

ADVOCACY POLICY

- Intent** To provide a framework for how Council determines and pursues Advocacy Priorities.
- Scope** This policy applies to Councillors and all Council employees undertaking activities relating to Council's endorsed Advocacy Priorities and/or matters that may become Advocacy Priorities in future.

DEFINITIONS

- Advocacy:** The process of negotiating and mediating a dialogue through which influential networks, opinion leaders, and ultimately, decision makers (including, and in particular, State and Federal Governments) take ownership of Council's Advocacy Priorities and subsequently act upon them.
- Advocacy Priorities:** Matters which relate directly to Council's strategic priorities or areas of responsibility and which Council has specifically determined to be advocacy priorities in accordance with this this policy.
- Council:** Cairns Regional Council.
- Council Meeting:** An Ordinary Meeting of Council pursuant to the *Local Government Act 2009*.
- Support Advocate:** A Councillor specifically nominated at a Council Meeting to support Council's Advocacy activities for a particular Advocacy Priority/ies pursuant to Provision 4 of this Policy.

PRINCIPLES

Council's Advocacy will be guided by the following principles:

1. **Strategic alignment** - Advocacy Priorities should align with endorsed strategies and plans of Council (e.g. Council's Corporate Plan and Operational Plan).
2. **Collaboration** - Council will seek to establish strong relationships and work constructively and collaboratively with external parties to advance Advocacy Priorities and objectives.
3. **Non-partisan** - Advocacy will be apolitical and conducted in a fair and equitable manner.
4. **Independence** - Council Advocacy will be conducted independently and free from undue political, commercial or external influence ensuring positions are based on what is in the best interests of the Cairns community.
5. **Accountability and transparency** - Council will be open and transparent about its Advocacy objectives, activities and results.
6. **Councillor-led** - Advocacy will be led by Council's elected representatives (Mayor and Councillors) supported by relevant Council Officers.
7. **Adaptability** - Council will retain the ability to respond to emerging opportunities or issues in a timely manner whilst also remaining focused on longer term strategic priorities and community need.

8. **Evidence-based** - Wherever possible, Council's Advocacy will be grounded in credible data and analysis to demonstrate the need/problem; the appropriateness of the solution being advocated for; and the benefits to the Cairns community.
9. **Role-clarity** – Council will ensure its role in advocacy is understood and clearly communicated.
10. **Strength of voice** – Council will advocate with a clear, strong, purposeful voice and will amplify Advocacy messaging as and when needed.

PROVISIONS

1. Determining what matters become Advocacy Priorities

From time to time, Council Officers will make recommendations to Council on potential Advocacy Priorities having regard to the Principles set out in this policy. Decisions on what matters become Advocacy Priorities will be made by the full Council at a Council Meeting. Once endorsed, they will remain Advocacy Priorities of Council until such time as they cease to be an Advocacy Priority in accordance with Provision 2 below.

Council may also choose to rank, prioritise or categorise Advocacy Priorities having regard to a range of factors including (but not limited to) the breadth and scale of impact on the Cairns community. Prioritisation (if any) in this manner will be a matter for the full Council to decide at a Council Meeting.

2. Ceasing to be an Advocacy Priority

A matter will cease to be an Advocacy Priority if:

- A successful advocacy outcome is achieved. For example, if the Advocacy Priority relates to funding for a particular project and that funding has been secured;
- Council resolves at a Council Meeting that the matter will no longer be an Advocacy Priority; or
- Council resolves at a Council Meeting that a number of Advocacy Priorities are to be a complete and current list of Council's Advocacy Priorities and the matter is not included in that list.

3. Council's role in advocacy

3.1 For Advocacy Priorities determined under this policy

Council will lead advocacy activities for those matters that have been determined to be Advocacy Priorities in accordance with this policy.

3.2 For advocacy being led by others

From time to time, Council may also be formally approached to support the advocacy being led by external parties for non-Council projects or initiatives. Such requests will be considered as follows

- Where there is **clear alignment** between the project or initiative and a Council strategy/ies or plan/s that has previously been endorsed at a Council Meeting, then Council's official support for advocacy can be provided subject to approval by both the Mayor and Chief Executive Officer. Where Council's official support for advocacy has been provided in this regard, details of the matter will be provided to all Councillors. It is noted that Council may rescind such support by resolution at a Council Meeting.
- Where there is **no clear alignment** between the project or initiative and a Council strategy/ies or plan/s that has previously been endorsed at a Council Meeting or where there is alignment but approval from the Mayor or Chief Executive Officer (or both) is not forthcoming, then Council's official support cannot be provided unless determined to the contrary by the full Council at a Council Meeting.

4. The role of Mayor and Councillors

The Mayor will be the primary lead for Council's Advocacy activities for endorsed Advocacy Priorities including engagement with ministers and elected representatives from other levels of government. Council may also choose, through resolution at a Council Meeting, to nominate an additional

Councillor/s as Support Advocate/s to provide support for Council's Advocacy activities for a particular Advocacy Priority based on their individual skills, experience, or interests. Where Council has nominated a Support Advocate/s in this regard, the Mayor, Support Advocate/s and Council Officers will work collaboratively to ensure Council's advocacy activities are coordinated and lines of responsibility are clearly understood.

It is also recognised that Advocacy is most effective when all elected representatives (Councillors) are actively engaged. Accordingly, the Mayor and Council Officers will ensure Councillors are kept informed regarding Council's Advocacy activities and that they are involved in such activities where relevant and wherever possible.

From time to time, Council's Advocacy activities may require engagement and interaction with the media. Council maintains a separate policy/ies relating to media interactions which is to be applied in such circumstances and which will govern Mayor and Councillor/s involvement in such interactions.

5. The role of Council Officers

This policy recognises effective Advocacy should be Councillor-led. Council Officers, in particular Council's Chief Executive Officer, Director – Economic Development and Advocacy and members of Council's Advocacy and Government Relations team, will support Council's Advocacy through a range of activities including (but not limited to):

- The provision of recommendations and advice relating to Advocacy Priorities (both existing, proposed and potential);
- The development and implementation of Advocacy strategies and plans for endorsed Advocacy Priorities;
- Reporting to, and engaging with, Council on Advocacy activities, outcomes and results;
- Proactively building relationships through regular engagement with key stakeholders involved in Advocacy; and
- Supporting Mayor and Councillor engagement with political representatives and other stakeholders in relation to endorsed Advocacy Priorities.

6. Individual Councillor advocacy

Councillors are elected to represent the interests of the Cairns community. Divisional councillors also have a particular focus on the geographic area they represent. In fulfilling this role, it is appreciated that Councillors may advocate for a range of projects and initiatives including those that are not Advocacy Priorities pursuant to this policy. Such advocacy may be directed towards other Councillors and/or external parties including representatives from other levels of government. This policy does not seek to restrict individual Councillors from undertaking such activities in their individual capacity, but they cannot commit Council resources, including delivery timeframes or funding, outside of the approved Council budget or a specific Council resolution. A matter should only be referred to as an Advocacy Priority of Council where it has been determined to be an Advocacy Priority in accordance with this policy.



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: 29/04/2026
DUE FOR REVISION: 29/04/2030
REVOKED/SUPERSEDED:**



**Ken Gouldthorp
CHIEF EXECUTIVE OFFICER**