

ITEM 5 WOLLONGONG HERITAGE REFERENCE GROUP

On 27 June 2022, Council endorsed the Review of Reference Groups and Committees report which included the requirement for the Charter and function of the Wollongong Heritage Reference Group to be reviewed and presented at a future meeting of Council.

A review has been undertaken and several amendments to the proposed in relation to the membership, meeting frequency and format of the Reference Group. These amendments are reflected in a revised Charter.

It is recommended that Council adopt the revised Charter and the Heritage Reference Group be re-established for the new Council term.

RECOMMENDATION

- 1 The revised Wollongong Heritage Reference Group Charter be endorsed.
- 2 Councillor [insert name] be appointed as the chairperson of the Wollongong Heritage Reference Group for the term of the Council.
- 3 Community nominations be sought for the community positions on the Wollongong Heritage Reference Group through an Expression of Interest process.

REPORT AUTHORISATIONS

Report of: Chris Stewart, Manager City Strategy

Authorised by: Linda Davis, Director Planning + Environment - Future City + Neighbourhoods

ATTACHMENTS

- 1 Draft Wollongong Heritage Reference Group Charter

BACKGROUND

Council has engaged with the community on heritage related matters since the 1990's in various committee forms. The structure of the committee / stakeholder engagement has been reviewed following the local Government elections at the commencement of each Council term.

In 2018, the Heritage Reference Group was formed through an expression of interest process and met until dissolved prior to the December 2021 Council elections.

The Reference Group is made up of community members with special interest of expertise in heritage and in the past has had representative from the Illawarra / Shoalhaven Branch of the National Trust, the Illawarra Historical Society, the Austinmer Village Committee, Kembla Jottings and representatives from the Illawarra Local Aboriginal Land Council and Aboriginal community.

Ex-officio members of Destination Wollongong, the Wollongong Art Gallery and Local Studies Library are also regularly in attendance providing a valuable information sharing and relationship building forum between these key stakeholders.

In the last Council term, the Heritage Reference Group provided stakeholder feedback on key projects and initiatives, including -

- Review and update of the Wollongong Heritage Strategy 2019-2022.
- Assessment of applications to the Heritage Grant Program as per the requirements of the Council Financial Assistance Policy.
- Events and support of the NSW National Trust Heritage Festival.
- Input into various planning proposal such as Corrimal Coke Works, Wollongong Heritage Schedule Review and City Centre Heritage Review.

With the election of a new Council, a review of Council references groups and committees has been undertaken. A survey of the most recent members of the Heritage Reference Group resulted in three recommendations to increase the function and effectiveness of the Group. These include -

- 1 Ensure expectations are clear on attendance for members.
- 2 On-site meetings could be beneficial when discussing specific sites.
- 3 Schedule quarterly meetings, with online options to attend made available.

The survey results also suggest the Group achieves its objectives and recommended that the Heritage Reference Group be re-established.

Due to Covid-19 restrictions, the Heritage Reference Group met online for the period of March 2020 to October 2021. The online format created technological barriers for some members and arguably resulted in reduced meeting attendance throughout this period. However, other members found it beneficial as they could join the meeting from remote locations, rather than submitting an apology. Creating an opportunity for a mixed format meeting, is expected to have a positive impact on future meeting attendance.

PROPOSAL

The Charter of the Wollongong Heritage Reference Group has been reviewed and a revised draft Charter prepared (Attachment 1). The following key changes are proposed -

- Schedule quarterly meetings for a year period, with online options made available to increase attendance.
- Reduce Councillor membership from 2 to 1 Councillors.
- Reduce quorum requirements from half plus one to half of membership due to the reduction in overall membership numbers, to ensure a quorum can be formed.
- On-site meetings to be held where beneficial to discuss key matters.

It is recommended that the Heritage Reference Group is reformed for the period of the current local Government term subject to the meeting arrangement under the revised Charter.

CONSULTATION AND COMMUNICATION

Key stakeholders and reference group and committee members were invited to provide their feedback regarding the objectives, membership and meeting frequency, time and location. Five members provided feedback, and all responses indicated the Group achieves its objectives.

If the recommendations of this report are adopted, Council staff will facilitate training for members of the Heritage Reference Group relating to Council's heritage work and the broader NSW Heritage management framework and context.

PLANNING AND POLICY IMPACT

This report contributes to the delivery of Wollongong 2032 goal "We are a connected and engaged community".

It specifically delivers on core business activities as detailed in the Governance and Administration Service Plan 2022-23.

The report also contributes to the delivery of core business activities outlined in the Wollongong Heritage Strategy 2019-2022, including Strategy 1 "We actively involve the community in the management of Wollongong's Heritage" and action 1.2 of the associated implementation plan "Hold bi-monthly meetings of the Wollongong Heritage Reference Group" (noting the revised charter proposes quarterly meetings).

CONCLUSION

The Wollongong community consists of diverse people and groups that Council can draw upon to improve our decision making in relate to heritage management. Council reference groups and committees can be effective method for community stakeholders to have input and provide advice on areas of interest.

Review of the effectiveness of the Heritage Reference Group has found that the community values the input of the Group and with implementation of recommended updates to the Charter, the Group will continue to meet its objectives and provide meaningful guidance to Council's approach to Heritage Management policy and priorities.

CHARTER

WOLLONGONG HERITAGE REFERENCE GROUP



1 INTRODUCTION

The Wollongong Heritage Reference Group has been established to provide advice to Council on policies and strategies which relate to the management, conservation and promotion of Wollongong's heritage. The focus of the Reference Group is to advise Council on the preparation and delivery of the Wollongong Heritage Strategy and Implementation Action Plan. The Reference Group comprises community members who can positively contribute to furthering these aims.

2 AUTHORITY

The Reference Group will provide advice and feedback to Council in developing, implementing and monitoring policies and strategies which relate to the management, conservation and promotion of Wollongong's heritage.

The Reference Group does not have decision making authority, the power to bind the Council, nor the power to incur expenditure.

3 RESPONSIBILITIES AND FUNCTIONS

The responsibilities and functions of the Wollongong Heritage Reference Group are to:

- Review and monitor Council's heritage Management and Policy;
- Provide advice on the development, review and monitoring of the Wollongong Heritage Strategy and Action Plan;
- Advise on the cumulative effects of Council's decisions on cultural heritage;
- Provide advice to Council on strategic projects and Council policies related to, or that may impact on, Wollongong's heritage;
- Raise community awareness of heritage conservation;
- Provide advice to Council on the distribution of the local heritage grant fund; and
- Provide advice to Council on the review and update of the Heritage Schedule in Council's Local Environmental Plan(s), including recommendations relating to the nomination and deletion of items.

4 PRIORITIES

The immediate priority of the Wollongong Heritage Reference Group is to advise on the preparation and implementation of the Wollongong Heritage Strategy and Implementation Plan.

Other priorities will be determined by the Implementation Plan .

5 COMPOSITION OF THE REFERENCE GROUP

The Wollongong Heritage Reference Group is to be made up of:

- At least one Councillor holding the position of Chairperson. A second Councillor member may also form part of the membership; and
- Eight independent members with a wide range of knowledge and expertise in natural and cultural heritage, planning as well as representing specific heritage interest groups or local communities

The Chairperson will be appointed by Council from the Councillor Representation.

Vacancies that occur on the Reference Group will be filled by public advertisement and selection by the Manager City Strategy.

Council's Heritage Coordinator, Heritage Officer, Land Use Planning Manager and Manager City Strategy will attend Reference Group meetings as ex-officio members and will provide professional advice to the Reference Group.

Representatives of Council's Local Studies Library and Cultural Services Sections as well as representatives from Destination Wollongong may also attend meetings as ex-officio members.

CHARTER

WOLLONGONG HERITAGE REFERENCE GROUP



Other Council staff and consultants, Government officers, advisors or individuals may be invited to attend meetings from time to time to provide expert advice, information or presentations in relation to the Reference Group's business.

Reference Group meetings are not open to the public to attend as observers.

6 TERM OF APPOINTMENT

The term of appointment is for this term of Council.

7 OBLIGATIONS OF MEMBERS

Members of the Reference Group, in performing their duties, shall:

- Act honestly and in good faith;
- Participate in the work of the Reference Group and commit to attending quarterly meetings;
- Perform their duties in a manner that ensures public trust in the integrity, objectivity, and impartiality of the Reference Group;
- Exercise the care, diligence and skill that would be expected of a reasonable person;
- Comply with the Reference Group's Charter; and
- Comply with Council's Code of Conduct.

8 MEETINGS

Regular meetings will be held quarterly, except where no business has been identified by staff. Additional meetings may be required from time to time to attend to urgent business.

On site meeting may also be organised, where it is considered necessary or beneficial for the consideration of a particular agenda item for the Membership to visit a site.

A quorum will consist of half of the Reference Group members plus the Chairperson.

If the Chairperson is absent from a meeting, an ex-officio member will act as Chairperson.

The Reference Group has an advisory role to Council and will make recommendations by consensus. In the absence of consensus, advice from the Reference Group may be presented with supporting and dissenting views of Reference Group members.

Meeting agendas will be distributed at least five business days prior to the meeting.

9 REPORTING

The minutes of meetings will be distributed to all members, provided to Councillors and Council's Executive Management for information and published on Council's website (under Reference Groups).

Advice and recommendations of the Reference Group relating to specific Council projects, will be reported to Council as part of the project reporting process.

Any matters arising that require a separate decision of Council may be reported to Council at the discretion of the Manager City Strategy.

10 EVALUATION AND REVIEW

A review of the Reference Group will be undertaken every two (2) years to ensure the purpose, membership and operation of the Reference Group is effective and to make appropriate changes.