

Darebin Lifelong Learning Strategy 2017–2021 Reference Group



Terms of Reference

June 2017

1. Introduction and background

Lifelong learning can be described as ‘formal and informal learning opportunities throughout people’s lives to foster the continuous development and improvement of knowledge and skills needed for employment and personal fulfilment’. (Collins Dictionary)

UNESCO’s Belém Framework for Action says ‘the role of lifelong learning is critical in addressing global educational issues and challenges. Lifelong learning “from cradle to grave” is a philosophy, a conceptual framework and an organising principle of all forms of education, based on inclusive, emancipatory, humanistic and democratic values; it is all-encompassing and integral to the vision of a knowledge-based society.’

The Darebin Council Plan 2017–2021 articulates our mission ‘to preserve and improve the physical, social, environmental and economic health of all our neighbourhoods, and ensure quality of life for current and future generations’.

The Darebin Lifelong Learning Strategy aims to provide a framework to enhance Council’s provision of lifelong learning opportunities across all ages as well as extend opportunities for our community through the skills and expertise within other agencies and learning organisations. Through a collaborative partnership approach, we will go beyond learning to build community connections and capacity to meet the current and future needs of our community.

2. Purpose and objectives

The purpose of the Reference Group is to provide advice, feedback, support and guidance to Council on the development of the Darebin Lifelong Learning Strategy 2017–2021.

2.1 Policy context

The development of a Lifelong Learning Strategy supports the Council Plan 2017–2021 in a number of ways:

- It will contribute to addressing our overarching challenges in a changing world where ‘Our transport, infrastructure, education and training must keep pace with the needs of our changing economy’.
- It will support our community to address growing inequality where ‘The gap between rich and poor is growing across Australia, including in Melbourne and in Darebin’.
- The Strategy and associated consultation and engagement activities will deepen our understanding of the challenges facing our community in this space and support our endeavours to work in partnership with others to provide more with less.

Lifelong learning is relevant to most Council Plan goals but is specifically mentioned in Goal 2: ‘We will improve the wellbeing of people in our community by providing opportunities for them to live their lives well’; and section 2.3: ‘We will expand lifelong-learning opportunities, to enable local people to learn, develop their interests, and secure good quality work’.

Council is committed to a consultative approach to develop and implement the Darebin Lifelong Learning Strategy 2017–2021.

2.2 Guiding principles

The Reference Group will be guided by and share the following values with Darebin City Council employees, partners and the Darebin community: collaboration, accountability, respect and integrity.

2.3 Objectives

The objectives of the Reference Group are to:

- inform and assist Council in understanding issues, policies and drivers that impact the current and future provision of lifelong learning opportunities for the Darebin community;
- provide advice and feedback on processes and consultation during the development stage of the Strategy;
- provide strategic thinking for effective planning;
- ensure alignment with relevant Council policies; and
- advise Council on appropriate actions that arise from the Strategy.

3. Membership

Reference Group membership will be open to those interested in the provision of lifelong learning opportunities in the City of Darebin.

The Reference Group will consist of:

- at least one (1) nominated Darebin Councillor. A Councillor will Chair the Reference Group;
- up to fifteen (15) community, agency and learning organisation representatives who live, work, study or provide lifelong learning in Darebin; and
- two (2) Council officers, and others as required, who can implement actions to address issues raised by the Reference Group.

Apart from Councillors and officers, the Reference Group's membership should not exceed fifteen (15).

3.1 Membership diversity

The Reference Group should reflect as far as possible the diversity of the Darebin community in terms of gender, age, sexuality, cultural and linguistic background, employment status, education and income levels, and associated learning industry/sector. This will be a key consideration in the selection and recruitment of members. The Reference Group will seek to build and reflect diversity within the membership and be inclusive in practice.

3.2 Reimbursement of members' expenses

To enable diverse participation, Council will support participation through provision of assistance for childcare, transport or other specific needs (interpreting, assistance support, etc.) as required.

Application for assistance should be made at the Expression of Interest stage (see 4.1), but can also be made at any time if changing circumstances mandate it.

3.3 Role of members

Reference Group members will fulfill their role by:

- providing input, views and advice on the development of the Darebin Lifelong Learning Strategy 2017–2021 and associated action plans; and
- facilitating Council's engagement with the community and assisting Council to connect with the Darebin community and to take into account, balance and reflect the different perspectives and requirements of all groups that form the Darebin community.

4. Terms and method of nomination

4.1 Method of nomination

Nomination for the appointment of members to the Darebin Lifelong Learning Strategy Reference Group will be called through an Expression of Interest process. The process will be advertised widely through appropriate mediums, including a public notice in local newspapers and on Council websites.

All appointments will be made based on responses to the selection criteria and approved by Council.

4.2 Terms of appointment

Appointments to the Reference Group will be for the duration of the planning and development stages of the Strategy, expected to be until 30 June 2018.

If a member resigns during the course of their term, the position will be filled at the discretion of Council.

5. Meetings and procedures

The Reference Group will meet for up to two (2) hours duration a minimum of four (4) times, with the possibility of additional meetings as required. Meetings will be held at various Council facilities or other locations within the City of Darebin as appropriate.

Dates and times will be determined by Council, taking into consideration members' constraints and the need to enable participation from a range of representatives.

5.1 Chairperson

Meetings will be chaired by a nominated Councillor or, in their absence, a senior Council officer, or as determined by the Group.

The responsibilities of the Chair include:

- guiding the meeting according to the agenda and time available;
- facilitating fruitful discussions, with care to ensure members understand what is outside the scope of the Reference Group;
- assisting members to abide by the Code of Conduct (see 5.4), including by taking action in case of breaches;
- reviewing and approving minutes before distribution as needed; and
- where appropriate, updating Council on the progress and discussions of the Reference Group, e.g. through Councillors' reports at Council meetings.

5.2 Officer support

A Council officer will provide support to the Reference Group, including provision of meeting agendas and minutes.

Meeting agendas will be forwarded to the Reference Group members by email no later than one week (five working days) before a scheduled meeting.

Meeting minutes will be provided to Reference Group members no later than two weeks (ten working days) after a scheduled meeting, including details of proceedings and clearly expressed resolutions (where applicable), including relevant documentation as attachments where necessary.

Records of agendas and minutes will be maintained in accordance with Public Records Act requirements.

5.3 Recommendations to Council

The role of the Reference Group is to provide advice to Council; as such, it does not have any decision-making powers.

Where the Reference Group wishes to make recommendations to Council, a consensus of all members present will be sought. In the absence of such consensus, and provided there is a quorum of at least half of the members (apart from Councillor(s)/Chair and Council officers) present at the meeting, the recommendation will be put to a vote with the majority recommendation being endorsed as the Reference Group's. Council officers can never take part in the vote. In the event of a tie, the Chair may exercise a casting vote.

It is up to the supporting officer to follow up on the Reference Group's recommendation(s), including deciding on the most appropriate means to report on it to Council or internal departments.

The Reference Group does not have an operational role and may not direct Council staff in the performance of their duties.

5.4 Conduct of members

Members will:

- Act honestly and treat others with respect. Failure to do so will be dealt with by the Chair as appropriate.
- 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, and addressed accordingly.

Members must disclose a conflict of interest in relation to any matter the Reference Group is concerned with or that the Reference Group 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.

Members of the Reference Group are not authorised to speak to the media or make public statements on behalf of the Reference Group or Council, unless the member is a Councillor. In that case, any engagement with the media will be in accordance with Council's media and communications policy.

Members are authorised to disclose, and encouraged to share with community members, general information such as objectives of the Reference Group, membership procedures, list of activities and information in regard to any issues that have already been previously dealt with and approved in the Reference Group's discussions.

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

6. Monitoring and evaluation

Operations of the Reference Group will be evaluated via a number of methods (including reflective self-evaluation of the Reference Group) to ensure the Reference Group is achieving its objectives. Results of the evaluation will be reported in an annual progress report submitted to Council detailing the Reference Group's activities and achievements.