

Terms of Reference – Queensland Social Cohesion Implementation Committee

Context

The Queensland Government is committed to a fair and equitable society with a strong focus on harmony, unity and inclusion – from older Queenslanders, people unemployed or on low incomes, those with a disability or poor health, Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples, young marginalised people, and people not proficient in English or otherwise marginalised. Working collaboratively with communities, government and non-government agencies to build and promote their strengths, resilience and cohesion can improve participation and a sense of belonging while reducing isolation and other vulnerabilities.

Compared to other countries, Australia has a remarkable degree of social cohesion given its diversity. However, maintaining this cohesion can be a challenge. Promotion of welcome, belonging and equal access to resources is the foundation of preventing feelings of marginalisation and social inclusion.

As part of the 2015–16 State Budget, the Queensland Government committed \$5 million over three years for a committee to strengthen social cohesion and address issues that lead to anti-social behaviours, including extremism. The 2017-18 budget approved an additional \$7.4 million over four years. This committee will provide leadership to promote Queensland as a place where everyone is welcome and can make a positive and valued contribution.

Role of the Committee

The Queensland Social Cohesion Implementation Committee (the Committee) will provide expert advice to the Queensland Government in relation to:

- recommended whole-of-Government and community responses to anti-social behaviour and behaviour that may lead to violence or physical harm to others, that provide for timely intervention and address the underlying causes of the behaviour
- design and implementation of an action plan for Queensland including priorities for action and related strategies, with particular consideration to:
 - promoting the benefits of diversity in Queensland
 - strengthening community cohesion and resilience
 - reducing marginalisation
 - addressing anti-social behaviour and behaviour that may lead to violence or physical harm to others

- communications approaches for promoting diversity and social cohesion across Queensland communities.

Principles

In developing and implementing an action plan for Queensland, diversity will be recognised as central to our identity and a multi-faceted approach to building community harmony and resilience. The Committee will work to:

- promote the benefits of diversity and social cohesion in Queensland
- foster creative community-driven solutions that use contemporary ways of engaging, including social media platforms and multimodal communication
- harness best-practice research to develop and measure strategies and initiatives that address the complex causes of social isolation, marginalisation and anti-social behaviours
- identify multi-layered community relationships to ensure that everyone can be part of tackling the issues we face
- empower and engage young people in particular, as an effective strategy to advance cohesion across and within communities.

Responsibilities

The Committee will:

- develop a draft whole-of-Government and community action plan for government consideration, informed by thought leaders, research and community ambitions, to guide the work of the Committee and relevant agencies to improve social cohesion and resilience, and reduce the risk of anti-social behaviours and associated violence
- provide rigorous, defensible and transparent advice on strategies and responses to engage communities and to promote diversity in furthering social cohesion, with particular consideration of strategies for addressing anti-social behaviour and behaviour that may lead to violence or physical harm to others
- work cooperatively and collaboratively with government to guide implementation of activities, including promoting community ownership of initiatives
- fairly and openly assess the functioning of the Committee and its achievements and report to government on areas for improvement.

The Queensland Government and its agencies will:

- provide timely and accurate information as requested by the Committee, including providing briefings on any related activities or matters

- support the Committee in its activities through professional administration and secretariat duties
- make strategic links with other government advisory groups, local, state and Federal Government agencies that can make a contribution to strengthening communities and ensuring a focus on benefits to, and responsibilities of, the whole community, and advise the Committee on such.

The Committee will, through its Chair, liaise with the Multicultural Queensland Advisory Council to ensure an integrated approach around social cohesion efforts in Queensland.

Membership

The Committee membership will be determined by the Premier, in consultation with the Minister for Multicultural Affairs, Minister for Communities and the Committee Chair. The membership will include:

- Mr Scott Stewart MP, Member for Townsville, as Chair
- an appropriate person from outside the government sector as Deputy Chair
- at least six (6) other members, comprising non-government stakeholders with expertise and representation across a range of subjects including Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander affairs, cultural diversity, youth, seniors, arts, media, sports, local government, community engagement and community development.

The Committee membership is to comprise at least 50 per cent representation of female members.

Up to six senior government officials will be invited to attend Committee meetings as observers, from the Department of Communities, Department of the Premier and Cabinet, Department of Child Safety, Youth and Women, Department of Education, Department of Youth Justice, Queensland Health and the Queensland Police Service **OR** from relevant government departments. Additional representatives may be invited to attend to provide specific expert advice on matters as required (including from relevant Queensland Government agencies).

Term of Appointment

Members will be appointed for a period up to 31 December 2021.

Meetings

The Committee will meet on a quarterly basis as determined by the Chair. The frequency, timing and date of meetings will be at the discretion of the Chair and reviewed according to ongoing requirements.

Proxies

Proxies for members are not permitted.

Budget and Remuneration

The Queensland Government (through Department of Communities) will meet the costs of the Committee, including reasonable out-of-pocket expenses, meeting and consultation logistics and travel expenses.

Members will not be remunerated for attendance at meetings. However, members will be reimbursed for reasonable travel and accommodation expenses incurred as specified in the Remuneration Procedures for Part time Chairs and Members of Queensland Government Bodies.

Reporting

The Committee will report to the Queensland Security Cabinet Committee (QSCC) via the Premier and the Minister for Communities at least annually.

The Minister for Communities will attend the QSCC meetings for agenda items relating to the Committee.

The Premier will forward issues to Cabinet for consideration as relevant.

Dispute Resolution

Where any dispute or dissent arises in respect of prevailing views, opinions or research evidence, the alternative view will be noted by the Chair in reporting to the QSCC.

Confidentiality

Discussions at Committee meetings are to be treated by members as confidential.

Secretariat/Administration

The Committee will be supported by Social Cohesion, Department of Communities, Disability Services and Seniors.

Committee Recommendations

Implementation of any Committee recommendations in relation to strategies and responses to strengthen social cohesion (including expenditure of the available funding) will be subject to QSCC consideration and approval. Additional Ministers might be requested to attend QSCC for this consideration if initiatives impact on their portfolios.

Media and Public Relations

Official public comment on Committee deliberations may only be made by the Chair with agreement from the Premier.

Committee members will be expected to promote the benefits to Queensland of cohesive, united and inclusive communities.

Committee members are not precluded from commenting to the media on issues in the capacity of their daily role/s and which are outside their Committee responsibilities.

The Chair will provide guidance to members around appropriate management of media and public comment.

Variations to the Terms of Reference

The Terms of Reference may be amended by the Premier.