

Officer response to feedback from DNT during development of the Terms of Reference, October 2019

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Sent: Wednesday, 30 October 2019 2:13 PM

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Subject: Timeframes for your feedback - proposed Terms of Reference (Darebin Nature Trust)

Hello all,

Following up our discussion on the new Terms of Reference – I can confirm that Council is likely to consider a report on the DNT at a Council meeting on 2nd December. I have attached the most recent draft of the revised ToR - - because of report deadlines this can't be considered at the DNT meeting scheduled for the 26th November. We have had detailed feedback from some members of the DNT and based on this (and comments from our governance officers) we are proposing the attached ToR for your consideration and further feedback. I have outlined in the table below this feedback/comments/suggestions and the officers response – detailing where these suggestions have been taken into consideration in the revised ToR and where – if not adopted - why. I am seeking one last round of feedback from you before finalising this report. Could I please have your feedback by Wednesday noon 6th November.

Feedback to date.

- The DNT has previously recommended that the Trust remain a council advisory committee.
- Individual members of the Trust provided feedback on the terms of reference and general operation of the committee – see below.

Issues raised by DNT members	Officer Response
<p>The time commitment requirements of members need to be clear at the time of nomination – i.e. meeting attendance.</p>	<p>The frequency of meetings as now been specified being at least 4 times per annum.</p> <p>Meetings will be structured either as workshops or evening meetings (they may be longer than the current 2 hours for example) and scheduled to align with key times in the year at which council is seeking advice - for example to align with council's annual budget and business planning cycle. Council will call additional meetings beyond the four meetings when further feedback is required on particular issues.</p> <p>The next recruitment, and formal induction process, will outline the time commitments and meeting attendance expected of members – this will give potential new members a clearer understanding of the time commitment required.</p> <p>The revised ToR proposes to align the membership term with the Council term. So a new committee would be expected to be formed in early 2021 and run for four years. Current members of the DNT would be eligible to renominate.</p>
<p>How vacancies/non-attendance would be managed needs to be addressed.</p>	<p>A provision has been inserted into the Terms of Reference specifying how vacancies and leave of absences are to be managed.</p>
<p>Consider skype or other formats for members who wish to attend but are unable to do so for work/travel reasons.</p>	<p>Officers will investigate using Skye or Zoom for committee meetings and explore other ways in which members could contribute (for example when they are interstate).</p>
<p>Ensuring that feedback is provided to the committee on how the advice that it has provided has been considered by council.</p>	<p>Officers will continue provide regular updates to the committee on how the committee's advice has been considered by council. Council reports on topics where DNT has been consulted will outline the advice.</p>

<p>Insert a new section in the terms of reference: 'Rationale'</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. To access community expertise that is otherwise not readily available to council. This expertise includes biodiversity, ecology, open space provision and management, urban liveability and environment; 2. To systematically seek the expertise and advice of the community members; and 3. To evaluate the expert advice from the community members at DNT meetings 	<p>The clause on expertise (biodiversity, ecology, open space management, urban and/or environmental design expertise) has been specifically incorporated into the Representation and Membership provisions in the revised terms of reference. This is a change from the previous ToR.</p> <p>Council is systemically seeking advice from the committee and evaluates this advice and provides regular feedback to the committee on how this advice has been considered. This is actioned through regular emailed updates, formal council reports and through discussion scheduled thought items on the committee agenda and forward agenda planner.</p> <p>The forward committee agenda planner is the way in which council tracks this systematic engagement and works with the committee to prioritise the extent, depth and frequency in which expert advice is sought. There is a balance to be struck between what is being asked of the committee in terms of its time, and capacity and interest and the breadth and depth of all potential topics that council could conceivable seek advice on.</p>
<p>The objective of the DNT is to protect and enhance Darebin's Biodiversity and Open Space.</p>	<p>This is now reflected in the revised terms of reference.</p>

<p>To provide advice to council on:</p> <p><i>Identifying biodiversity opportunities including project proposals;</i></p> <p><i>planning and designing new open spaces for biodiversity enhancements;</i></p> <p><i>Ensuring that biodiversity considerations and actions are adequately included in Darebin's Key strategic documentation including Darebin's Breathing Space: the Darebin Open Space Strategy, Urban Forest and Natural Heritage Strategies;</i></p> <p><i>Reviewing parks, gardens and natural heritage and bushland management policies, improvement plans and masterplans to enhance biodiversity outcomes;</i></p> <p><i>Advising on the provision of open space including the acquisition and disposal and related policy, as it pertains to biodiversity;</i></p> <p><i>Prioritising council investment in biodiversity;</i></p> <p><i>Securing green space for current and future generations;</i></p> <p><i>Increasing the profile of Darebin's green spaces and local biodiversity;</i></p> <p><i>Building community custodianship of our natural spaces;</i></p> <p><i>Facilitating, educating, promoting and advocating for benefits to public and private landowners to enhance green space provision and biodiversity outcomes (such as the retention of bushland) in Darebin;</i></p> <p><i>Developing models for community advocacy; and</i></p> <p><i>Educating and advising council and engaging with the community so that Darebin's biodiversity is valued.</i></p>	<p>These objectives have been incorporated into the revised terms of reference.</p>
<p>The ToR to acknowledge that the central role of DNT is to provide frank and fearless advice to Council about biodiversity and open space issues and that this should be provided without fear or favour. That is, DNT community members should not be burdened by how they think their advice might be received and their advice should not be muted or diluted in any way by such a prospect.</p>	<p>This point will be addressed as part of the induction process. An induction kit and process is to be developed in 2020 by the governance team. In part, the Code of Conduct also provides for clarity around the expected behaviours of all i.e. respect and inclusion.</p>

Regards

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Darebin City Council acknowledges the Wurundjeri people as the traditional owners and custodians of this land and pays respect to their Elders past and present.

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