Women's Advisory Group Draft Terms of Reference

July 2024 – June 2025

Introduction and purpose

A Women's Advisory Group (the Group) will be established to assist Council in the design and planning for a suite of initiatives in support of gender equity and in response to issues affecting or impacting on women in Hobsons Bay.

The Women's Advisory Group explores programs, services, resources and ways for women to connect in Hobsons Bay.

The purpose of the Group is to bring together local knowledge, expertise and networks, including to contribute ideas and contacts, and to guide engagement with the community.

The Group provides an advisory and liaison function, and is not a decision making forum.

Policy context
Convening the Group contributes to meeting Council objectives including in the

- Hobsons Bay Council Plan 2021-25 1.4 Enable participation and contribution to community life, learning and inter-connection
- A Fair Hobsons Bay For All 2024-28
- Victorian Local Government Association Women's Charter 1996

The Group is consistent with obligations in the Gender Equality Act 2020.

Women's Advisory Group details

Duration

- It is planned that the Group will be in place for the period July 2024 through until June 2025

Formation
The Group is convened by Hobsons Bay City Council, formed through an Expressions of Interest process.

Applications are invited from women who meet one or more of the following criteria

- Commitment to making a positive contribution in the community
- Interest or experience in programs, services, networks and related resources
- Interest in community engagement including in the western region

To be eligible, applicants need to

- Work, live or study in Hobsons Bay
- Identify as a woman
- Be able to attend and contribute to a minimum of four meetings over the term. In person or virtual attendance can be supported

The selection of members for the Group will be guided by diversity, skills and geographic representation. Members will be invited to local and regional women's events and activities.

Council may invite people as members onto the Group or invite as guests to meetings.

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Operation of the Group: meetings, requirements and code of conduct

- Group members need to agree and adhere to a code of conduct that supports a respectful and safe environment in the exchange of ideas and in creating an open and trusting committee atmosphere.
- Meetings are planned to be held from August 2024 to June 2025 or as agreed by the group. Meetings are proposed to take place in August 2024, September 2024 (workshop), November 2024, February 2025, May 2025.
- All meeting venues will be accessible. Council can provide support to transport and other requirements, and sign or language interpreter as appropriate.
- Membership of the Group is on a voluntary basis, there is no fee paid to attendees.
- The Group itself doesn't have budgetary responsibility, decision-making powers or any delegated authority.

Role of a Group member:

- Develop recommendations toward Council's programs, services, resources and ways for women to connect in Hobsons Bay
- Actively participate in the Group including attendance at meetings, and sharing ideas and contributing expertise

Role of the Chair: (the Group will be co-chaired by Council's Women's Charter Champion representatives)

- Facilitate discussion and assist the group to a consensus and position on activities and events
- Support members in their role within the Group
- Act as the official spokesperson of the Group
- Guide the group on factors that will ultimately impact and determine the development of activities and events (examples such as operational, safety, budgetary, liability as a guide)
- Run the Group meetings efficiently and effectively including, but not limited to tasks such as
    - Delegating meeting chair responsibilities to a Council staff member if needed
    - Meeting with Council staff members to plan meeting agendas
    - Encouraging participation of Group members
    - Keeping meetings to time, unless agreed to by the group at the meeting;
    - Ensuring all are able to express views
    - Ensuring no one person dominates proceedings

Things to note – governance

- Group members note that the Chair is the authorised spokesperson/s for the Group and members are not authorised or required to speak for the group including to the media, or in the distribution of materials and information until agreed
- Group members are to advise the Chair or a Council staff member if they are unable to attend meetings
- All members of the Group are required to
    - Observe the provisions of the Hobsons Bay City Council Privacy Policy relating to any access to personal information. Privacy legislation governs the collection, holding, use, correction, sharing, disclosure and transfer of personal information.
    - Disclose any conflicts of interest
    - Not intentionally or recklessly disclose information that the person knows, or should reasonably know, is confidential information

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