

COMMUNITY RELATIONS COMMISSION
For a multicultural NSW

Guidelines for
the operation of
Regional Advisory Councils

March 2005

FOREWORD

The Community Relations Commission For a multicultural NSW emphasises a new approach to NSW society. The Community Relations Commission and Principles of Multiculturalism Act 2000 recognises and values the different linguistic, religious, racial and ethnic backgrounds of residents of NSW.

The Community Relations Commission For a multicultural NSW is legislated to act with government and across the whole community to promote harmony and to ensure that we all enjoy maximum benefits from cultural diversity.

The Regional Advisory Councils are essential support structures and active participants in the promotion of the principles of cultural diversity across the State. The councils are well placed to identify issues that affect communities, particularly those outside the Sydney metropolitan area and resolve them through co-operation and partnership between community and Government

The Community Relations Commission For a multicultural NSW will seek advice from Regional Advisory Councils on local issues.

These guidelines were updated by the Commission in March 2005 to provide for increased membership from community representatives and government agency members.

Stepan Kerkyasharian AM
Chairperson

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1. Establishment

Regional Advisory Councils are established by the Community Relations Commission For a multicultural NSW under section 10 of the Community Relations Commission and Principles of Multiculturalism Act 2000. Section 10 states:

“The Commission is to establish regional advisory councils for regional areas of the State.”

2. Functions of a Regional Advisory Council

The functions of the Regional Advisory Council are:

- (1) to advise the Commission on any matter relating to the Commission’s functions that the council considers appropriate;
- (2) to exchange information, discussion and promote joint action on local community relations issues that require attention;
- (3) to report, make recommendations and advise the Commission on matters relating to community relations issues and activities which are referred to it by the Commission;
- (4) to inform the Commission and other organisations represented in the council about community relations issues and other related matters affecting the local region which require research, policy development/direction or other forms of attention;
- (5) to monitor and report on the implementation, value and effectiveness of Commission initiatives in its region.

3. Composition and Appointment of a Regional Advisory Council

- (1) A Regional Advisory Council shall consist of persons whose appointments have been approved by the Commission.
- (2) A Regional Advisory Council may have up to 15 appointed members comprising community members, NSW state and local government members and the Chairperson, who is a commissioner of the Commission.
- (3) Membership of a Regional Advisory Council shall always comprise more community members than government members. Up to eight community members may be appointed. Up to seven Government members, being representatives of government agencies, may be appointed of which at least one shall be a representative of a relevant local council.
- (4) A community member is an individual or representative of a community

organisation invited by the CRC, on the basis of the criteria in Clause 3, to join the Regional Advisory Council. A government member is one nominated by a state government agency or a local government agency within the area of the Regional Advisory Council in accordance with the criteria in Clause 3, for a place on the Regional Advisory Council.

- (5) Members of a Regional Advisory Council are appointed on the basis that they:
 - (a) reside in the area and have knowledge of local communities; or
 - (b) are representatives of a regional or local state government agency or a council in the region which provide services to members of local communities; or
 - (c) work in the area in a capacity where they have knowledge of local communities in the region and are not representatives of state or local government agencies.
- (6) At least one community member is a young person between the ages of 18 to 25 years.
- (7) A senior officer of the Commission will attend each meeting of the Regional Advisory Council to act as a reference point and provide information.

4. Terms of Appointment of Members

- (1) A community member of a Regional Advisory Council shall be appointed for up to a three year term.
- (2) A government member of a Regional Advisory Council shall be appointed for up to a two year term.
- (3) A community member shall not be appointed for more than two consecutive terms. In the case of government membership this provision may not apply if the government representative continues to occupy a relevant position in the Department.
- (4) A former community member of a Regional Advisory Council may be appointed for a third (or further) term provided that three years have elapsed from the end of the member's previous appointment.

5. Calling of Meetings

The procedure for calling and conducting business at meetings shall, subject to these guidelines, be determined by the Regional Advisory Council.

6. Chairing of a Regional Advisory Council

Meetings of a Regional Advisory Council shall be chaired by a person approved by a the Commission.

7. Quorum

A quorum for a meeting of a Regional Advisory Council is five members.

8. Decision of a Regional Advisory Council

- (1) A decision of a Regional Advisory Council shall be made by a majority of the members present and voting at the meeting.
- (2) The minutes of a Regional Advisory Council meeting shall record a member's dissent to a decision.
- (3) Actions arising from Regional Advisory Council meetings may be directed to the Commission for consideration and/or one or more of the government members may propose to initiate follow up action within their own jurisdiction.

9. Records to be Kept

- (1) The Commission shall cause minutes to be kept of the proceedings of a Regional Advisory Council.
- (2) Minutes of a Regional Advisory Council meeting shall be tabled at the next Commission meeting.

10. Authority to Act

A Regional Advisory Council shall not act on decisions taken at its meetings that relate to State Government policy or Commission activity without the authority of a resolution of the Commission or, in matters of urgency, the Chairperson of the Commission.

11. Authority to Make Statements

A Regional Advisory Council or any of its members shall not publicly comment on any issue or business transacted at a meeting without the authority of a resolution of the Commission or the Chairperson of the Commission.

12. Authority of the Commission to Direct

The operation and activities of a Regional Advisory Council shall at all times be subject to the direction and authority of the Commission.

13. Vacation of Office

Members of a Regional Advisory Council are deemed to have vacated office if:

- (1) they are absent from two consecutive ordinary meetings for which reasonable notice was given either personally or by post;
Unless:
 - (a) the member requests in writing and is granted leave by the Chairperson of Council in writing in advance of the meeting; or
 - (b) before the end of a four week period after the last of those meetings the member requests in writing and is excused by the Chairperson of Council in writing for the absence from those meetings.
- (2) they become a protected person, incapable person or person detained under the Mental Health Act;
- (3) they are convicted either:
 - (a) in New South Wales, of a felony or misdemeanour which is punishable by imprisonment for 12 months or longer; or
 - (b) outside New South Wales, of an offence which would be a felony or misdemeanour if committed in New South Wales;
- (4) they resign in writing to the Commission.

14. Remuneration

Community members of a Regional Advisory Council shall be paid a sitting fee for attending meetings on the basis of remuneration rates for part-time members of boards and commissions as determined by the Minister.

15. Secretarial Assistance

Minute taking, preparation and distribution of agenda papers and the organisation of meetings for the Regional Advisory Council will be provided by staff of the

Commission.

16. Meetings - Regularity

Ordinary meetings of a Regional Advisory Council shall be held every three months. The convenor of a Regional Advisory Council, the Commission or the Chairperson of the Commission may convene extraordinary meetings.

17. Members' Responsibility

- (1) Community members of a Regional Advisory Council are appointed as individuals and not as representatives of any group or organisation.
- (2) Government members of a Regional Advisory Council are appointed as representatives of their agencies. These members should have the authority to represent the views of their agency and to undertake further action on issues raised in the meeting that are their agency's responsibility.

18. Confidentiality

Members of a Regional Advisory Council shall treat its deliberations as confidential.

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