

CLIMATE REFERENCE GROUP: TERMS OF REFERENCE

The Climate Reference Group was established in 2020 and its Terms of Reference (TOR) was reviewed in 2022-23. The group was made fully independent in late 2022.

Purpose To provide expert independent advice to evolve and guide QLDC's response to the climate and ecological crises.

Vision



Role

The **role** of the Climate Reference Group is to:

- Provide expert independent advice to Council officers and Elected Members.
- Review the key priorities set out in the Climate and Biodiversity Plan to ensure they remain relevant and focused on the most urgent and material issues for the district to address.
- Advise Council on emerging trends, best practices, scientific updates and legislative changes that may impact on QLDC's response to the climate and ecological crises.
- Provide subject matter expert input into Climate and Biodiversity Plan projects at the request of Council officers.
- Develop expert, independent, positions on key issues that impact the realisation of the district's climate and biodiversity goals.
- Provide advisory support to partnerships and joint work programmes that QLDC is a member of e.g. the Destination Management Plan.

Scope

The **scope** of the Climate Reference Group is advisory only. The group does not undertake governance or decision-making over the delivery of the Climate and Biodiversity Plan portfolio.

Council has a separate governance structure through the Audit, Finance and Risk Committee and the option of reporting to Full Council to track progress of the plan delivery.

Desired Outcomes

The Climate Reference Group plays an active role in the delivery of the following outcomes:

- Development of well-informed, aspirational and achievable Climate and Biodiversity Plans, for consideration by the Council.
- More effective climate and biodiversity decision-making by Council officers and Elected Members.
- Improved level of Climate and Biodiversity Plan engagement with the community and key stakeholders.
- Increased reassurance that Council is taking the appropriate level of climate and biodiversity action.

Composition

Membership will involve 10-12 diverse and proactive thinkers from a broad range of climate and biodiversity focussed fields of expertise. Where possible membership will be selected from locally based candidates however consideration will be given to incorporating specialist expertise from elsewhere in New Zealand.

The application process for new members will be publicly notified with final recommendations being shortlisted by Council officers. Recommendations will be approved by the Chief Executive and Mayor with appointments approved by Full Council.

Required skills: innovative, open-minded, strategic systems thinkers with expertise relevant to climate change, adaptation, mitigation, biodiversity, wellbeing, behaviour change and our local community. Preference will be given to candidates with inspirational and recognised voices, specialist areas of expertise, broad local or national networks, and strong interpersonal and facilitation skills. Experience of working in collaborative and action-orientated organisations will also be considered.

Diversity: composition of the group should reflect a broad range of backgrounds, fields of expertise, age/gender balance and locality representation. Two mana whenua positions will be reserved for Kāi Tahu runaka representation. A rakatahi (youth) position will also be reserved. Other opportunities for diversity should be sought as appropriate.

Independent Chairperson: to support the effective management of meetings and align with the best practice of other Council groups an Independent Chairperson will be appointed. The selection will be through an open, contestable process with final decision being made by Full Council.

Membership:

- Independent Chairperson
- 2 representatives from Aukaha and Te Ao Marama Inc.
- 1 rakatahi (youth) representative
- 7-9 climate and biodiversity experts

Lifecycle of the group

The Climate Reference Group will operate on a three yearly cycle that aligns with the development of each new Climate and Biodiversity Plan. The current cycle commenced on 1st July 2022. The next term of the group will begin on 1st July 2025.

An annual review of the TOR and membership composition will be undertaken to ensure the group is operating effectively.

A full review of the Climate Reference Group will be undertaken during the development of each three-year Climate and Biodiversity Plan to ensure that the purpose and makeup of the group remains aligned with the new plan and Council priorities. If the interest level and domain of expertise of current members remains aligned with the new plan then they will be invited to re-join the group. If new areas of expertise are required to support the plan then a public application process will be initiated.

Resignations from the group will be accepted at any stage of the group term. Depending on the timing of the resignation a public application process may be initiated immediately or deferred to align with the annual or three yearly review, in discussion with the Independent Chair.

Te Ao Marama and Aukaha will determine their own representation on the group and may initiate changes to their representatives at any time.

Queenstown Lakes District Council recognises the need for the Climate Reference Group to provide expert advisory support to the Council, but may at its discretion choose to disband or redesign the group should the requirement arise.

Ways of working

To assist with group development and productivity, Council officers and the Independent Chairperson will develop and manage a Climate Reference Group Code of Conduct.

The Climate Reference Group is not a decision-making body, however in the event that a matter is not able to be agreed the Chairperson can put the matter to a vote. Any decision-making will be a consensus-building approach.

To assist with management of caseload, sub-working groups may be established to focus on particular topics, such as submissions. The composition and tasking of working groups will be coordinated by the Chairperson. Where a working group is formed to provide advice or a position on behalf of the group, the full Climate Reference Group will be given the opportunity to review the final document before the Chairperson approves it.

Microsoft Teams will be used to share and collaborate on documents. All members need to be able to access Microsoft Teams and should endeavour to share documents via Teams rather than as email attachments.

Meeting structure and frequency

There are two types of Climate Reference Group meetings:

Formal meetings:

Quarterly two-hour meetings. QLDC will set the agenda in consultation with the Chairperson. Group members are expected to prepare for and attend these meetings.

Team meetings:

Currently quarterly, in cadence with the formal meetings. The group sets the agenda, coordinated by the Chairperson and with support from officers. Agenda items are selected by the group and may include topics not defined in the scope of this Terms of Reference, such as learning and sharing opportunities. Frequency of team meetings may be changed by the group at any time. Attendance is voluntary.

Meetings are during work hours and organised via a poll with the group. Meeting frequency may be changed as determined by the Chairperson and officers, with group consensus.

QLDC will help facilitate meetings and ensure effective flow of information whilst enabling Climate Reference Group members to co-guide, co-design agenda items and facilitate sessions with QLDC staff and the Chairperson.

Time commitment

Each member should be able to contribute at minimum ½ day per quarter to prepare/attend/take actions from the quarterly formal meetings.

Any time spent preparing for or attending team meetings or working group meetings is voluntary.

**Honorarium
Payment**

Members will receive an annual \$1,000 honorarium payment.

This payment shall be payable at the start of the financial year on 1st July. For new members who start within a financial year a pro-rated payment will be provided.

**Confidentiality &
conflict of
interest**

In the course of their duties members will receive information, whether in reports or through debate, that is confidential. Accordingly, members agree not to use or disclose confidential information for any purpose other than the purpose for which the information was supplied to the member.

Members will maintain a clear separation between their personal interests and their duties as CRG members in order to ensure that they are free from bias (whether real or perceived). Members will register any conflicts of interest and membership of any other voluntary, paid, or appointed roles. This register will be reviewed annually. Members are required to declare any financial conflict of interest and not participate in any discussion where a financial conflict may eventuate.