

PLANNING AND ENVIRONMENT COMMITTEE

13 JULY 2022

6**ADVOCACY POLICY**

Nick Masasso | 58/6/3 | #6975995

RECOMMENDATION:**That Council adopts the Advocacy Policy.****EXECUTIVE SUMMARY:**

Council has an important role to play in advocating to State and Federal Governments and other stakeholders on matters that impact the quality of life and liveability of the Cairns community. Accordingly, it is recognised that from time to time, Council may wish to adopt a formal advocacy position on a particular matter so that Council's position is clear.

Council recently reviewed the process used to identify and adopt formal advocacy positions, with consideration given to when Council should lead or support the development and prosecution of advocacy matters. To formally document the recommended process, it is appropriate to update Council's Advocacy Policy to reflect the new approach and to ensure transparency and clarity for all concerned. A draft updated policy has been developed (Attachment 1) and this report seeks endorsement of it by Council.

BACKGROUND:

Advocacy is the process of negotiating and mediating a dialogue through which influential networks, opinion leaders, and ultimately, decision makers take ownership of your ideas, evidence and proposals and subsequently act upon them.

In addition to its role in the direct delivery of certain services, policy and infrastructure, Council has a role to undertake advocacy on behalf of the Cairns community regarding the services, policy and infrastructure delivered by others as indicated in the diagram below (Figure 1).

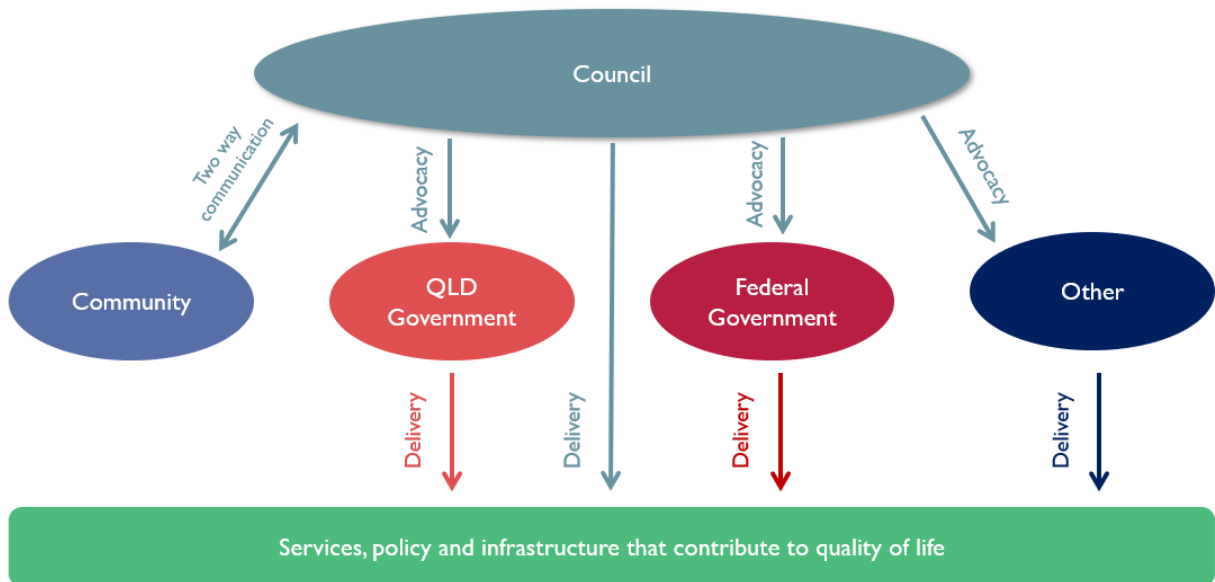
Advocacy is important as it allows Council to be strategic in addressing the issues that matter to our community, and it acts as an enabler of Council's Corporate Plan and related strategies. It also provides a framework for Council to engage more effectively with external stakeholders to ensure collaboration on issues that impact liveability.

More broadly, advocacy allows Council to:

- make decisions on project and/or policy priorities and how and when to activate them
- defend and advance the needs and interests of the Cairns community through supporting external partners in the promotion of a unified voice

- influence system-level change around legislative issues that improve liveability
- educate our community to help them make informed decisions on issues that impact them
- leverage political and business cycles to influence decisions that improve liveability
- build stronger, more meaningful relationships with stakeholder partners

Figure 1: Council's role – service delivery and advocacy



The first Advocacy Policy adopted by Council was endorsed on 26 May 2021 and was created to clarify the process through which Council advocacy positions would be developed. Prior to development of the policy, Council had endorsed advocacy positions on a range of matters but the process for doing so had not been formalised or conveyed to external partners.

Examples of Council's formally endorsed advocacy positions and documents include:

- Cairns 2050 Shared Vision (endorsed by Council in November 2018)
- Cairns Federal Government Priorities Document (endorsed by Council in December 2019)
- Cairns Queensland Government Priorities Document (endorsed by Council in December 2019)
- COVID-19 Cairns Local Recovery Plan (endorsed by Council in August 2020)
- Cairns Water Security – Stage 1 Project (endorsed by Council in April 2021)

Through implementation of the current policy, a number of lessons have been learned with regard to strengths and weaknesses in the existing process. In addition, Council has created a new *Program Leader – Advocacy* role which warrants a review and refinement of the approach.

To improve the process through which Council decisions should be made regarding advocacy matters, a revised Advocacy Policy has therefore been developed. The new policy considers details such as whether Council should lead or support proposed advocacy positions, how significant the impact of the issue is on the quality of life and liveability of the Cairns community, the impact and integration of a proposed advocacy

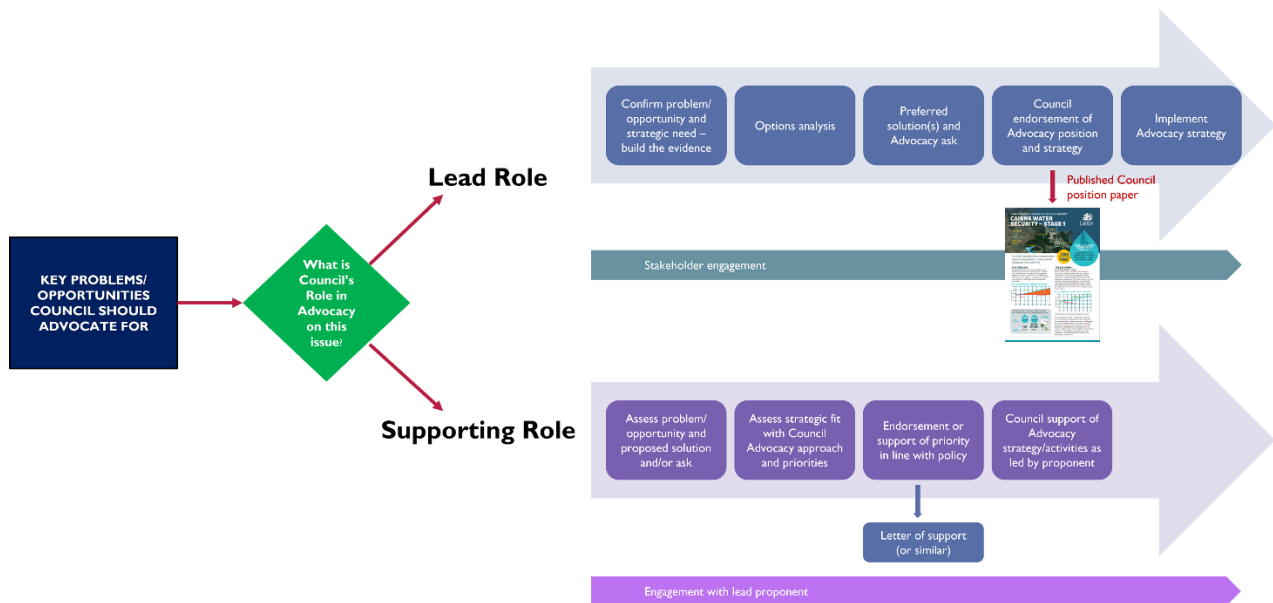
position on existing policy and positions, and the relevance of the issue to Council’s Corporate and other strategic plans.

To provide clarity and transparency around the new process, it is recommended that Council adopt the revised policy that sets out how Council advocacy positions should be identified, developed, considered and adopted. This report sets out the recommended approach and seeks Council endorsement of the associated policy (Attachment 1). A workshop with Councillors on this topic was conducted on 22 June 2022.

COMMENT:

The diagram below provides an overview of the proposed approach to the identification, development, consideration and adoption of individual advocacy positions by Council.

Figure 2: Council advocacy position/s – overview of approach



Further detail on each of the steps are set out in the policy itself which is attached (Attachment 1).

The process outlined in this policy will be coordinated by Council’s *Director Economic Development & Advocacy* and *Program Leader – Advocacy*. Support from other areas of Council will be obtained as and when required when developing advocacy positions on specific issues.

It is noted that the policy relates to the process for developing advocacy positions for individual matters/issues. Over time, it is expected that Council will develop and hold a suite of advocacy positions on a range of matters. In addition to specific advocacy plans for individual issues, it is acknowledged that at times (for example in the lead up to State and Federal elections) consolidated advocacy may be required across a range of issues and advocacy positions. This consolidated advocacy will be coordinated by Council’s *Director Economic Development & Advocacy* and *Program Leader – Advocacy*.

OPTIONS:

Option 1 (recommended):

That Council adopts the Advocacy Policy.

Option 2:

That Council **does not** adopt the Advocacy Policy at this time and seeks further information or changes to it before reconsidering this matter.

ATTACHMENTS:

Attachment 1: Advocacy Policy ([DM#6648002](#))



Nick Masasso
Director Economic Development & Advocacy

Attachment 1: Advocacy Policy



CAIRNS REGIONAL COUNCIL

General Policy

ADVOCACY POLICY

- Intent** To outline the process for identifying issues for which Council should consider adopting a formal advocacy position, including when Council should lead or support advocacy initiatives, the process for developing advocacy position papers, the process for Council endorsement and advocacy prioritisation, stakeholder engagement considerations, and ongoing advocacy review.
- Scope** This policy applies to the range of matters including human, social and economic for which Council may consider establishing and/or supporting an advocacy position for the benefit of the Cairns community.

PROVISIONS

Advocacy is the process of negotiating and mediating a dialogue through which influential networks, opinion leaders, and ultimately, decision makers take ownership of your ideas, evidence and proposals and subsequently act upon them¹.

In addition to its role in the direct delivery of certain services, policy and infrastructure, Council has a role to undertake advocacy on behalf of the Cairns community regarding the services, policy and infrastructure delivered by others.

Advocacy is important as it allows Council to be strategic in addressing the issues that matter to our community, and it acts as an enabler of Council's Corporate Plan and related strategies. It also provides a framework for Council to engage more effectively with external stakeholders to ensure collaboration on issues that impact liveability.

The purpose of this policy is to outline the process for Councillors, Council Officers, and External Parties to raise potential issues for Council to consider establishing formal advocacy positions on, either as the lead proponent or in support of an external stakeholder partner.

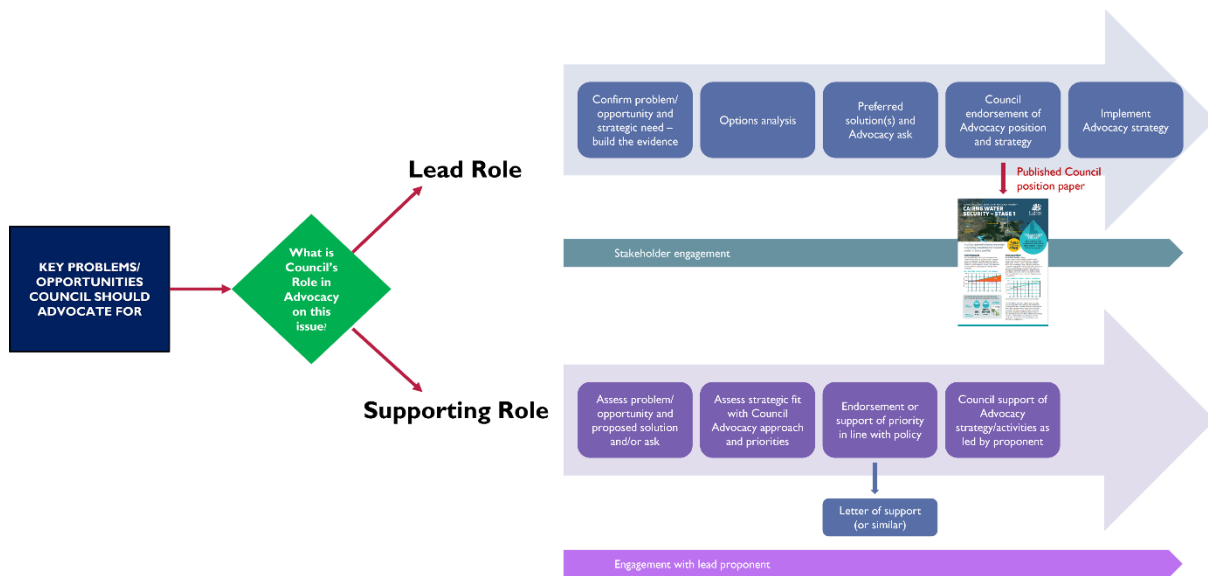
Once endorsed by Council, advocacy representations will be made to relevant parties (Federal Government, Queensland Government, Other) on behalf of Council regarding the endorsed issue. The issues could relate to services, policy or infrastructure projects that contribute to quality of life within the Cairns Local Government Area.

An overview of the proposed process for the identification, development, consideration and adoption of an advocacy position by Council is summarised in the diagram on the following page (Figure 1) with further detail on each of the steps in the paragraphs that follow.

The process will be coordinated by Council's *Director Economic Development & Advocacy* and *Program Leader – Advocacy* in consultation with Officers from the relevant Council teams and with external stakeholder partners relevant to each advocacy position.

¹ International Centre for Policy Advocacy

Figure 1: Summary of process for identifying and endorsing Council advocacy positions



1. Issue/Problem/Opportunity Identification and Defining Council's Advocacy Role

An issue/problem/opportunity is identified by Councillors, Council Officers, or External Parties and brought to the attention of Council's *Director Economic Development & Advocacy* and *Program Leader – Advocacy*.

In determining whether Council should establish an advocacy position on a particular issue (and its relative priority), a range of matters will be considered including how significant the impact of the issue is on the quality of life and liveability of the Cairns community, the impact and integration of a proposed advocacy position on existing policy and positions, and the relevance of the issue to Council's Corporate and other strategic plans.

Following an initial review by Council's *Director Economic Development & Advocacy* and *Program Leader – Advocacy*, and prior to commencing detailed analysis, a recommendation will be made to the Mayor and Chief Executive Officer on whether Council should pursue the issue being considered and if so, whether Council should lead or support the development of an agreed advocacy position. The recommendation on whether Council should take leading or supporting role in respect of a potential advocacy issue will be based on a range of factors including (but not limited to):

- For projects seeking State and/or Federal investment, who the project proponent is – i.e. Council or another entity. Council would normally expect to lead advocacy for projects where it is the proponent.
- The extent to which the issue to be advocated for impacts the community of Cairns only or has broader regional, state or national implications.
- Whether there is an established, reputable and representative organisation that can effectively represent the interests of the stakeholders impacted by a particular issue.

The decision on whether to pursue the issue being considered and whether Council should take a leading or supporting role should be approved by the Mayor and Chief Executive Officer.

2. Where Council is considering Leading an Advocacy Position

1) Confirm Problem/Opportunity and Strategic Need

Using an evidence-based approach, Council's *Director Economic Development & Advocacy* and *Program Leader – Advocacy* will consider the advocacy issue in consultation with others to confirm the problem or opportunity and the strategic need. The assessment will generally be based on a detailed business case framework which, subject to the complexity of the issue, may include the use of investment logic mapping, options analysis, and a detailed business case report to determine the preferred solution(s) and advocacy ask. A recommendation on the advocacy position Council should/could take will then be made and a draft advocacy position paper developed by Council Officers.

The draft advocacy position paper will include a holistic consideration of the issue, including implications for Council, and as a minimum should clearly articulate:

- The issue/problem/opportunity and its relevance to the Cairns community
- The proposed solution/action required (based on the evidence) and how that addresses the issue/problem/opportunity
- The third party (Federal Government, Queensland Government, Other) Council is seeking support from and the particular action sought (policy, investment or service)
- The level of Council support to be provided as part of the overall investment or services delivery

2) Advocacy Position Workshopped with Council

The draft advocacy position is workshopped with Council. Council Officers will discuss considerations developed in the draft advocacy position paper. This is also an opportunity for Councillors to interrogate the issue and to direct Council Officers if further detail is required. The purpose of Councillor workshops is for Council Officers to present information for issues to be considered by Council.

3) Council Endorsement of Position Paper

The position paper will be submitted to Council with an accompanying Council report for consideration and endorsement. Any such report will include the recommendations of Council Officers however, the ultimate decision as to whether an advocacy position is adopted and what that position is, rests with Council. Accordingly, Council can choose to endorse the recommended position, endorse an alternative position or choose not to endorse any position on the matter.

Where endorsed by Council, an advocacy position paper will be made publicly available (unless matters of commercial sensitivity or confidentiality prevent it from being made available publicly) and can be utilised by Councillors, Council Officers and others when communicating Council's official position on a particular matter or issue.

4) Issue Specific Advocacy Plan Agreed

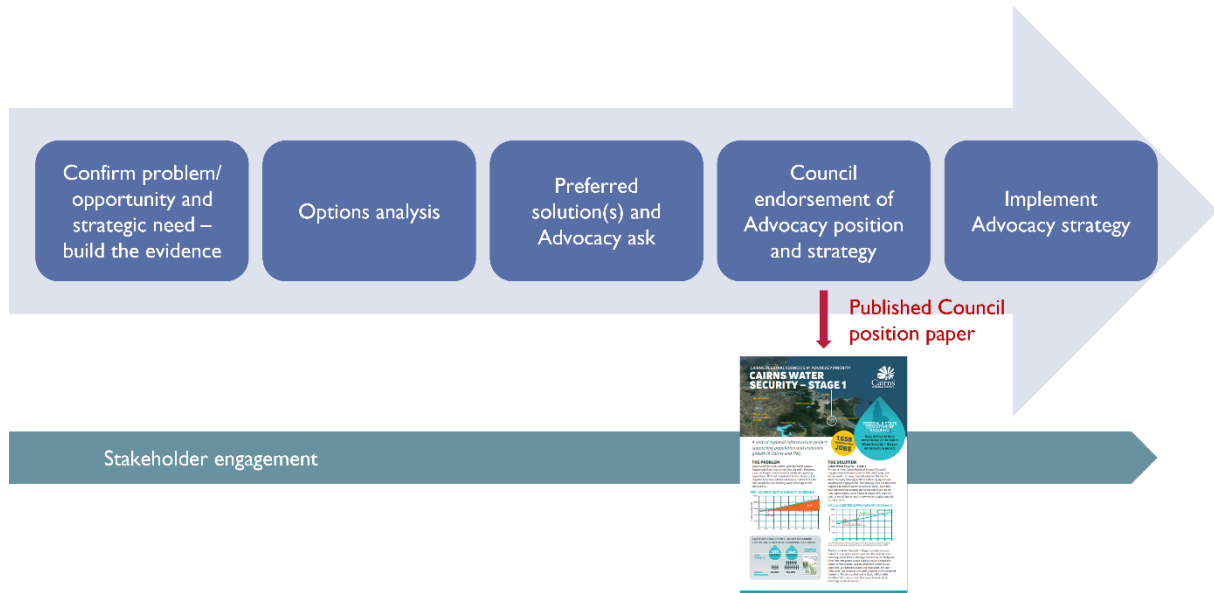
Where Council Officers prepare a report for Council recommending endorsement of a proposed advocacy position, that report should include an issue-specific advocacy plan that provides an overview of how the advocacy position will be prosecuted and which stakeholders will be involved.

5) Ongoing Review/Update of Advocacy Position Paper

Council Officers will be required to monitor activity relating to Council's endorsed advocacy position for any changes in the circumstances which may impact Council's position and/or advocacy efforts. Where there is any substantial change to a matter for which Council has an established advocacy position, a revised position may be developed in accordance with

the steps outlined above.

Figure 2: Council Leading Development of an Advocacy Position – process for development



3. Where Council is considering Supporting an Advocacy Position to be led by another party

a) Confirm Problem/Opportunity and Strategic Need

Using an evidence-based approach, Council's *Director Economic Development & Advocacy* and *Program Leader – Advocacy* will consider the proposed advocacy position in consultation with the lead proponent to confirm the problem or opportunity and the strategic need. The issue will also be discussed with relevant Council teams, then be assessed against Council's Corporate and other strategic plans, and against Council's own advocacy approach and priorities.

A recommendation to support the proponent's advocacy position will be made that as a minimum, clearly articulates:

- The issue/problem/opportunity and its relevance to the Cairns community
- The proposed solution/action required and how that addresses the issue/problem/opportunity
- A summary of the evidence provided in support of the advocacy position
- The third party leading the advocacy position (proponent), the third party the proponent is seeking support from (Federal Government, Queensland Government, Other), and the particular action being sought (policy, investment or service)

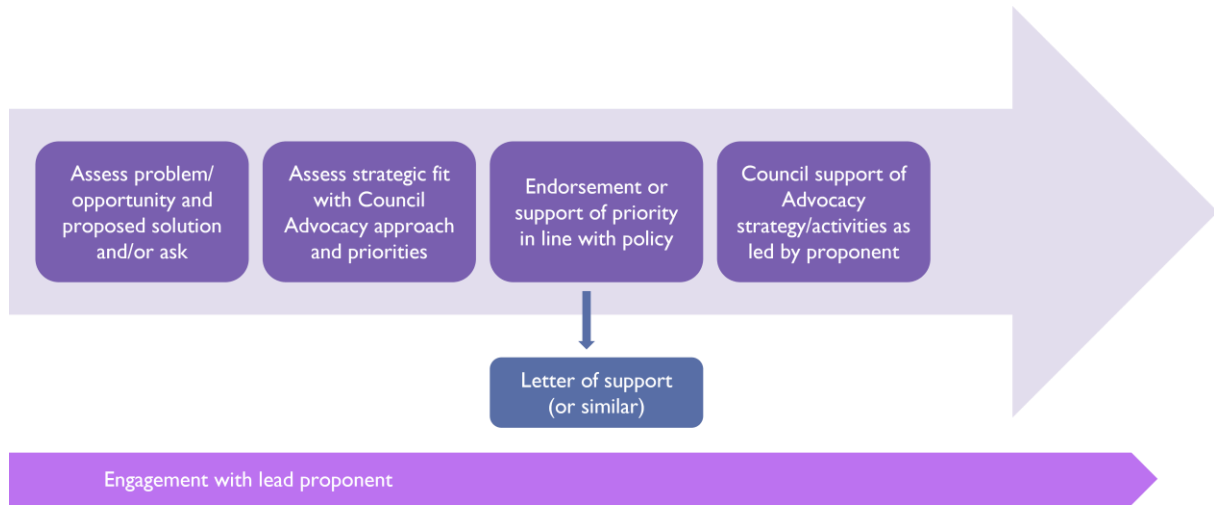
b) Endorsement or Support of Advocacy Priority

Where a proposed advocacy position is consistent with an existing strategy, plan or policy that has previously been endorsed by Council, Council support for the proponent's advocacy position can be approved by the Mayor and Chief Executive Officer. Otherwise, support for the proponent's advocacy position is to be considered/approved by Council at a Council meeting.

Subject to the approval referred to above, Council would not develop a formal position paper but would provide a letter of support (or similar) and speak about the project when appropriate to support a united position on the matter on behalf of the Cairns community.

In some cases, it may be appropriate to approve the use of Council's logo in support of the proponent's formal advocacy submissions. Approval for logo use should be at the discretion of the Chief Executive Officer.

Figure 3: Council Supporting an Advocacy Position of an External Partner – process for approval



4. Additional Considerations

It is acknowledged that from time to time, a situation may arise where a Council advocacy position may be required to be established as a matter of urgency and within timelines that are unable to accommodate the process outlined in sections 1 to 3 above. In such situations the following approach should be adopted.

Where Council is leading:

- The advocacy position should be approved by the Mayor and Chief Executive Officer.
- In all materials published for the advocacy position, it should be noted that the position has not yet been formally endorsed by Council.
- As soon as practicable, a report should be provided to Council for consideration in respect of the advocacy position so established. Council may choose to endorse the position or rescind it.

Where Council is supporting:

- The advocacy position put forward by the proponent should be approved by the Mayor and Chief Executive Officer
- The use of Council's logo should be withheld from any materials published by the proponent in relation to the advocacy position
- As soon as practicable, an assessment of the evidence base should be undertaken by Council's *Director Economic Development & Advocacy* and *Program Leader – Advocacy* and a briefing provided to the Mayor and Chief Executive Officer
- If required, an updated recommendation should be provided for consideration in respect of the proponent's advocacy position. Pursuant to section 3 of this policy, Council may choose to retain support for the position or rescind it.

The process outlined in this policy will be coordinated by Council's *Director Economic Development & Advocacy* and *Program Leader – Advocacy*. Support from other areas of Council will be obtained as and when required when developing advocacy positions on specific issues.

◆◆◆◆◆

This policy is to remain in force until otherwise determined by Council.

Director responsible for Review:

Director Economic Development & Advocacy

ORIGINALLY ADOPTED: 26/05/2021

CURRENT ADOPTION: 13/06/2022

DUE FOR REVISION: 13/06/2026

REVOKED/SUPERSEDED:

**Mica Martin
CHIEF EXECUTIVE OFFICER**