

Natural Area Volunteers Group – Terms of Reference

Adoption Date:	20/01/2020
Amendment Date:	26/09/2022,
Minute Number:	MIN20.67, MIN22.645, MIN22.673
Review Date:	1/12/2024
Directorate:	City Development
Record Number:	POL22/26

1. Purpose

The purpose of the Natural Area Volunteers Group is to act as an advisory and representative group on all matters relating to the future directions of the Bushcare Policy and program (MIN10.1461).

2. Interpretation

For the purpose of this document:

Member means a member of the advisory and representative group

Group means Natural Area Volunteers Group

Council means Shoalhaven City Council

Chairperson / Chair means the chairpersons of the group

3. Status

The Group provides non-binding advice to Council for consideration.

4. Role of the Natural Areas Volunteers Group

To meet the 'Purpose' above, the Group will advise Council on strategic matters pertaining to the Bushcare Program. This will include policies, procedures, resourcing, natural resources management, environmental restoration and preservation techniques and plans, and community and volunteer stakeholder engagement. Natural Area volunteer groups include those managed under Council's Bushcare program that predominantly work on Community Land categorised as 'Natural Area' (*Local Government Act 1993*). These include Bushcare, Dunecare and similar groups.

5. Delegations

The Group may make recommendations to Council on all matters within the role as outlined above. These recommendations are submitted via the minutes of each meeting to Council for consideration.

Substantial issues and recommendations (possibly including expenditure) raised by the Group will be reported to Council by a separate report from the Manager – Environmental Services.

The Group does not have the power to incur expenditure, or the power to bind Council.

6. Membership

Membership of the Group includes:

- Appointed Chair (Councillor)
- All available Councillors
- Council's CEO or nominee

- Nine (9) Natural Area volunteer representatives (e.g., Bushcare, Dunecare volunteers)
- South-east Local Land Services representative (optional)
- NSW Department of Planning and Environment representative (optional)
- Other relevant government agency representatives

Councillor Representatives

Council appoints one (1) Councillor to be the voting Chair of the Group. All other Councillors are welcome to attend meetings of the Group as observers and contribute to discussions but are not entitled to vote.

Note: Any non-voting Councillor in attendance at a meeting may act as an alternate voting member in circumstances where achievement of a quorum is required.

If no Councillors are appointed as members, the Chief Executive Officer or nominee represents the elected member to chair the meeting.

Local Representatives

Council will seek to appoint Group representatives from across the entire region.

Where possible, a minimum of three (3) representatives are to be appointed from each of the northern, central and southern areas of the Local Government Area. In the event where nominations for vacancies are insufficient to support three (3) members from one (1) area, the membership can include more than three (3) members from other areas.

Natural Area volunteer community representatives must be a current active member of a Natural Area volunteer group

Following an expression of interest process, the Chief Executive Officer appoints a maximum of nine (9) local community representatives, that meet the following criteria:

- Experience and skills in community-based volunteering, particularly pertaining to the sustainable management of Natural Areas.
- Ability to represent a cross-section of volunteers that work within Natural Areas.
- Ability in knowledge-sharing and communication.
- Ability in strategic, program-level thinking.

Local community representatives have voting rights.

Community Member Appointments:

- Nominations should be advertised throughout the community via an Expression of Interest (EOI) process.
- Appointments to the Group will be for a three (3) year term with a set commencement and finish date. Vacancies which are filled during the Group's term will have the same finish date.
- Vacancies will be advertised to all registered Natural Area volunteers by the Bushcare Coordinator.
- Council will manage the application process; and

- An assessment panel consisting of a Council staff member (Manager – Environmental Services), the Chairperson of the Group and one (1) suitably qualified independent representative will assess the applications and make recommendations for appointments to Council. Each member of the assessment panel will vote on recommendations with a majority ruling.

Natural Area Volunteers Group members who are absent for three (3) consecutive meetings of the Group without tendering an apology will be requested in formal correspondence from Council to confirm their intention regarding their membership. Failure to respond may result in removal from this Group.

Council Officers

Council officers attend meetings to provide specialist professional advice, strategic planning, development assessment and environmental management. Council officers do not have voting rights.

Government Agencies

The Chief Executive Officer (or nominee) invites the relevant State Government agencies to nominate representatives.

The nominated agency representatives provide advice in relation to their functions and areas of expertise, however, are non-voting members.

Chair and Deputy Chair

Council appoints one (1) Councillor to be the Chair of the Group.

In the absence of the nominated Chair at a particular meeting, the members elect a Chair for that meeting.

Terms of Office

The term of the Chair will be three (3) years, which will be reviewed following the election of a new Council. Councillors continue as members of the Group until the next Local Government election, or until the Group is disbanded or completes its purpose in accordance with these Terms of Reference.

7. Natural Area Volunteers Group Meetings

Agenda

The agenda will be developed by the Director - City Development with support from the Manager - Environmental Services in view of the prevailing issues. Councillors and members can contribute to the agenda by requesting a report on a particular issue four (4) weeks prior to the meeting, subject to approval of the Chair and the Director - City Development.

Quorum

Five (5) provided that a minimum of one (1) Councillor as chair or acting chair with voting rights and four (4) community representatives are present. If a quorum is not present within 30 minutes of the scheduled commencement time, the meeting lapses.

Voting

It is expected that the Group, and any working group, develop recommendations by consensus. If voting is required, the Chair has a casting vote. Any votes against will be recorded in the minutes.

Meeting Schedule

In general, meeting frequency should be conducted on an as required basis.

Minutes

The Group provides advice to the Council for consideration. The Group's advice is posted on the Council website with minutes reported to the elected Council. Following consideration of the advice from the Group, any resolution determined by Council, will be posted on the Council website.

Confidentiality And Privacy

Members may have contact with confidential or personal information retained by Council. If so, members are required to maintain the security of any confidential or personal information and not access, use, or remove any information, unless the member is authorised to do so.

Communication

In relation to the communication functions of the Group, the following applies:

- Members of the Group are not permitted to speak to the media as Council 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.
- Where endorsement is required from Shoalhaven City Council, approval must be sought through the formal processes; and
- The Chair of the Group is the point of contact for communication between Group members and Council staff.

8. Code of Conduct

All members of the Group are required to observe the provisions of Council's Code of Conduct and any other policy or requirement applicable to the proper functioning of the Group.

A breach of the Code of Conduct may lead to the member being expelled from the Group.

9. Document Control

These Terms of Reference are reviewed at the commencement of each term of Council. Amendments to these Terms of Reference are to be reported to Council for approval. A version history (footnote on front page) is included if amendments have been approved.