Terms of Reference

Date last updated	**August 2024**
Prepared by	**Teresa Mahood**

1. Purpose

The purpose of this Rural Engagement Group is to create an open and productive relationship between Council and representatives of the agricultural sector. Approximately 76% of land in Bass Coast Shire is used for agricultural purposes and agriculture contributes over $200 million to the local economy through a combination of traditional farming, such as dairy and meat production and processing, as well as some agricultural boutique enterprises, including venison, producers, olives, wine, and cheese.

2. Strategic Basis

The Rural Engagement Group is aligned with the following Council Plan Strategic Objectives:

Protecting our natural environment - *Building resilience and protecting and enhancing our natural assets*

Improve biodiversity through careful management of land, water and ecosystems that protect and enhance our native flora, fauna and biolinks.

Healthy Community - *An inclusive community that embraces its lifestyle and supports health and wellbeing*

Support individuals, community groups and local organisations to enhance community connection and wellbeing.
Work in partnership with the community to adapt and respond to emergencies and climate change.

Growing our Economy - *Progressing opportunities for visitor economy and business growth in harmony with our natural environment and sustainable values*

Support our agricultural and farming industry and facilitate biodiversity conservation and transitions to regenerative farming practices

Sustainable Development - *Prepare for growth while ensuring the intrinsic values and character of Bass Coast are retained*

Manage urban growth and define town boundaries to deliver future focused infrastructure that is innovative, sustainable and adaptable.

Leading for our Community - *Demonstrating leadership through good governance, transparency and accountability*

Foster partnerships and engage with the community, Traditional Owners and businesses to deliver the Climate Change Action Plan and achieve the zero net emissions target by 2030.
Demonstrate good governance, integrity and accountability through decision making that is ethical, informed and inclusive

3. Membership

Total membership of twelve. Members apply via an expression of interest process for a two-year term, and members will be selected by a panel.

Membership will constitute the following:

Ten farmers and / or agribusinesses representing a mix of industry sectors.

Bass Coast Shire Council:

- One Councillor (Chair)
- Coordinator Business and Industry Development Officer

Representative nominated from:

- Bass Coast Landcare
- Victorian Farmers Federation
- Food and Fibre Gippsland

4. Roles, Responsibilities & Objectives

The Rural Engagement Group is responsible for:

- Increasing social networking and collaboration for those in the agricultural industry
- Complying with standards of conduct agreed for the meeting

Council officers will be responsible for:

- Recording and distributing minutes

5. Meetings

Chair: Councillor, Bass Coast Shire Council

Secretariat: Coordinator Business and Industry Development, Bass Coast Shire Council

Meetings: Quarterly

Location: In person meetings

Quorum: 8

Conflicts of Interest: Members are to notify the Chairperson if any conflict of interest is foreseen with any issues or processes to be considered by the committee.

Confidentiality: On some occasions, the committee may deal with items of a confidential nature. Members are expected to deal with such items and issues with confidentiality, discretion and sensitivity.

6. Limitations

The Rural Engagement Group has no authority to:

- Expend monies on behalf of Council
- Commit Council to any arrangement
- Direct Council officers in the performance of their duties

7. Media

Any public comments made in relation to Rural Engagement Group must be done in accordance with the Bass Coast Shire Council Media Engagement Policy 2020.

8. Amendments, Modification or Variation

This Terms of Reference may be amended, varied or modified in writing after consultation and agreement by Rural Engagement Group members.

Members of the Committee and Councillor will review the Terms of Reference, membership and objectives every 3 years.