



Rural and Remote Education Advisory Council

COUNCIL CHARTER

1. Purpose

The Rural and Remote Education Advisory Council (**Council**) was appointed by the Minister for Education (**Minister**) in 1997. This Charter sets out the authority, operation, membership, functions and responsibilities of the Council.

2. Function

2.1. Reports to the Minister for Education

The Council reports to the Minister.

2.2. Terms of Reference

The Council is to:

- provide the Minister with evidence-based, and solution-focused strategic advice on education and training issues and developments in rural and remote areas of the State
- provide specific strategic advice on the education services that give senior secondary students in rural and remote areas equitable opportunities for compulsory participation in education and training
- advise about rural and remote community and consumer interests in education and training
- ensure strategic advice is provided from a cross-sectoral perspective across the schools, training and higher education sectors and encompasses both public and private provision.

2.3. Own motion

The Council may initiate its own inquiries within its terms of reference.

2.4. Minister's directions

From time to time the Minister may establish terms of reference for, or refer items to, the Council for consideration and report.

3. Membership

3.1. Composition

The composition of the Council may change from time to time depending on appointments made by the Minister, however it usually comprises:

- a Chairperson and Deputy Chairperson, who are Members of Parliament
- up to twelve (12) representatives from community/consumer groups, and
- up to six (6) representatives from fund/provider groups.

3.2. Representatives

Groups represented on Council may change from time to time according to appointments made by the Minister.

3.3. Appointments

Members are appointed by the Minister. Ministerial appointments are endorsed by Cabinet.

3.4. Term

- a) Members are usually appointed for an indefinite term.
- b) A Member's continuing appointment is subject to holding a position with the group that they are appointed to represent.

3.5. Resignation

Members resign in writing to the Minister.

3.6. Remuneration and allowances

- a) Members are not entitled to the payment of remuneration, sitting fees or allowances for their service on the Council.
- b) Travel and accommodation allowances may be provided to non-public sector Members who live beyond the metropolitan area in accordance with Government policies.

4. Role and responsibilities of Members

- a) Members will:
 - support the Council in fulfilling its terms of reference
 - work from an evidence-based, solution-focused and strategic perspective
 - work in a collaborative manner by putting forward ideas to the Council that may form the basis of strategic advice for the Minister
 - keep their organisations briefed on the Council's work, while respecting Council requirements of confidentiality
 - encourage their representative members/respective organisations to support the Council (e.g. the collection of relevant data)
 - provide timely feedback to queries, reports and documents, as stakeholder feedback is critical to provide meaningful response, and
 - use their best endeavours to attend meetings.
- b) If a Member is a Community/Consumer representative he/she will inform the Council of issues and concerns relating to rural and remote education and training *as identified by the organisations they represent*.
- c) If a Member is a Funder/Provider representative he/she will:
 - provide a knowledge base from which the Council may work, and
 - respond or arrange for a response, on behalf of their organisation to questions raised by the Council in a timely manner.

5. Chairperson and Deputy Chairperson

- a) The Chairperson is appointed by the Minister for an indefinite term, usually for the term of Government. The appointment is endorsed by Cabinet.

- b) A Deputy Chairperson of the Council appointed by the Minister for an indefinite term, usually for the term of Government. The appointment is endorsed by Cabinet.
- c) The Chairperson is to:
 - provide leadership of the Council to ensure the efficient organisation and conduct of the Council's functions
 - preside over all Council meetings, facilitate the effective contribution of all Members, preserve order, control any voting processes, adjourn or close meetings as required and sign the minutes
 - link the two key components of the Council (Community/Consumer representatives, and Funder/Provider representatives)
 - engage the Council in activities of analysis and evaluation to enable the terms of reference to be achieved
 - be the link and source of liaison between the Minister and the Council
 - inform the Minister about significant issues and events
 - maintain regular contact with the Principal Executive Officer of the Council, and
 - ensure that the work of the Council between meetings is undertaken through consultation with the Principal Executive Officer.
- d) In the absence of the Chairperson the duties of the Chairperson shall be performed by the Deputy Chairperson.

6. Council meetings

6.1. Frequency

- a) The Council meets at least five times a year or when necessary at the call of the Chairperson.
- b) Where possible one meeting a year is held in a regional location over a period of two days.

6.2. Attendance and quorum

- a) Members are expected, by virtue of their appointment, to attend 75 percent of all meetings held in each calendar year.
- b) A quorum for meetings shall be at least 50% of Members.

6.3. Guests

- a) Attendance of guests at Council meetings is at the invitation of a Member, with the prior approval of the Chairperson.
- b) Guests' attendance at Council meetings is limited to specific items that relate to the business of their organisation.

6.4. Working Parties

- a) The Council may establish Working Parties of Members to assist with the management of its research and inquiries.
- b) The Working Party operates in an advisory/administrative capacity and reports directly to the Council.

- c) A Working Party may consist of a mixture of Community/Consumer representatives and Funder/Provider representatives, or Members solely from one group.
- d) A Working Party will be chaired by a nominated Member.

6.5. Papers and records

- a) It is the responsibility of the Chairperson, with the assistance of the Principal Executive Officer, to ensure that meetings are appropriately scheduled, agenda papers prepared, and minutes recorded and disseminated.
- b) The Agenda will be finalised with the approval of the Chairperson.
- c) Papers for meetings should be provided to the Secretariat in accordance with the due dates circulated by the Secretariat, but generally will be required at least 15 working days prior to the meeting date. The due date may vary depending on the frequency and type of meeting.
- d) Agenda papers should be circulated at least 10 working days prior to the relevant meeting.
- e) The minutes will reflect an accurate and complete record of all matters discussed, decisions reached and items requiring further action.

6.6. Resolutions

- a) The Council will make decisions on the basis of consensus wherever possible.
- b) If a consensus is not achievable, decisions are made by a majority of votes of Members present.
- c) Each Member has a deliberative vote only.
- d) When the votes are equal, the question is resolved in the negative.
- e) The voting of individual Members is not to be recorded unless requested by a Member.

7. Out of Session business

- a) The Council may deal with items and make decisions by correspondence between meetings (**Out of Session**).
- b) A Member proposing such action should contact the current Chairperson or the Secretariat.
- c) Business can be conducted Out of Session if it does not require face to face discussion for decision-making, and for items for noting. It is also used where the urgency of the business requires it to be finalised ahead of the next scheduled meeting. Meeting agendas are usually busy and should not be weighed down by items that can be satisfactorily dealt with Out of Session.
- d) Out of Session agenda items are managed in accordance with a strict control system whereby an agenda item number is allocated by the Secretariat and papers are circulated to Members who are asked to provide a response to the agenda paper within 20 working days, or earlier if the nature of the business warrants.

- e) The Council may approve protocols for managing the process for, and responses to, Out of Session items.

8. Confidentiality

8.1. General principles

- a) Unless otherwise agreed to by the Council, Council discussions, decisions, papers and other material, whether presented in a meeting or Out of Session would generally be considered confidential to the Council.
- b) This does not however negate the need for adequate consultation and consideration of issues raised at a Council meeting. In such instances Council representatives may be required to consult with and provide feedback from the organisations they represent. In such a case clause 10.1 applies.
- c) The public release of Council documents and decisions is a matter for the judgment of the Council taking into account matters including the nature of the business, the decision made, the Council's reporting relationship to the Minister, whether the particular business is finalised or ongoing, the purpose of any request made to release the documents and any request made by a person providing the information.
- d) The Council may develop protocols regarding treatment of types of material and information received or generated by the Council.

8.2. Members responsibilities

- a) Members will:
 - respect confidential information and observe any restrictions agreed by the Council (subject to Freedom of Information Act 1992 requirements)
 - maintain confidentiality and not divulge information deemed confidential or sensitive. If Members are uncertain of the confidentiality of specific information, they should seek clarification from the Chairperson or the Principal Executive Officer
 - ensure recorded information under their control (in both paper and electronic form) is kept in a secure place
 - be cautious about leaving Council records on fax machines, photocopiers or computer screens
 - avoid discussing Council business in public places where there is a likelihood of being overheard, and
 - dispose of duplicate copies of records no longer required in accordance with Council archive procedures.
- b) While the Secretariat may have primary responsibility for the handling and maintenance of records, all Members have individual responsibility for any document, tape, disk, or other record in their custody. Records of any type should not be left in places where non-Council members may see them, such as at home, an office or a motor vehicle.

9. Secretariat

9.1. Administrative and Executive Support

The Council is supported in the administration of its responsibilities by the Department of Education Services by the provision of Secretariat comprising:

- a Principal Executive Officer (0.5 FTE), and
- an Administrative Assistant (0.5 FTE).

9.2. Role of the Principal Executive Officer

The Principal Executive Officer is to provide effective and timely executive support to the Chairperson and Council. This includes:

- making arrangements for all aspects of meetings
- preparing agendas, minutes, reports and other documents
- managing and/or facilitating the development of policy initiatives and projects
- providing advice with respect to the membership, terms of reference and budgets for the Council
- undertaking research as directed by the Council or Chairperson
- in conjunction with the Chairperson, providing a positive and collaborative working environment for the Council
- representing Council on nominated committees as determined by the Council or Chairperson, and
- providing a point of contact for the Council and for the public.

9.3. Role of the Administrative Assistant

The Administrative Assistant is to ensure an effective office environment is established and maintained to enable the Secretariat and Council to fulfil its role. This includes:

- providing administrative support to facilitate effective meetings
- record keeping
- to assist the Principal Executive Officer with the preparation of minutes, reports and other documents
- communication
- developing and maintaining databases (personal and financial)
- responding to requests, and
- coordinating travel and accommodation for Members.

10. Communication

10.1. Consultation with stakeholders and the public

- a) The Council may undertake public or targeted stakeholder consultations as part of its decision-making processes.
- b) Only those documents or information agreed by the Council for public release or dissemination can be provided for consultation purposes.

10.2. RREAC Website

The Secretariat shall maintain the Council website and ensure that relevant information on the Council is posted, including Council reports once they have been noted by the Minister.

11. Code of Conduct

- a) The Council will develop and adopt a Code of Conduct that defines the principles, values, standards, and rules of behaviour for Members.
- b) The Council Code of Conduct will be based on the Western Australia Public Sector Code of Ethics incorporating the following:
 - *Personal integrity* - to act with care and diligence and make decisions that are honest, fair, impartial, timely and consider all relevant information
 - *Relationships with others* - to treat people with respect, courtesy and sensitivity and recognize their interests, rights, safety and welfare
 - *Accountability* - to use the resources of the State in a responsible and accountable manner that ensures the efficient, effective and appropriate use of human, natural, financial and physical resources, property and information.

12. Conflict of Interest

- a) Members must act impartially and in the public interest in performing their duties.
- b) Members must identify any real, perceived or potential conflicts of interest in relation to the items on the agenda or those arising during the course of Council discussion. These should be raised in the first instance with the Chairperson.
- c) Real, perceived or potential conflicts of interest and the manner in which they were addressed must be officially recorded in the minutes of meetings.
- d) The Council may develop protocols for handling conflict of interests.

13. Financial

The Council reports under the *Financial Management and Accountability Act 1997*, through the Department of Education Services' Annual Report and Financial Statements.

14. Review

The Council will review this Charter every two years to ensure that it remains consistent with the Council's objectives and responsibilities.

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