

Terms of Reference – Knox City Council: Early Years Advisory Committee

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Approval by: Council	Responsible Officer: Manager Family and Children’s Services
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1. Purpose

The purpose of the Early Years Advisory Committee (EYAC) is to provide advice to Council on the implementation of the Child, Youth and Seniors Plan 2021 - 2025 and matters impacting families and young children within the Knox municipality throughout the appointed term of the Committee.

2. Objectives

The objectives of the Committee will be to:

- Provide advice and recommendations to Council on the implementation of the key life stages (early years) focus areas as incorporated in the Child, Youth and Seniors Plan 2021 - 2025.
 - The advice and recommendations in relation to this plan will include:
 - Agreed priorities
 - The ongoing outcomes and achievements of the Child, Youth and Seniors Plan 2021 - 2025 (early years) focus areas; and
 - Effective communication and consultation strategies to facilitate engagement with the community and other key stakeholders on the development and implementation of the Child, Youth and Seniors Plan 2021 - 2025 (early years) focus areas.
- Provide advice to Council on matters impacting families and children and the related services within the Knox community;
- Identify emerging key research, policy and legislative issues that might impact on the implementation of the Child, Youth and Seniors Plan 2021 – 2025 and;
- Consider advice and information made available through other Council advisory and community consultation processes related to families and children and/or local early years services.

Many of the five key directions of the Community Plan 2021 – 2031 and Council Plan 2021 – 2025 are life stage-related and have informed the implementation of the Child Youth and Seniors Plan 2021 – 2025 objectives.

- Council Plan 2021 – 2025: Key Directions
 - Opportunity and Innovation
 - Neighbourhoods, Housing and Infrastructure
 - Natural Environment and Sustainability
 - Connection, Resilience and Wellbeing
 - Civic Engagement and Integrity

- Child, Youth and Seniors Plan 2021 - 2025
 - **Key Objectives**
 - To value the unique perspectives, experiences, abilities and contributions of residents across the life course, from the youngest to the oldest residents in Knox.
 - To promote greater understanding of the changing priorities, needs and challenges facing children, young people and seniors in Knox.
 - To identify opportunities for intergenerational activities that build understanding and strengthen community connectedness across the life course.
 - **Alignment to Council Plan 2021 – 2025 Key Direction - Opportunity and Innovation**
 - 1.3 Prioritise the needs of vulnerable children and implement integrated service strategies that provide full access to services and supports for families and community members, to support all children in Knox to successfully transition to school.
 - 1.4 Advocate for the provision of targeted resources to ensure that all children in Knox have the opportunity to participate in two years of funded kindergarten.
 - **Alignment to Council Plan 2021 – 2025 Key Direction – Neighbourhoods, Housing and Infrastructure**
 - 2.2 Plan for future municipal early years infrastructure needs to provide access to funded kindergarten for 3 and 4-year-old children in Knox, in line with Council’s decision on kindergarten expansion.
 - **Alignment to Council Plan 2021 – 2025 Key Direction – Natural Environment and Sustainability**
 - 3.1 Raise awareness of climate change by providing information, and supporting children, families, young people and seniors to help reduce their environmental footprint and impact of climate stressors.
 - **Alignment to Council Plan 2021 – 2025 Key Direction – Connection, Resilience and Wellbeing**
 - 4.10 Deliver the agreed annual priorities from the ‘Early Years Compact’ to promote coordinated and collaborative approaches which improve outcomes for all Knox children in the early years.
 - 4.11 Establish allied health services within the Wantirna South and Bayswater Early Years Hubs to provide an integrated service delivery model.
 - 4.14 Embed the State Government's Child Information Sharing Scheme (CISS) to support the safety and wellbeing of children.
 - 4.15 Design and deliver a range of intergenerational activities, events and programs across the Knox municipality.
 - 4.16 Deliver community events and activities that cater to a variety of interests and ages
 - 4.17 Develop and implement an Indigenous Partnership strategy to build tangible connections with Knox families and children.

- **Alignment to Council Plan 2021 – 2025 Key Direction – Civic Engagement and Integrity**
 - 5.3 Provide opportunities for the voices of children and families to inform decision making, including Council service planning and provision
 - 5.4 Undertake business system improvements to remain sustainable and enhance the experience of community members accessing Children’s Services.

2.1 Advisory Groups

Advisory Committees, when established under this Terms of Reference policy, will be aligned to one of the following four Council Advisory Groups:

- Key Life Stages Group
- Sustainable Development Group
- Inclusive, Active and Creative Community Groups
- Grants Evaluation Group.

Whilst individual committees will meet at designated times as per their individual terms of reference, each ‘advisory group’ will meet once annually, typically between October to December. A designated Directorate will be responsible for coordinating group meetings on a rotational basis.

The purpose of Advisory Group meetings will be to:

- Provide feedback to the group regarding priorities of individual committees;
- Provide updates regarding progress of key direction and success measures;
- Discuss and share information regarding key issues being faced by individual cohorts and;
- Identify synergies between issues, actions and opportunities to progressing the key objections of the Child, Youth and Seniors Plan and the Community and Council Plans.

In addition to group meetings, all committees will be provided with an opportunity to meet together annually. The ‘annual advisory committee’ forum will be held between April or May each year and will be coordinated by Council’s Governance team.

The purpose of these meetings will be to:

- Report on progress by Council against Community and Council Plans key objectives;
- Provide overview of industry trends and Council priorities for the upcoming year;
- Consider synergies and opportunities for sharing information and collaboration; and
- Deliver training to support committees.

3. Membership Terms, and Method of Appointment

The Early Years Advisory Committee shall comprise of the following:

Member Type	Specifications	Duration
2 x Knox Councillors	One appointed to Chairperson	Annual
6 x Community (Volunteer) Members (maximum)	Representing diverse perspectives and experience of early years sector	Two Years
4 x Professional (industry) Members (maximum)	Professionals including any relevant government/community agency representatives	Two Years

3.1 Selection and Recruitment of Community and Professional Industry Representative Members

The process to appoint community and professional members will involve a comprehensive campaign including an advertisement in local newspapers and via Council’s public website and information distribution through local networks and other established committees. Applicants must complete an application via an expression of interest process.

Eligible community members may include individual residents and/or representatives of Knox focused organisations who have an interest in, and understanding of issues impacting families and children and are not directly employed by Knox City Council.

Eligible professional members may include people with specialist knowledge and experience of the early years’ service system, other levels of government and professional practice and/or research, who can represent a Knox focused organisation who have an interest in, and understand the issues impacting families and children and who are not directly employed by Knox City Council.

The approach and method for appointing representatives will include the following:

- Community and professional/ industry members will be selected by a panel comprising of a Councillor and two Council Officers from the relevant service unit;
- The method of appointment will be via an expression of interest process;
- Members will be appointed for a two-year term;
- All members will be eligible to re-apply for a second term of appointment, however continuous membership for longer than four years will not be considered;
- Council will be responsible for appointing all Councillor, community and professional representative members.

3.2 Commitment from Members

- To provide consistent representation
- To attend meetings as required and;
- To carry out specified tasks as designated.

3.3 Attendance and Casual Membership Vacancies

Professional/industry representatives unable to attend a committee meeting are able to nominate a proxy or alternate member from the organisation they represent. Any proxy attendance should be notified to Council’s nominated officer at least 24 hours prior to the meeting. It is expected the appointed professional/industry representative will provide an appropriate briefing of the committee purpose and objectives and relevant meeting notes to enable active participation and contribution of the proxy representation to the meeting.

Community/volunteer members must aim to attend all scheduled meetings and cannot appoint a proxy to attend a meeting on their behalf.

Casual vacancies, which occur due to community members being unable to complete the full term of their appointments, may be filled by co-opting suitable candidates from a previous selection process for the remainder of the previous incumbents’ terms. The selection panel will make a recommendation to the CEO, who will have the authority to appoint the recommended candidate to the committee for the remainder of the previous incumbent’s term.

The committee may invite observers to meetings from time to time. This is at the discretion of the committee.

Guests may also be invited to attend and participate at meetings, this would generally be for a specific purpose and/or specified period of time. This is at the discretion of the committee.

3.4 Training

All elected representatives who are Council volunteers and community members are required to undertake prescribed Child Safe Training and any other training required by Council within their term on an Advisory Committee. (Refer to section 9 for further information.)

3.5 Councillors

Council will appoint Councillor representation to EYAC on an annual basis.

The role of Councillors is to participate in the meetings, listen to community and stakeholder views and keep the Council informed, through reports on committees by Councillors at Council meetings, on issues of community interest being considered at meetings.

Unless otherwise appointed to the committee by Council, the Mayor is, by virtue of the Office, an ex officio member of the Committee. It is important that whilst the Mayor may not chair these meetings, appropriate recognition should be given to the presence of the Mayor if in attendance.

3.6 Council Officers

Council officers will be nominated to support the committee by the CEO as required to provide advice and administrative support to the committee.

Roles of Council officers are as follows:

Position Title	EYAC Responsibility
Councillor	Chairperson
Director Connected Communities	Participant/Advisor
Manager F&CS	Participant/Advisor
Head of Strategy and Partnerships for Children	Participant/Advisor
Senior Strategic Project Officer (Strategy and Partnerships for Children)	Secretariat
Project Support Officer (Strategy and Partnerships for Children)	Minute Taker

4. Delegated Authority and Decision Making

The committee acts in an advisory capacity only and has no delegated authority to make decisions on behalf of Council.

5. Meeting Procedures

The Early Years Advisory Committee will meet on a bi-monthly basis and an annual schedule of meetings will be agreed upon at the first meeting of the committee in each year. The committee will also participate in the six monthly Advisory Group Meetings and the annual Advisory Committee Forum.

The committee is not required to give public notice of its meetings and its meetings are not open to the public.

At the commencement of each calendar year the committee will develop and agree upon a work plan for the upcoming year which details meeting discussions, presentations and information sharing topics. Topics will generally be aligned with the current Community and Council Plans. The committee may also highlight any emerging issues which will also be documented as part of the work plan and/or meeting minutes. For efficiency purposes the business of the committee throughout the ensuing year should align with the work plan and list of emerging issues.

Meetings will follow standard meeting procedure protocols:

- Commence on time and conclude by the stated completion time;
- Be scheduled and confirmed in advance with all relevant supporting information distributed (as appropriate) to each member;
- Encourage fair and reasonable discussion, participation and respect for each other's views;
- Focus on the relevant issues at hand; and
- Provide advice and recommendations to Council (in context of committee authority and objectives) on a consensus basis.

6. Chair

The position of Chairperson shall be held by a Councillor for a duration of one year. A review of the Chairperson is conducted annually in October, immediately following the Knox Councillor appointments period. The position of Chairperson is to be agreed upon between Councillors. When this cannot be achieved, the Mayor of the day shall determine the Chair.

If the Chairperson is not present at a meeting, any other Councillor who has been appointed to the Committee shall be appointed Chairperson. In the absence of any other Councillor representative/s, a staff member, appointed by the Director Connected Communities, may Chair the meeting.

7. Agendas and Meeting Notes

Agendas and meeting notes must be prepared for each meeting.

The Agenda must be provided to members of the committee no less than 4 days before the meeting date.

The Chairperson must arrange for meeting notes of each meeting of the committee to be documented and circulated. The meeting notes of a Council Committee must:

- (a) contain details of the proceedings and recommendations made;
- (b) be clearly expressed;
- (c) be self-explanatory; and

(d) incorporate relevant reports or a summary of the relevant reports considered by the Committee.

Meeting notes must be:

- (a) submitted to the Committee Chairperson for confirmation and approval within 7 days of the meeting;
- (b) distributed to all Committee Members following confirmation from the Chairperson and within 14 days of the meeting; and
- (c) submitted to the next meeting of the Committee for information.

Agendas and notes from meetings are not required to be made available to the public.

8. Voting

As this is an advisory committee, voting on issues is not required. Any recommendations will generally be developed through consensus. Where a matter cannot be agreed, the differing opinions should be clearly documented in the notes of the meeting.

9. Conflict and Interest Provisions

In performing the role of the Early Years Advisory Committee member, a person must:

- Act with integrity;
- Impartially exercise his or her responsibilities in the interests of the local community;
- Not improperly seek to confer an advantage or disadvantage on any person;
- Treat all persons with respect and have due regard to the opinions, beliefs, rights and responsibilities of other persons;
- Commit to regular attendance at meetings; and
- Not make improper use of information acquired because of their position or release information that the member knows, or should reasonably know, is confidential information.

Meetings of the Advisory Committee may potentially form an Assembly of Councillors. Councillors and officers are required to comply with the conflict of interest provisions as set down in the Act.

Where a meeting is identified as an Assembly of Councillors, staff must follow the designated procedure.

Where a community member has a conflict of interest or perceived conflict of interest in relation to a matter before the committee, the community member must disclose the matter to the group before the matter is considered or discussed. Disclosure must include the nature of the interest and be recorded in the meeting notes. It will be at the discretion of the Chairperson if the community member remains or leaves the meeting whilst the matter is discussed. Details of this decision must also be recorded in the notes of the meeting.

All members of the Early Years Advisory Committee shall participate in training on Committee Conduct and Interest provisions, provided annually by the Governance team.

10. Reporting

The Committee will prepare a formal report on an annual basis in line with their stated objectives (refer to section 2). The report must be adopted by the committee and should directly reflect the objectives and the performance measures of the committee as set out in the Terms of Reference. Once adopted, the report will be presented to Council for formal noting.

11. Administration Support

Administration support for EYAC will be provided by members of the Strategy and Partnerships for Children team of the Family and Children's Services Department as part of the Connected Communities Directorate.

12. Contact with the Media

Contact with the media by Early Years Advisory Committee members will be conducted in accordance with Knox City Council Councillor and Staff Media policies. Members should defer any media enquiries to the committee Chairperson in the first instance and should take care not to respond as a representative of the Committee.

13. Review Date

The Early Years Advisory Committee will sunset after 3 years. If the committee continues to have a relevant function, a report must be presented to Council prior to the sunset date that includes a review of the committee's Terms of Reference and seeking endorsement from Council to continue to act in an advisory capacity.

14. Meal

Should an occurrence of an EYAC meeting take place onsite at the Civic Centre, the provision of refreshments during the course of a committee meeting will be provided in accordance with the Meals and Beverages for Council Committees Policy.

15. Administrative Updates

From time to time, circumstances may change leading to the need for minor administrative changes to this document. Where an update does not materially alter this document, such a change may be made administratively. Examples of minor administrative changes include changes to names of Council departments or positions, change to names of Federal or State Government departments or a minor amendment to legislation that does not have material impact. Where any change or update may materially change the intent of this document, it must be considered by Council.