

Joint Community Government Reference Group

TERMS OF REFERENCE – updated January 2021

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1. FUNCTION

1.1 Role

The Joint Community Government Reference Group (JCGRG) is a consultative forum focused on enhancing the open and transparent relationship between the ACT Government and community sector to progress social issues impacting the Canberra community.

1.2 Key Functions

Under the principles and undertakings of the *ACT Social Compact*, the JCGRG will:

1. Inform cross portfolio and cross sector alignment of effort to progress social issues, including:
 - exploring and providing across sectoral advice on systemic issues that need to be resolved so that both parties contribute to achieving policy objectives
 - seeking feedback on the progress and outcomes of measures intended to improve the capacity, sustainability and effectiveness of government and community sectors
2. Facilitate wide engagement on cross sectoral issues through a range of communication mechanisms
3. Explore matters of mutual interest relating to the relationship between sectors. In doing so, the Group will:
 - maintain linkages and facilitate communication between sectors in relation to social issues affecting the wider community
 - improve the capacity of the community sector to partner with government
4. Provide advice and respond to requests for advice from relevant Minister/s on the capacity, sustainability and effectiveness of government and community sector partnerships and efforts to contribute to achieving policy objectives.

2. MEMBERSHIP

2.1 Guidelines

The JCGRG comprises: representatives from the ACT community sector, including peak networks, service providers; executive representation from ACT Government Directorates with a social and community perspective; and the Australian

Government. Members are appointed as representatives of their networks rather than as individual representatives.

Community sector representatives on the JCGRG will come from consumer, provider and peak bodies.

Members must be able to make commitments on behalf of their representative networks and/or organisation, and influence key decision-makers within their organisations and networks.

At the first meeting of an even year, members will be invited to review their membership, check the overall spread of membership, and invite and appoint new members if required.

Outside the first meeting of an even year, where possible, expressions of interest for membership will be sought from community sector representatives by the Secretariat three months prior to positions becoming vacant and will be assessed for suitability for appointment by the co-chairs of the JCGRG. The expression of interest invitation will outline the required skills and knowledge to fulfil the representative role.

The JCGRG may invite non-members to assist with the consideration of particular issues of interest, in agreement of the co-chairs.

2.2 Current ACT Community Sector Membership

The following organisations are currently represented on the JCGRG:

ACT Council of Social Service; ACT Shelter; Capital Region Community Service; Carers ACT; Conservation Council ACT Region; Council on the Ageing ACT (COTA ACT); Families ACT; Mental Health Community Coalition ACT; National Disability Services; Volunteering ACT; and the Youth Coalition of the ACT.

Members are also welcome from the health and justice sub-sectors.

2.3 Current ACT Government Membership

The following relevant Government directorates are represented at executive level:

Community Services Directorate; Chief Minister and Treasury Directorate; Health Directorate; Justice and Community Safety Directorate; Education Directorate; and Environment, Planning and Sustainable Development Directorate.

2.4 Current Australian Government Membership

A representative from the Commonwealth responsible for policy and reforms related to the community sector is invited to join the JCGRG. The Department of Social Services is currently represented.

2.5 Role and Responsibilities of Members

The role of a member is to represent the viewpoint of their organisation, network or sector group; and for Government representatives, their portfolio responsibility and current ACT Government policy. Members have responsibility to promulgate key issues, inform decisions, outcomes and policies relating to agenda items. The ability to fulfil these roles is a product of the members' position and their influence within the wider Government and community sectors.

Members should:

- progress advice and issues arising from the JCGRG by undertaking consultation with their community sector constituency or directorate
- make decisions (or actively engage decision makers) to enable engagement on issues being discussed and progressed by the JCGRG
- attend to out-of-session items as required
- develop a succession plan for membership, in cooperation with their organisation or directorate.

2.6 Role of the co-chairs

The JCGRG is led by co-chairs (a community representative and a Government representative) who are actively involved in the broader community and human services sectors. The co-chairs will be the Deputy Director-General of the Community Services Directorate and the Director of the ACT Council of Social Service (ACTCOSS).

The role of the co-chairs is to:

- agree on the meeting agenda for each meeting, in consultation
- preside over all meetings
- ensure all members have opportunity to contribute ideas, opinions and concerns through maintaining a positive and constructive dialogue
- assist members to work together and ensure active participation in the Group
- work across both the community and Government sectors to progress the JCGRG's priorities
- engage with Ministerial Advisory Councils as required
- act as a public spokesperson for the Group, for example:
 - through communication with relevant Ministers on behalf of the Group; and
 - participation in community engagement events sponsored by the JCGRG.

2.7 Term of Office

Membership of JCGRG will be reviewed every two years. See section 2.1 for more information on review of membership and appointment of new members.

2.8 Resignation / Handover Procedures

- Members to notify the co-chairs in writing or email of their intention to resign from JCGRG
- Members who fail to attend three consecutive meetings without an apology may be deemed to have resigned from the JCGRG
- Where possible, the Secretariat will coordinate handover and induction procedures with both the departing and new members.

2.9 Role of Alternative Representatives / Observers

- ACT Government directorates to nominate an alternate representative to attend meetings in their absence
- Community organisations / peak networks to nominate an alternative member to attend JCGRG meetings in the absence of the sitting member
- The Australian Government to nominate an alternate representative to attend meetings in their absence
- The Chairs and Secretariat to be notified of the alternative member arrangement
- Observers will be invited to JCGRG meetings by the Secretariat with the approval of the co-chairs, if their presence is relevant to an agenda item.

2.10 Support Person for JCGRG Member

A JCGRG member may at any time during the term of appointment request that a support person assist them to perform their role as a member.

- Prior to the first meeting:
 - a) The member will advise the co-chairs of the name of the support person
 - b) The support person will sign a *Code of Conduct / Conflict of Interest Declaration* (available from the Secretariat).
- Role of support person:

The role of the support person is to provide assistance to the member to participate in JCGRG meetings. The support person may:

 - attend meetings and other events, such as community consultations, with the member

- assist the member to perform their role at meetings and other events, such as reading papers and reports, writing notes, or interpreting for a member from a culturally and linguistically diverse background.
- Conduct of support person:
 - The support person will:
 - seek or provide information from the co-chair, or other members or the Secretariat only when requested to do so by the member
 - not seek to influence the member during discussions, consultations or voting procedures
 - not seek to participate in discussions or to influence any JCGRG decision
 - not attend meetings as a delegate for the appointed member.
- Out of pocket expenses:
 - The member may seek a Community Engagement Payment for reimbursement of reasonable out of pocket expenses on behalf of the support person.
- Vacation of Office:
 - The appointment of the support person ceases on either:
 - the date the member advises that a support person is no longer required
 - the date the appointment of the member ceases, including if the member resigns.

3. OPERATION

3.1 Meeting Schedule

The JCGRG meets approximately every six months, or as required at the advice of the co-chairs. Meeting agendas will be based on the JCGRG’s priorities and items of mutual interest, of a cross Government and cross sectoral nature.

3.2 Meeting Procedure

Meetings are to be facilitated by the co-chairs, alternatively. Wherever possible, decisions of the Group are to be made by consensus, or if consensus cannot be reached, by a majority vote of those members present. If there is a significant decision with dissenting views, a vote will be made based on a quorum. Significant decisions include making a recommendation to Government or the community sector regarding a social issue.

A member who abstains from voting or dissents from the majority ruling can request to have their action recorded in the minutes of the meeting.

Out of session items may be circulated for consideration and feedback.

3.3 Reporting

A communiqué will be developed by the secretariat following each meeting for wider dissemination within two weeks of the meeting. The communiqué outlines key decisions taken, progress against the work plan, current key discussions and actions undertaken by the Group, and any timelines for contributing to future discussions. The communiqué is distributed to members, ACT MLAs and is made available through the CSD and ACTCOSS websites.

The Minister for Community Services and Social Inclusion is to be informed by the JCGRG Secretariat of significant decisions made by the JCGRG and of significant issues related to the Group's governance or priorities.

3.4 Quorum

For the purposes of a vote of members for a 'majority ruling', a quorum is no less than half the total number of members plus one.

3.5 Sub-Committees

Sub-committees can be established under the JCGRG. These can comprise permanent or semi-permanent groups, which will be referred to as sub-committees. The operations of ad hoc or transitory groups, which will be referred to as working groups, is addressed in a later section.

Sub-committees can be established by the JCGRG or can be directly requested by any of the ACT Government Ministers. Sub-committees will develop specific terms of reference to govern their operations. These terms of reference will be agreed by the JCGRG and will not be inconsistent with the objectives of the JCGRG, but may extend the role of the JCGRG to meet the specific purposes of the sub-committee.

The proceedings of sub-committees, including meeting agenda, minutes, action items and any planning documents, will be tabled at the JCGRG, or made available to members on request, as soon as possible after the relevant meeting of the sub-committee.

The current sub-committee of the JCGRG is: the Industry Strategy Steering Group.

3.6 Working Groups

Working groups are short term advisory bodies to the JCGRG and assist the JCGRG with work that needs to be undertaken. Working groups will be formed to progress specific issues as identified by the JCGRG. They are intended to be specific issues related, time limited and outcomes focused. They meet as directed by the JCGRG and report (in writing) to the JCGRG.

Working groups should regularly report at JCGRG meetings to provide advice and make recommendations. The JCGRG has the final responsibility for decisions.

Working groups' members may include non-JCGRG members, as determined by the JCGRG. The JCGRG decides the purpose and terms of reference of a working group.

A working group should comprise at least three JCGRG members, from both the community and Government sectors. Each working group has a nominated convenor.

The convenor is responsible for:

- reporting back to the JCGRG about the working group's findings and recommendations
- ensuring the implementation of approved recommendations is monitored
- encouraging participation in the working group from members and the broader community, as determined by the JCGRG.

Working groups usually meet between regular JCGRG meetings. This allows time for consideration of their particular area of responsibility and to decide on any necessary action or follow up.

The current working group of the JCGRG is: the Community Facilities Working Group.

3.7 Secretariat Support

Secretariat support to the Group will be provided by ACT Council of Social Service. The Secretariat will support the co-chairs and members by:

- organising meetings (arrange venues, refreshments, notify members)
- formalising agenda, in consultation with the co-chairs
- collating and distributing written material as required prior to each meeting
- recording minutes and attendance at meetings
- ensuring that minutes are cleared by the co-chairs and distributed to members within 10 working days of the meeting
- preparing correspondence on behalf of the JCGRG
- assisting with small research tasks and preparing written material as required
- disseminating information regarding JCGRG activities, decisions, outcomes and regular communiqués
- assisting with any other duties that are negotiated by the co-chairs with the Secretariat, at the request of members.

3.8 Reimbursement and Out-of-Pocket Expenses

The community co-chair can request per diem reimbursement for their role and this request will be considered by the Director-General of the Community Services Directorate.

The employing organisation of members who are representatives of ACT Community Organisations and Peak Networks, will meet the costs of out of pocket expenses incurred as a result of their involvement in the JCGRG.

The *Community Engagement Payment Policy* from the Community Services Directorate allows for the Executive Director to approve financial assistance to support community members involved in directorate community engagement mechanisms, who would not be reimbursed by Community Organisations or Peak Networks.

4. CODE OF CONDUCT / CONFLICT OF INTEREST

Documentation outlining appropriate conduct in relation to conflict of interest and other issues is outlined in the *ACT Government Boards and Committees Code of Conduct (ACT Government Boards and Committees Handbook 2009)* and *Code of Ethics (Section 9 of the Public Sector Management Act 1994 (PSM Act))*. These documents are available on request to all new JCGRG Members.

New JCGRG members should sign a *Code of Conduct / Conflict of Interest* declaration form after their membership has been finalised. This declaration is available from the Secretariat.

5. CONTACT DETAILS

Secretariat

Joint Community Government Reference Group

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