

# Terms of Reference – Status of Women Advisory Group

## 1. Role

Central Coast Council has an adopted Community Strategic Plan and Delivery Plan that will shape all activities and projects over the next four years. Council's Advisory Groups are an important mechanism for consultation, advice and feedback to Council and staff on implementation and review of the Community Strategic Plan.

The primary role of the members of the Status of Women Advisory Group is to provide advice to Council on gender equality and the empowerment of women on the Central Coast.

It is an expectation that the Status of Women Advisory Group (SOWAG) members are key influencers in the Central Coast community and are able to engage with a range of key stakeholders to affect change resulting in gender equality and empowerment of women.

This is achieved by:

- Where appropriate, advocating and providing advice to Council on gender equity issues impacting upon women across the Central Coast.
- Building the capacity of organisations and groups that represent local women to develop connections and networks by providing advice on strategies and initiatives that impact women.
- Promoting the role of women in leadership positions both within local government and in the broader community.
- Presenting as positive role models on behalf of the Status of Women Advisory Group to the broader community.

## 2. Responsibilities

The Status of Women Advisory Group will:

- Provide feedback on Central Coast Council's Community Strategic Plan at 2- and 4-year review periods and in the development of new Strategic Plans.
- Provide responses to Local, State and Federal initiatives that directly relate to gender equality and improvement of quality of life for women. Assist in the development of Council and community initiatives that aim to address gender equity issues and improve the lives of women on the Central Coast
- Identify strategies to develop social, economic and personal leadership opportunities for women.
- Identify and promote mentoring opportunities and networks for women.
- Advocate on and raise community awareness about issues affecting women.
- Promote the important role and contributions of women in our community.

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## 3. Membership, voting and quorum

### *Membership*

#### Councillors

#### Community Members

Margot Castles  
Victoria Collins  
Belinda Field  
Danielle Habib  
Heather Irvine-Rundle  
Sally Jope  
Vickie Parry  
Kylie Smith  
Sharon Walsh

#### Council Staff:

Director Community and Recreation  
Services or delegate

Membership on the Advisory Group is for the term of Council. All members will be stood down when Council goes into the caretaker period prior to Local Government elections.

Members can re-apply with the new term of Council.

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Community members must be women who are representative of, but are not limited to, at least one of the following:

- Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander community
- Young people under the age of 25
- Culturally and linguistically diverse communities
- People with a disability
- Local women's organisations and/ or groups

Community members will be appointed by the Chief Executive Officer or their delegate on a merit basis, as a result of an Expression of Interest process.

The staff holding the following Central Coast Council positions may attend Advisory Group meetings:

- Director, Community and Recreation Services (or their delegate)
- Section Manager, Community and Cultural Development
- Community Development Worker

Council officers will provide professional advice and administrative support.

Employees of the Council are not subject to the direction of the Advisory Group or any members of it.

Staff attendance is at the discretion of the Chief Executive Officer or their delegate.

Non-staff members are appointed to the Advisory Group for the remainder of the current Council term, although membership can be altered at any time by a resolution of Council.

Membership can be withdrawn by resolution of Council.

If a member misses three consecutive meetings without apology, their membership may be withdrawn, and their position deemed vacant.

The Advisory Group has no authority to make decisions on behalf of Council.

The Advisory Group has no authority to direct Council staff.

## *Casual Vacancy*

Casual vacancies will be appointed by the Chief Executive Officer or their delegate in accordance with the initial membership process.

## *Chairperson*

The Chairperson of the Advisory Group will be a Councillor or a delegated staff member.

In the absence of the Chairperson, another Councillor Member of the Advisory Group, or a

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delegated Central Coast Council staff member shall chair the meeting.

The Chairperson is to have precedence at the meeting and shall determine the order of proceedings, generally as set out in the agenda.

Where the Mayor is appointed to be a delegate to an Advisory Group, it is not necessary that the Mayor be the Chairperson.

## *Coordinator*

A *Coordinator* shall be appointed by the Director Community and Recreation Services or their delegate.

The *coordinator* shall be a staff member of Council and is responsible for coordinating the preparation of agendas, invitations and minutes of the Advisory Group. The Facilitator shall also be responsible for coordinating any presentations from guest speakers and for considering requests from members of the public to address the Committee in consultation with the Chairperson.

The *coordinator* has the right to refuse a request from a member of the public to address the Advisory Group if it is deemed more appropriate for that person to address a formal Council meeting.

## *Voting*

No formal voting rules apply.

As the Advisory Group has an advisory role, its recommendations are to be made by consensus. Where consensus cannot be reached, a vote may be taken at the request of the Chair. The vote will be carried by a majority of voting members. The meeting record will reflect this process.

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Council is the decision-making body and the Advisory Group provides recommendations for consideration.

The Advisory Group may agree to allow participation in meetings through conference calls and other technology.

As no formal voting rules apply, there is no proxy voting. The Quorum for a meeting is half the non-Councillor representatives and at least two Council officers. However, the Chairperson shall use their discretion to determine if a meeting should be postponed due to insufficient members being able to attend.

## 4. Meetings

- Meetings are held quarterly.
- The Chairperson has the authority to call additional meetings.
- The agenda and meeting papers will be distributed to members at least three days prior to the meeting.
- The Advisory Group shall meet at times and dates determined by consensus of the Group.
- The Advisory Group meetings will be held at the Central Coast Council Civic Centre, Wyong or another venue agreed to by the Advisory Group members.
- Meetings will be recorded by the taking of minutes. The minutes are a record of agreed outcomes and do not record discussion.

## 5. Communications and reporting

The agendas and minutes of the Advisory Group will be stored as a permanent record of Council. All agendas and meeting records will be published on Council's website.

Where the Advisory Group recommends an action that is outside the delegation of staff to determine, a report will be provided to Council.

Staff will prepare the report that recommends that Council note the minutes of the Advisory Group. Reporting of Advisory Group recommendations to Council will be reported as Committee Recommendations without change. Staff will also provide professional commentary on the Advisory Group's recommendation where appropriate and provide a staff recommendation which may or may not align to that of the Group. The Council may, at its discretion, resolve to adopt some or all the Advisory Group's recommendations and advice.

Where the Advisory Group has not recommended an action, the minutes will be reported to Council as an Information Report only.

## 6. Conduct.

Conduct of members is expected to be consistent with the principles outlined in the Code of Conduct.

Members of the Advisory Group are not permitted to speak to the media or make representations on social media on behalf of the Advisory Group or Council unless approved by Council.

## 7. Cessation of Advisory Group

All member positions of the advisory group are declared vacant at the enactment of the caretaker period prior to every local government election.

Council may at its discretion by resolution of Council cease operation of the Advisory Group.

## 8. *Version history*

<i>Date</i>	<i>Details</i>
<i>18 December 2017</i>	<i>Document adoption as per Council resolution from 18 December 2017 Ordinary Council Meeting.</i>
<i>13 August 2018</i>	<i>Updated as per Council resolution from 13 August 2018 Ordinary Council Meeting. Amendments provided by members on 11 July 2018 meeting.</i>
<i>11 November 2019</i>	<i>Quorum updated as per Council resolution from 11 November 2019 Ordinary Council Meeting.</i>
<i>11 March 2020</i>	<i>Membership updated following appointment of Monique Tovo. Format updated to correct template. Approved by Julie Vaughan (Director Connected Communities).</i>
<i>31 March 2021</i>	<i>Meeting frequency updated as per revised Advisory Group formats adopted on 23 March 2021 Ordinary Council Meeting.</i>
<i>9 August 2022</i>	<i>Membership references updated as per Council resolution from 14 September 2021 Ordinary Council Meeting.</i>
<i>22 February 2023 (this version)</i>	<i>Draft revision of terms of reference to modernize and include advocacy.</i>