

Children's Services Reference Group - Terms of Reference

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1. PURPOSE

The Children's Services Reference Group (Group) advises Council on issues relating to the education and care of children aged 0 – 12 years. It acts as a channel to advise Council on new issues and developments affecting these children. The Group also shares information on issues affecting children, families and their communities, advocates for inclusive environments and practices for all children and families in the Shoalhaven. The Group develops and implements a collaborative child friendly cities plan for the Shoalhaven.

2. STATEMENT

Council recognises the value of investing in programs and is committed to projects that support children and families and embraces a strategic direction that plans for facilities and services to meet the growth and development of children and families in the Shoalhaven.

3. TERMS OF REFERENCE

3.1 Relationship to Council

The Group is a Section 355 & 377 Committee of Council (Local Government Act 1993). It is a strategic advisory committee to advocate for and inform Council's decision making process related to children and families in the Shoalhaven.

3.2 Membership

Membership of the Group is open to all members of the community with an interest in advocating on behalf of and protecting the rights of children, and families and/or sharing information and advice to promote the development of children in the Shoalhaven. Every attempt will be made to ensure that there are representatives from the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Community and the CALD community in the group.

Any individual, representatives of an organisation, service or agency, who agree to work within the purpose of the Group may become a member. Only one representative from any one organisation may vote.

Membership is by application to the Group.

The Group to have a membership consisting of the following:

- A maximum of 20 community members
- All Councillors

Community representatives that do not attend three (3) meeting without an apology will be sent a reminder/courtesy letter advising that their membership will lapse unless they confirm their membership in writing.

3.3 Quorum

The quorum to be 5 (five) members

3.4 Meetings

- Meetings will be held four (4) times each year – one (1) meeting per school term and one (1) of which is to be a planning day.
- The planning day be held in July each year.
- Agendas and Minutes from previous meetings will be circulated to members at least - seven (7) days prior to the meeting.
- The Chairperson will be elected annually by the Group at the planning day and is open to all members of the Group.

3.5 Voting

- Voting and Recommendations are made by consensus and all decisions must be stated precisely for the inclusion of the minutes.
- Where a consensus cannot be reached then the majority of 60% of those present can adopt a motion.
- Alternative views are to be minuted.

3.6 Code of Conduct

All members of the Group are to abide by Council’s Code of Conduct.

3.7 Communication

- All issues must be clearly communicated including priorities, limitations and benefits to the community.
- Members of the Group are not permitted to speak to the media as representatives of the Group unless approved by the chairperson.
- Where approval has been given by the Chairperson, views and opinions expressed are those of the Group and not of Shoalhaven City Council.
- The Chairperson is the point of contact for communication between Group members and Council staff.
- Where endorsement is required from Shoalhaven City Council, approval must be sought through the formal processes.

3.8 Council Staff Attendance

Shoalhaven City Council will provide administrative staff who are normally required to attend the meetings of the Group to carry out the following tasks:

- Collate and distribute Business Papers.
- Organise meetings.
- Minute taking, storage and distribution of minutes and associated documents.
- Providing administrative support to the relevant Council staff to distribute information between the Group and the Community Development Team.
- Other staff at the relevant Group Directors’ discretion or at the Group’s request can attend meetings as required. Staff, with the exception of the nominated supervisor of Shoalhaven Family Day Care Services, have no voting privileges.

3.9 Expectation of Children’s Reference Group Members

Pecuniary Interest Returns may be required on appointment and annually as required by the Office of Local Government and Council.

3.10 Responsibility of Council

Council at its discretion may review and change the Terms of Reference, role and structure of the Group.

4. REVIEW

After every Council election.