Darebin Environmental Reference Group Terms of Reference with proposed changes relating to membership underlined.

Darebin Environmental Reference Group
Terms of Reference and Selection Information.

Background

To coincide with World Environment Day on 5 June 2001, Darebin Environmental Futures Day was held involving the participation of schools and community to develop a shared environmental vision for Darebin. Establishment of an Environmental Reference Group was regarded as the most suitable framework to engage with the community regarding environmental and sustainability issues on a regular basis.

The first DERG meeting was held on October 31 2001.

DERG Terms of Reference

The purpose of DERG is:
- To facilitate community action and to assist in strengthening links and partnerships between the Darebin community and Council's contribution to environmental sustainability.
- To provide an avenue of community consultation regarding policy, strategies and matters pertaining to environmental sustainability in Darebin and to operate as a "sounding board" for key strategies and policies.
- Provide community feedback and assistance to Council regarding local environmental issues.
- To contribute to the content of environmental forums and events.

DERG Members' Roles and Responsibilities

Community members are appointed for a two year period (see length of Term and Committee Renewal below).

The committee currently meets every six weeks on a Wednesday night between 7.00 – 9.00pm.   DERG members are required to attend at least half of these meetings. Meeting times can be changed by a majority vote of the committee. Meetings are currently held at the Preston municipal offices with occasional meetings at Northcote Town Hall.

DERG members will be invited to environmental events and activities hosted by the City of Darebin and may be invited to represent the committee at Council dinners or meetings.

DERG members will also be asked to provide input to environmental strategies and plans and to submissions on other Council strategy documents.

DERG members are encouraged to undertake and/or participate in voluntary environmental projects that are relevant to Council's environmental priorities (DERG's reusable nappy project is a good example). There is no budget allocation for projects of this kind but where possible support will be made available in accordance with Council priorities.

DERG's role and input is valued by Council but as described above DERG is not a decision-making body.   Council receives submissions from a wide range of stakeholders and all submissions are considered through the same processes. The relevant Council officers are requested to provide feedback on if and how DERG's submissions have been incorporated in strategies and plans.

Selection Criteria for Community Members

- Demonstrated knowledge of and commitment to environmental and sustainability issues, particularly issues relevant to local government and the Darebin community.
- Demonstrated commitment to community action/involvement.
- Understanding and interest in local government issues.
- A broad representation of the Darebin community will be sought – based on location (home address) and diversity.

Representation

- There are *twelve* community representatives and *at least one* Councillor representative.
- *A* Councillor representative acts as Chair.
- The Chair is the official spokesperson for DERG. DERG members may speak on behalf of the group where the content and spokesperson is agreed by a quorum at a DERG meeting.

Quorum

- For decisions where a vote is required, at least *6* community representatives must be present. If this is not the case the decision will be postponed until the next meeting. If this is not possible a vote via email/mail may be pursued.

Length of Term and Committee Renewal

This process applies to the *12* community members of DERG (*The Councillor representative/s* will be reviewed yearly or as required and will be appointed by Council)

- Community member positions will be 2 year appointments, with half the positions *(6)* being advertised each year to ensure continuity.

- If at the end of a 12 month term any DERG member has attended less than half of the meetings in that period, that member will be retired.

- Former members may reapply for membership.

- Membership applications shall be reviewed and selected by a selection panel. The selection panel for community members will comprise: one officer representative, one community member of DERG, one Councillor representative of DERG.

Reporting and Review

Where a quorum of members propose changes to the role and responsibilities of DERG, Council will be required to approve the proposed change to DERG's Terms of Reference.

For process changes (eg meeting frequency, length of term and committee renewal etc) the Terms of Reference can be modified by a quorum of members. In the case of any doubt around the nature or significance of the proposed change, the proposal will be referred to Council for approval.

The August meeting of each year will be set aside for review of the Terms of Reference and DERG processes in general.

At the December meeting of each year a summary document and discussion of DERG's achievements through the year will be presented to the group by an officer. This document will also be provided to new members.

Method of Resignation
Members will automatically resign after their 2 year membership period. As per above, retiring members are eligible for re-appointment.

If a member retires during the course of their 2 year term during February - June.
Invitations will be sent out to those people who registered interest in being members in the most recent call for memberships. If applications through this process outnumber positions the selection panel will determine membership. At any other time of resignation the additional vacant membership position will be filled through the yearly membership process.

If a membership is not filled through advertising
DERG will target potential members. If applications through this process out number positions, the selection panel will determine membership.