

Rating Advisory Committee Terms of Reference

February 2023

1.0 Background

Cassowary Coast Regional Council (Council) as a part of the Annual Budget development process, undertakes a review of the General Rates and Special Levies structure.

In 2016 Council resolved to establish a "Rating Reference Group" consisting of community stakeholders representing various industries and regional sectors to provide independent feedback and recommendations regarding General Rates and Special Levies and other related matters.

The 2016 experience was regarded as successful, with the Council of the time gaining valuable insights into community expectations and ideas with regard to Council's proposed rating structures. The Rating Reference Group was also considered a best-practice community engagement initiative and should be considered as part of future annual budget development processes.

At the time of preparing this Terms of Reference document, Council has developed a draft "Advisory Committee Policy", which outlines the definition and objectives of Advisory Committees. In accordance with that policy, the previous Rating Reference Group will be regarded as an Advisory Committee.

The Rating Advisory Committee will be established for the purpose of providing feedback and recommendations on Council's current General Rates and Special Levies structure in advance of developing the 2024/25 Annual Budget.

2.0 Objectives and Outcomes

- The objectives and outcomes of the Committee will be to:
- With regard to the General Rates and Special Levies structure, and in consultation with nominated officers, understand the short, medium and long-term challenges applicable to Council and the local government sector more broadly
- Conduct review and analysis of Council's General Rates and Special Levies structure
- Provide feedback regarding the Council's current General Rates and Special Levies structure
- Provide feedback on Council's current approach in seeking to achieve a transparent differential General Rates and Special Levies structure
- Prepare a report, making recommendations on the future direction of Council's General Rates and Special Levies structure.
- Present findings to the elected members at a Councillor Information Session

3.0 Legislation and other prescribed requirements

In working towards a transparent General Rates and Special Levies structure for all ratepayers, the Committee must be cognizant of the following:

- The provisions of the *Local Government Act 2009* and *Local Government Regulation 2012* relating to levying of General Rates and Special Levies
- The provisions of the *Valuation of Lands Act 1944*
- The impact of the recommended General Rates and Special Levies structure on all ratepayers within the region

4.0 Membership

The Rating Advisory Committee shall be comprised of:

- an Independent Facilitator
- a Technical Specialist
- Representatives from local organisation/interest/community groups (ideally a maximum of 12)

Council will appoint an independent facilitator and a technical specialist with extensive knowledge of Local Government rating methodologies and processes. The appointment may result in a single person filling both roles.

Council will use established engagement and communication channels to advertise this opportunity seeking expressions of interest for community and interest group representatives to be part of this initiative.

Advisory Committee members will be appointed by Council following a review of applicants' suitability, including an assessment to determine whether a representative sample of the CCRC community has been achieved. Preference will be given to those residents who represent local organisations/interest/community groups and whose skills and experience will, in Council's opinion, most ably assist the objectives of the Committee. Subject to this assessment, Council may wish to either progress, extend the "appointment" processes or reconsider the initiative.

5.0 Roles and Responsibilities

5.1 Membership

- Seek to understand the methodologies of General Rates and Special Levies across the Cassowary Coast region
- Provide input into a report regarding preferred options for the General Rates and Special Levies structure
- Act both in the interest of the organisation or interest group they are representing, while remaining receptive to possible impacts on all ratepayers in the Cassowary Coast region
- Be an advocate for the Committee's outcomes and constructively work with all members
- Be committed to, and actively involved in pursuing project outcomes
- Ensure that private information, including rates information, shared during the project is protected and remains confidential

5.2 Independent Facilitator (in addition to membership)

- Maintain order and facilitate authentic, respectful discussion, deliberation and debate
- Establish meeting agendas and meeting dates
- Liaise with Council regarding the progress of the Committee and arrange the final presentation
- Coordinate the preparation of the final report and presentation to Council

5.3 Technical Specialist (in addition to membership)

- Conduct preliminary analysis of the Council's current rating structure
- Provide an introduction to the Committee on the current rating structure
- Provide an overview of rating and benchmark Council's rates where possible
- Provide expert advice on rating issues and methodologies
- Conduct "what if" analysis and run scenario testing of the Committee's ideas and suggestions, providing feedback on the effects of any of these changes
- This role is a non-voting member of the Committee

5.4 Council

- Appoint the Independent Facilitator and Technical Specialist
- Appoint representatives from local organisations/interest/community groups
- Ensure the availability of Council officers and resources where required to assist/provide information when requested by the Independent Facilitator
- Subject to EOI responses, Council will seek to establishment the Group by April 2023 with the final report due by 23rd February 2024

6.0 Conduct of Meetings

Meetings will be chaired by the independent facilitator who will be responsible for setting meeting times and dates in consultation with the Committee members.

While the Committee will be setting agenda and conducting analysis of the entire General Rates and Special Levies structure, Council may identify some key items it would like addressed as a part of the project.

As a part of the meetings, full copies of the Minutes, including attachments are required to be recorded and distributed to all Committee members. Also at the completion of the project, minutes will be formally tabled to Council for noting in addition to the final report.