Ararat Rural City

Environmental Working Group: Terms of Reference

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Environmental Working Group

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Introduction

The Environmental Working Group (EWG) has been established to assist in the development of Ararat Rural City's Environmental Sustainability Strategy (2024-2034) (The ESS), and to advise upon its implementation and review.

The EWG will not be an established Committee of Council, and as such will not provide advice directly to Council, rather it works in an advisory capacity to the Chief Executive Officer (CEO) on matters of strategy development and implementation.

Purpose/Scope

Environmental management and compliance have become a more complex operating environment for Council. There is an increasing level of community interest and engagement in this space and there is a need for Council to manage a range of competing stakeholder interests. These stakeholders include Federal and State Governments, interest groups, industry sectors and broader complex community interests and concerns.

Development and successful implementation of Council strategy requires scientific input, advice and community engagement to navigate the policy complexity as it exists around issues of the environment and sustainability.

Ararat Rural City Council has developed the ESS through consultation with the EWG and aims to continue engagement during the implementation and review of the strategy.

Membership

The composition of the EWG is as follows:

- Chair (CEO or Nominee);
- Up to 4 community representatives selected through an open EOI process, which will be advertised broadly to ensure maximum opportunity to potential members to express interest;
- Up to 6 representatives from community environmental groups, such as local Landcare and catchment action groups, selected through a targeted Expression of Interest (EOI) process;
- Up to 6 skills-based representatives, with academic/scientific/administrative skills and experience in environmental science/ management, appointed through an invitation process.

Membership is not subject to a defined term. Members may continue to serve for as long as they are willing and able to contribute, subject to any changes endorsed by the EWG. Organisations represented on the Committee may nominate or change their representative at any time.

EWG Role

The role of the EWG is to:

- Contribute to the meeting agenda.
- Provide community comments on issues of sustainability and the environment within Ararat municipality.
- Based on evidence, best practice, and feedback from EWG meetings, contribute to the scheduled review of The ESS.

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The role of the CEO or Nominee is to:

- Chair the EWG meetings.
- Arrange meeting documents, including the meeting agenda.
- Take minutes and perform secretarial duties.
- Report to Council on the outcomes of the EWG meeting.
- Provide advice to Council on the development of policies, standards, and legislative requirements in alignment with the ESS.

Meetings

The EWG will meet 4 times per year, with extra meetings as required at the discretion of the CEO or Nominee. Half of the current EWG members plus one is required to operate the Working Group and make any decisions.

The EWG may invite suitably skilled persons to join the EWG as a co-opted member for a specified purpose and period. A co-opted member joins the EWG in an advisory capacity and does not form part of the quorum.

All EWG members are expected to attend each meeting in person or via video conferencing. A meeting agenda will be forwarded to each member prior to the meeting.

Voting

Voting is generally not a requirement for Working Groups, however if a vote is required, the matter will be decided by majority of votes from members who are present at the meeting. In the event of a tied vote, the Chair holds the casting vote.

Review

A review of the EWG will be conducted annually. The review will be conducted by the CEO or their Nominee.

Retiring Members

In the event of a community member resigning from the EWG, an EOI for a new community member may be advertised. In the event of a skills-based representative resignation, the CEO or their Nominee will arrange for a replacement representative.

EWG EOI Process

Expression of Interest will be received addressed to the CEO, Ararat Rural City Council, PO Box 246, Ararat, or emailed to council@ararat.vic.gov.au, through the Engage Ararat website.

Expressions of Interest should outline the following:

- Interests in environmental management and sustainability;
- Previous experience or qualifications in environmental and sustainability matters; and
- Involvement in environmental and/or sustainability community groups or sector:

EWG Selection Process

Members of the EWG are selected following the EOI process through discussions with a panel consisting of the CEO or their Nominee, and a member of the existing EWG (nominated by the group).