



Stormwater Community Reference Panel (SCRCP)

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Approved by Council:	<Date>
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1. Introduction

- 1.1 The Stormwater Management Plan 2024-2034 (SWMP) aims to address the challenges of stormwater management within the Yarra Ranges municipality. The plan focuses on balancing flood protection with the preservation of natural waterways, considering the impacts of urban development and climate change.
- 1.2 The Stormwater Management Plan includes a structured approach to achieving its objectives through thirty-two specific actions.
- 1.3 Action 26 within the Stormwater Management Plan (SWMP) includes establishing a Stormwater Community Reference Panel (SCRCP) to facilitate community input on stormwater projects and studies under the SWMP.

2. Purpose

- 2.1 The SCRCP will work collaboratively with Yarra Ranges Council to understand the stormwater and flood management challenges affecting the region. These challenges are anticipated to grow due to climate change, urban development, and increased population.
- 2.2 The SCRCP will provide a platform for community voices to guide the development of key projects, including municipal-wide flood modelling and stormwater management initiatives under the Stormwater Management Plan. This partnership will help shape council decisions and ensure that project-related communications reflect community concerns and priorities. In contributing to Council's decision-making process, the SCRCP will play a vital role in ensuring that the Yarra Ranges community is well-positioned to address future challenges. This will foster a sustainable and resilient community, ensuring a liveable and thriving environment for both current and future generations.
- 2.3 The SCRCP will be established by Council for the purpose of:
 - a) being a voice to Council for people with an interest in Stormwater Management in Yarra Ranges;
 - b) assisting Council in the consultative process and providing feedback on Council processes and policies, and supporting Council's decision making; and
 - c) monitoring the achievement of actions under the Stormwater Management Plan.
- 2.4 The SCRCP does not have authority to make decisions on behalf of Council, nor does it have delegated authority to act or to incur expenditure on behalf of Council.
- 2.5 The SCRCP must at all times recognise that the primary responsibility for management of Council's operations is controlled by the Chief Executive Officer.

3. Role and Objectives

- 3.1 The SCRCP will serve as a direct link between Yarra Ranges Council and the community, with participation open to residents who have knowledge, interest,

skills, or lived experience in stormwater and flood management. The panel will provide valuable community insight to guide the development and implementation of the Yarra Ranges Stormwater Management Plan (SWMP), ensuring that community concerns and values are reflected in stormwater planning decisions.

3.2 The SCRPP will help support the implementation of Stormwater Management Plan 2024-2034, by:

- a) Actively contributing to discussions about stormwater management and flood risk, with a focus on sustainability, biodiversity, and preparedness for natural disasters.
- b) Providing feedback on flood mapping, stormwater infrastructure projects, and integrated water management strategies to help shape Council's response to stormwater challenges.
- c) Participating in the development and review of public communications and educational materials related to stormwater services, ensuring the community is well-informed and involved in the decision-making process.
- d) Strengthening strategic partnerships and community engagement to foster a sustainable and resilient environment in line with Yarra Ranges Council's vision for the future.

4. Structure

4.1 The Panel is proposed to consist of individuals with specific interests and/or expertise in flood and stormwater management, including:

- a) Thirteen (13) community members representing a balanced mix of gender, ages and geographical representation within the Shire
- b) Interested Councillors
- c) Council officers, including a senior Council officer, either a Director, Manager or Executive Officer.

4.2 Consultants and representatives from external agencies such as Melbourne Water may attend SCRPP meetings to provide specific input when required.

5. Nomination, selection & appointment of members

5.1 Community Membership to SCRPP will be sought through an Expression of Interest (EOI) process advertised through Council's website, social media, local media and by communications to Council's broad network of community groups and local organisations.

5.2 Applications will be considered against a selection criteria.

5.3 In recruiting members, Council strives to attain a Panel that is diverse and representative of the community. This includes but is not exclusive to Aboriginality, gender, sex, culture, nationality, refugee or asylum seeker background, migration or visa status, language, religion, ability, age, mental health, socioeconomic status, housing status, and geographic location.

5.4 Members should:

- a) live or work in the Yarra Ranges;
- b) have an interest in stormwater management;

- c) be personally or professionally impacted by flooding within the Yarra Ranges municipality;
- d) be able to commit to attending the regular meetings of the SCRP and
- e) have a passion for working with Council towards better stormwater management.

6 Terms of Appointment

- 6.1 Community members will be appointed for a two-year term and may reapply to be appointed to the SCRP on the expiry of their first term.
- 6.2 Councillors are appointed to the Panel by Council annually. Notwithstanding the term of appointment, Council will consider and reaffirm this on an annual basis, while reserving the right to change its appointed representative at any time.
- 6.3 A member of the SCRP has the right to resign at any time. Notice of resignation can be made at any time in writing.

7 Chairperson

- 7.1 The Chairperson will be a Council Officer.
- 7.2 The duties of the chairperson are expected to be:
 - a) Convene the meeting according to Terms of Reference and meeting agenda
 - b) Facilitate the discussion of items on the agenda in a timely manner
 - c) Ensure all panel members can participate in panel discussions

8 Responsibilities

- 8.1 SCRP members are required to:
 - a) Act with integrity, upholding ethical standards at all times.
 - b) Be impartial and responsible, working in the best interests of the local community.
 - c) Engage in open and respectful discussions, fostering a collaborative environment.
 - d) Ensure fair participation, allowing all members to share their views and contribute to discussions
 - e) Avoid bias, refraining from actions that advantage or disadvantage any individual, including themselves.
 - f) Disclose conflicts of interest, whether real or perceived.
 - g) Align with Council values:
 - i. We make it happen
 - ii. We do what matters
 - iii. We make it better
 - iv. We do it together
 - h) Contribute actively, working cooperatively with other members and stakeholders.
 - i) Follow Council's Social Media Policy, referring media inquiries to the relevant Council officers and ensuring online conduct aligns with these principles.

- j) Maintain confidentiality, refraining from sharing non-public or sensitive information without senior Council authorisation.

8.2 SCRP members are also expected to:

- a) Prepare for meetings, reviewing materials in advance.
- b) Communicate ideas effectively, representing the community's views while considering options to advance project development.
- c) Promote community engagement, encouraging residents to register for updates on relevant Council project pages.
- d) Ensure IT readiness, having access to personal equipment for video conferencing when necessary.

8.3 The duties of Council Officers supporting the SCRP:

- a) Are required to adhere to the Employee Code of Conduct.
- b) Ensure that the feedback and perspectives of the SCRP are communicated and factored into decisions related to the project.
- c) Investigate issues as needed and provide technical expertise and advice to those involved in the project and to the panel.
- d) Keep SCRP members informed about the project's progress, as well as any risks or concerns that may arise.
- e) Regularly update the online Stormwater Management Plan Project Page with progress reports, meeting agendas, minutes, etc.

8.4 Failure to comply with above responsibilities may result in the termination of membership on the SCRP.

9 Vacancies

9.1 A position is deemed vacant if a member fails to attend three (3) consecutive meetings without being granted a leave of absence.

9.2 Where a member decides to relinquish their membership before the end of their term of appointment, they must submit their resignation in writing.

9.3 Council will seek to fill a vacancy that may occur before the end of a two-year term of appointment, with the exception of a vacancy that occurs within two months of the end of the term of appointment.

9.4 If a representative resigns or their membership lapses within the first six months of the SCRP's term, the vacancy may be filled by selecting a suitable candidate from those considered during the original selection process to serve the remainder of the outgoing panel member's term:

- a) Officers will recommend a suitable candidate to senior management for appointment to the SCRP for the remainder of the term.
- b) If no suitable candidates are identified, a formal expression of interest process may be initiated.
- c) If a vacancy arises within two months of the term's end, or if the SCRP believes a replacement is unnecessary, the vacancy does not need to be filled for the remainder of the term.

10 Meetings

- 10.1 At least three (3) meetings of the SCRP will be held per year and confirmed at least one month in advance, with these to be held at an accessible venue in the Yarra Ranges or via video conference.
- 10.2 Meetings will have the option for remote virtual attendance for members who cannot attend in-person.
- 10.3 Meetings may be cancelled, or additional meetings may be convened.
- 10.4 If apologies are received from a significant number of the members of the Panel, meetings may be cancelled and rescheduled (if feasible).
- 10.5 Members are asked to check their email on the morning of the meeting to receive any notice of cancellation.
- 10.6 Meetings of the Panel are defined as “Informal Meetings of Councillors under Chapter 8, Rule 1 of Council’s Governance Rules if at least one Councillor is present. The responsible Council Officer must forward a record of an Informal Meeting of Councillors to Council’s Governance Team within 7 days of a meeting.
- 10.7 Members are responsible for providing their own IT equipment and devices, that meet the suitable requirements to access Panel meetings (eg. having access to webcam and microphones).
- 10.8 Meetings are closed to the general public.

11 Conflicts of Interest

- 11.1 A member of the Panel with a conflict of interest in an item of business to be considered at a meeting must declare this before the item is considered.
- 11.2 A member declaring a conflict of interest must leave the meeting while the identified item is being discussed and must not vote on the matter being considered.
- 11.3 A declaration of a conflict of interest that has been made at a meeting of the Panel must be recorded in the minutes of that meeting.
- 11.4 A failure to comply with the provisions regarding the disclosure of conflicts of interest may result in the member’s appointment to the Panel being terminated.
- 11.5 A Councillor appointed to the Panel must declare a conflict of interest in accordance with the requirements of Chapter 7, Rule 7, of Council’s Governance Rules.

12 Attendance at Meetings

- 12.1 A member of the SCRP has the right to resign at any time. Notice of resignation can be made at any time in writing.
- 12.2 If a SCRP member fails to attend three (3) consecutive meetings without giving 24-hour notice, membership is deemed to be void.

Notifying Absence

- 12.3 SCRP members are encouraged to notify their absence at meetings at least 24 hours prior to a scheduled meeting where possible. A proxy cannot be appointed.

13 Meeting Procedures

Agenda for Meetings

- 13.1 Council officers will be responsible for setting the Agenda for each meeting.
- 13.2 Panel members can request an item to be included on an Agenda by sending details to the delegated Council Officer at least seven (7) days prior to the meeting.
- 13.3 The delegated Council Officer will consider any such requests and determine if they be listed or dealt with (investigated) as per normal business as discussion of operational issues should be directed to an appropriate Council Officer.
- 13.4 The Agenda for each meeting will include:
 - a) commencement with an Acknowledgement of Country at the start of every meeting;
 - b) declaration of any conflict of interests declared by Councillors, Community Reference Panel members, or officers with reference to the conflicting agenda item up for discussion;
 - c) provision for any urgent items of business to be raised and, by agreement, considered by the Panel;
 - d) brief reports back on:
 - (i) the use of the Panel's advice by Council; and
 - (ii) actions and/or matters arising from items discussed at the previous meeting;
 - e) updates on current Council actions, programs and initiatives;
 - f) substantive discussion about major current issues and directions; and
 - g) an opportunity to raise other business matters from the table.
- 13.5 An Agenda will be sent to the Panel one (1) week prior to each meeting, together with any background reading material.
- 13.6 In exceptional circumstances, the Chair may allow accompanying reports that were not able to be sent out prior to the meeting to be reviewed at the meeting.

Minutes of Meetings

- 13.7 Minutes will be taken for each meeting by a delegated Council Officer and will record:
 - a) the attendance of members (either in person at the designated meeting place or using electronic technology);
 - b) agenda items tabled;
 - c) any declared conflicts of interest;
 - d) key discussion points; and
 - e) actions and agreed outcomes only

14 Confidentiality and Privacy

- 14.1 SCRP members are encouraged to freely discuss issues amongst each other and this is highly valued.
- 14.2 Members must treat information they receive as confidential, unless otherwise advised, and are expected to comply with the provisions that cover confidential information contained in sections 3 and 125 of the Local Government Act 2020.

- 14.3 Members must not use confidential information other than for the purpose of performing their function as a member of the Panel.
- 14.4 Documents presented to the Panel will often be in draft format and not suitable for wider distribution. Members have an obligation not to disclose any materials or information that is not available to the public, unless approved by the Chair or a representative of Council.
- 14.5 All Panel discussions should comply with the requirements under the Privacy Act 1988 and its principles.
- 14.6 The failure of a member to comply with paragraphs 14.2 to 14.5 will result in the termination of their appointment.

15 Media

- 15.1 The Chairperson will represent the views of the Panel and make all public statements. If members of the Panel wish to raise an issue in the media, which relates specifically to the work of the SCRP, this should be agreed beforehand at a SCRP meeting.
- 15.2 On occasion, representatives of the Panel may be invited to join the Chairperson to promote the work of the Panel or to support advocacy positions.
- 15.3 Members are entitled to make comment on matters in their capacity as a member of another organisation or as private citizens; however, it must be clear that those views are not expressed on behalf of Panel or Council.

16 Review

- 16.1 The Terms of Reference will be reviewed every four years, or at such other time that Council determines.
- 16.2 The Terms of Reference may be withdrawn at any time by Council.