



**Rural and
Remote Education
Advisory Council**

Rural and Remote Education Advisory Council

Council Charter

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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. Appointments

- a) Members are appointed by the Minister. Ministerial appointments are endorsed by Cabinet.
- b) The Minister is responsible for nominating and appointing the Chairperson and Deputy Chairperson.
- c) The Chairperson and Deputy Chairperson appointments cease automatically in the event of a change in Government.

3.2. Composition

The composition of the Council may change from time to time depending on appointments made by the Minister. The Council is comprised of:

- a Chairperson and Deputy Chairperson, who are current Members of Parliament
- representatives from community/consumer groups
- representatives from fund/provider groups.

The Minister determines the number of representatives from community/consumer and funder/provider groups.

3.3. Representatives

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

3.4. Term

- a) Members are appointed for a term that shall not exceed 3 years.
- b) Members holding the position of Chairperson or Deputy Chairperson may be appointed for a term not exceeding 4 years to coincide with the length of a government term.
- c) All members may have their appointment renewed.
- d) The total appointment length of members should not exceed 10 years.
- e) A member's continuing appointment is subject to holding a position with the group that they are appointed to represent.

3.5. Resignation

Members must resign in writing to the Minister.

3.6. Remuneration and allowances

- a) Members are not entitled to the payment of remuneration or sitting fees for their service on the Council.
- b) Overnight accommodation may be provided for non-Government employee members travelling outside of a 50 kilometre radius from their home to attend a Council meeting or regional visit.
- c) Travel costs may be reimbursed for non-Government employee members travelling outside of a 50 kilometre radius from their home to attend a Council meeting or regional visit. Reimbursement for motor vehicle travel will be calculated using the current Australian Taxation Office rates.
- d) Flights may be provided for non-Government employee members to attend a Council meeting or regional visit.
- e) Where travel to attend a Council meeting or regional visit can be undertaken by plane or motor vehicle, reimbursement to a member opting to undertake motor vehicle travel must be the lower amount of the applicable flight(s) and the motor vehicle cost.
- f) Meals may be provided to members whilst in attendance at a Council meeting or regional visit.
- g) Accommodation, flights, and travel costs for members are endorsed by the Secretariat and approved by the Chairperson.

4. Role and responsibilities

4.1. Chairperson and Deputy Chairperson

- a) The Chairperson is to:
 - ensure the Council discharges its obligations under the terms of reference
 - approve the agenda
 - 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 Secretariat
 - ensure that the work of the Council between meetings is undertaken through consultation with the Secretariat.
- b) In the absence of the Chairperson the duties of the Chairperson shall be performed by the Deputy Chairperson.

4.2. 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
 - 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
 - respond or arrange for a response, on behalf of their organisation to questions raised by the Council in a timely manner.

5. Council meetings

5.1. Frequency

- a) The Council schedules at least 5 meetings 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 2 days.

5.2. Attendance and quorum

- a) Members are expected, by virtue of their appointment, to attend 75% of all meetings held in each calendar year. Alternatives to in person attendance at meetings such as video and audio conferencing are acceptable to constitute the attendance of members.
- b) A quorum for meetings shall be at least 50% of currently appointed members.

5.3. Guests

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

5.4. Working Parties

- a) The Council may establish Working Parties or 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.

5.5. Papers and records

- a) It is the responsibility of the Chairperson, with the assistance of the Secretariat 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.
- f) The minutes will be presented at the next meeting for endorsement, with any amendments noted.
- g) The minutes are the final and only record of meetings.
- h) The minutes of all Council meetings will be provided to the Minister for noting.
- i) The Council will advise the Minister of specific matters that relate to another Ministerial portfolio.
- j) The Council shall only provide information to another Minister or Member of Parliament at the direction of the Minister.

5.6. Resolutions

- a) The Council will make decisions based on consensus wherever possible.
- b) If a consensus is not achievable, decisions are made by a simple 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.

6. 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.

7. Confidentiality

7.1. 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 9.1 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.

7.2. Members responsibility

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 Secretariat
- 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
- 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.

8. Secretariat

8.1. Administrative and Executive Support

- a) The Council is supported in the administration of its responsibilities by a Government department (Department) nominated by the Minister.
- b) The nominated Department will form the Council Secretariat.
- c) The salary costs of the Secretariat staff will be met by the Department separate to the Council's annual budget.
- d) The Council's annual operating budget shall be determined and administered by the Department.

8.2. Role of the Secretariat

The Secretariat is to provide effective and timely support to enable the Chairperson, Deputy Chairperson and Council Members to fulfil their respective roles on the Council. Functions include (but are not limited to):

- draft and progress any required Ministerial briefings
- 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, Charter, 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
- providing a point of contact for the Council and for the public.
- developing and maintaining databases (personal and financial)
- responding to requests
- coordinating travel and accommodation for Members
- creating and/or maintaining a Secretariat Procedures document to facilitate efficient support to the Council in the event of a change in Secretariat personnel.

The Department responsible for the Secretariat will determine the allocation of functions amongst its officers.

9. Communication

9.1. 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.

9.2. 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.

10. 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.

11. 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.

12. Financial

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

13. Review

- a) The Council will review this Charter every two years to ensure that it remains consistent with the Council's objectives and responsibilities.
- b) Changes to the Charter are approved by the Council and the Minister before being published.

14. Versions

| Effective date | Last Charter version number | Notes |
|------------------|-----------------------------|---------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| July 2024 | 1.01 | <p>Changes to the term and total appointment of Members consistent with Premiers Circular 2023/02.</p> <p>Changes to travel allowance eligibility to include both metropolitan based meetings and regional visits.</p> <p>Removal of references to Department of Education Services.</p> <p>Amalgamation of all duties allocated to the Secretariat and removal of specified FTE.</p> |
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