



Environment Reference Group

1. NAME

Environment Reference Group

2. STATUS

Special interest group set up by resolution of North Sydney Council.

3. ESTABLISHED

Established: 24 November 2008 (Min. No. 757)

Reconstituted: 2 September 2013 (Min. No. 560)

Note: Reference Groups are reconstituted in September each year.

4. AIMS

- 4.1 To provide a better environment for those who live, work, study and visit the North Sydney local government area, through the development of effective, sustainable environmental policies and programs.
- 4.2 To enable Council to meet its objectives under its various policies and plans including the *North Sydney Community Strategic Plan, Local Environment Plan(s), Greenhouse Action Plan and Water Management Plan, State of the Environment Report* and the *North Sydney Environmental Levy Program*.

5. SCOPE

- 5.1 The functions of the Environment Reference Group shall include but not be limited to:
 - Providing a recognised forum to achieve better co-ordination, integration and implementation of Council's policies with a sustainability focus;
 - Improving awareness and information sharing across Council departments and the community regarding sustainability issues;
 - Identifying policy initiatives and actions and to include these in Council's Management Plans, with particular reference to the Reference Group; and
 - Monitoring the implementation of the Council's Companion Animals Management Plan.

6. QUORUM

- 6.1 The quorum is four participants - including at least three citizen members.
- 6.2 The designated Councillor as elected by the Council will chair the Reference Group. In the absence of the elected Councillor, another Councillor will chair the Reference Group. In the absence of a Councillor the senior Council officer present shall take the chair.

7. POWERS OF COMMITTEE

- 7.1 The Reference Group does not have the power to incur expenditure.
- 7.2 The Reference Group does not have the power to bind the Council.

8. MEMBERSHIP

- 8.1 All elected Councillors shall be ex officio members of all Reference Groups.
- 8.2 There is no limit to the number of Citizen Members. Citizen Member eligibility includes:
 - a) individuals - North Sydney residents; and
 - b) representatives from community organisations/groups working with the community in North Sydney, with a maximum of two representatives from any one group.
- 8.3 All Working Group members shall have equal voting rights.
- 8.4 Citizen members will be determined annually by advertising, calling for expressions of interest for the positions in the local media and on Council's website. Representatives will be selected on the basis of their stated experiences/skills/interest of relevance to the Reference Group.

9. TIMETABLE FOR MEETINGS

- 9.1 Four meeting will be held per year as published in Council's Schedule of Meetings.
- 9.2 Reference Group meetings will be limited to a maximum of one hour and fifteen minutes hours' duration unless the Reference Group meeting decides to continue the meeting until a later time or the completion of business, where possible.
- 9.3 Extraordinary meetings to be called as required.
- 9.4 Agenda items be called for four weeks prior to scheduled meeting date.

- 9.5 If there are insufficient items/reports on the agenda (as determined by the General Manager) a scheduled meeting may be deferred or cancelled up until three days before the meeting. Councillors and citizen members will be notified of the cancellation. Council's website will also be updated accordingly.

10. MEETING PRACTICES AND PROCEDURES

- 10.1 The provisions of Council's *Code of Meeting Principles and Practices* shall apply.
- 10.2 Council Officers will distribute soft copies of the draft minutes to Reference Group members within one week of the meeting. Reference Group members will have one week to advise Council Officers of any errors or omissions from the minutes.
- 10.3 The minutes of a Reference Group meeting can only be confirmed and adopted by resolution of that Reference Group, passed at a subsequent meeting of that Reference Group. A motion or discussion in respect of the Minutes shall not be in order except as to their accuracy as a record of proceedings. Minutes may not be amended to reflect second thoughts on a resolution - changes may only be made if the accuracy of the resolution is found to be at fault; as per the *Code of Meeting Principles and Practices*.
- 10.4 A report on the proceedings of Reference Group meetings are to be submitted to the next available meeting of Council for endorsement, including all recommendations. Any Councillor, irrespective of whether that Councillor is a member that Reference Group, may be the mover or seconder of a motion to confirm the proceedings of a Reference Group meeting.
- 10.5 Reference Group members and the 'Keep Informed' distribution list (refer to 10.8) will be provided with copies of the agenda/business paper of the-meetings two weeks prior to each meeting date. The agendas and minutes of all meetings will also be made available from Council's website.
- 10.6 Registrations to speak by non-members (i.e. members of the public) must be made by 12 Noon on the day of the meeting, by contacting Council's Governance Coordinator on 9936 8154. Each speaker is limited to three minutes per agenda item. These items will then be brought forward, in agenda order, and dealt with before items in which there is no interest from the public gallery.
- 10.7 All Reference Group members and attendees (including speakers) shall register their name on the attendance record provided at the meeting.
- 10.8 Non-members attending for the first time will include an e-mail/postal address on the attendance record for the receipt of minutes of the meeting they attended, and must indicate they wish to receive agendas and minutes for future meetings.

11. CONDUCT PROTOCOLS FOR PARTICIPANTS

11.1 All Councillor Reference Group members are required to observe the provisions of Council's *Code of Conduct - Councillors and Staff*.

11.2 All Citizen Reference Group members are required to observe the provisions of Council's *Code of Conduct - Volunteers and Community Representatives*.

11.3 All Reference Group members as well as other participants are expected to observe the following protocols:

11.3.1 General Responsibilities:

- a) Be courteous to other participants, Council staff and Councillors;
- b) Help to create an environment that is free of harassment and discrimination; and
- c) Protect the health, safety and welfare of yourself and others at meetings and related activities.

11.3.2 Declarations of Interest:

- a) Speakers at Reference Group meetings may have a personal (non-pecuniary) or financial (pecuniary) interest in matters being discussed by the Reference Group.
- b) Participants are required to disclose any interest in a matter under discussion, particularly when the interest is one of a pecuniary nature. Such declarations will be noted in the minutes.
- c) A conflict of interest does not mean that you will be barred from participating in a meeting. Instead, it allows others to understand your position and prevents criticism of Council activities or decisions at a later date.
- d) If you are paid lobbyist representing an individual or group, you are required under Council's *Lobbyist Policy* to declare your role and to register as a lobbyist on Council's *Lobbyist Register*.

11.3.3 Gifts or Benefits - Participants should not offer to a Councillor or Council staff member a gift or benefit that is:

- a) designed to gain advantage for yourself or a group you represent; or
- b) may be perceived by the public to give advantage to you or a group you represent.

11.3.4 Alcohol and Drugs - Reference Group members and participants shall not attend meetings whilst under the influence of alcohol or other drugs that could impair your ability or cause danger to the safety of yourself or others.

12. PRIVACY

- 12.1 All Reference Group members are required to observe the provisions of Council's *Code of Conduct - Volunteers and Community Representatives* relating to their access to personal and confidential information.

13. ACCESS TO COUNCIL CODES, POLICIES AND GUIDELINES

- 13.1 Related Council Codes, Policies and Guidelines, including the *Code of Meetings Principles and Practices*, *Code of Conduct - Councillors and Staff*, *Code of Conduct - Volunteers and Community Representatives* and *Lobbyist Policy* may be viewed on [Council's website](#) and/or hard copies may be obtained upon request from Council's Corporate Planning and Governance Department.