

# Longreach Regional Council Terms of Reference

## CONTEXT

The Longreach Regional Council Youth Council (LRCYC) is a youth leadership and civic action program. LRCYC represent the voice of young people aged 14 – 25 who live, work and study in the Longreach Regional Council area. It is an important mechanism for consultation, advice and feedback to young people, the Longreach Regional Council, and staff of Longreach Regional Council as they review, develop and implement strategies across the region.

## PURPOSE

The purpose of the Longreach Regional Council Youth Council is to

1. provide young people with an opportunity to:
  - Develop personal leadership skills
  - Understand the role and capacity of local government and where it fits in the broader political system
  - Have their own platform to advocate and act on issues important to them
  - Develop and oversee the implementation of an annual Youth Council Action Plan
  
2. Advise the Longreach Regional Council on:
  - current and emerging issues affecting young people in Longreach
  - the views, issues and ideas of young people

## MEMBERSHIP

The LRCYC seeks to represent the demographics of young people across the shire. LRCYC will consist of a minimum of five (5) and a maximum of seven (7) members who live, work or study within the Longreach Regional Council area.

Ideally there will always be one third (2) Youth Councillors who are returning for their second term each year once the Youth Council is established.

- Members must be aged between the ages of 14 – 25 years at 31 December.
- No more than one third of Youth Councillors will be aged between 14 – 16 years.
- Membership will be determined through a panel of judges which consist of one Councillor, one staff member of Longreach Regional Council and a member from the broader community.

- From the age of eighteen (18) all Youth Councillors are required to hold a current Blue Card.

### TERM OF OFFICE

The Longreach Regional Council Youth Councillors term runs from February to November (Queensland School term) and are elected for a one-year period with the option of electing to stay on for a second year if they wish. Youth Councillors may only stay on for two x one-year period at a time. After a twelve month break from Youth Council, a young person is free to nominate again for a place on the Youth Council.

### NOMINATING FOR YOUTH COUNCIL

Nominations for Youth Council are opened October to December each year.

Interested young people who meet eligibility requirements must complete nomination form, and provide one referee. Applicants are selected according to the following selection criteria:

- A passion – to give and/or to learn
- A willingness to represent a broad range of views that reflect the diversity of the Longreach Regional Council community
- An understanding of the local community and its social, environmental and economic influences on young people
- A willingness to contribute positively to meetings in a fair and unbiased manner
- The capacity to commit to the Youth Council and its expectations for the duration of the Youth Council term

### YOUTH COUNCIL LEADERSHIP TEAM

The Youth Council Leadership Team will consist of a Youth Mayor and a Youth Secretary.

- The Youth Leadership Team is elected at the first formal meeting.
- Youth Councillors nominating will be required to give a speech outlining their commitment and why they should be the preferred candidate. A vote will be made by secret ballot.

- Youth Councillors' may vote for themselves.
- The vote will be counted by the Longreach Regional Council representative present.
- A Youth Councillor may only ever hold each leadership position for a twelve-month period. If there is ever a situation where Youth Council team wish to install a returning Youth Councillor who has already held a particular leadership position, this may be allowed if the Coordinator (employee of Longreach Regional Council) agrees and no one else wishes to take on the role.

### BEHAVIOURAL COMMITMENT

All Youth Councillors (and parents/carers of those under 18years) are required to sign a Behavioural contract which sets out a guide for behavioural expectations for Youth Councillors.

Please see Appendix 1

### ANNUAL ACTION PLAN

The Youth Council must establish an annual action plan and outlines their goals for twelve (12) month. The Annual Action Plan will be completed and presented to Longreach Regional Council Councillors by the end of March each year.

### MEETINGS

Formal Meetings are held monthly in the Council Chambers in Longreach during the school term, and Youth Councillors are expected to attend a minimum of 80% of these over 12 months.

Youth Councillors are expected to attend one official Council meeting in the first 2 months of their term.

Youth Councillors are asked to be available to attend action meetings when there are projects that need to be worked on and require more time, however, this is flexible.

Meetings do not run during school holidays, unless there is a need and both the Coordinator and the Youth Leadership Team are in agreeance.

Youth Council uniform is expected at Formal Youth Council meetings.

If a Youth Councillor fails to attend 80% of the meetings over a 12 month period, they may be asked to resign. They will have the right to appeal.

### DATES AND TIMES OF MEETINGS

These will be confirmed at the beginning of each Youth Council term.

### EXTRA-ORDINARY MEETINGS

An extra-ordinary meeting of the Youth Council can be called by the Youth Mayor or at least two (2) Youth Councillors by a written notice to call a special meeting of the Council delivered to the Coordinator. Email is acceptable.

- The notice must specify the date and time of the special meeting and the business to be transacted;
- The Coordinator must call the special meeting as specified in the notice or resolution.
- Unless all Councillors are present and unanimously agree to deal with another matter, only the business specified in the notice or resolution is to be discussed.

### MEETING ATTENDANCE BY THE PUBLIC

The public, especially youth, are welcomed to observe formal Youth Council meetings, dates and times to be advised.

### REQUESTS TO YOUTH COUNCIL BY COUNCIL, COMMUNITY OR ORGANISATIONS

All matters that others wish Youth Councillors to consider must be:

- Submitted to the Youth Council email, or to the Coordinator, and outline:
- Name and contact details of the person/group/organisation seeking input by the Youth Councillors
- The issue/project/event/service etc
- The information or actions being sought from the Youth Councillors
- A time frame for the request

- Whether a time to speak to the request at a formal Youth Council meeting is desired. The issue will be put on the next formal Youth Council meeting agenda.

## REPORTING

The Youth Council will provide quarterly progress reports to the Longreach Regional Council to report on their progress and deliberation. Quarterly written progress reports will be provided to the Longreach Regional Council three (3) weeks before the date of the council meeting. Dates will be given to the Youth Council at the beginning of their term. Presentations by the Youth Council to the Longreach Regional Council on their activities and progress in achieving objectives may be scheduled at other times during a year through negotiation with the Coordinator and the Youth Council.

## CONFIDENTIALITY

In the course of their duties Youth Councillors will receive information they are required to treat as confidential. This may be information that is either commercially sensitive or is personal to a particular individual or organisation. Council staff will ensure Youth Councillors are aware confidential / sensitive conversations are taking place.

## CONFLICT OF INTEREST

The Local Government Act identifies direct and indirect conflicts of interest which require disclosure as they arise. If a Youth Councillor has a particular bias or interest in an issue or discussion, or believe others might perceive that they do, there may be a conflict of interest. If this occurs, the Youth Councillor must alert the Youth Mayor and the Coordinator as soon as possible.

## RESOLUTION OF GRIEVANCES

In the event that a conflict occurs between Youth Council members, the Youth Mayor and Youth Council will work with the Coordinator to resolve it. If a Youth Council member has a grievance or concern, it should be raised according to the following:

- If the grievance is about a fellow Youth Council member, the issue should be raised with the Youth Mayor and the Coordinator

- If the grievance is about the Youth Mayor, the issue should be raised with the Coordinator
- If the grievance is about the Coordinator, the issue should be raised with the Director of Communities. All conflicts will be addressed and resolved in accordance with the code of conduct and principles of natural justice.

## COMMUNICATION

### **Guidelines for Personal Views**

In the interest of free speech, Youth Councillors must feel free to make personal comments on matters important to them, without undermining the Youth Council, or Council. Within each Youth Council there will be young people with a wide-ranging set of values, experiences, understandings and beliefs.

Youth Councillors will respect both the right to hold a view and to share it, and, use the monthly Councillor conversations as an opportunity to learn, understand, and articulate without offence, sensitive issues.

Media comments from young people on Youth Council expressing personal views will not include the Longreach Regional Council logo, or recognise the person as a Youth Councillor.

Whilst on Youth Council, Youth Councillors who use social media are expected to have personal social pages and accounts that respect the code of conduct they have signed as Youth Councillors, and which reflect the values agreed upon by the Youth Council group. This must be upheld in social settings as well.

Youth Councillors will refrain from publicly criticising decisions made by the Youth Council, or Council.

### **Guidelines for Youth Council Views**

To make a public statement on behalf of Youth Council the topic must have been debated in a Youth Council meeting, recorded in the minutes and hold a majority vote. Once agreed, this stance must be supported by all Youth Councillors publicly. Social media accounts held by Youth Council will display the following disclaimer: Any views expressed here are those of the Longreach Regional Council Youth Council, and are not necessarily the views of the Longreach Regional Council. This disclaimer may also be added to printed articles on occasion by the Communications and Media team.

## **Media**

All communications with the media will be conducted under the guidance of and with the support of the Communities team. Media statements/releases on behalf of the Longreach Regional Council Youth Council will be issued by the Youth Mayor (or delegated Youth Councillor) through the Engagement and Communications Coordinator. Youth Councillors directly approached by media outlets will, in the first instance, redirect enquiries to the Coordinator. Youth Councillors are to seek authorisation before making media statements. This will be done in consultation with the Engagement and Communications Coordinator. The Youth Mayor is the primary spokesperson for the Youth Council, however they are encouraged to delegate their authority to other Youth Councillors under certain circumstances, for example where:

- A Youth Councillor has a specific ongoing interest and/or role in an issue;
- The topic/area of concern aligns with the Youth Councillors' working group;
- A Youth Councillor has specific knowledge or expertise in the matter;
- A Youth Councillor leads a specific Committee

Facebook – secret page/ SLACK/other electronic communication platform

Each year the Coordinator and Youth Council will commit to one form of communication for communication within the group. Parents and carers are invited to join this group, but must not contribute to conversation other than to clarify a detail.

Socials/online – chats

Chats amongst Youth Councillors may be set up from time to time to quickly converse with a small number of people who are working on a project. The Coordinator must always be included in these groups, but need not participate. This measure is meant only as a strategy to keep online conversations safe.

## PARENTS AND CARERS

Parents and carers are critical in their support for Youth Councillors under the age of 18 and/or those still living at home.

Their role is valued by Longreach Regional Council, and where appropriate their involvement is encouraged. Parents and carers are expected to direct all concerns about Youth Councillors', behaviours and/or activities to the Coordinator (or the

Director of Communities if their concern is with the Coordinator), and not to Youth Councillors themselves - this includes communication via social media.

## YOUTH COUNCILLOR SUPPORT

### **Roles & Responsibilities**

#### **Longreach Regional Council**

Longreach Regional Council will support Youth Council with:

- A dedicated council staff member (Coordinator) to facilitate the group.
- Provide IT support, a dedicated youth council email address and a space for the youth council on the website, remote access to meetings.
- Annual funding (uniforms, meeting costs, other operating costs)
- Assistance with promotion of events and issues as requested.
- Rooms to meet.

#### **Facilitator**

The Longreach Regional Council Youth Council is facilitated by the Coordinator or another Council Staff member.

The facilitator is responsible for:

- Being the primary relationship with Youth Councillors, families, Council and the public on all things Youth Council.
- Setting meeting dates and times, organising meeting venue and providing refreshments.
- Working with the Leadership Team to develop the agendas and minutes of meetings.
- Supporting the Leadership Team to take minutes, run effective meetings.
- Attend meetings as a resource person.
- Guide the development of the Youth Council Action Plan.
- Support Youth Councillors to complete their Action Plan.
- Provide administrative support to the youth council to prepare and develop documents.



- Ensuring Youth Councillors have access to the support needed for full participation in meetings and activities.

### **Longreach Regional Council Councillors**

Representative(s) from the Longreach Regional Council will attend every formal Youth Council meeting. Youth Council will send calendar invitations to all Councillors for every second meeting at the beginning of their term.

Youth Councillors and/or Councillors can set a topic for exploration at each of these meetings. Topics will be forwarded to the Youth Secretary or the Coordinator at least one week prior to the meeting. In the case of no topics being selected, the Youth Leadership team, in consultation with the Coordinator will set the topic.

### **Training**

Youth Councillors will be provided opportunities to attend various training and professional development sessions throughout their term which will improve their capabilities to carry out their role as advocates. This *may* include:

- Training in meeting procedures
- Governance
- First Aid
- Public speaking
- Leadership

### **Youth Council**

Induction All Youth Councillors are required to attend an induction to the Youth Council and an induction to the Longreach Regional Council. Induction will include:

- Introduction to local government, Longreach Regional Council
- Roles and responsibilities of Youth Councillors;
- Media training;
- OH&S
- Meeting protocols

## **Youth Council Uniforms**

Youth Councillors will be issued with a t-shirt.

T-shirts may be kept after their term in office is completed. There is no cost to Youth Councillors for the shirts.

A Formal Uniform code for all Council meeting and formal events is: Black bottoms (skirt/pants/shorts), black socks and shoes and YC tops.

An informal uniform code is: uniform tops and anything else you like!

Lanyards, name badges, compendiums

Youth Councillors will all be issued with Longreach Regional Council Lanyards, name badges and compendiums. The lanyards and name badges are to be worn when on official business, and compendiums are to be brought to each meeting.

## **Travel assistance**

Whilst it is the responsibility of young people to negotiate with those around them support to get to and from meetings, where there is an inhibiting factor, discussions will be had amongst the Communities team to see what support can be given. If it can be, it will be. Assistance might come in the form of a fuel voucher, taxi ride, personal lift. Communication with the Coordinator in a timely fashion is key.

Amendments and Review of the Longreach Regional Council Terms of Reference

This Terms of Reference will be reviewed by the Coordinator and the Youth Council each year

## **APPENDIX 1 LONGREACH REGIONAL COUNCIL YOUTH COUNCIL - BEHAVIOURAL CONTRACT**

This contract provides the guidelines around which Youth Councillors are expected to conduct themselves when attending all duties as a Youth Councillor.

Name of Youth Councillor:

I understand that in performing my role as a Longreach Regional Council Youth Councillor I:

1. Respect the rights of every young person
2. Impartially represent the views of young people to Council and community – and understand that to do this I must actively seek out and listen to youth in my community.
3. Always act with integrity, recognising the privilege and importance of the role of Youth Councillor
4. Attend Youth Council meetings
  - On time
  - Have suitable transport arrangements to and from
  - Give as much notice as possible if I will be absent
  - Abide by outlined meeting/event protocols
5. Respect confidentiality
6. Have the right to say no – individually and as a Youth Council team.
7. Endeavour to ensure that public resources are used in the public interest
8. Lead by example, represent and act in a way that secures youth confidence in the role of Youth Council
9. Have read and agree to the Terms of Reference for the Longreach Regional Council Youth Council
10. Will demonstrate a positive attitude – and have fun!

Consequences of Actions: The process for Youth Councillors who breach any section of this agreement will be:

1. Warning – formal spoken warning,
2. Call to parents/guardians and final written warning
3. Expulsion from the group.

I understand that Council has a zero-tolerance to the following behaviours whilst representing Youth Council, and that if I disregard any of these my parent/guardian will be notified, and I may be asked to leave Youth Council:

- Drugs and alcohol
- Misconduct, including sexual, harassment, bullying and discrimination
- Violence – including online
- Weapons

**DECLARATION**

I confirm that I understand the meaning of this contract and that the consequences of breaking the contract have been explained to me:

Youth Councillor Name: \_\_\_\_\_

Youth Councillor signature: \_\_\_\_\_

Date:

Parent / guardian name: \_\_\_\_\_

Parent/ guardian signature: \_\_\_\_\_

Date: