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| **Local Government Mayoral Taskforce Supporting People Seeking Asylum**  **Minutes – Meeting No. 30 – Wednesday 25 October 2023**  1pm-2.56pm via Microsoft Teams |
| **Chairperson:** Mayor Cr Angelica Panopoulos (Merri-bek)  **Attendees:**  VIC: Mayor Cr Jo Armstrong (Ararat), Dr Tim Harrison (Ararat), Lisa King (Banyule), Pradeep Peteti (Casey),Peter Johnstone (Greater Dandenong (CGD)), Ann Ly (CGD), Mayor Cr Julie Williams (Darebin), Deputy Mayor Cr Susanne Newton (Darebin), Shabaz Fattah (Darebin), Cr Belinda Moloney (Geelong), Ben Pollard (Hobsons Bay), Celia Chang (Hume), Mayor Cr Hadi Saab (Kingston), Tracey Collins (Kingston), Cr Jennifer Anderson (Macedon Ranges), Kara Barnett (Melbourne), Nelum Buddhadasa (Merri-bek), Petr Svoboda (Merri-bek), Cr Nicky Luo (Monash), Amey Rountree (Monash), Dalal Sleiman (Whittlesea), Deputy Mayor Cr Jennie Barrera (Wyndham), Amani Nyikang (Yarra);  NSW: Mayor Cr Kylie King (Albury), Julia Vesval (Albury), Cr Elizabeth Adamczyk (Newcastle), Lisa Davis (Newcastle), Cr David Mallard (Orange), Mayor Cr Philipa Veitch (Randwick),  SA: Mayor Cr Michael Coxon (West Torrens), Adriana Christopoulos (West Torrens);  **Guests:**  Rob Myers (Advoc8) and Paul Schmidt (Communify).  **Apologies:** Josephine Frawley (Ararat), Mayor Cr Des Hudson (Ballarat), John Drennan (Ballarat), Frances Salenga (Ballarat), Cr Peter Castaldo (Banyule), Amy Bennett (Bass Coast), Cr Andrea Metcalf (Bendigo), Nikki Williams (Bendigo), Pinar Maher (Bendigo), Mayor Cr Bruce Lancashire (Brimbank), Lynley Dumble (Brimbank), Wambui Thirimu (Brimbank), Mayor Cr Tammy Radford (Cardinia), Teresa Lawler (Casey), Mayor Cr Eden Foster (CGD), Cr Rhonda Garad (CGD), Cr Lana Formoso (CGD), Cr Gaetano Greco (Darebin), Jane Wager (Geelong), Mayor Cr Tony Briffa (Hobsons Bay), Cathy Miles (Hobsons Bay), Mayor Cr Joseph Haweii (Hume), Julie Andrews (Hume), Meg Lawton (Hume), Cr Steve Staikos (Kingston), Susan Quach (Kingston), Mayor Cr Annette Death (Macedon Ranges), Mayor Cr Sarah Carter (Maribyrnong), Catherine Dwyer (Maribyrnong), Mayor Cr Rob Steane (Maroondah), Chris Riseley (Maroondah), Paul MacDonald (Maroondah), Lord Mayor Sally Capp (Melbourne), Deputy Lord Mayor Nicolas Reece (Melbourne), Cr Elizabeth Mary Doidge (Melbourne), Cr Rohan Leppert (Melbourne), Cr Roshena Campbell (Melbourne), Cr Kevin Louey (Melbourne), Cr Philip Le Liu (Melbourne), Cr Jamal Hakim (Melbourne), Cr Dr Olivia Ball (Melbourne), Cr Jason Chang (Melbourne), Cr Davydd Griffiths (Melbourne), Cr Mark Riley (Merri-bek), Emma Sampson (Merri-bek), Mayor Cr Tina Samardzija (Monash), Cr Rose Iser (Moonee Valley), Sally Abbott (Moonee Valley), Cr Sarah Race (Mornington Peninsula), Chris Munro (Mornington Peninsula), Mayor Cr Ben Ramcharan (Nillumbik), Deputy Mayor Cr Geoff Paine (Nillumbik), April Wilson (Nillumbik), Mayor Cr Heather Cunsolo (Port Phillip), Ewa Zysk (Port Phillip), Mayor Cr Isabelle Tolhurst (Queenscliffe), Mayor Cr Ian Bye (Wellington), Mayor Cr Mark Lane (Whitehorse), Zoe Quinn (Whitehorse), Sana Saiyed (Whittlesea), Mayor Cr Susan McIntyre (Wyndham), Cr Sahana Ramesh (Wyndham), Liana Thompson (Wyndham), Cr Anab Mohamud (Yarra), Cristina Del Frate (Yarra), Milica Latu (Yarra); Mayor Cr Tony Bleasdale (Blacktown), Michael Maxwell (Blacktown), Mayor Cr Mark Greenhill (Blue Mountains), Mayor Cr Khal Asfour (Canterbury-Bankstown), Graeme Beattie (Canterbury Bankstown), Garry Starr (Canterbury Bankstown), Mayor Cr Sarah McMahon (Hawkesbury), Cr Danielle Wheeler (Hawkesbury), Liz Murphy (Hawkesbury), Mayor Cr Darcy Byrne (Inner West), Cr Pauline Lockie (Inner West), Cr Justine Langford (Inner West), Cr Marghanita Da Cruz (Inner West), Mayor Cr Jason Hamling (Orange), Catherine Davis (Orange), Cr Kym Chapple (Randwick), Cr Rafaela Pandolfini (Randwick), Mayor Cr Dallas Tout (Wagga Wagga); TAS: Lord Mayor Cr Anna Reynolds (Hobart), Alison Hines (Hobart). |

| **Item** | **Action** |
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| 1. **Welcome, Acknowledgement of Country and Introduction to new Member Councils**   Chair welcomed attendees and new members – Orange City (NSW), Ararat Rural City (VIC), City of West Torrens (SA) and Albury City (NSW); and acknowledged Country. | - |
| 1. **Endorsement of Minutes of Previous Meeting**   Minutes of previous meeting were endorsed. | - |
| 1. **Review of Outstanding Action Items**  * Taskforce 2023-24 membership update – General Member Councils: Canterbury Bankstown, Greater Bendigo and Blue Mountains Council have yet to confirm membership. Launceston Council has resigned. | All Members to advise Secretariat of any invitations sent to Councils to join the Taskforce. |
| 1. **Back Your Neighbour (BYN) Asks and Campaign Strategy – Discussion & Direction**  * With consideration to the refugee sector priorities (<https://asrc.org.au/policies/>; <https://www.refugeecouncil.org.au/>) and political context, Members reviewed the Taskforce advocacy asks. Revised priorities were endorsed by consensus– see Appendix 1. * The draft 2023-24 Campaign Strategy including the Monthly Engagement Plan detailing opportunities for Member contributions were presented by the Secretariat officer (CGD). Key feedback from members included:   + Re Engaging all Member Councillors and ensuring Members are aware of the Taskforce – Cr Jennifer Anderson (Macedon Ranges) suggested providing people an option to opt out of Taskforce communications.   + Member Council officer suggested that instead of sending meeting minutes to every Councillor, a bulletin summary of Taskforce activities, decisions made etc. can be sent to respective central Councillor support email of Member Councils for distribution.   + Mayor Cr Julie Williams (Darebin) agreed that this is a big piece of work that can have an impact on the outcomes we are trying to achieve. Regular communication and updates are particularly important when there is a change in Mayor. * The Campaign Strategy was endorsed by consensus. | All Members to advise Secretariat of central Councillor support contact details. |
| 1. **Advocacy Software – Advoc8**  * Rob Myers (Advoc8) provided an overview of the platform and demonstration of its functions, including monitoring political stakeholders, tracking stakeholder engagement, and identifying potential new Taskforce Members. * Trial of Advoc8 by Secretariat demonstrated the potential for Advoc8 to streamline the Taskforce’s administrative activities, and its capability to help with research, membership recruitment, campaign management and evaluation. * The long-term engagement plan for the Taskforce is to be able to track Councillors across Australia in the platform. * Taskforce Secretariat will be the primary user of the platform and Member Councils will be able to liaise with Secretariat import their stakeholder engagement and additional activities into the platform as appropriate. * Members endorsed the Taskforce Secretariat to proceed with an annual subscription of Advoc8 ($15,000 per annum excl GST). | Contract with Advoc8 to be organized – Secretariat (CGD). |
| 1. **Other Business**  * Federal Government’s Multicultural Framework Review – Secretariat thanked Member Councils (Maroondah, Melbourne, Darebin, Hume, Merri-bek and Newcastle) for their endorsement and feedback on the Taskforce’s submission. The submission can be shared with interested Members upon request. | - |
| 1. **Next Meeting**  * Next Meeting on Wednesday 13 December 1pm-3pm, MS Teams. | All incoming and outgoing Mayors to be invited to the December meeting – Secretariat (CGD).  All outgoing Mayors/Councillors to engage new Mayors to attend December meeting. |
| 1. **Meeting closed at 2.56pm.** | - |

**Appendix 1 – Mayoral Taskforce Supporting People Seeking Asylum Strategic Priorities (as of 25 October 2023)**

We are calling on the Federal Government to:

1. **Provide everyone with a valid visa with work, travel and study rights.** 
   * Provide all people waiting for their protection application to be processed with a valid visa and associated work rights.
   * Provide people higher education study rights and access to scholarships.
   * Enable all bridging visa classes to have overseas travel rights and remove the need to apply for a waiver.
2. **Expand the SRSS eligibility criteria and simplify the application process so that people in need can access healthcare, disability, housing support and other essential services.**

* Expand SRSS eligibility to all people in need to fully utilise the underspent Federal budget allocated to the program.
* Simplify the SRSS application process so eligible people are not excluded by the burden of applying.
* Ensure all people seeking asylum have access to basic healthcare, disability, income, housing and social support while they await decisions in the refugee determination process, in order to reduce the burden on Local Governments and charitable organisations.

1. **Ensure an independent, timely and fair application and merits review process for all humanitarian applications.**

* Enable fairer and faster processing of onshore protection visa applications, including providing certainty on processing timeframes.

1. **Provide people who have received a negative refugee determination under the ‘Fast Track’ system with a fair review process.** 
   * There is no review process for people denied protection under the Fast Track system, other than requesting Ministerial intervention. People who have received a negative outcome under the Fast Track process should have their reviews heard in a timely and fair manner.
2. **Continue to invest resources to urgently clear** **the backlog of asylum applications and appeals.**

* Ensure the backlog of applications and appeals are cleared with appropriate, ongoing resourcing.

1. **Abolish temporary visas like TPVs and SHEVs and replace them with permanent protection visas and pathways to citizenship for all humanitarian arrivals.**
   * Ensure all refugees on TPVs and SHEVs are offered permanent Resolution of Status visas by April 2024.
   * The temporary protection regime will continue to exist after the RoS conversion for refugees who arrive in Australia without a valid visa. Abolish temporary protection visas (TPVs and SHEVs) and provide permanent protection to all refugees.
   * Despite permanent residents being eligible for citizenship, many are unable to provide the proof of identity documentation that is required for their citizenship application and as a result, their applications are being refused. Permanent visa holders applying for citizenship should be permitted to use the same identity documents as per their permanent visa application, for their citizenship application.