

Community Reference Groups Policy

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Version:	2

Head of Power

Local Government Act 2009 - S.4(2) The local government principles are—

- a) *Transparent and effective processes, and decision-making in the public interest; and*
- b) *Democratic representation, social inclusion and meaningful community engagement Local Government Act 2009 Chapter 1 S4.2a &c*
- c) *Good governance of, and by, local government; and*
- d) *Ethical and legal behaviour of councillors and local government employees.*

Section 9 Powers of local governments generally

- (1) *A local government has the power to do anything that is necessary or convenient for the good rule and local government of its local government area.*

Corporate Plan 2018-2023

8 Inclusive and Ethical Governance

This policy should be used in conjunction with Council's Community Engagement Policy.

Policy Objective

To enable Council to create and manage groups which allow Council to engage meaningfully with representatives of external organisations and members of the community to assist Council in its decision making process or support continuous improvement.

Policy Statement

A community reference group is any deliberative forum coordinated by the Council and that includes members of the community or other external stakeholders.

Council is committed to:

- *Effective Engagement* – Council engages with the community through a range of methods, outlined through the Community Engagement Policy and guidelines. Council uses the International Associate of Public Participation (IAP2) spectrum of participation which defines the purpose of engagement activities, which can be information sharing, consultation, involvement, partnership or empowerment with transfer of decision making power. Reference Groups will usually be formed where consultation, involvement or partnership are required.

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- *Engaging with Groups to contribute to good decisions* – where it will assist Council to make more informed decisions and/or achieve better outcomes, Council may form groups to seek input from outside the organisation. These groups can provide feedback and advice to Council and in some cases may partner with Council to progress particular pieces of work.
- *Transparency* – Council will be open and transparent about the creation, existence, purpose and arrangements for any groups established for the purpose of engagement with external individuals or organisations. A list of all groups will be published on Council’s website.
- *Good governance* – All groups will have effective governance arrangements in place to ensure clarity of purpose and a consistent approach to the management of the groups. Advisory Committees are excluded from this policy, because they are governed by specific provisions under the *Local Government Act 2009*. Community development and capacity building activities are governed by Council’s Community Development Practice Guidelines and are also excluded from this policy.

Definitions

Term	Definition
Community Reference Group	Any deliberative forum coordinated by the Council and that includes members of the community or other external stakeholders. This does not include Council volunteer groups (eg Bushcare workers or Art Gallery workers) or groups established for the purpose of community development or capacity building which are managed under the Community Development Practice Guidelines for Building Strong Communities.
Terms of Reference	Describes the purpose and structure of a project, committee, meeting, negotiation, or any similar collection of people who have agreed to work together to accomplish a shared goal. A Terms of Reference is required for each group, unless they are managed under the Community Development Practice Guidelines. These groups may not have a formal terms of reference, particularly if they are short term or newly formed, but will still need to have a clear purpose statement.

Associated Documents

International Association for Public Participation (IAP2) spectrum, core engagement values

Twyford et al. (2006). *Beyond public meetings: connecting community engagement with decision - making*. Vivian Twyford Communication Pty Ltd.

Community Engagement Policy ([A196571](#))

Community Engagement Guideline ([A214585](#))

Community Development Practice Guidelines for Building Strong Communities

Document Control

Only Council can approve amendments to this document by resolution of a Council Meeting, with the exception of administrative amendments which can be approved by the relevant ELT member. Refer to *Policy Instrument Development Manual* for an explanation on administrative amendments ([A4063988](#)).

Any requests to change the content of this document must be forwarded to relevant Service Manager(s).

Approved documents must be submitted to the Corporate Meetings and Registers Team for registration.

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Version Control

Version number	Date	Key Changes
1	July 2015	New Policy
2	December 2019	Administrative changes resulting from policy framework review