Koo Wee Rup Longwarry

Flood Protection District

# Terms of reference for the Advisory Committee 2024

# 1.1 Purpose

The Koo Wee Rup Longwarry Flood Protection District Advisory Committee (‘the Advisory Committee’) is a representative forum made up of local residents, landowners and interest groups, Melbourne Water and local councils.

The Advisory Committee plays an important role in making recommendations to Melbourne Water on a range of matters relevant to precept ratepayers and residents living in the area. The Advisory Committee is convened by Melbourne Water and meets every four months.

# 1.2 Background

Melbourne Water is the designated caretaker of waterway health for the Port Phillip and Westernport region, and the regional drainage and floodplain management authority. We work on behalf of, and in close collaboration with, the people of Melbourne and surrounds.

The Koo Wee Rup and Longwarry Flood Protection District is a unique area within Melbourne Water’s operating region. The area is a former swamp that was drained through the mid-late 1800s to be used for farming. Drains were cut through the land to make it suitable for farming and reduce the flooding that was and remains common in the area.

In the district there are two types of drains, precept and carrier drains. Melbourne Water owns and is responsible for maintaining these drains on behalf of its customers and charges landowners in the district a special rate – the ‘precept rate’ – to fund drainage services across the District. Drainage works on assets originating within the district (precept drains) are fully-funded by the precept rate; those originating outside the district (carrier drains) are currently 50% funded by the ‘waterways and drainage’ charge (charged to all landowners outside the district) in addition to the precept rate.

The funding for flood and drainage maintenance works in the district amounts to around $1.35 million per year, but much more is spent on maintenance under other programs (e.g. healthy waterways).

# 1.3 Role and function

Melbourne Water is committed to delivering accessible and responsive service to our precept customers.

The Advisory Committee is not a decision-making body. It plays an important role in making recommendations to Melbourne Water on a range of matters relevant to precept ratepayers and residents living in the area.

Melbourne Water will consult the Advisory Committee on the following:

* The proposed annual maintenance and renewals plan, including the prioritisation of works.
* Proposed rate increases and potential district boundary realignments.
* The suitability of requests for unscheduled works that exceed the level of service specified in the Koo Wee Rup Longwarry Flood Protection District Customer Service Charter.
* Other works that Melbourne Water proposes to undertake in the District.

In providing advice the Advisory Committee should take into account:

* The problems and needs of, and benefits to, the District’s landowners and residents.
* Local and regional community concerns, related to waterway management, drainage, environmental management and flood prevention.
* The minimum level of works and maintenance required to effectively manage the drainage system, land and environmental values.
* The budgets available to undertake works.

# 1.4 Responsibilities

## 1.4.1 Members

The aim of the Advisory Committee is to represent a cross-section of precept ratepayer viewpoints and feedback on Melbourne Water’s works in the District. All members of the Advisory Committee will be expected to provide advice that benefits the majority of precept ratepayers, rather than pursuing individual interests or objectives.

Members of the Advisory Committee are required to:

* Regularly attend Advisory Committee meetings.
* Review all briefing papers as required prior to Advisory Committee meetings.
* Seek feedback from other precept ratepayers prior to these meetings to present an informed view on broad community opinion on Melbourne Water’s level of service and performance.
* Provide objective and informed comment on any plans and proposals presented by Melbourne Water.
* Respect the opinions of all Advisory Committee members and not discuss representations made by other members without their prior knowledge and consent.
* Provide accurate and timely information to other customers enquiring about discussion items at Advisory Committee meetings.
* Refer any media enquiries immediately to Melbourne Water’s convenor of the Advisory Committee.
* Respect confidentiality.

## 1.4.2 Melbourne Water

Melbourne Water will be responsible for:

* Setting up and providing all administrative support to the Advisory Committee.
* Appointing the independent chairperson for the Advisory Committee.
* Presenting clear and timely information on matters of relevance to the Advisory Committee.
* Providing publicly available information on the outcomes of meetings of the Advisory Committee.

# 1.5 Composition

The Advisory Committee will comprise of the following:

* An independent chairperson.
* A total of eight representatives comprising a broad geographic spread across the District and having a mix of agricultural, township, community and environmental interests.
* A senior representative from Cardinia Shire Council, Baw Baw Shire Council and the City of Casey.
* A convenor from Melbourne Water.
* Two representatives from Melbourne Water

All resident and interest group members must be precept ratepayers in the District. Melbourne Water, with the agreement of the independent chairperson, may invite representatives from a public statutory body, government department or specialist groups to attend or present to specific Advisory Committee meetings to provide information or feedback, as appropriate.

# 1.6 Terms of appointment

Members shall be appointed for a four-year term unless a member elects to retire from the committee. Members are eligible to continue on the committee for additional terms.

Melbourne Water will publicly seek nominations for membership of the Advisory Committee. The appointment process and selection criteria are provided in Appendix A. The level of interest will impact the scale of renewal required.

A member may resign by notice in writing to the chairperson of the Advisory Committee. If the member is a representative of one of the Councils or Melbourne Water, the relevant authority may replace that member with an alternative representative.

A member may have his or her term of office terminated if, in the opinion of the convenor in consultation with the chairperson, the member:

* Is no longer effectively contributing to the business of the Advisory Committee.
* Has not complied with their responsibilities as outlined in section 1.4.1.

# 1.7 Chairperson

An independent chairperson will be appointed by Melbourne Water.

The role of the chairperson will be to:

* Guide the meetings and facilitate discussion and participation by all members.
* Review the draft minutes of meetings prior to their circulation to the full Committee.
* Ensure the proper and professional conduct of the group.

If the chairperson cannot attend a meeting of the Advisory Committee, he or she will advise Melbourne Water no later than 48 hours in advance. The chairperson will nominate a member of the Advisory Committee to chair the meeting.

# 1.8 Operation and logistics

Key operational details of the Advisory Committee include:

* Meetings will be held every four months (unless otherwise agreed by the Advisory Committee).
* The Committee convenor will provide written notice of meeting dates at least 10 business days prior to the date of the meeting.
* Melbourne Water will be responsible for administration associated with the Advisory Committee, including the organisation of minutes and support activities such as the distribution of agendas, minutes and briefing papers. These activities may occur with the support or involvement of the chairperson.
* Where a member of the Advisory Committee is aware that he or she has a particular personal financial interest in an issue being discussed, that person must declare his or her interest.
* Melbourne Water may reimburse members for any significant costs associated with the performance of their duties. Reimbursement of costs will only be approved where arrangements have been made through the convenor prior to the costs being incurred, and will generally not be extended to incidental items such as cost of travel to attend meetings etc.

Melbourne Water will publish details of the Advisory Committee, including its members and activities, on its website.

Appendix A:   
Appointments to the Advisory Committee

# Appointment process

Melbourne Water will publicly seek nominations for membership of the Advisory Committee. Melbourne Water will provide information on the nomination and selection process, including:

* Dedicated information on Melbourne Water’s website.
* Links to Melbourne Water’s website through social media like Facebook and Twitter.
* Advertisements in local media.
* Written updates to precept ratepayers.

Melbourne Water will directly invite the Cardinia Shire Council, Baw Baw Shire Council and the City of Casey to nominate a senior representative to the Advisory Committee.

Candidates will be required to submit a nomination form outlining their suitability for membership on the Advisory Committee and including the contact details for two personal referees. Melbourne Water may appoint a selection panel including the convenor, independent chairperson or a senior representative from one of the Councils to review the nominations. In the event of extended deliberations by the selection panel, candidates may be invited to participate in an interview with the selection panel.

# Selection criteria

Resident/precept ratepayer representatives and representatives of local agricultural, community and environmental interests must meet the following selection criteria:

* Demonstrable interest in and appreciation for waterways management and drainage issues in the Koo Wee Rup and Longwarry Flood Protection District.
* Demonstrable interest in and appreciation for local conservation and environmental issues.
* Strong understanding of the local Koo Wee Rup and Longwarry community and its needs in relation to Melbourne Water’s work in flood protection and drainage in the Flood Protection District.
* Strong local community connections, networks and links within the District and ability to articulate how they may use these in their role as a two-way channel for information sharing between the Committee and the community.
* Demonstrated willingness to participate in an advisory capacity representing broad customer and community interests and providing constructive feedback on Melbourne Water’s performance.
* Ability to volunteer the necessary time to participate effectively in the Advisory Committee.
* Willingness to work cooperatively and constructively with the Melbourne Water operations team.

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