

Customer and Community Advisory Council

Terms of Reference

11/02/2025



Horticulture students undertaking their practical component at Koo Wee-Rup Regional Health Service.

1. Purpose

The Customer and Community Advisory Council constructively challenges South East Water's consideration of and engagement with stakeholders, customers and community in all areas of its operations and planning. It is customer-centric in its thinking and plans its own agenda to enhance how South East Water services, partners and engages with the Traditional Owners whose Country it operates within, its customers, community, partners and stakeholders, both now and into the future.

2. Areas of focus

The agenda of the Customer and Community Advisory Council is self-determined, however it should consider:

1. how well South East Water is engaging with its customers, communities, partners and stakeholders
2. how South East Water is partnering with the Traditional Owners and is including their cultural values within strategies, projects and operational activities
3. delivery of promised customer outcomes
4. South East Water's strategic plans and its implementation of government policies
5. community education (to shape attitudes and behaviour) and customer experience
6. water affordability and customer assistance
7. recreational and environmental values
8. existential challenges such as population growth and climate change
9. South East Water's research to understand the above issues, track customer satisfaction and the resultant changes.

3. Membership of the Customer and Community Advisory Council

Council members are selected based on their skills and experience, with an expectation that some members can also *broadly* represent the interests of South East Water customers, communities, partners and stakeholders. (South East Water has other specific ways of engaging with these groups and quantifying the views expressed.)

The Customer and Community Advisory Council as a minimum includes a representative from the First Nations community and a member of the South East Water Board. There is an equal gender representation and a diversity of views in its membership.

4. Roles and responsibilities

4.1 Customer and Community Advisory Council role

The South East Water Customer and Community Advisory Council:

1. provides guidance, counsel and leadership advice in line with the purpose and areas of focus listed in these terms of reference
2. contributes to the development of initiatives to assist South East Water's delivery of enhanced water availability and more liveable communities
3. raises current and emerging issues affecting water supply, sewerage, recycling and demand in South East Water's region
4. participates in the review of South East Water's strategies, operational plans and pricing submissions.

The Customer and Community Advisory Council may proactively request information from South East Water to help inform its advisory role.

Participation in South East Water's Customer and Community Advisory Council does not prevent members from publicly advocating personal views on water issues.

Customer and Community Advisory Council members are expected to bring to the attention of the Council Chair any conflicts of interest which may arise during their participation on the Council and in deliberations of the Council.

Further information about the person specification and desirable skills, qualities, knowledge, experience for Customer and Community Advisory Council members as well as the Chair and Deputy Chair are set out in Attachment 1 – Position Description.

4.2 Chair's role

The Chair's role is to ensure members:

1. actively participate in discussions and offer their opinions and views
2. treat others with respect
3. act with integrity
4. attend each meeting where practical
5. adhere to confidentiality requirements when South East Water advises they are presenting members with confidential information
6. put the operation of our Council ahead of personal interests (but subject to known declared professional conflicts that are notified to the Council at the beginning of each meeting).

4.3 Deputy Chair's role

The Deputy Chair's role is to act in the Chair's role when the Chair is absent and to support the Chair in performing their role particularly during meetings.

4.4 Conduct

All members are required to adhere to South East Water's Code of Conduct, Privacy, and Conflict of Interest policies. When a new member is advised their appointment has been approved by South East Water, they will be provided with a copy of these policies to review, sign and return.

5. Appointment and cessation of members

5.1 Appointment of members

In consultation with the Customer and Community Advisory Council, South East Water invites applications for replacement members or to expand membership.

Appointments to the Council are made by South East Water in its discretion and are for up to four years with a maximum of two terms (i.e. eight years).

5.2 Appointment of independent Chair

The independent Chair is a member of the Council (other than a South East Water representative) selected by South East Water.

5.3 Parental or extended leave

In the event a member advises they will be taking parental or extended leave (for a maximum period of 12 months), their vacancy may be temporarily filled for the period of parental leave until the member returns. A period of one month's notice is requested from a member returning from parental or extended leave.

During the period of leave committee papers and remuneration for meeting attendance will not be provided.

5.4 Cessation of membership

A member:

1. may resign by prior written notice to the Chair;
2. is deemed to have resigned where (in each case as determined by South East Water acting reasonably):
 - a. they become insolvent, bankrupt or otherwise unable to pay their debts as and when due and payable; or
 - b. the organisation which they represent enters any form of administration, liquidation or winding up or is otherwise unable to pay its debts as and when due and payable; or
 - c. the member fails to attend:
 - i. 3 consecutive meetings without an apology; or
 - ii. the member dies; or

- iii. the member:
 - A. is found guilty of a serious criminal offence or breach of a relevant professional standard; or
 - B. engages in any conduct (whether during participation in the Council or in another capacity) that will or may:
 - I. disrupt the operation of the Council or its meetings;
 - II. embarrass South East Water, the Council or any employee or member of either; or
 - III. bring any of the aforementioned into ridicule or disrepute.

6. Performance of the Council

The performance of the Council is reviewed annually ensuring the Council is representative of South East Water's broad customer base and has the skills and expertise to constructively challenge South East Water's strategic planning and operational performance.

7. Actions arising from the Customer and Community Advisory Council

Actions are recorded in the minutes of the Customer and Community Advisory Council meetings, with follow up responses or subsequent actions by South East Water reported back to the Council.

Where advice provided by the Customer and Community Advisory Council is not adopted by South East Water, South East Water will provide an explanation to the Council.

The agenda, key discussion points and actions arising from the Customer and Community Advisory Council are disclosed on the South East Water website, once approved by the Customer and Community Advisory Council.

8. Operation of the Customer and Community Advisory Council

The Council meets quarterly. If circumstances arise in which timelines are tight, the Council may consider a matter out-of-session via email, for formal endorsement at the next quarterly meeting.

South East Water provides secretariat services to the Council, including preparation of agendas (in consultation with the Council), and recording and disclosing actions from Customer and Community Advisory Council meetings.

Members will receive an honorarium for attendance at the quarterly meeting as follows:

- \$500 per meeting is paid to council members,
- \$750 per meeting paid to the Chair and

\$600 per meeting to the Deputy Chair. When acting as Chair, the Deputy Chair will be paid \$750 for the meeting.

9. Review of council effectiveness

South East Water will consider a review of the effectiveness of the council annually taking into account the effectiveness of Customer and Community Advisory Council for South East Water as a business.

10. Review of the terms of reference

The Terms of Reference may be reviewed at any stage but will be updated every two years by the Customer and Community Advisory Council and endorsed by the South East Water Board's Safety, People, Customers and Community Committee (SPCC).

Attachment 1: Position Description

Position title	Customer and Community Advisory Council member
Reports to	Customer and Community Advisory Council Chair

Position purpose

The South East Water Customer and Community Advisory Council was established in 2019. The Council is an advisory council to the South East Water board and executives. It works to provide a platform for customer, community and industry perspectives in all areas of South East Water's operations and planning. It is customer-centric in its thinking and plans its own agenda to enhance how South East Water services, partners and engages with the Traditional Owners, customers, community, partners, and stakeholders, both now and into the future.

Member positions are voluntary positions. See [Terms of Reference](#) for further information and details about an honorarium and expense reimbursement.

Responsibilities

The Customer and Community Advisory Council is appointed in an advisory capacity to the South East Water board and executives. It has no operational authority.

The responsibilities of the council are set out in the [Terms of Reference](#).

This position description should be read in conjunction with the [Code of Conduct](#) and [Conflict of Interest Declaration Procedure](#). Any conflicts should be declared on the [Conflict of Interest Disclosure Form](#).

Person specification

Members are appointed by South East Water on the joint recommendation of the Chair, Customer and Community Advisory Council, and the Executive Sponsor. The selection criteria include:

- Capacity to reflect views of the community or industry perspectives;
- Strong links to community and / or industry; and
- An interest in the water industry.

Eligibility considerations:

- Members are appointed as individuals, and not as a representative of any organisation.
- Members are selected on their community networks as well as their capacity to work at a strategic level, rather than an operational level, or personal concerns and individual issues.
- Applicants who are current employees of a Victorian water authority aren't eligible to be appointed.

Community members – desirable skills, qualities, knowledge, experience

It is desirable that members demonstrate:

- Ability to inform and or influence decision making at a strategic level.
- Ability to reflect, and articulate community and/or industry issues at a strategic level, in order to advocate on Customer and Community Advisory Council matters.
- Contribution of specialist knowledge and expertise by providing customer, consumer or industry perspectives.
- Connection to, and activities undertaken with, established formal or informal community or industry networks; individual customers with the capacity to develop such links will also be considered.
- Capacity to engage with South East Water employees and other Council members on strategic issues pertaining to Customer and Community Advisory Council work.
- Capacity to work constructively as a team member as well as undertake and lead Customer and Community Advisory Council activities as required.
- Participate actively and respectfully in discussion and formal meetings, including being receptive to other perspectives when querying or challenging topics under discussion.
- Preference will be given to someone who lives or works within the South East Water service region.
- Experience on a committee, board, or a water corporation.

Chair and Deputy Chair – desirable skills, qualities, knowledge, experience

Additional to the skills, knowledge and experience expected of community members, there are additional skill sets sought in a Chair or Deputy Chair of the Customer and Community Advisory Council. These capabilities are also desirable although not mandatory for Council members. These should include well developed or developing:

- **Skills** – Water corporation or utility experience, sound knowledge of policy and governance requirements, strategic thinking, strategic planning and leadership, risk management, understanding the impact of risk and the ability to read and understand documentation.
- **Qualities** – Integrity and standing in the community, demonstrated honesty, tolerance of different views, ability to listen, ability to gain the views of others through appreciative inquiry, analyse topics, think clearly, work well with others, develop positive working relationships and confidence to take an active leadership role.
- **Knowledge and Experience** – previous experience working with relevant stakeholders and performing at a high level. Chairperson meeting duties: including promote discussion, ensure respectful behaviour, effective time management.

Other position requirements

- Customer and Community Advisory Council members are approved by the South East Water following an expression of interest and interview process.
- Ongoing appointment is subject to an initial twelve month probationary period, which commences on the date of the first meeting attended.
- The term of appointment is for a period of four years.

- Successful members will be asked to sign a confidentiality agreement and a Code of Conduct.
- All Customer and Community Advisory Council members are required to abide by South East Water values and adhere to South East Water policies and procedures.

About South East Water

At South East Water, we're driven by a purpose to deliver healthy water. For life. As a metropolitan water retailer, we support healthy and liveable communities by delivering water, sewerage and recycled water to 1.8 million people every day and every night in Melbourne's south-east.

Ours is one of the most diverse catchment areas in Australia – from those who are new to our region to the Traditional Owners of the land and water we rely on.

Our customers live and work along 270 km of coastline and 3,640 km² of land, from high-rise communities to growth suburbs, and from agricultural holdings to large industrial areas

Our values

We put safety first

The wellbeing of all our people, customers and community comes first.

We're bold

We strive to excel. We have the courage to challenge ourselves. We're future-focused and accept change is constant.

We care

We listen to understand. We do all we can to meet the needs of our people, customers and community.

We discover

We search for new ways to deliver value. We're curious and creative, learn from mistakes, and celebrate success

We're real

We embrace diversity. We take responsibility. We do what we say and get things done.

We deliver sustainably

Our decisions are made with the understanding every drop and action counts.