

GENDER EQUITY  
ADVISORY COMMITTEE  
TERMS OF REFERENCE

2023

## 1. Introduction

- 1.1 The Gender Equity Advisory Committee was formed in 2021 as part of the *Hepburn Shire Council Vision and Plan (2021-2025)* and the ongoing commitment of Hepburn Shire Council to the *Gender Equality Act 2020*.
- 1.2 The aim of the Gender Equity Advisory Committee (GEAC) is to provide Council with advice on improving Gender Equity within the Hepburn Shire Council and Community.
  - 1.2.1 Gender equality is defined by the *Gender Equality Act 2020* as the “equality of rights, opportunities, responsibilities and outcomes between persons of different genders”.
  - 1.2.2 Gender equity acknowledges that people may have different needs and power relating to their gender and that these differences should be identified and addressed in a manner that rectifies gender related imbalances.

## 2. Purpose

- 2.1 The Committee will advocate for gender equity within the Hepburn community through the provision of community-centric gender equity advice to Council on policies, plans, strategies, and programs that assist in the reduction of gender related imbalances.
- 2.2 The scope of the Gender Equity Advisory Committee is to assist and advise Council on the review of policies, programs and services that will have a direct and significant impact on the community.

## 3. Authority

- 3.1 The GEAC is an advisory committee, not a decision-making body, and will make recommendations to Council on matters of Gender Equity for consideration.
- 3.2 The GEAC, through the Chair or Councillor representative, has the capacity to put forward recommendations to Council for discussion that will be tabled and presented by the Councillor at the subsequent Council meeting.

## 4. Membership

- 4.1 The Hepburn Shire Council will seek members who are knowledgeable and prepared to engage in exploring issues and opportunities and provide advice to Council.
  - 4.2 It is preferable to have members who work or reside in a range of geographical areas across the Hepburn region and represent the diverse demographics, skills and expertise within the municipality. Hepburn Shire Council will seek members that are representative of the diversity of the community with reference to disability, age, sexuality and gender identity, Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander, cultural and linguistic background and socio-economic status.
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## 4.3 Composition

- 4.3.1 Up to ten (10) voluntary community members with broad representation of residents of the Hepburn Shire who are committed to working positively to achieve the Committees defined Purpose,
- 4.3.2 Up to two (2) professional representatives with expertise from Gender Equity/Equality organisations operating in the region,
- 4.3.3 One Councillor representative, and
- 4.3.4 Council Officers, as required.
- 4.3.5 The GEAC may invite relevant industry stakeholders with specific skills and expertise to participate in discussion from time to time. Other Councillors may participate in meetings and Council Officers may attend in order to service the Committee.

## 4.4 Selection Process and Appointment

- 4.4.1 Membership will be invited by way of publicly advertised expression of interest.
- 4.4.2 The Selection Committee will assess the applications against the Membership Selection Criteria (4.5) and recommend appointments to Council.
- 4.4.3 The Selection Committee will include:
  - 4.4.3.1 Manager Community Life
  - 4.4.3.2 Council Officers
- 4.4.4 Recommendations of appropriate members will be presented to Council for consideration and appointed by Council resolution.
- 4.4.5 Professional/expert representatives shall be invited by Hepburn Shire Council.
- 4.4.6 The Council shall appoint a Councillor representative as Chair and Deputy Chair at the beginning of each Council term.

## 4.5 Membership Selection Criteria

- 4.5.1 Advisory Committee members will be able to demonstrate some of the following:
  - 4.5.1.1 Knowledge, understanding and/or lived-experience of the needs and issues relevant to gender equity;
  - 4.5.1.2 An interest and involvement in local and/or broader community partnerships, advocacy, networks, or activities;
  - 4.5.1.3 The ability to contribute to the strategic development of gender equity initiatives at local government level;
  - 4.5.1.4 Direct links to local community populations and/or organisations; and
  - 4.5.1.5 Experience and/or understanding of the role of an advisory committee.

## 4.6 Tenure

- 4.6.1 Appointments will be for a minimum four-year (4) term
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4.6.1.1 Members may seek reappointment for a further four-year term through participation in a public Expressions of Interest process.

4.6.2 The maximum tenure will be two full terms (up to eight years).

4.6.2.1 There is no maximum term for professional expert representatives.

4.6.3 The membership of the Committee will be reviewed as part of the on-going review and implementation of the Gender Equality Action Plan (GEAP) and the broader Council Plan.

## 4.7 Disqualification of Membership

4.7.1 If the Council proposes to remove a member from the GEAC, it must give written notice to the member of its intention to do so and provide that member with the opportunity to be heard if that member so requests.

4.7.2 If a member misses two consecutive advisory committee meetings without an Apology, they will have disqualified themselves from membership.

4.7.3 Any vacancies will be filled by reviewing the previous applicants or through the defined Selection Process (4.5).

## 5. Roles and Responsibilities

### 5.1 Duties of Hepburn Shire Council

5.1.1 Council will have accountability for facilitation and administration of the GEAC, including responsibilities defined in Meetings (6).

5.1.2 Council will keep an up-to-date register of members and their contact details.

5.1.3 Council is committed to working co-operatively with GEAC members to improve gender equity across the Hepburn Shire Council and its region.

### 5.2 Duties of Committee Members

5.2.1 Bring local knowledge and broad community experience or technical and evidence-based research and experience (as relevant) to the Committee;

5.2.2 Attend and participate in a compulsory induction workshop, as required;

5.2.3 Understand the role and responsibility of members and Council;

5.2.4 Abide by the Council's Code of Conduct and other related policies and protocols;

5.2.5 Attend and participate in meetings of the Advisory Committee;

5.2.6 Work co-operatively with other members in achieving the aims of the Advisory Committee;

5.2.7 Contribute ideas and suggestions relating to items on the Agenda;

5.2.8 Provide advice and recommendations to Council on Agenda items;

5.2.9 Action and follow up tasks established by the Advisory Committee and resolved by Council;

- 5.2.10 Where required, report back to existing networks within the region about any decisions relating to the Advisory Committee; and
- 5.2.11 Use existing networks to remain informed regarding the views and interests of the particular community they represent.
- 5.2.12 If a Member wishes to rescind their Membership, they must do so by way of written community to either the Chair or a Council representative.

### **5.3 Duties of the Chair**

- 5.3.1 Chair meetings in accordance with the Terms of Reference, Code of Conduct and Meeting Agenda;
- 5.3.2 In the event of Apology, the Chair must advise Council Officers and ensure the Deputy Chair attends the meeting;
- 5.3.3 Liaise with the Council Officer convening the Advisory Committee to determine the Agenda for each meeting;
- 5.3.4 Facilitate the discussion of items on the Agenda in a timely manner;
- 5.3.5 Facilitate the moving of recommendations and voting by Committee members;
- 5.3.6 Ensure all committee members have the opportunity to participate.

## **6. Meetings**

### **6.1 Conduct of Meetings**

- 6.1.1 A Council Officer will:
  - 6.1.1.1 Provide the support required to enable the meetings of the Advisory Committee and invite members of staff or others to attend meetings to provide pertinent information as necessary;
  - 6.1.1.2 Co-ordinate meetings, Agendas and minutes; and
  - 6.1.1.3 Provide policy and secretarial support to the Advisory Committee.
  - 6.1.1.4 As far as is reasonably practical, provide a hybrid model of meetings to reduce barriers to attendance.

### **6.2 Scheduling**

- 6.2.1 The Committee will meet a minimum of four (4) times annually, with provision for additional meetings as required.
- 6.2.2 The schedule of meetings will be set in the first quarter of each year.

### **6.3 Attendance & Quorum**

- 6.3.1 All Members are expected to attend each meeting.
  - 6.3.2 In the event a Member cannot attend a meeting, they must inform the Council Officer at their earliest opportunity in the form of a written Apology.
  - 6.3.3 In the absence of the Chair from a meeting, the Deputy Chair will attend.
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- 6.3.4 Total annual time commitment for Committee Members is approximately eight (8) hours.

## 6.4 Meeting Papers

- 6.4.1 Documents will be sent to members with a minimum of five (5) business days, in advance of the Advisory Committee meeting. This will include:
- 6.4.1.1 Agenda for the upcoming meeting;
  - 6.4.1.2 Minutes of the previous meeting; and
  - 6.4.1.3 Any other documents, information or resources to be considered at the meeting of that may support the Committee Members to provide advice.

## 7. Conduct

### 7.1 Members

- 7.1.1 All members of the GEAC will work in a co-operative and positive manner. Members are expected to:
- 7.1.1.1 Actively participate in meetings and offer opinions and views;
  - 7.1.1.2 Attend a minimum of 75% of meetings;
  - 7.1.1.3 Treat all persons with respect and have due regard to the opinions, rights and responsibilities of others;
  - 7.1.1.4 Declare any conflicts of interest or perceived conflicts of interest;
  - 7.1.1.5 Act with integrity and avoid the release of confidential information;
  - 7.1.1.6 Adhere to the principle of clear and open communication;
- 7.1.2 Where issues of conflict arise, parties will be encouraged to discuss issues openly and clearly in a respectful manner;
- 7.1.2.1 Where there is difficulty in resolving issues of conflict, Council will make a final decision on any matter.

## 8. Confidential and Sensitive Information

### 8.1 Members

- 8.1.1 Members are expected to comply with the confidential information provisions contained in sections 3(1) and 125 of the *Local Government Act 2020*.
- 8.1.2 Members must treat information they receive as confidential unless otherwise advised. The documents presented to the Advisory Committee will often be in draft format and not suitable for wider distribution.
- 8.1.3 Members must not use confidential information other than for the purpose of performing their function as a Member of the GEAC.
- 8.1.4 Draft documents cannot be referred to or used in any Grant applications, presentations or in the private working roles of Members.
- 8.1.5 Any Member who breaches this agreement will have disqualified themselves from Membership.
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## **9. Reporting**

### **9.1 Hepburn Shire Council**

- 9.1.1 The Hepburn Shire Council will report to the GEAC on activities and issues as they arise.

### **9.2 The Gender Equity Advisory Committee**

- 9.2.1 The GEAC will provide advice to Hepburn Shire Council through the Chair.
- 9.2.2 The GEAC will report to Council through the meeting minutes.
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