



Kingston Interfaith Network Committee

TERMS OF REFERENCE (2020)

INTRODUCTION

The Terms of Reference for the Kingston Interfaith Network Committee provides the framework for the operation and accountability of this committee.

1. RATIONALE

The Committee has been established by Kingston Council to provide a conduit between Council and faith communities within local areas to encourage open communication, interfaith dialogue and partnerships to address the needs of the local communities.

2. AIMS OF THE COMMITTEE

- To promote and advocate for an inclusive and engaged community that respects religious diversity.
- The development of strong partnerships between faith communities and Council to facilitate appropriate responses to community needs.
- The provision of advice to Council regarding faith issues and identifying strategies to promote interfaith dialogue.
- The provision of information from Council to faith communities to ensure information about Council direction, programs and services are disseminated to faith communities.
- To facilitate key local interfaith activities for the Kingston community.
- To promote the exchange of information about issues of importance to faith communities.

3. SCOPE

3.1. Legislative framework

The Racial and Religious Tolerance Act 2001, the Equal Opportunity Act 2010, the Multicultural Victoria Act 2011 and the Charter of Human Rights and Responsibilities Act 2006 set the legislative framework in Victoria for the respect of racial and religious difference and human rights.

3.2. Kingston Interfaith Network Committee

The Committee will be formed from members of recognised faith organisations endorsed by the Australian Bureau of Statistics as a religious body, that are located in Kingston.

4. KEY VALUES AND PRINCIPLES

The key values and principles underpinning the Committee are:

- Respect for religious difference.
- Preservation of the identity of each religious community.
- Acknowledgement of the different ways religious communities are organised.

5. ROLES

The Committee will:

- Review Council policies that impact on the community, especially the faith community, and submit responses as required.
- Provide advice on Council operations and activities that impact upon faith communities.
- Support Council in its advocacy to State and Federal Government, organisations and agencies.
- Act as a conduit between Council and faith communities to ensure information about Council direction, programs and services are disseminated to the community.
- Coordinate and jointly facilitate, with Council, the Committee's activities such as forums, breakfasts and educational events.

5.1. Role of Committee Members

Members of the Committee are considered volunteers of the City of Kingston.

Members of the Committee share the following responsibilities:

- Planning – establishing and reviewing strategic plans of the Committee in line with Council direction.
- Policy and decision making – establishing policies/procedures and recording decisions and actions on matters concerning the Committee.
- Management – making sure Committee Members carry out their roles and responsibilities and are actively involved in the activities of the group.
- Evaluation – monitoring all activities by the Committee with feedback contributing to the continuous improvement in governance and service delivery.

Members of the Committee should:

- Act honestly and in good faith.
- Ensure the committee carries out activities in accordance with its intended purpose.
- Act in the best interests of the community.
- Respect privacy and confidentiality of information obtained in the course of the operation of the committee.

- Disclose potential conflicts as they arise and remove themselves from that particular discussion or decisions.

5.2. Role of Chairperson

- Acts as a spokesperson for the Committee.
- Stays in touch with other Committee members.
- Is familiar with the strategic plans of the Committee.
- Maintains an effective working relationship with key stakeholders, including faith communities, key service providers and Council staff.
- Represents the Committee at significant Interfaith community events.
- Maintains an effective relationship with the community.
- Chairs Committee meetings and acts as the final decision maker when voting is tied.
- Develops the meeting agenda in consultation with the supporting Council officer.
- Conducts the meeting in a manner that enables everyone to have their say.
- Conducts the meeting in a way that ensures that business is dealt with effectively.
- Steers the Committee through the agenda.
- Summarises what has been said.
- Moves to vote if necessary.

6. MEMBERSHIP

- A maximum of twelve (12) members can be appointed to the Committee. Members must nominate to the Committee. Committee members are to be appointed by Council.
- Chairperson – to be a member of the Committee. The member must be nominated to the role by other Committee members. If there are two or more nominations, a voting process will be overseen by the Council support officer. The Chairperson is nominated for a period of one (1) year, and may be renominated for one (1) successive year only.
- Additional Council representative(s) can be nominated at the discretion of the Council's Chief Executive Officer.
- Council will provide officer support to the Committee.
- Periodically the Committee may establish temporary sub-groups, comprising of members from other community agencies, faith groups, support groups and community representatives to work on specific issues.
- Membership of the Committee may be altered at any time on the recommendation to Council of the majority members of the Committee or at the discretion of Council.
- A 'rolling' membership model will be used to ensure new representatives from participating faith communities are able to join the Committee. Membership will be reviewed every two (2) years or at the discretion of Council. See section 7 for further details.

- Resignation of a Committee Member must be submitted in writing to the Chairperson. The Chairperson must notify Council of the resignation through the Council support officer. The resigning member may submit a nomination for a replacement representative from the same faith group. This nomination must go through the nomination process spelled out in section 8.2.
- If a member is unable to attend Committee meetings for a period less than three (3) months, a delegate may be appointed by the member for this period. This delegate will have the same voting rights as a permanent member. For absences greater than three (3) months, the Committee member must submit their resignation as outlined above and the delegate must go through the nomination process spelled out in section 8.2 should they wish to continue on the Committee.

7. TERM OF MEMBERSHIP

- Members are appointed for a period of two (2) years with an option for a second two (2) year period. At the conclusion of the second two (2) year period the member must resign from the Committee for a period no less than twelve (12) months to ensure a 'rolling' membership and a new representative from that faith community is able to participate on the Committee.
- The Committee will be able to co-opt members on a temporary needs basis. These members are not permanent Committee members, and have no voting rights.
- All appointments are to be based on nominations assessed using Council's selection process and approved by Council.

8. NOMINATION PROCESS

8.1. A general call for nominations

- Council will open nominations to the Committee publicly through advertisements in Kingston Your City, local newspapers, Council's website and notification to key stakeholders via mail or phone. Nominations will be open for at least a four (4) week period.

8.2. All nominations

- Nominations will be collated and assessed by Council officers based on the selection criteria as outlined on the membership form.
- All candidates need to submit a letter of support from their faith organisation.
- Preferred candidates may be interviewed by a panel consisting of two (2) Council officers and one (1) Committee Representative.
- Preferred candidates will then be presented to Council for endorsement.
- All applicants will be notified of the outcome of the nomination in writing.

9. MEETINGS

- Meetings will be bi-monthly, subject to review.

- Meetings will last no more than two (2) hours.
- Meetings will be open to the public by invitation or application.
- Meetings may include presentations from external guest speakers.
- Secretariat support, including the setting of agenda, minute taking and distribution of minutes will be the responsibility of Council.
- Meetings will usually be held at the Kingston Municipal Offices, though the Committee has the discretion to hold them at other venues throughout the municipality, as can be arranged and approved by the Committee.

10. DECISION MAKING PROCESS

- Decisions will be made based on common agreement as far as possible, but by simple majority vote in circumstances where this is not achieved.
- When voting is required only one (1) vote per person will be counted.
- The Chairperson can exercise two (2) votes if the voting is tied.

11. REMOVAL OF A COMMITTEE MEMBER

A Committee Member may be removed from the Committee for inappropriate behaviour, or behaviour which is not in line with the principles (see Section 4) of the Committee:

- The Committee Member must receive an official warning from the Chairperson or the Council representative outlining the inappropriate behaviour. This warning may be verbal or written.
- If the Committee Member's behaviour continues, removal of the Member may be requested by majority vote of the Committee.
- For serious misconduct or allegation, for example, being charged with a criminal offence, the Member may be stood down immediately by the Chairperson or the Council representative.
- The request for removal of a Committee member must be referred to Council through the Council support officer as a confidential report for Council determination.

12. ROLE OF COUNCIL OFFICERS ON THE COMMITTEE

Council will nominate a support Officer for the Committee. The support Officer is not a Committee Member.

The support Officer is responsible for supporting the Committee in its work including taking minutes, mailing list updates, mail out of agendas, minutes, discussion papers and information as required, and booking venue(s) and catering.

Other Council officers may also attend Committee meetings and provide additional support to the Committee as necessary.

13. ACCOUNTABILITY OF COMMITTEE MEMBERS

- To maintain an active role in communicating community views; participating in discussion at meetings; and positive involvement in the work of the Committee.
- To attend meetings regularly.
- To be actively involved in the work of the Committee – chairing meetings, sitting on working groups, contributing to submissions, developing strategies, making presentations, etc.

14. CONFLICT OF INTEREST

Where a member of the Committee has an interest or conflict of interest in relation to a matter in which the Committee is concerned or is likely to be considered or discussed, the member must disclose the interest to the Committee before the matter is considered or discussed at the meeting. Disclosure must include the nature of the relevant interest and be recorded in the minutes of the meeting.

The Chairperson of the Committee will determine the appropriate action which may include, but not be limited to:

- requiring the member to withdraw from the meeting while the relevant item is discussed and decided upon.
- enabling the member to participate in discussion but requiring them to withdraw from the meeting before a decision is made on the matter.
- enabling the member to remain present, but not participate in discussion or any decision on the matter.
- enabling the member to participate in discussion and to vote.

The action taken must also be recorded in the minutes.

If the Chairperson or Council representative believes there to be a potential conflict of interest of which a member may be unaware, the Chairperson shall raise the matter with that member prior to the meeting concerned.

If the Chairperson has a conflict of interest, he or she must withdraw from the meeting while the item of business is discussed and decided upon. In this instance the Council representative will take on the chairperson responsibilities.

15. REVIEW OF TERMS OF REFERENCE

A review of these terms of reference and the role and lifespan of the Committee will be undertaken every two (2) years or at the discretion of Council.