Victorian Home Education Advisory Committee (VHEAC)

Terms of reference

# Purpose and Scope

* 1. VHEAC was established in the context of the regulatory changes to home schooling in Victoria outlined in the Education and Training Reform Regulations 2017. The changes commenced on 1 January 2018.
	2. VHEAC provides guidance, information and feedback to the Department of Education (DE) and the Victorian Registration and Qualifications Authority (VRQA) on the operation of the home schooling regulations. Advice provided by the VHEAC will be used by the DE and the VRQA to inform the development and implementation of the home schooling guidelines, support materials and templates. Feedback provided by the VHEAC will also inform the DE’s evaluation of the current regulatory approach.
	3. VHEAC also provides guidance, information, and feedback on home schooling matters in Victoria, that are not directly affected by the regulations, as they arise. If the VHEAC wishes to discuss an individual case or application, VHEAC may only do so once that case has been finally determined and sufficiently anonymised.
	4. VHEAC home education representatives may participate in the recruitment of VRQA staff who work on home schooling issues.
	5. In undertaking its work, VHEAC will:
		+ share and discuss resources, evidence and current research relating to home education to support and inform policy and resource development.
		+ draw on the respective expertise of VHEAC members and the views of the broader home schooling community.

# Membership

* 1. VHEAC will comprise up to 12 members as follows:
		+ Director or Executive Director, Planning, Risk and Non-government Schools Division, DE as Chair
		+ An academic/researcher
		+ Deputy Chief Executive Officer, VRQA
		+ Manager, Home Schooling Unit, VRQA
		+ Up to 8 representatives of the Victorian home education community, or 7 members where a member is not also a disability advocate.
		+ An advocate for children with disabilities (the advocate may also be a representative from the home education community).
	2. VHEAC will be chaired by a representative from the DE and will be supported by a DE Secretariat. The Manager, Non-Government Schooling and Sector Support (NGSSS) has oversight of the home education portfolio. The Manager NGSSS and Secretariat attend VHEAC meetings and contribute to discussions, and agenda item updates, as non-voting attendees.
	3. Non-home education representatives of VHEAC (which may or may not include the disability advocate) will be appointed by the Chair or through appointment to a prescribed Victorian Public Service position.
	4. Membership of VHEAC occurs on a voluntary basis and no sitting fees are payable unless otherwise agreed with DE. Reasonable expenses incurred in participating in VHEAC’s work will be reimbursed in accordance DE’s Travel Policy and Procedure and by prior agreement with the VHEAC Secretariat.
	5. The process for VHEAC elections is noted in **Attachment 1**.

# Meetings and administration

* 1. VHEAC will meet at least 3 times each year, unless otherwise agreed to by the Chair and Committee members.
	2. If required, the Chair may call extraordinary meetings.
	3. A quorum at VHEAC meetings will be reached when at least 3 of the home education representatives and at least 3 of the non-home education representatives are in attendance.
	4. Delegates and invitees cannot be accepted as part of VHEAC, except with prior approval of the Chair. Every effort will be made to accommodate the availability of members. If a member cannot attend meetings, apologies will be recorded in the meeting minutes.
	5. VHEAC meetings will be held in hybrid mode (face-to-face or online) with the DE venue to be confirmed via each meeting’s agenda.
	6. VHEAC will be supported by the DE Secretariat, who will issue meeting papers, and prepare meeting minutes and a communique following each meeting.
	7. All VHEAC members can nominate agenda items and submit meeting papers. To permit the timely and efficient assembly and distribution of the VHEAC agenda and supporting papers, all papers are required to reach the DE Secretariat by email at vheac@education.vic.gov.au 7 working days prior to a scheduled meeting.
	8. All VHEAC members will be consulted on the proposed meeting minutes and communique.
	9. VHEAC will conduct a collective review of the future format and functions of the VHEAC in late 2025.

# Communications

* 1. Only official communiques of VHEAC meetings may be published by the DE, the VRQA and the Home Education Network.
	2. While it is expected that VHEAC members will continue to participate in public discourse about home education, they should refrain from discussing the specific deliberations of the Committee.
	3. VHEAC proceedings and papers are confidential. Proceedings should not be discussed with people external to the VHEAC; papers should not be circulated to people who are not members of the VHEAC without agreement of the Chair.
	4. Should members receive any media enquiries or public speaking requests about VHEAC, members should refer these requests to the VHEAC Secretariat. Members should be mindful that their public comments may reflect on VHEAC deliberations.
	5. Requests to represent the VHEAC on other bodies must be brought to the attention of the Secretariat and approved by the Chair.

# Conflict of interest

* 1. All non-government members are required to complete a declaration of private interests. Disclosed conflicts of interest and perceived conflicts are recorded in the VHEAC meeting minutes and managed at discretion of the Chair. Members have an obligation to declare and manage conflicts as they arise.

# Code of Conduct

* 1. All VHEAC members are expected to contribute and add value to VHEAC meetings and deliberations. Members are also asked to respect differences of opinion and provide their perspective in the context of other voices and the unique circumstances of Victoria.
	2. An outline of expected behaviours for all DE Committees is included at **Attachment 2.**

# Amendment, modification, or variation

* 1. The Terms of Reference may be amended, varied or modified in writing after consultation and agreement by VHEAC members.

# Attachment 1

**Appointment of Home Education Representatives and Disability Advocate**

**New member appointment process**

1. The home education representatives of the VHEAC and the disability advocate will be selected by a panel of current VHEAC home education representatives.
2. A call for applications will be published via the DE VHEAC webpage, the Home Education Network, the VRQA Facebook page and any other appropriate media.
3. Applicants must:
	1. have a minimum of 2 years’ home education experience and be able to provide guidance, information, and feedback on home schooling matters in Victoria
	2. be connected to the Victorian home education community (as a home educating parent, past parent, or home educated adult)
	3. for the position of disability advocate, must have demonstrated experience advocating for children with a disability (may or may not be a home education representative).
4. Applications must include:
5. the applicant’s name and contact details
6. a short summary of the applicant’s skills, experience and/or reasons for applying (one page maximum).
7. Expiring members of VHEAC may re-apply following their term but cannot form part of the selection panel.
8. The selection panel will consider the applications and may conduct interviews to complete the selection. Consideration must be given to the mix of skills and expertise, lived experience, personal qualities, diversity and gender balance of existing committee members. Appointments should reflect the rich diversity of the Victorian community.
9. The selection panel must obtain approval from the VHEAC Chair of the preferred candidate prior to advising the successful and unsuccessful candidates.
10. The VHEAC Secretariat will arrange the induction and onboarding of the new representatives.
11. Home education representatives and disability advocate will hold tenure for 3 years from the date of appointment, after which their position will be vacated, and a new appointment process conducted.

**Expiring and resigning members**

1. With the agreement of VHEAC, the Chair can extend the membership of elected home education representatives for up to 12 months.
2. In the event a home education representative resigns from the VHEAC, the position may be left vacant or filled by an interim member appointed by the VHEAC until a replacement is selected by the panel and appointed by the Chair.
3. Resigning members are to notify the Chair no later than one month prior to an upcoming VHEAC meeting.

# VHEAC 2025 Membership

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| --- | --- | --- |
| Name and title | Appointment | End of appointment |
| Linda Vaughan, Executive Director, International Education and Partnerships Division, Department of Education (Chair) | 2024 | N/A |
| Keith Don, Deputy CEO Victorian Registration and Qualifications Authority (VRQA)  | 2017 | N/A |
| Chris O’Sullivan, Manager, Home Schooling Unit, VRQA | 2017 | N/A |
| Dr Glenda Jackson, Director, Australian Home Education Advisory Service  | 2017 | N/A |
| Annie Regan, Home Education Representative | December 2024 | December 2026 |
| Kirsty James, Home Education Representative | October 2021 | December 2026 |
| Kamya Foster, Home Education Representative | October 2021 | December 2026 |
| Heidi Ryan, Disability Advocate | October 2021 | December 2026 |
| Joanna Bindon, Home Education Representative | December 2024 | December 2028 |
| Kate Croft, Home Education Representative | December 2024 | December 2028 |
| Pavlina McMaster, Home Education Representative | December 2024 | December 2028 |
| Lois Bedson, Home Education Representative | December 2024 | December 2028 |

# Attachment 2

**Expected Behaviours**

Advisory Committee, Board, Standing Committee, Sub-committee, and Project Control Board members are required to act in accordance with DE’s values and those behaviours expected of senior public officials in line with the VPS Code of Conduct. All external committee members and staff are expected to take the time to understand DE’s governance arrangements.

## Expectations of Board and committee members

All members of governance bodies must:

* adhere to the behaviours outlined in DE’s leadership charter
* act impartially
* act in accordance with the DE’s legal, compliance and regulatory responsibilities
* demonstrate respect by listening and encouraging committee members to explain ideas and actions, and by collaborating and engaging constructively to work towards a common goal
* lead and support DE’s integrity culture by providing transparency and accountability to committee deliberations and decision-making
* appropriately prepare for meetings, including consulting as appropriate in advance of the meeting to inform decision-making
* draw on relevant technical expertise from the member’s business area including collaborating with other business areas as appropriate to provide advice and input that considers a whole of system perspective
* demonstrate collective accountability and responsibility for advice
* attend all meetings, with delegations not ordinarily permitted except where formal acting arrangements are in place or other arrangements are agreed by the Chair.

## Expectations of the Chair

In addition to the expectations outlined above, the role of the Chair is to lead the governance body to achieve its objectives and execute responsibilities in line with its terms of reference. This includes:

* holding members to account where members do not adhere to the expected behaviours above
* championing continuous improvement of the governance body, and member performance
* ensuring the governance body acts in accordance with all relevant DE policies, and the Victorian Public Service Code of Conduct, including with respect to full disclosures of any potential conflicts of interest
* oversight of the governance body’s compliance obligations
* managing the governance body’s forward agenda, and maintaining its focus on matters relevant to its function
* conducting meetings which are scheduled and administered in a way which:
	+ supports the governance body to arrive at clear outcomes
	+ monitor actions and communicates advice
	+ enables active participation by all members
	+ engages with differing viewpoints in a constructive and clear way.