

Terms of Reference Environment & Sustainability Community Reference Group



Rural City of
Wangaratta

June 2023

Introduction

The Rural City of Wangaratta is committed to meaningful engagement with the community on issues affecting the municipality, and on local issues that significantly impact on the community. Public participation and engagement is the foundation of good decision-making, and is mutually beneficial to the community and council.

One of the ways that council engages with the community is through its Community Reference Groups, which align to the Councillor portfolios.

This Terms of Reference (TOR) sets out the operating conditions for the Environment and Sustainability Community Reference Group including the purpose, structure, and responsibilities of the group's members. This TOR should be read in conjunction with the 'Community Reference Groups Policy'.

Purpose, Scope and Objectives

The purpose of the Environment and Sustainability Community Reference Group is to provide a platform where community representatives provide information, advice and views to council on matters relating to core business functions. The scope of the Environment and Sustainability Community Reference Group is centred on but not limited to the following:

- Natural asset management
- Climate change adaptation and mitigation
- RCOW Environmental and Sustainability Strategy
- Roadside Conservation Management
- Waterways, catchment and floodplain management
- Urban / Corridor greening
- Waste reduction, reuse and recycling
- Environmental awareness, education and compliance
- Nature-based recreation and conservation visitor management
- Disaster management and planning
- Cultural Heritage
- Sustainability (Environment, Economic and Social)

The objectives of the Environment and Sustainability Community Reference Group are:

- To provide a deliberative forum for members to discuss issues of community interest related to matters within the scope of the Environment and Sustainability Community Reference Group;
- To draw on local knowledge and enhance community voice in decision making processes and outcomes related to matters within the scope of the Environment and Sustainability Community Reference Group; and
- To build community understanding of council's core business functions and specific projects or activities related to matters within the scope of the Environment and Sustainability Community Reference Group

Membership

The Environment and Sustainability Community Reference Group will consist of:

- A maximum of 20 and a minimum of 10 members all of whom are appointed through an Expression of Interest process (see 'Community Reference Groups Policy');
- A Convenor, which is a Councillor with responsibility for this portfolio;
- A Facilitator, being the Director Sustainability & Culture (or their delegate) assisted by council officers from the relevant Department.

Councillors who are also responsible for the same portfolio may attend at their discretion as observers of the Community Reference Group proceedings.

Subject matter experts from council may also be invited to attend a meeting/s from time-to-time, if required, for particular projects or issues.

Subject matter experts from outside the Community Reference group may also be invited to attend a meeting/s from time-to-time, if required, for particular projects or issues.

Term

The term of membership is two (2) years, subject to compliance with these Terms of Reference. The Facilitator (supported by the Economic Development, Environment and Compliance team) is responsible for implementing another public EOI process at the end of each term. Members may submit another EOI at the end of their two-year term however priority may be afforded to new applicants in the assessment process to ensure a diversity and evolution of community participation is possible.

Vacancy

In the event of a member vacancy, replacement shall be appointed by Council's Chief Executive Officer (CEO) by revisiting unsuccessful EOI applications.

Termination

A member will be removed from the Environment and Sustainability Community Reference Group if they are absent from three (3) consecutive meetings. Members may also be removed, by decision of the Facilitator, if they breach these Terms of Reference. The Facilitator will formally notify the member in writing if their removal is required.

Members may terminate their membership at any time. Notice of membership termination must be provided in writing to the Facilitator.

Elections

During election periods (whether federal, state or local government elections), members who are considering or intending to stand for elections should remain aware of any conflicts of interest that may arise as a result of being a member of the Environment and Sustainability Community Reference Group and declare this at meetings (see discussion of 'Agendas and minutes'). Further, upon formal notification or announcement of a members candidacy for election, that member will be automatically suspended from the Environment and Sustainability Community Reference Group until after the relevant election is held. Any successful candidates will no longer be eligible to be a member of the Environment and Sustainability Community Reference Group and unsuccessful candidates will be reinstated as a member. Members are at all times to be aware of their conduct obligations (see discussion of 'Conduct')

Powers of the Environment and Sustainability Community Reference Group

The Environment and Sustainability Community Reference Group provides information, advice and views and, where sought, recommendations to Council. Any information, advice, views and recommendations will be recorded in the minutes. The group has opportunity to influence council decision making, however, does not have decision-making authority. This remains the function of council

Roles and Responsibilities

Rural City of Wangaratta

The Convenor of the Environment and Sustainability Community Reference Group is a Councillor with responsibility for the 'Sustainability, Environment and Resource Recovery' Portfolio. The convenor will be the conduit between the reference group and Councillors.

The Facilitator, which is the Director Sustainability & Culture (or their delegate) will oversee the governance and coordination of the Environment and Sustainability Community Reference Group, including:

- Participating in meetings and adhering to the Terms of Reference;
- Ensure group adherence to the Terms of Reference;
- Coordinate the agendas, minutes and other documentation;
- Undertake a review of the Terms of Reference and group's efficacy every two years;
- Notify councillors of any changes to group membership.

The Facilitator will be supported by administrative support including minute taking, agenda preparation, filing, coordinating correspondence and communication, meeting preparation and logistics and information disclosure.

Subject-matter experts from council may also be invited to attend a meeting/s from time-to-time, if required, for particular projects or issues.

Members

Members of the Environment and Sustainability Community Reference Group are required to:

- Attend and participate in meetings;
- Adhere to the Terms of Reference; and
- Represent community views and provide information and advice to council on items related to the group's purpose, scope and objectives.

Meetings

Frequency

The Environment and Sustainability Community Reference Group will meet, on an as required basis for approximately two hours at the Government Centre Wangaratta and or online. Depending on the agenda and discussion, meeting run times may be shortened or lengthened.

Agenda and Minutes

The Facilitator will set the agenda and circulate to the group at least one week prior to the meeting. Each agenda will incorporate a standing agenda item call 'Declaration of potential or actual conflicts of interest' and require members to declare any conflicts of interest they may have, including conflicts of interest with any particular agenda item/s or issue/s to be discussed at the meeting. Other members can also request items be added to the agenda. Members will deliberate based on the set agenda items. The agenda and any accompanying documents will be circulated to members at least one week prior to the meeting. Minutes will be recorded and will be circulated to members within two weeks of the meeting. Minutes are to be appropriately filed.

Conduct

Members are required to:

- Act with honesty, good faith and integrity;
- Abide by the Terms of Reference;
- Actively participate in meetings;

- Declare any actual or perceived conflicts of interest at the commencement of the meeting;
 - Represent the interests of their local community rather than individual interests or issues; and
- Maintain confidentiality of discussions within meetings. Members are not permitted to liaise with the media and represent either the opinions of council or the group.

In particular, members are required not to use any Community Reference Group for any public lobbying or political purposes, including use of social media to promote specific campaigns or strategies.

Any material breach of this code of conduct may result in immediate termination of membership. Any member charged with any offence as defined in the *Local Government Act 2020* shall be automatically suspended until the matter has been resolved. Any person convicted of an offence as defined in the *Local Government Act 2020* shall not be eligible for membership of any Community Reference Group

Voting

The role and format of the Environment and Sustainability Community Reference Group in providing information, advice and views means that voting will not occur.

Information

Members will not use any information disclosed at meetings for personal purposes or gains for either themselves or others (including financial gains) and maintain confidentiality of all information provided.

Record Keeping

Council will manage record keeping of the group's activities in Council's internal filing system, including:

- Member details – as provided on the EOI application (personal details will be managed confidentially, in accordance with council's privacy standards);
- EOI applications and other selection process documentation;
- Register of when meetings were held;
- Terms of Reference;
- Agendas and minutes for each meeting; and
- Any other related correspondence or information.

Review

The Facilitator will undertake a review of the efficacy of the Environment and Sustainability Community Reference Group every two years. This includes reviewing the TOR document, suitability of meeting frequency and the efficacy of the group in meeting the objectives and working to the TOR.

Version #	Date	Comments
1	24 May 2022	First iteration
2	1 February 2022	Updated Directorate titles and skill matrix

Privacy

The personal information of all members and applicants will be managed in accordance with Council's privacy standards. The names of the group's members will be published on Council's public website upon their appointment.

Insurance

Reference group members are covered under Council's public liability insurance policies when partaking in meetings.

SIGNED by the RURAL CITY OF WANGARATTA

by its authorised officer

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Chief Executive Officer Date

Environment and Sustainability Community Reference Group - Skills Matrix Appendix 1	
MEMBERS	For example:
Manufacturing	Metal / Textiles / Timber Production / Chemical / Furniture / Plastics / Steel / Waste....other
Agribusiness	Traditional & Regenerative Farming / Horticulture / Viticulture / Agriculture services / Farm produce/other
Environment / Sustainability	Renewable Energy / Climate Change / Landcare / Water /Environmental Management
Traditional Owners	Cultural knowledge / Caring for Country
Transport Logistics	Coach / Rail / Truck /other
Service Sector (Health, Education etc.)	Health / Education / Academic....other
Retail	Small to large enterprise
Construction	Builders / Building Products / Concrete / Steel / Trades
Investment / Development	Real Estate / Export businesses / Brokers
Media / Marketing / Communication	Social Media / Graphic Designs / Local Media / PR / Printers
Government Agencies	Department of Energy, Environment and Climate Action / North East Catchment Water Authorityother
Food / Wine / Beverage	Wineries / Breweries / Distilleries / Hospitality / Cheese / Food production /
Events / Conferencing / Tourism	Accommodation / Tour Operators / Event Organisers / Conference venues
Youth	Youth groups / Youth sports / Individuals



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