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**Terms of Reference**

**Gender Equality** **Reference Group**

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| 1. **Classification**
 | The Gender Equality Reference Group (the Reference Group) was established by Council resolution dated 9th February 2022. |
| 1. **Delegation**
 | This Reference Groups has no formal delegation. Their role is to provide advice to:* + - 1. the Council; or
			2. a Delegated Committee; or
			3. a member of Council staff who has been delegated a power, duty or function of the Council.
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| 1. **Accountability**
 | The Reference Group is accountable to their Convenor. This is the Council officer responsible for coordinating the Reference Group. |
| 1. **Term**
 | The Reference Group will sunset six (6) months after the end of the Council term. |
| 1. **Role and Responsibilities**
 | The role of the Gender Equality Reference Group is to collaboratively advise Council of current and emerging gender equality issues in the community.The Gender Equality Reference Group is also responsible for:* contributing to development, and implementation of relevant Council policies, strategies, and plans. For example, the Gender Equality Action Plan
* assisting council to ensure the diverse perspectives and lived experiences of gender are considered in Council services, programs and projects
* promoting knowledge, visibility, equality and inclusion of all genders in the community
* assisting to identify opportunities for advocacy, projects and partnerships for gender equality in the community
* informing, consulting and collaborating with relevant Advisory Committees on issues relating to gender equality
* participating in event planning, consultation processes, and other forms of engagement relating to relevant issues.
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| 1. **Council Membership and Chairperson**
 | Reference Groups can be chaired by a Councillor or alternatively they can be chaired by a Council officer or a community member. |
| 1. **Community Membership**
 | The Members appointed to the Reference Group by Council resolution are detailed in Schedule 1. |
| 1. **Role of Staff Member(s)**
 | Council officers will provide a support role to the Reference Group. Council officers may participate in meetings but must not actively influence the discussions and recommendations of the Committee or Group.Council administration will appoint appropriately skilled Council officers to provide secretariat support, including minute-taking and other administrative functions, to the Reference Group. This may also include:1. Preparation of an agenda for each meeting in liaison with the Chair;
2. Preparation and distribution of all papers required for each meeting; and
3. Notification to all other external parties or invitees who are required to attend any meeting for specific agenda items.

The officer support function provided by Council’s administration for the Reference Group is detailed in Schedule 1. |
| 1. **Meeting Frequency**
 | Times and dates of meetings for the Reference Group shall be determined at the discretion of the Chairperson and/or Convenor, after seeking the views of all other Members of the Group.Unless otherwise determined by the Chairperson, the Reference Group will generally meet on a quarterly cycle. Less or additional meetings may occur subject to approval of the Chairperson. |
| 1. **Notice and attendance of Meetings**
 | Agendas, meeting minutes and any reports will be circulated ten (10) days prior to the meeting, wherever possible, in a suitable format. The meeting Agenda shall be determined by the relevant officer in consultation with the Chairperson.Members may request items to be included on the agenda by advising the relevant officer at least fourteen (14) days prior to the scheduled meeting. Inclusion of the items on the proposed agenda shall be at the discretion of the Chairperson, based upon their judgement as to whether the item is consistent with the specific scope and core responsibilities of the Group.A Reference Group Member shall endeavour to advise the relevant Officer of non-attendance at any meeting.Any Member of the Reference Group unable to attend three (3) consecutive meetings shall notify the Chairperson in writing as to their availability to continue as a member. Where this provision has not been met, the Chairperson will deem the member resigned from the Reference Group.  |
| 1. **Quorum**
 | * + - 1. A quorum is the majority (more than half) of appointed Members to the Reference Group which must include either the Chairperson or Acting Chairperson.
			2. If a quorum is not present within 30 minutes of the time appointed for the commencement of the meeting, the meeting shall lapse. If a quorum fails after the commencement of the meeting, the meeting shall lapse.
			3. Business that is unfinished at the completion of a meeting may, at the discretion of the Chairperson, be referred to the next meeting.
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| 1. **Code of Conduct**
 | All Members of the Reference Group are expected to comply with the following expectations in order to ensure safe, respectful and effective conduct of meetings: 1. Prepare for each meeting and be active participants.
2. Regularly contribute to discussions during meetings, provide advice and opinions on topics of discussion and respond to Council requests for input or feedback.
3. Treat others with respect, dignity and courtesy always. Harassment, intimidation, abuse or any behaviour deemed offensive or hurtful will not be tolerated. Any Member displaying these behaviours will be asked to stop immediately. Should this continue, the person can be asked to leave the meeting. Council, at its discretion, will take appropriate action in the event of gross misconduct by a Reference Group Member.
4. In the first instance of conflict between Members, any complaint should be brought to the Chairperson, who can bring the parties together to seek a resolution. Where the dispute involves the Chairperson, the issues will be brought to the Council primary contact officer. Mediation through an agreed mediator can be arranged with the consent of all parties.
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| 1. **General Conflicts of Interest (COI)**
 | A well-established system for identifying, disclosing and managing a conflict of interest (COI) increases Moreland City Council’s public accountability and reduces the risk of corruption, misconduct and bias in Council’s operations and decision-making processes. All Members will approach the declaration of conflicts of interests with the following principles:1. Obligations and good practice: Council, and Advisory Committees and Reference Groups of Council, must comply with statutory obligations under relevant legislation in a manner which is supported by good governance practice.
2. Public interest: COIs must be avoided wherever possible. Where a conflict exists, it must be declared and managed in the public interest.
3. Real, potential or perceived: COIs exist whether the conflict is real, potential, or perceived.
4. Transparent and accountable: The process for declaring and managing COIs is transparent, accountable and consistent with the Victorian Directors’ Code of Conduct.
5. Culture of integrity: Council and Advisory Committees and Reference Groups of Council must foster and lead a culture of integrity. Members are supported to raise their own COIs and to speak up if they believe another Member may have an undeclared conflict.
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| 1. **Specific Conflict of Interest**
 | 1. The Chairperson is responsible to manage all declared conflicts of interest at each meeting. Conflicts of interest may be raised at the commencement of the meeting in response to an Agenda item, where this cannot be anticipated, upon the conflict of interest being realised/presented.
2. All Members have a duty to place the public interests above their private interests when carrying out their official duties, role and functions or in representing the Moreland City Council.
3. All Members are individually and collectively responsible to consider their personal interests in the context of Agenda items and discussions at each meeting.
4. At the time indicated on the Agenda, Members with a conflict of interest must declare their real, potential or perceived conflict of interest and the matter in which the conflict arises.
5. At the time for discussion of that item, those Members with a conflict of interest must excuse themselves from the meeting for the duration of the discussion and must abstain from communicating on that matter with any Members of the meeting thereafter.
6. Where there is no Agenda or where the matter raising the conflict could not be anticipated, Members with the conflict of interest must declare a real, potential or perceived conflict of interest as soon the matter arises, in an effective manner.
7. Where a Member has excused themselves from the meeting as a result of a real, potential or perceived conflict of interest, they must not participate in the discussion of that matter which has come before the Reference Group for deliberation, decision, or where a decision will be made by a Member of staff acting under delegation.
8. Any and all declared conflicts of interest will be recorded in the Minutes of the Meeting by the meeting secretariat.
9. Where there are no Minutes kept of the meeting, the declared conflict of interest will be recorded in a Meeting record and provided to the Governance team to be registered and managed accordingly.
10. The meeting Minutes or record will also reflect the duration of the discussion and whether the Member excused themselves from the Meeting.
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| 1. **Confidentiality**
 | 1. Reference Group Members must not release information that the Member knows, or should reasonably know, is confidential information in accordance with the Local Government Act 2020.
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| 1. **Member Support**
 | 1. Members will be provided with the resources, facilities and support reasonably required for them to be effective in their role.
2. Members will be reimbursed\* for out-of-pocket expenses that are bona fide expenses, have been reasonably incurred in the performance of their role and are reasonably necessary for the Member to perform this role\*note this is subject to the 2022/23 budget process
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| 1. **Reporting Requirements**
 | There are no formal reporting requirements for Reference Groups although reporting to Council and the public may occur on an as needs basis. |
| 1. **Transparency Requirements**
 | There are no transparency requirements for Reference Groups although relevant information may be published on Council’s website on an as needs basis. |
| 1. **Compliance**
 | All Members of the Reference Group must comply with the requirements of Council’s Governance Rules and Framework for Advisory Committees and Reference Groups. |
| 1. **Review**
 | These Terms of Reference for the Reference Group will be reviewed every 4 years, at the beginning of each new Council term, or as otherwise directed by Council.  |

**Schedule 1 - Membership**

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| **Name** | **Gender Equality Reference Group** |
| **Membership**  | This Reference Group is made up of:* Councillor/s where nominated to Chair
* 9 community Members, one of whom will Chair
* 1 community representative from the Human Rights and Inclusion Advisory Committee
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| **Current Members** | The current Members are:* Councillor/s: Cr Riley
* Community Members:
1. Helen Politis (Chair)
2. Verna Fisher
3. Rachel Avery
4. Faisal Nawaz
5. Luis Bogliolo
6. Brooke Pettit
7. Billie Gjurcinoska
* Human Rights and Inclusion Advisory Committee representative.
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| **Council Officer Support** | Council officer support is provided by:* Social Planning and Policy Officer (May Haeder) – Primary contact for Members and Agenda preparation / Minute Taker
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