

Consumer Advisory Council Charter

Effective Date: December 2023

This policy or procedure applies to:

Members of the Consumer Advisory Council

1. General

This Charter establishing a Consumer Advisory Council (CAC) for Guide Dogs Victoria (GDV) is based upon the principle that people with disability should have input into the development of organisational policies and processes relevant to the provision of supports and services and the protection of participant consumer rights as per NDIS Practice Standard 2 and other relevant Government policies.

2. Purpose

The purposes of the Guide Dogs Victoria (GDV) Consumer Advisory Council (CAC) are to represent views of consumers with low vision, and blindness in the delivery of GDV services in Victoria and to ensure:

- That consumer interests are considered in relevant GDV decisions.
- That GDV understands consumers current and future needs in order for them to achieve and exceed their expectations.
- That a facility is provided for engaging with and responding to, the needs of GDV consumers.
- That a voice for consumers is provided in the development of GDV products and services.
- That an active role is provided for consumers in shaping GDV disability advocacy policies.

3. Membership

- The CAC Membership will be comprised of up to ten (10) Members who have lived with low vision or blindness and include two ex-officio Members representing GDV leadership.
- Membership may include: A diverse mix of GDV consumers including carers of children, who have current experience* of GDV services. *Current Experience means that Members have recently received GDV services, or remain enrolled to receive GDV services, or GDV communications over a period of the past three years.
- GDV staff with current consumer experience.
- The CAC may appoint from time to time, special sub-committees including non-CAC Members, to research and report on, issues affecting GDV consumers and services.
- Members of the CAC shall conduct themselves in accordance with GDV's Codes of Conduct, Values and Behaviours. Members will at all times, treat other CAC Members, or consumers, courteously while adhering to GDV's confidentiality requirements.
- All non-staff CAC members will be required to register as a GDV volunteer and will be required to comply with GDV volunteer policies including signing Code of Conduct forms and undertaking the required social media, police and Working With Children checks.
- The Chairperson shall be an appointed Director of GDV's Board.
- The Deputy Chairperson may nominate for this role of Deputy and be appointed by a majority vote of CEC members through an expression of interest / nomination process. The appointment of Deputy Chair will be for a twenty-four-month term.
- The CEO and General Manager of Dog and Vision Services of GDV, may be ex officio Members of the CAC.
- All CAC Members shall serve a term of appointment of three years and may be eligible for re-appointment for a term of a further three years.
- Current Members may submit an expression of interest at the end of their term to the Chairperson to remain on the council for an additional term.
- At the commencement of a calendar year, GDV may call for expressions of interest (EOI) from consumers to join the CAC unless the number of Members is less than the quorum where a call for new Members can be also made. The call for EOI may specify particular skills, knowledge of lived vision loss experience, or regional interests, to be a criteria for appointment.

- It is expected that, while respecting Consumer confidentiality, CAC Members shall bring to the notice of the CAC Chair, any Consumer, or GDV service issues, including negative publicity affecting GDV, for the purposes of forming CAC agenda items.
- With approval of the CEO, or General Manager of Dog and Vision Services, the CAC may request attendance of other GDV staff at its meetings to advise on specialised issues.
- The CAC may request advice from related organisations or disciplines as required from time to time including, but not limited to, health scientists, Occupational Therapy, Orientation and Mobility, Physiotherapy, Mental Health and Technology disciplines.
- Members must declare any conflict of interest that should arise and withdraw from the meeting/group discussions as appropriate.
- Members will be advised in writing three months prior to the expiry of their term of Membership.
- A register of CAC Members, their contact details and date of appointment, will be kept up to date by GDV.

4. Proceedings

- Following each CAC meeting, reports will be made to the Board of GDV via the CAC chair or Deputy Chair on consumer and advocacy issues considered by the CAC.
- The CAC shall meet in person or by electronic means, no less than six times per year.
- A quorum of CAC meetings shall consist of five Members including the Chair and any appointed ex officio members.
- A schedule of meeting dates and times determined by CAC Members is to be prepared by GDV and presented to the CAC at commencement of each calendar year.
- The CAC will be supported as required by GDV staff who shall organise electronic meetings and or facilities, record minutes and decisions of CAC meetings and circularise such records to CAC Members.
- The Chair and or GDV CEO and support staff may call for items of discussion fourteen days prior to any scheduled CAC meeting so that an Agenda including such issues shall be circularised seven days prior to any scheduled meeting.
- The Chair may consent to the inclusion of any late items submitted by Members in the ordinary General Business of the meeting, or in his/her discretion, have that item deferred until the next meeting.

- It is expected that CAC Members presenting issues for discussion shall have concise summaries of background facts prepared so that suitable recommendations can be formed.
- The GDV Board Chair, or other Board Member, may attend CAC meetings from time to time to hear and discuss issues affecting GDV consumers or the vision impaired or blind community generally.
- A CAC Member will not act, or purport to act as spokesperson on behalf of GDV, but, at the request of the CEO, or Marketing General Manager, may consent to participate in any promotional publicity, or activity.
- A CAC Member may be suspended by notice in writing if:
 - They fail to attend more than two CAC meetings without apology accepted by the Chair, or,
 - Refuse or neglect to comply with provisions of this Charter or,
 - Engage in conduct unbecoming to the interests and purposes of GDV and the CAC.
- CAC Members will be expected to provide a short personal profile and either or both their phone and email contact details for inclusion in GDV's website and in GDV Newsletters for the purposes of being available for contact by GDV Consumers.

5. Remuneration and Expenses

- CAC Members, as volunteers, shall not receive remuneration for their services as members of the CAC.
- CAC Members may be reimbursed by GDV for reasonable out-of-pocket expenses related to their duties as CAC members, subject to any restrictions set by GDV. Such expenses must be approved in writing by the CEO (or their delegate) before being incurred.
- GDV may occasionally involve a CAC Member in paid consulting work outside the usual CAC scope. During such engagements, the CAC Member will temporarily cease to be a member of the CAC

6. Responsibilities

The **CAC** will:

- Provide a communication channel between consumers, carers, supporters of clients and Guide Dogs Victoria.
- Through working groups as required, provide support, and insight into the appropriateness and areas for improvement of GDV services to existing and prospective consumers.
- Participate in a co-design process when GDV is introducing new policies, services, programs, facilities, or technology.
- Advise and make recommendations to the GDV Board and GDV Management

7. Amendments to this Charter

This Charter shall be approved by the GDV Board and may be amended by the Board from time to time when and if requested by the Board, CEO, or CAC Members so as to maintain the objectives of consumer representation for GDV.