

Regional Advisory Committee Policy

The following is adapted from the 1998 policy that guided the establishment of the four non-Brisbane Regional Advisory Committees. At the December 2000 meeting, this adapted policy was endorsed by the Board of Directors in conjunction with the resolution passed unanimously by the 2000 AGM:

That approval be given to set a Brisbane Region Advisory Committee to include the elected Brisbane Board Representative, a QPP Brisbane Representative, a QuAC Management Representative and Representatives from a service provider and other outer Brisbane Regional Representatives.

The policy describes each of the defined roles of the RACs in some detail. It then describes the steps for the establishment of the RAC and the initial policy responsibilities – a local issues paper, a fundraising strategy, etc. The final page includes notes from the original restructure implementation workshops that outlines the role and membership of the RACs.

At its April 1998 meeting, the Board of Directors discussed the role of the Regional Advisory Committees (RACs) in more detail. The restructure documents provided the key terms of reference for the RACs and, since this was the first meeting of the Board of Directors to include the new Regional Representatives, the meeting spent some time determining what these broad terms would entail.

Broad Role

In general terms, it was agreed that the RACs should provide advice to the Board and to the local office at the level of policy, priority and strategy. RACs provide one mechanism for the inclusion of key local stakeholders in the Council and for ensuring responsiveness to local and emerging issues. The establishment of RACs is part of the Council's restructure, which sought to (i) improve accountability to stakeholders and (ii) move away from the centralised decision-making structures previously in place.

The RACs are instruments of the Board of Directors and therefore have a central role in alerting the Board to local issues and advising the Board as required. The RACs also have important roles in advising the local staff and volunteers through the Coordinator, as well as outwardly promoting the Council and its work in the local community.

1. Advise the Board on Matters of Policy and Strategy

A key role of the RAC is to assist the Board to develop Council policies. This is an advisory role and only the Board of Directors is empowered to determine Council policies (although in some cases RACs may be requested to draft policies for the Board's endorsement). Each meeting, the RAC will be provided information about the Board's activities and priorities to ensure the best possible advice to the Board.

The Board of Directors meets on a monthly basis and includes an elected representative from each region, who also sits on the local RAC. After each meeting of the RAC, the Region Representative will provide a brief report to the Board of Directors. Normally, this report will just be a copy of the meeting minutes and will simply be for the Board's information. In line with the Board's procedure on all reports for information, these will not generally be discussed at Board meetings unless a Director specifically requests.

There is also an opportunity at any meeting for the RAC to raise an item for the Board's attention. Such items may be to identify new local issues, highlight when processes or policies are failing or to suggest re-prioritising at the local level. When this occurs, the Region Representative will prepare a brief paper that outlines the

issue and includes recommendations for the Board's determination. This item is then placed on the agenda for the next scheduled Board meeting and will be considered by the Board at that meeting.

The RACs will also provide advice through the internal consultation processes. As QuAC policies are developed, drafts are exposed for comment to various internal stakeholders. RACs will be asked to comment on such exposure drafts where appropriate. Similarly, strategic planning and operational planning processes include, to varying degrees, consultation with internal and external stakeholders. Specific consultation meetings will occur each year with each RAC as part of these planning processes. RACs will also be consulted on priorities for funding applications and negotiations as they relate to the local office.

2. Media

Currently, only the President and the General Manager are permitted to make comment on behalf of QuAC to the media or approve promotional material to be published in the media.

It is not expected that the RAC or any individual member will be expected to provide comment to the media, however the RAC will play an active role in advising the President and the General Manager. When a media story of local significance emerges, wherever possible the QuAC spokesperson will seek input from the RAC regarding the appropriate response.

The RAC can also play a proactive role in media advice by suggesting strategic use of media stories and advising the local office, through the Coordinator, on promotional opportunities.

3. Advise the Brisbane Team Leaders

The RAC has a key role in advising the staff and volunteers of the local office on key issues. As part of assisting local accountability, the RAC has an important role in feeding back and processing local issues of importance in terms of quality improvement and service development, and assisting the Team Leaders to identify strategies to respond to such issues. This kind of advice will include key local issues, emerging needs, client/community satisfaction and future opportunities.

RAC members will also be aware of a range of minor feedback within the community about QuAC and its programs. This minor feedback is useful to gauge community attitudes and to inform program developments, however it may not be useful to discuss in a RAC meeting. As a general rule, this minor feedback role should be provided directly to the respective Team Leader. This ensures that staff and volunteers do not come to feel that they have several bosses and it enables the Team Leaders to capture the range of feedback and advice and pass it on to staff and volunteers in a consistent and constructive manner.

Members of the RAC may also have significant feedback to provide regarding the Team Leaders themselves. In situations where such feedback is significant but the member is unable or unwilling to provide it directly to the Team Leader, then the feedback should be provided to the respective Program Manager. Such feedback is not useful discussion for the RAC or the Board of Directors and this protocol allows the Program Manager to treat the feedback in a similarly constructive and consistent manner. Additionally, members of the RAC will be invited to participate in the annual performance appraisal for the Team Leaders.

From time to time the Team Leader (or other staff and volunteers through the Team Leader) may bring ideas and proposals to the RAC for feedback. By using the RAC

as a kind of “bouncing board” this enables the local office to draw on the skills and expertise of the RAC members to improve program planning at the local level. This is not an endorsing role for the RAC as there are other internal processes for endorsing program activities.

4. Link to the Local Community

A key feature of the RACs is to act as a link to the local communities. By informing RACs about QuAC’s activities and seeking advice on QuAC’s direction, the Board of Directors hopes to strengthen and improve the quality of our links with key stakeholders in each region and between regions. Some RAC members are invited to the RAC as representatives of particular groups or agencies. It is expected that those representatives will inform their group/agency about RAC activities and, where possible, speak on behalf of their group/agency in RAC discussions

The Board will provide copies of its minutes to RAC members to keep them informed of the Board’s activities and priorities. RAC members can assist the local stakeholders to understand QuAC by promoting the Board’s issues and decisions in the local community and faithfully reporting back how those issues are received.

RACs are also expected to report on their own activities in local newsletters and to seek the input of members and other stakeholders on priority issues.

5. Fundraising

In line with the principle of local determination, the Board will delegate decision-making responsibility regarding fundraising to each RAC. This will involve decisions regarding fundraising activities and the disbursement of fundraised moneys.

In the first instance, each RAC will be requested to develop a policy on how decisions will be made regarding the expenditure of fundraised moneys. (The Board has already determined that any expenditure in excess of \$2,000 requires the approval of the Board of Directors.) This policy may include identifying particular priorities for expenditure, criteria for accepting and assessing requests for funding, etc. It will be endorsed by the Board of Directors and will provide a framework within which the RAC will make decisions during the year.

RACs will also be requested to develop annual plans for fundraising activities. These plans will include mechanisms for planning and conducting activities as well as budgets and fundraising goals for each activity. As a general rule, fundraising activities should utilise a minimum of staff time and staff should not be diverted from their program responsibilities.

All funds raised and fundraised moneys disbursed must be reported in RAC minutes.

6. Public Relations

Consistent with the role of providing a link to the local community, RAC members are expected to play an ambassadorial role for the local QuAC office. In addition to providing feedback to QuAC, members are asked to promote QuAC, its role and its work in the local community.

Other Issues

- The Board of Directors will reformulate RACs each year subsequent to the Annual General Meeting.
- RACs will each elect their own chairperson.

- The Board proposes that each RAC meet bimonthly.
- The Region Representative will be responsible to provide minutes of RAC meetings to the Board; represent RAC issues to Board meetings; and communicate Board issues to RAC meetings and to local stakeholders.
- The Team Leaders will provide secretariat support to the RAC including preparing agendas, sending notices, preparing and distributing minutes and assisting with policy development.

Establishment

The process for establishing each Regional Advisory Committee will be:

1. The Region Representative and President formally invite each group/agency in the core membership to nominate an individual to act as RAC member until November 2001.
2. All core members meet with Region Representative as Chairperson and identify (i) a list of key issues for the RAC to consider in the first year, and (ii) a list of recommended groups and/or individuals to co-opt as RAC members until November 2001.
3. Board considers recommended co-opted members and endorses final RAC membership.
4. The Region Representative and President formally invite each individual in the co-opted membership (or group/agency to nominate an individual) to act as RAC member until November 2001.
5. Team Leaders draft issues paper based on key issues from initial meeting.
6. First full meeting of RAC occurs chaired by Region Representative. Role of RAC is clarified and draft issues paper presented for discussion.
7. Team Leaders redraft issues paper and draft action plan to November 2001 based on discussion.
8. Second RAC meeting occurs to endorse final issues paper and action plan. Permanent Chairperson elected.
9. Board of Directors note issues paper and endorse action plan.
10. RAC meets in accordance with action plan.
11. October 2001 - RAC reports to new Board of Directors on progress regarding action plan and recommended membership.
12. November 2001 - Board of Directors endorses membership of RAC and provides instructions for annual activity.

- THE REGIONAL ADVISORY COMMITTEE ROLE** To advise the Board of Directors on matters of strategic planning, policy and funding submissions
- To advise the President and General Manager on local media issues
 - To advise the regional staff, through the Team Leader, on regional program development
 - To be a link between QuAC and the local community, including in matters of fundraising and public relations.

THE ROLE OF THE RAC IS NOT

- The monitoring or evaluation of programs, or
- The approval of expenditure, other than of locally fundraised moneys
- The management of staff

RAC MEMBERSHIP

The RAC will consist of:

- QPP representative
- Volunteer representative
- Representative of the local sexual health service
- Regional representative of the Board of Directors
- Regional Coordinator
- Up to 5 co-opted members

CO-OPTED MEMBERS

Coopted members may include:

- A representative of the local hospital treating HIV infection and related illnesses
- A person drawn from the local gay community
- A representative of local sex workers group
- A representative of local injecting drug users group
- Ordinary members
- A representative of the local nursing service/s