

Appendix D - Darebin Nature Trust Terms of Reference

Purpose

Darebin City Council (Council) recognises that Darebin's community is growing and changing with development of high rise or multi-dwelling living, changing demographics and an overall increase in population. These changes mean that Darebin's residents may not have access to private open space. As a result, public open spaces are becoming more important to the health, socialisation and recreation of the community. This is creating an increasing pressure on existing spaces and creating a need for additional open spaces and natural environments. Council have committed to the policy principle of a net increase in green open space in Darebin. The Darebin Nature Trust (the Trust) has been formed to ensure that green space provision parallels Darebin's growth and achieves best practice outcomes for our environment and growing community by improving Darebin's open space provision, protecting and enhancing local biodiversity.

The Trust will work with Council, community groups, other governments, authorities, private sector and other organisations to achieve this aim.

The Trust will:

- Provide expert input into the development and implementation of the Darebin Open Space strategy.
- Advise on strategic open space provision including acquisition and disposal and related policy, as well as accessibility and use. (In the longer term it is planned that there will be powers provided to the committee to plan and undertake land acquisition with trust funds)
- Raise the profile and increase focus and education on Darebin's green spaces and local biodiversity, including engaging schools and new migrants, with an aim to build community custodianship of our natural spaces.
- Support retention and reinstatement of traditional aboriginal land practices and engagement where possible.
- Support and reflect cultural diversity practises and engagement in the development and maintenance of public and green space in Darebin.
- Work to ensure there is sustainable long term funding and resourcing available for the acquisition, ongoing development and maintenance of public open and green space in Darebin.
- Facilitate, educate, promote and advocate for benefits to public and private land owners to enhance green space provision and biodiversity outcomes (such as the retention of bushland) in Darebin.
- Provide avenues and models for community advocacy and action to secure green space for current and future generations.
- Devise and apply for other sources of funding (e.g. grants, fee for service etc.) that improve effectiveness and financial sustainability of the Trust
- Work with Council to promote and deliver identified actions of the Open Space, Urban Forest and Natural Heritage Strategies.

The Trust will complement Council's work on green spaces and will not double up on Council action.

Transition and Development

The first focus for the Trust is to provide expert input into the development of the Open Space Strategy and determine the most effective long term Trust model for Council consideration by February 2018 to inform the 2018/19 Council budget process. This will include resourcing and targets and may affect changes in membership and representation.

Representation and Membership

There are 9 community members and a Councillor representative from each of the 3 Council wards.

Community members will be selected based on expertise and experience in: biodiversity; green space management and strategy; community engagement and mobilisation; fund sourcing and advocacy. Representation across Darebin will be sought.

In the first year a membership committee formed from the 3 Councillor representatives and 2 officers will determine community member appointment based on these criteria.

Council Officers will attend meetings and advise the trust as required.

(It is anticipated that the Coordinator Public Places and Strategies, Manager Assets and Property, Manager Parks and Gardens and Chief Financial Officer will advise and attend in the first year)

The Mayor or Councillor representative acts as Chair. When a Councillor is not present at a meeting a Council officer will act as Chair. (There is intent to transition to an independent Chair in the long term model.)

Conduct of Trust members

Members will:

- act honestly and treat others with respect.
- exercise reasonable care and diligence
- not make improper use of their position or make improper use of information acquired because of their position

Where there is a requirement for confidentiality, this is to be noted in the minutes if the matter arises during a meeting, or made clear to members if arising in communication outside of a meeting (e.g. provision of a draft policy ahead of a meeting, for discussion and feedback at the meeting), and addressed accordingly.

Members must disclose a conflict of interest in relation to any matter the Trust is concerned with or that the Trust will, or is likely to, consider or discuss. The conflict of interest, including the nature of the relevant interest, must be disclosed before the matter is considered and must be recorded in the minutes.

The Councillor Chair is the official spokesperson for the Trust. Trust members may only speak on behalf of the group where the content and spokesperson is agreed by a quorum at a Trust meeting. Any engagement with the media will be in accordance with Council's standard media and communications policy.

Members must ensure that new issues raised by the public or community are brought back to the Trust for consideration before any public information or response is provided in relation to the issue.

Quorum

For decisions where a vote is required, at least 7 representatives including 2 Councillor 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.

Resourcing

The Trust formation and actions will be funded by the Council operational budget in 2017/2018 and the first year of the Trust will determine sustainable resourcing and working models for the Trust. This will include discussions with other organisations and local governments to ensure that an optimum long term model is developed for the Trust.

Capacity to leverage future outcomes by bringing forward strategic purchases and considering loan or bond funded projects will be considered.

Meetings and Reporting

The Trust will hold at least 3 meetings between July and December 2017.

A report will be provided to Council by February 2018 on the proposed long term governance model for the Trust, this will determine membership terms and appointment.