

Councillor Portfolio for the Status of Women and Preventing Violence Against Women - Terms of Reference

1. Introduction and background

Darebin has a strong commitment and investment in advocating for and supporting women to live and participate equally in all aspects of life, through addressing gender inequity and violence against women. In 2012, Council endorsed Darebin's Women's Equity Strategy 2012-2015, including the Preventing Violence Against Women and Gender Equity Annual Action Plans. These plans were the first of their kind and have supported Council to embed a whole-of-organisation approach to addressing the inequities that women still face.

The investment since 2006 has resulted in key achievements, including:

- Endorsement of the Victorian Local Government Women's Charter 2008
- Establishment of the Darebin Women's Advisory Committee in 2009
- Development of a workplace family violence policy for staff
- Investment in a dedicated, full-time Preventing Violence Against Women Officer

On 5 October 2015, Council resolved to appoint Darebin's first portfolio councillor and spokesperson for the Status of Women and Preventing Violence Against Women for a 12-month period from October 2015 until October 2016 inclusive.

2. Purpose and objectives

The purpose of the Councillor Portfolio for the Status of Women and Preventing Violence Against Women is to promote and advocate for women's full and equal participation, gender equity and freedom from violence and discrimination.

2.1 Policy Context

The 2013-2017 Darebin City Council Plan has a key focus on healthy and connected communities, including a commitment to gender equity, "*promote gender equity, prevent violence against women and support the right of women to engage and participate fully and equally in all aspects of community life*".

Gender equity and violence against women are identified across Darebin policies and documents:

- Community Health and Wellbeing Plan 2013-2017
- Equity and Inclusion Policy 2012-2015
- Preventing Violence Against Women Annual Action Plan
- Gender Equity Annual Action Plan
- Community Safety Strategy 2012-2016
- Darebin Leisure Strategy 2010-2020
- Darebin Family Violence Policy (internal)

2.2 Objectives

The objectives of the Councillor Portfolio for the Status of Women and Preventing Violence Against Women are:

1. **Develop an increased understanding of the causes of violence and the opportunities available to promote women's equity and prevent violence against women.**

- This will include the Councillor participating in capacity building opportunities including identification

of family violence training, preventing violence against women short course, gender equity training and women's leadership opportunities.

2. Support and Advocate for women's full and equal participation and freedom from violence.

- This will include acting as a spokesperson to promote Council's activities to prevent violence against women.
- Attending key events relating to the portfolio that aim to promote gender equity and prevent violence against women, across Darebin and the Northern Region.
- Advocating at Council and across other tiers of government on key issues and identified priorities.
- Participating in and seeking advice from the Darebin's Women's Advisory Committee.
- Seeking advice and input from the Darebin Family Violence Network and key partners in the prevention sector.

2.3 Guiding principles

The guiding principles for the Councillor Portfolio for the Status of Women and Preventing Violence Against Women are grounded in the Women's Equity Strategy and cascading action plans. These documents affirm that:

- **Gender equity between women and men is paramount to the creation of a fair and productive society.** Due to certain social structures, inequity for women remains and continues to impact on their capacity to fully and equally participate in community life.
- **Gender equity is paramount for creating a violence-free society.** Well established research identifies the link between gender inequity and the high prevalence of violence against women (VicHealth, 2007). The key drivers of violence against women are unequal power relations between women and men, adherence to rigid gender stereotypes and broader cultures of violence (VicHealth, 2007).
- **Violence against women is a pervasive issue that occurs among all cultural, religious, and socio-economic groups.** As gender relations are intersected by social factors, women who are marginalised by these factors may be more vulnerable to violence and experience additional barriers to seeking support.
- **Addressing violence against women must occur across a spectrum of strategies, from tertiary response, secondary prevention and primary prevention.** Local government is best positioned to influence systemic and cultural change through primary and secondary prevention. However, Council has a key role to advocate for and work closely with services to ensure the safety of women and children.

These principles will underpin the objectives of role and the subsequent actions undertaken.

3. Relationship to existing to existing committees

Council's existing networks and committees will provide advice to Council as per their current Terms of Reference. The Portfolio Councillor may refer to existing committees for information and advice relevant to the status of women and preventing violence against women. The existing committees relevant to the Portfolio Councillor and work relating to the status of women and preventing violence against women include:

3.1 Darebin Women's Advisory Committee

The Committee aims to support the right of women to fully and equally engage and participate in the life of the community. Through addressing the barriers to women's participation in Darebin and the causes behind them, including poverty and violence, dis-enablers of equity, the committee supports Council's strong and sustained commitment to gender equity.

3.2 Darebin Family Violence Network

The Network is convened and supported by Darebin City Council as an operational network of professionals who work in the family violence service system. It is a multi-agency forum comprising representatives from government, non – government, police and community agencies at the local level who share a collective commitment to addressing family violence and improving the safety of women and children. The goal of the network is to improve the accessibility, co-ordination and availability of services to women and children experiencing family violence in Darebin.

The existing committees do not have an operational role and may not direct Council officers in performance of their duties.

4. Focus of Work in 2015/2016

The Portfolio Councillor will use the existing and emerging opportunities outlined in the Preventing Violence Against Women Annual Action Plan and Gender Equity Annual Action Plan to further the objectives of this role.

These strategic documents and principles will inform the priorities and focus of work in 2015/2016 for the Portfolio Councillor, as outlined in **Appendix A - Portfolio Councillor for the Status of Women and Preventing Violence Against Women - 2015/16 Focus of Work**.

5. Councillor Protocols

5.1 Councillor and employee interaction protocols

All interaction between the Portfolio Councillor and the supporting officers will adhere to the expectations of section 9 of the *Excellence in Governance @ Darebin City Council Employee Code of Conduct*.

5.2 Current Councillor communication/media protocols

As per the *2013 Media Policy for the Mayor and Councillors*, the Mayor is the official spokesperson for Darebin Council and the decisions of Council, unless otherwise delegated.

If delegated by the Mayor, the Portfolio Councillor may act as the spokesperson for the items relating to the portfolio. This will occur only after it is negotiated on a case by case basis with the Mayor, the relevant Director and/or Communications staff.

All requests for official City of Darebin comment on organisational policies, business and operations must be referred to the Communications and Marketing Department.

6. Officer Support

Darebin City Council's Preventing Violence Against Women Officer, Diversity Policy Officer and other relevant officers will provide support to the appointed Councillor, through existing resources and budget.

The Portfolio Councillor may not direct Council officers in performance of their duties.

The Portfolio Councillor must, in the first instance, request information from the relevant Director and cc. the Chief Executive into any such requests.

7. Reporting to Council

The Portfolio Councillor will report to Council on actions and outcomes achieved on a bi-annual basis.

The Portfolio Councillor update will be a standing agenda item for the Darebin Women's Advisory Committee during the term of this appointment.

8. Term of Appointment

The appointed Councillor with the portfolio for the Status of Women and Preventing Violence Against Women will undertake this role from 5 October 2015 until 31 October 2016.

9. Monitoring and Evaluation

The Terms of Reference and the portfolio for the Status of Women and Preventing Violence Against Women will be evaluated after 30 October 2016, with a report submitted to Council detailing the outcomes and recommendations of the portfolio.

10. Appendices

Appendix A - Portfolio Councillor for the Status of Women and Preventing Violence Against Women - 2015/16 Focus of Work