



## **Asylum Seeker and Refugee Communities Advisory Committee Terms of Reference**

### **PURPOSE**

The Asylum Seeker and Refugee Communities Advisory Committee has been established to add value to other forms of community engagement used by Council to consult with the community with regard to asylum seekers and refugees. It will provide the Greater Dandenong community with a voice about issues that matter and an opportunity to inform Council of its priorities and aspirations.

The City of Greater Dandenong recognises that this Advisory Committee presents an opportunity to reach a clear understanding of the experiences of key stakeholders and residents and emerging issues for the community.

### **OBJECTIVES**

The objectives of the Asylum Seeker and Refugee Communities Advisory Committee are to:

- Provide advice to Council on the implementation, reporting and review of the Asylum Seeker and Refugee Communities Action Plan 2014-17
- Consider and provide advice on key Government, agency and community-based initiatives, issues, programs and reviews
- Raise awareness of the strategic issues impacting the community so Council can review its level of services and advocate to State and Federal Government and other relevant authorities
- Collaborate to identify effective ways to support engagement, interaction and capacity building with the Greater Dandenong community
- Consider funding and other opportunities as they arise
- Celebrate and raise awareness of the achievements of asylum seekers and refugees, the work of the Advisory Committee and implementation of the Asylum Seeker and Refugee Communities Action Plan.

### **REPORTING REQUIREMENT**

In accordance with Council's statutory reporting, an annual report will be provided to Council. The nominated Councillor/s will have the opportunity to speak to the report on behalf of the Advisory Committee. Committee advice may also be provided to Council through Infosum to Councillors or a scheduled Councillor Briefing Session.

## **TERM OF APPOINTMENT**

The Asylum Seeker and Refugee Communities Advisory Committee will be appointed for a period of two years. Should there be a need for the Asylum Seeker and Refugee Communities Advisory Committee to continue beyond this time, a re-appointment process will be undertaken for all members in accordance with the selection process outlined in these Terms of Reference.

## **MEMBERSHIP**

The Asylum Seeker and Refugee Communities Advisory Committee will consist of no more than 16 members and will include representatives from the following:

- Two Councillor representatives (appointed as part of the annual statutory process)
- One Council Senior Officer
- Up to five representatives from service providers and agencies that have an interest in asylum seekers and refugees
- Up to two representatives from State Government departments
- Up to two community members who have an interest and/or expertise in asylum seekers and refugees
- Up to two representatives from local community organisations and volunteer groups assisting asylum seekers
- Up to two members that are from an asylum seeker or refugee background.

Council staff will provide administrative support and service expertise to the Advisory Committee. At all times Council officers and staff will act in accordance with the Staff Code of Conduct.

Membership of the Asylum Seeker and Refugee Communities Advisory Committee is voluntary and all members must be over 18 years of age. Young people aged 18–25 years will be encouraged to participate.

Members of Asylum Seeker and Refugee Communities Advisory Committee are free to resign at any time. Should vacancies arise due to resignation or inability to attend the minimum number of meetings during the life of this Advisory Committee, these shall be addressed through the formation of the Selection Panel and the Selection Process.

If Council receives a request for membership in addition to the appointed members, such a request will only be considered if a vacancy exists.

In the event of a vacancy on the committee being created for any reason, the position shall be filled through the process described the Selection Process. If a vacancy arises less than six months before the end of the two-year term of the committee, the committee may resolve to leave the vacancy unfilled for the interim.

The term for any member appointed part way through the life of the Asylum Seeker and Refugee Communities Advisory Committee shall expire in line with the other members of the Advisory Committee.

## **ROLE OF THE COUNCILLOR**

Should a Councillor be nominated on the Asylum Seeker and Refugee Communities Advisory Committee, the Councillor will:

- Be appointed by Council in accordance with the annual statutory Council appointments
- Act as a link between Council and the Asylum Seeker and Refugee Communities Advisory Committee
- At all times act in accordance with the Code of Conduct – Councillors, 12<sup>th</sup> Edition.

## **SELECTION PROCESS**

Membership of the Asylum Seeker and Refugee Communities Advisory Committee will be achieved by calling for nominations. An advertisement will be placed in the local media and on Council's website. Specific representatives may also be invited to nominate. A nomination form must be completed by interested representatives and all nominations will be assessed against the Criteria for Membership.

## **CRITERIA FOR MEMBERSHIP OF THE ASYLUM SEEKER AND REFUGEE COMMUNITIES ADVISORY COMMITTEE**

Nominees for membership of an Advisory Committee must be able to demonstrate:

- Current involvement in the community in support of asylum seekers and refugees
- Endorsement by their own organisation, if appropriate
- Strong community networks and linkages within the Greater Dandenong
- An ability to constructively participate in an advisory capacity
- An ability to represent a broad range of views that reflect the diversity of the community
- A strong understanding of the local community and its social, environmental and economic influences
- Sound knowledge and understanding of local issues that are relevant to the interest area
- A willingness to contribute positively to meetings in a fair and unbiased manner
- An ability to look beyond personal interests for the benefit of the community and residents of Greater Dandenong
- An ability and willingness to encourage participation from, and provide feedback to, the community regarding asylum seekers and refugees
- A capacity to commit to the Advisory Committee for the required duration.

## **SELECTION PANEL**

When the appointment of members of the Asylum Seeker and Refugee Communities Advisory Committee is required and nominations are received, the following selection panel shall convene:

- A Senior member of Council (CEO or Director – or delegated Manager)
- A Council staff member from the specific service area that is relevant to the Asylum Seeker and Refugee Communities Advisory Committee
- A representative from a local organisation, agency, or government department (provided the organisation has not nominated a representative for membership on the Asylum Seeker and Refugee Communities Advisory Committee).

All nominations will be assessed by the selection panel against the selection criteria.

A recommendation about the membership of the Asylum Seeker and Refugee Communities Advisory Committee will then be made for the consideration and endorsement of Council.

It is noted that once the Asylum Seeker and Refugee Communities Advisory Committee has been appointed, the selection panel will be disbanded.

## **RESPONSIBILITIES OF THE ASYLUM SEEKER AND REFUGEE COMMUNITIES ADVISORY COMMITTEE**

Through the advice and timely information from the Asylum Seeker and Refugee Communities Advisory Committee, Council will be better informed of the concerns, aspirations, and expectations of the Greater Dandenong community as a whole.

The Advisory Committee will act as a mechanism through which Council can engage with the community for the implementation, reporting and review of the Asylum Seeker and Refugee Communities Action Plan.

Specific responsibilities of the Asylum Seeker and Refugee Communities Advisory Committee are to:

- Develop strategic partnerships in the community, strengthening advocacy efforts for improved or new services.
- Act in a primary partnership role with Council and the community, endeavouring to increase the understanding across the wider community of the challenges facing asylum seekers and refugees.
- Represent the interests of all members in the community.
- At all times, act in the best interests of Council and the community.
- Provide advice to Council through its communication, engagement and consultation with the community.
- Act with integrity, confidentiality, and objectivity.

### **MEETINGS OF THE ASYLUM SEEKER AND REFUGEE COMMUNITIES ADVISORY COMMITTEE**

Meetings of the Asylum Seeker and Refugee Communities Advisory Committee will be held bi-monthly for a maximum duration of two hours. A schedule of meetings will be developed and agreed to annually.

Under special circumstances, a meeting may be cancelled or re-scheduled.

All meetings shall be held in a central Council venue to be decided by the Advisory Committee.

The Asylum Seeker and Refugee Communities Advisory Committee may engage with community members, groups, leaders, industry representatives, practitioners, and qualified experts through periodic forums. This may assist to identify priority themes or action areas as a focus for implementation, reporting, and review of the Asylum Seeker and Refugee Communities Action Plan.

### **WORKING GROUPS**

Working Groups of the Advisory Committee may be established at the discretion of the Asylum Seeker and Refugee Communities Advisory Committee.

Working Groups may be developed to implement particular actions or roles of the Advisory Committee. The establishment of working groups will be conducted under specific objectives and/or expected outcomes and timelines, which will be determined by the Advisory Committee.

The Advisory Committee will determine the role, responsibility and resourcing of working groups. It will retain the ability to conclude a working group or the group's formal relationship with the Advisory Committee at its discretion and/or at the achievement of its objectives.

While Working Group membership itself may be open to non-Advisory Group members, the Chair of any Working Group should be a member of the Advisory Committee and would report back progress of the Working Group to the Advisory Committee.

### **ATTENDANCE AND RECORD OF MEETINGS**

All meetings will have an agenda. Minutes of the meeting will record attendees, apologies, decisions and actions.

The Chairperson will oversee the preparation of the agenda in consultation with Council staff. It is noted that any member may submit agenda items prior to the finalisation and distribution of the agenda.

Council staff will provide administrative support and service expertise to the Asylum Seeker and Refugee Communities Advisory Committee and will ensure the timely preparation and distribution of agendas and minutes.

Advisory Committee members will be expected to demonstrate their commitment and due diligence by the preparation for, attendance at, and active participation in, Advisory Committee meetings.

It is expected that each member of the Asylum Seeker and Refugee Communities Advisory Committee will attend a minimum of four meetings each year. Inability to attend the minimum number of meetings during the life of this Advisory Committee would result in a vacancy to be addressed in accordance with the selection process outlined in this Terms of Reference.

#### **CHAIRPERSON**

The Chairperson will be selected from the membership of the Advisory Committee by the members of the Advisory Committee. The term of the chair is aligned with the term of the Advisory Committee.

The appointed Chairperson is responsible for the conduct of meetings, ensuring fair and equitable opportunities for views to be discussed by the Advisory Committee.

#### **QUORUM AND VOTING**

Decisions require more than half of the membership of the Asylum Seeker and Refugee Communities Advisory Committee to be present at meetings, the majority being non City of Greater Dandenong staff.

It is preferable that decisions of the Asylum Seeker and Refugee Communities Advisory Committee are made by consensus; however, there may be circumstances where a matter is decided by a vote. Each member is entitled to one vote, except that the Chairperson may exercise a casting vote.

#### **CONFLICT OF INTEREST**

Any matter deemed by a member to represent a Conflict of Interest shall be reported to the Chairperson either prior to a meeting or before the specific item is discussed.



## **Code of Conduct for Members of the Asylum Seeker and Refugee Communities Advisory Committee**

I agree to:

- ✓ Attend Advisory Committee meetings and provide apologies in advance where attendance is not possible.
- ✓ Act in an advisory capacity by disseminating authorised information within the community and provide insight and advice into community perspectives of the issues facing asylum seekers and refugees.
- ✓ Seek at all times to obtain and represent the views of the broader community.
- ✓ Respect the ideas and beliefs of all members and provide an atmosphere where all members feel comfortable to participate.
- ✓ Contribute in a positive way to finding solutions to issues or concerns.
- ✓ At all times act in good faith, with honesty and integrity and apply the skills and expertise I possess with diligence and care.
- ✓ Represent the views of my organisation, interest group or community and not individual views at odds with my organisation or group.
- ✓ Notify Council of any potential conflict of interest that may arise with respect to my participation on the Advisory Committee.
- ✓ Allow Council to promote my participation in the Advisory Committee in order to facilitate community feedback and participation.
- ✓ Not disseminate confidential information that is discussed at the Advisory Committee meetings as advised by the Advisory Committee chair.
- ✓ Not make any media comment on behalf of the Advisory Committee in relation to the project unless approved by the Advisory Committee chair.
- ✓ At all times act in accordance with the Agreed Meeting Etiquette.

Signed: \_\_\_\_\_

Name: \_\_\_\_\_

Date: \_\_\_\_\_

Advisory Committee: \_\_\_\_\_