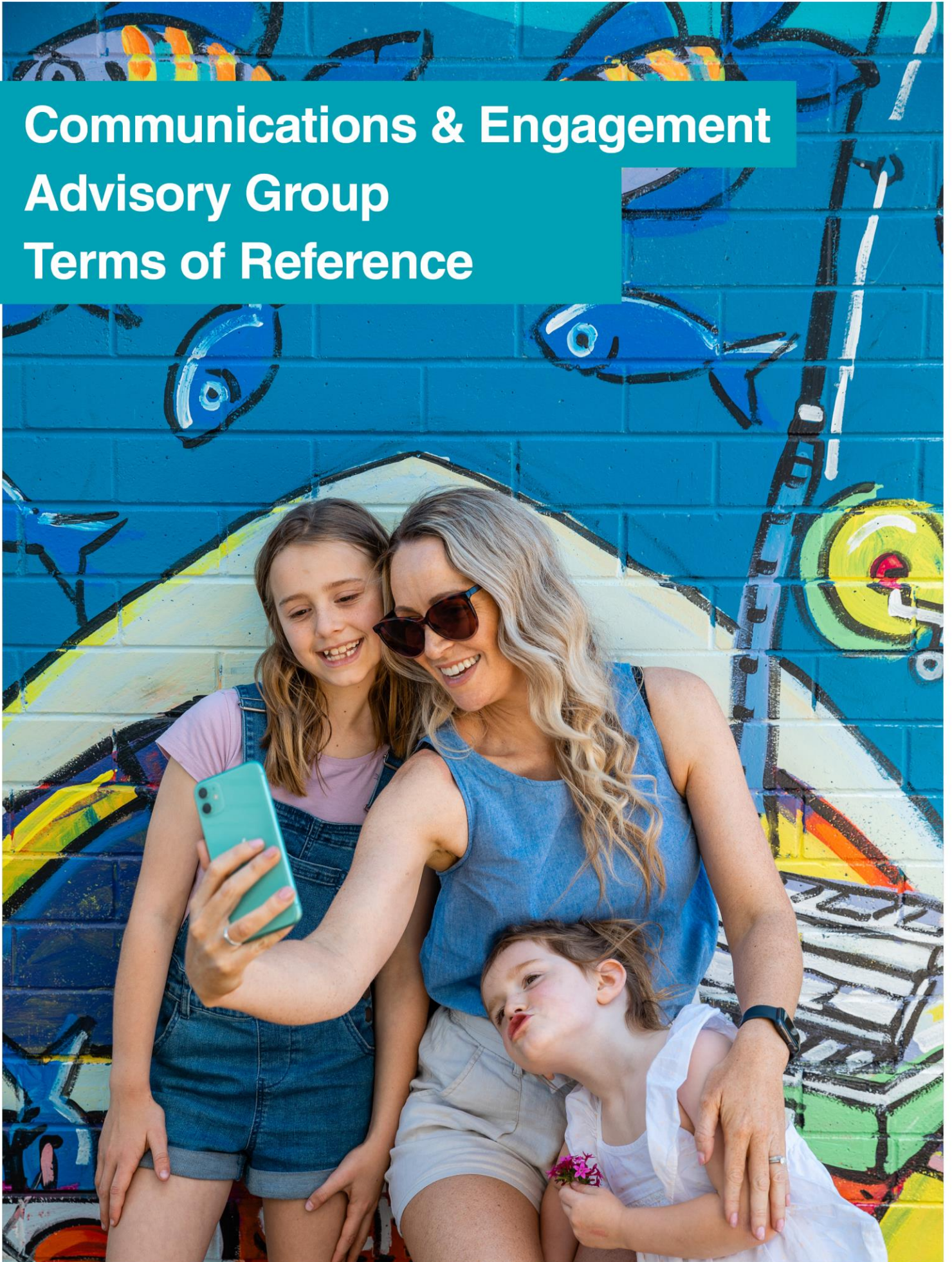


# Communications & Engagement Advisory Group Terms of Reference



## **COMMUNICATIONS AND ENGAGEMENT ADVISORY GROUP**

### **1. PURPOSE:**

- 1.1. The Port Stephens Council Communications and Engagement Advisory Group (CEAG) will support the delivery of transparent communications and meaningful community engagement.
- 1.2. The CEAG will provide information, advice and guidance on the development and delivery of Council communications and engagement programs to ensure a diversity of voices participates in decision making for their place.

### **2. BACKGROUND:**

- 2.1. Following extensive community engagement, Council's Communications and Engagement Strategy (2022 – 2027) was adopted on 13 December 2022.
- 2.2. Establishing the CEAG was identified within the strategy as an important action for Council and the community.

### **3. SCOPE:**

- 3.1. Provide advice, local knowledge and guidance on the design and delivery of communications and engagement projects
- 3.2. Projects will include those which are identified as having a significant social impact on the community. Examples of projects may include: cycling and pedestrian connectivity, town centre improvements, upgrades of parks and playgrounds, improvements to sporting facilities and the development of strategies and plans.
- 3.3. The panel is required to comply with the following policies and legislation:
  - a) Local Government Act 1993
  - b) Work Health and Safety Act 2011
  - c) Privacy and Personal Information Protection Act 1998
  - d) State Records Act 1998
  - e) PSC Code of Conduct
  - f) PSC Code of Meeting Practice
  - g) PSC Access to Information Policy
  - h) PSC WHS Statement of Commitment

# Terms of Reference



## 4. DEFINITIONS:

CEAG	Communications and Engagement Advisory Group.
Council	Port Stephens Council and the officers of Council.
The Group	Communications and Engagement Advisory Group.
The Strategy	Port Stephens Communications and Engagement Strategy.
TOR	Terms of Reference.
Social Impact	The effect the project may have on residents, business and visitors who utilise the place.

## 5. AUTHORITY:

5.1. The CEAG will provide advice and guidance on communications and engagement projects.

5.2. Projects will be determined based on the level of social impact on the community or as otherwise determined by the General Manager or their delegate.

5.3. The CEAG does not:

- a) make decisions on behalf of Council;
- b) provide formal policy advice or recommendations to Council;
- c) expend moneys on behalf of Council;
- d) commit Council to any arrangement;
- e) consider any matter outside its specific reference;
- f) Direct Council officers in the performance of their duties.

## 6. TERM:

6.1. The CEAG membership will align to the term of Council.

6.2. Council to review the TOR within three months following each Council election.

## 7. MEMBERSHIP:

7.1. The Group will be chaired by the appointed Councillors, rotating every 12 months for the term of Council.

7.2. Port Stephens Council: five (5) representatives – three (3) Councillors (one from each ward), two (2) Council Officers. The Mayor is an optional attendee.

7.3. Community representatives: minimum eight (8) and a maximum of twelve (12).

7.4. All members are eligible for reappointment and there is no limit to the number of terms a person may serve on the CEAG.

# Terms of Reference



7.5. A CEAG member may resign at any time by advising of their resignation in writing to the Chairperson.

7.6. Council may appoint a community representative to fill the casual vacancy for the remainder of the term.

7.7. A CEAG member who is absent for more than two consecutive meetings without leave or reasonable excuse, may be requested to explain their absence. If absenteeism of a member is ongoing, the CEAG may request Council to declare the position vacant.

## **8. COMMUNITY REPRESENTATIVE SELECTION PROCESS:**

8.1. Eight to twelve (8 -12) Community representatives will be selected for the CEAG through an expression of interest (EOI). EOIs will be accepted in multiple formats including but not limited to:

- a) written (electronic or handwritten);
- b) video (including video recording of person using Auslan);
- c) audio.

8.2. An assessment panel of three (3) nominated Councillors and two (2) Council Officers will assess all applications and endorse panel membership of the new CEAG. Future assessment panels will revert to the following:

- a) at least one delegated Councillor;
- b) one Council Officer.

8.3. Community representatives on the CEAG must reside, work or study in the Port Stephens LGA and demonstrate they meet three or more of the below criteria:

- a) have strong community networks and connections;
- b) have current involvement in the community;
- c) have a willingness to make an active contribution to discussions;
- d) have a capacity to commit to the CEAG.

8.4. If more than twelve (12) applicants are deemed suitable for appointment as community representatives, offers of membership will be made to the twelve (12) applicants most closely aligned with the selection criteria. The remainder will be placed on an eligibility list for up to 2 years.

8.5. Two Council officers will support the groups operation.

## **9. ROLES AND RESPONSIBILITIES**

9.1. The General Manager may refer any matter to CEAG within the scope of its role and responsibilities.

9.2. The responsibilities of CEAG may be revised or expanded by the Council from time to time.

# Terms of Reference



9.3. The Chairperson ensures that the CEAG functions effectively, that there is full participation at meetings, all relevant matters are discussed and that effective decisions are made.

9.4. In addition, the group provides:

- a) an understanding of the purpose of community engagement;
- b) the importance of effective local government communications;
- c) connections with their local community;
- d) support to establish and strengthen relationships – within the group, but also with the broader community;
- e) help to build trust;
- f) local knowledge and advice on key issues within the community;
- g) provide a forum for discussion and demonstrated how diverse stakeholders can work together to improve the wellbeing and liveability of the community.

9.5. Conflict of interest must be managed in accordance with the Code of Council.

## **10. ADMINISTRATION ARRANGEMENTS:**

### 10.1. Meeting practices and cycles

- 10.1.1. Unless otherwise specified in this Terms of Reference and in accordance with any Local Government Act requirements, the CEAG will determine its meeting practice, processes and protocols.
- 10.1.2. The CEAG will meet as required however, a maximum of six and a minimum of two meetings will be held per year.
- 10.1.3. Meetings will be targeted between Tuesday - Thursday, 6pm until 8pm, unless amended by mutual agreement.
- 10.1.4. These meetings will take place using a hybrid model in order to meet the needs of the group. They will be scheduled in advance.
- 10.1.5. Members are expected to attend all meetings, if unable to attend, members must notify the Chair or the Communications and Engagement Coordinator or their delegate.
- 10.1.6. A quorum for the CEAG shall be half the elected members plus one. If, for any reason, a quorum is not reached the meeting will be rescheduled.

### 10.2 Secretariat

10.2.1 Council will provide a secretariat for the Committee and that position will be filled by a staff member of the Communications Section. The secretariat role is not a member of the Committee and has no voting rights.

### 10.3 Agenda and minutes

10.3.1 Any CEAG member may submit agenda items 7 calendar days before to the meeting date,

# Terms of Reference



10.3.2 The Secretariat will ensure the agenda for each meeting and supporting papers are circulated to members in sufficient time (at least three working days) before the meeting.

10.3.3 Circulation of the agenda will be by electronic means as determined by CEAG.

10.3.4 A formal record of CEAG meetings, including action responsibilities shall be prepared by the Secretariat and circulated to all members within one week of the meeting.

## 10.4 Recordkeeping

10.4.1 The Secretariat will be responsible for minute taking and appropriate record keeping in line with Council policy and the requirements of the State Records Act 1998.

## 11 CONFIDENTIALITY

11.1 Members listed in this Terms of Reference may become acquainted with or have access to confidential and/or sensitive information. Members should not disclose such information to any other party unless specifically authorised to do so and should not make improper use of any information.

## 12 INTELLECTUAL PROPERTY:

12.1 The CEAG acknowledges and agrees:

- a) It is important for Council to develop, maintain, protect and manage the organisation's intellectual property including copyright, trademarks, registered designs, patents and databases.
- b) The CEAG has a duty to observe and help protect Council's intellectual property by not copying or supplying such property without the express permission of Council or the copyright owner.
- c) Council retains ownership of all intellectual property created by Members in the course of their CEAG work.

12.2 The CEAG will refer to the Secretariat any questions relating to intellectual property rights or the use of another organisation's document.

## 13 MEDIA:

13.1 Any media liaison associated with the activities of CEAG shall be undertaken in accordance with Port Stephens Council policy and with the approval of CEAG.

## 14 REVIEW:

14.1 The Terms of Reference will be reviewed at the first meeting in each calendar year.

## 15 OTHER MATTERS

15.1 In carrying out its functions the CEAG will be guided by existing processes and policies of Council.

## 16 MEETING CODE OF COOPERATION

- We start on time and finish on time.
- We focus on the strategic intent of the item.
- We ensure that people attending meetings are provided with guidance and support.
- We consider the risks and opportunities of each item.
- We are prepared to have open and honest conversations about an issue even if it is uncomfortable.
- We all participate fully and are prepared to challenge each other.
- We use improvement tools that enhance meeting efficiency and effectiveness.
- We actively listen to what others have to say, seeking first to understand then to be understood.
- We consider the deployment of actions and programs through appropriate frameworks and communicate the consensus view through appropriate channels.
- We follow up on the actions we are assigned responsibility for and complete them on time.
- We give and receive open and honest feedback in a constructive manner.
- We use data to make decisions (whenever possible).
- We determine issues arising by consensus or refer to the Chair for consideration.
- We strive to continually improve our meeting process and build time into each agenda for reflection and learning.
- We will promote best practice, keeping open minds, combining our experiences and shared learnings to inform our deliberations.

## 17 Related documents:

- Code of conduct
- Local Government Act 1993
- Crown Land Management Act 2016
- Communications and Engagement Strategy

# Terms of Reference



## CONTROLLED DOCUMENT INFORMATION:

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EDRMS container No		EDRMS record No	
Audience	Community and Engagement Advisory Group		
Process owner	Communications and Engagement Coordinator		
Author	Communications and Engagement Coordinator		
Review timeframe	Annually	Next review date	1 January 2024
Adoption date	31 July 2022		

## VERSION HISTORY:

Version	Date	Author	Details
1	13/03/2023	Communications and Engagement Coordinator	Placed on new template.