetings with individual responsible suppliers or others in the equipment supply chain, emails and other publications explaining aspects of the EESS, and updates on the EESS website.



EESS email enquiries:
5,053 enquiries actioned



Engagement events:
24 events

Due to Covid-19, phone calls have been diverted to email requests since March 2020. The phones reactivated from 1 July 2021.

Industry Events Highlights

Australian Standards Committees

SCO member jurisdictions (who are also part of Electrical Regulatory Authorities Council (ERAC)), participated in multiple standards committee meetings, subcommittee meetings and comment on Australian and International standards drafts throughout 2020-2021.

Committee participation included influencing household equipment safety standards in areas of lighting, electrical accessories, general household goods, and the renewable energy sector.

Industry association consultation

SCO Secretariat and EESS participating jurisdiction regulators met with industry associations throughout the year to discuss EESS regulatory requirements, the EESS IT Platform development (and enhanced certification details that may be included), feedback on information bulletins, and participating in organising and attending industry forums.

EESS IT Platform industry update

In April 2021 Energy Safe Victoria (ESV) (the Victorian energy safety regulator) hosted a webinar to update industry on the new EESS IT Platform. This followed on from industry consultation in the previous year as to what issues could be addressed by the new platform for certification, registration and data sharing.

ESV explained the reason for the change and vision for the EESS IT Platform. This included improved user experiences and functionality, national visibility, improved processes, traceability, capability, information sharing and general usage of the EESS. The new IT Platform will be a central system for: –

- certification: private certifier uploading of certificates;
- registration;
- auditing and compliance
(including a risk engine as part of classifying equipment into new risk levels, supplier compliance history, check testing activities and outcomes and audits linking back to risk engine and supplier compliance history);
- a process for regulator decisions to be published; and
- be an avenue for suppliers to access various levels of information at different stages and data capture to assist with industry and regulatory actions.

The presentation highlighted the phased implementation of the EESS IT Platform to enable adoption of the new EESS platform without impacting industry's use of the current system.

SCO Groups and committees

Standing Committee of Officials (SCO)

The SCO is a collaborative governance forum responsible for coordination of the day-to-day administration and operation of the EESS and reporting back to the Ministerial Oversight Committee of the EESS as required.

2020-2021 SCO Highlights

- Maintaining governance oversight of EESS funded activities
- Approval of the 2020-2021 Annual Distribution Proposal that included funding allocations for the further development of the EESS IT Platform, communication activities, methods of identifying non-compliant equipment being sold on-line and check testing
- Identified the need for a stakeholder / industry reference group (IRG) and approved steps to be taken to progress forming an IRG;
- Continued to work with Joint Accreditation System of Australian and New Zealand (JAZ-ANS) regarding a single certification scheme; and
- Progressed several governance documents relating to the administration of the EESS SCO.

5

SCO Meetings

5

SCO Meeting
communiqué's
approved by SCO

SCO Equipment Working Group (SCO EWG)

The SCO EWG was constituted to ensure uniformity and consistency of the technical aspects of the application of the EESS. The SCO EWG operates under agreed terms of reference and reports to the SCO. Meetings are conducted in conjunction with the Electrical Regulatory Authorities Council (ERAC) Equipment Working Group. Both regulatory groups work collaboratively on safety issues, industry engagement, and equipment safety.



Meetings: 8

The SCO EWG is a technical group that discusses various interpretations of requirements of standards in depth and agree on common approaches to apply. The SCO EWG also participate in the process for classification of risk level for electrical equipment.



Information and guidance materials published: 17

Electrical Safety Regulators provide guidance and clarification from time to time for designers, responsible suppliers, certificate holders and certifiers, in respect to requirements of the EESS. This information is published on the EESS website as information bulletins and guidance documents.

Risk Level Process

In the EESS, all in-scope electrical equipment is classified as a certain risk level: level 1 (low risk), level 2 (medium risk) or level 3 (high risk). This process is dynamic and evolving and allows for changes in equipment definitions or risk levels when lack of clarity of a definition, or safety issues of a type of equipment are identified. The process is overseen and approved by SCO in accordance with the IGA, but operationally undertaken by the SCO EWG. The process includes review of definitions, review of data relating to the risk of the equipment under review, input and collaboration with stakeholders and industry experts, determining a proposed appropriate risk level for the equipment. This ultimately results in publication of definition and risk level in AS/NZS 4417.2 to ensure information is available in all EESS jurisdictions at the same time. Industry or the SCO did not request the SCO EWG to review risk levels during 2020-2021.

EESS related activities – operational functions

General

The IGA provides the framework for governance for the EESS and operation of the SCO. This includes ensuring adequate actions is taken to maintain the EESS, the databases and other administrative functions. This included issues such as the SCO Secretariat and EESS regulators co-operating to perform various activities including governance and oversight of the EESS in accordance with the intergovernmental agreement. Some of the operational functions included:

- preparing and recording meetings of the SCO and SCO working groups;
- developing the next Annual Distribution Proposal (the processes for dispersing funds as approved by the Annual Distribution Proposal);
- providing copies of AS/NZS 44217.1 (with rules for use of RCM compliance mark) to registered responsible suppliers;
- responding to inquiries;
- providing hosting and IT support for the EESS registration and certification databases (including repair and upgrades for improved operation of the system) and the EESS website.

EESS registration and certification database updates

The EESS Registration and Certification databases are an important part of the EESS system that enables responsible suppliers to register and show they are meeting the EESS legislative requirements. The databases are also the outward public facing system of the EESS where suppliers, retailers, the public and regulators can check information related to verifying electrical equipment being sold meets legislative requirements. Improvements are constantly being considered on how to improve user experiences and to better utilise the information in the system. However, as the new EESS platform will be implemented to supersede the existing databases, for 2020-2021 activity was primarily focused on the maintenance and support of the existing system.

EESS website

In the 2019-2020 financial year the renewed EESS website went live. This website was updated to improve layout, information provided and clarity for responsible suppliers to assist in their understanding of requirements.

During 2020-2021 content was continually added to the website such as information bulletins and guidance documents, SCO communique and updates on the EESS IT Platform project.

Common Certification Scheme

The electrical safety regulators continued working with the JAS-ANZ, with input from industry and private certification bodies, to develop a single certification scheme. The goal of this work is to clarify differences between different regulator's expectations and current JAS-ANZ requirements and combine them into an agreed set of requirements to eventually move towards a single certification scheme.

Projects:

EESS IT platform development

As part of maintenance and modifications to the EESS National Database, the SCO approved the Victorian regulator to lead a project to review and renew the existing EESS registration and certification database and develop further data capture and sharing capabilities. The initial phase commenced during financial year 2019-2020, with consultation with regulators and industry stakeholders on issues and opportunities for improvements on the registration and certification systems, and associated data sharing options, of the current EESS IT systems. A database scoping document that outlined the framework, business rules, and necessary functions for a new EESS database platform was developed as phase 1 of this project.

After the initial phase 1 industry consultation activities, The Victorian regulator commenced its procurement process for phase 2 of the EESS IT platform in July 2020. In December 2020 the SCO approved the phase 2 grant request to build the new EESS Platform (certification, registration, data repository and information sharing/communications system). Early 2021 saw the start of the build work and preparations and planning for the future roll out of stages of the system (certification first, followed by registration and then data repository/information sharing systems). The project is ongoing.

Online Sales Research Project

According to a recent report on Statista¹, 69% of total market revenue in the household appliances sector will be generated through online sales by 2024. The number can be significantly higher with the impact of COVID-19 as the uptake of online purchasing has increased even faster. This posed an urgent need to address the compliance of electrical equipment being sold online.

The Victorian regulator, as a signatory to the EESS intergovernmental agreement, received a grant for preliminary work to investigate possibilities of end-to-end online auditing solutions to help determine the EESS registration status of any level 2 or level 3 equipment being offered for sale online, using Artificial Intelligence and Machine Learning algorithms.

¹ Statista is a portal for market data, market research and market studies. The database contains statistics drawn from consumer survey results and industry