



National Suicide Prevention Office Advisory Councils

Terms of Reference

About the National Suicide Prevention Office

The National Suicide Prevention Office (NSPO) was established in 2022 as a specialist office tasked with leading a coordinated, whole-of-governments approach to suicide prevention. It does this by:

- publicly reporting on the state of suicide prevention in Australia, monitoring the impact of government action and identifying priorities for further reform;
- advising governments on strategic responses that will improve suicide prevention, including identifying policy settings that could meaningfully impact future prevalence of suicidal distress; and
- facilitating collaboration across governments, portfolios, sectors, and with people with lived experience of suicide to promote a social determinants approach to suicide prevention.

Role of the advisory councils

The NSPO has established two advisory councils to provide advice to the Head of the NSPO on the work and strategic direction of the Office – the Lived Experience Partnership Council (LEPC) and the Advisory Council (AC).

These advisory councils contribute to the effectiveness of the NSPO by:

- providing strategic advice regarding prioritisation of work for the NSPO;
- shaping the development of key work being done by the NSPO;
- advising how to maximise the positive impact of NSPO work;
- informing the NSPO's approach to engagement to ensure alignment with best practice;
- helping to promote cross-sector collaboration on suicide prevention;
- ensuring NSPO work is based on the best available evidence;
- connecting NSPO work to significant current and emerging issues; and
- providing any other advice requested by the Head to support the effective functioning of the NSPO.

These advisory councils are advisory in nature. They have no legal or governance responsibilities or authority to direct the work of the NSPO. As such, there is no requirement for these advisory councils to come to a consensus on issues. In fact, a diversity of views is encouraged.

Membership

Members of both advisory councils are appointed via an open expression of interest (EOI) process. Applications are considered by a panel that includes NSPO staff and people with lived experience of suicide, with final decision on appointments made by the Head of the NSPO.

Both advisory councils deliberately include members who bring a diverse range of perspectives, reflecting the broad approach to suicide prevention outlined in the [National Suicide Prevention Strategy 2025-2035](#).

LEPC membership

Members of the LEPC have lived and/or living experience of suicide. This includes experience of thoughts of suicide, suicidal behaviours, having survived a suicide attempt, cared for someone in suicidal crisis, or being bereaved by suicide.

The LEPC membership includes representation from groups who are disproportionately impacted by suicide, including those who have traditionally experienced marginalisation. The membership also reflects geographic diversity – for example, from metropolitan, regional, rural and remote areas; and from all states and territories.

AC membership

Members of the AC have expertise in areas relevant to the work of the NSPO. Examples of relevant expertise include leadership in policy development, systemic reform, wider determinants of suicide, data translation and evaluation, and support service systems. Members may also have a lived experience of suicide.

There are three designated organisational positions on the AC. These are:

- Suicide Prevention Australia, CEO
- National Mental Health Commission, CEO
- Gayaa Dhuwi (Proud Spirit) Australia, CEO

Appointment and term

Membership to the advisory councils will be for a period of 2 years, with potential to extend to a maximum of two terms. These terms are deliberately staggered within each advisory council to maintain some continuity within the membership.

Members may withdraw from the advisory councils at any time by phoning or email the Co-Chair and Head.

Chairing arrangements

Meetings are chaired by two co-chairs – one from each advisory council. The co-chairs attend the meetings of both Councils. These co-chairs are appointed from the membership by the Head of the NSPO.

The co-chairs:

- facilitate discussions in meetings, including actively inviting contributions from all members;
- work with the NSPO to ensure meetings have suitable agendas and participatory approaches to ensure that members have the best possible opportunity to contribute;

- help communicate concepts to ensure members understand the critical elements of discussions and how it impacts suicide prevention outcomes;
- represent the advisory council members on occasion – for example, speaking at events or in the media to support the functions of the NSPO; and
- act as a bridge between the two advisory councils, which enables the sharing of knowledge of discussions between the two advisory councils.

It is important to overtly note that the LEPC member acting as one of the co-chairs **does not** represent all lived experience of suicide perspectives when attending AC meetings and vice versa.

Meeting schedule

The LEPC meets monthly. The AC meets bi-monthly. In addition, there may be occasions when advice is sought from members out of meetings.

Both meetings are typically held virtually. But with sufficient notice, there may be occasions when face-to-face meetings are arranged.

The advisory councils meet separately to each other (with the co-chairs attending both). But there may be occasions when members of both advisory councils are invited to come together.

Relationship between advisory councils

The NSPO values both advisory councils equally. Each one contributes distinct expertise and perspectives to inform the work of the NSPO. Having two separate councils means each can include a larger number of members, which enables a diverse range of perspectives to be represented. However, there is also benefit in sharing knowledge between the two councils – that is, to integrate the insights of learned and lived expertise.

Knowledge sharing will be achieved through:

- the two co-chairs attending meetings of both advisory councils – this enables them to thoughtfully introduce key themes or questions that surfaced during LEPC discussions to AC discussions;
- sharing of meeting minutes between members of both advisory councils – members are encouraged to consider and respond to perspectives and advice raised through the other advisory council;
- posing questions between advisory councils – significant issues relevant to the functions of the NSPO that are identified in either advisory council may be referred to the other advisory council for consideration;
- common agenda items across advisory councils – discussions framed in the same way can be distinctly different when drawing on the different perspectives in each advisory council, which provides the NSPO with a broader range of input; and
- a review of engagement with members will be conducted annually to ensure opportunities for improvement are identified and acted upon.

Attendance and delegates

Regular meeting attendance is critical for members to remain across the work of the NSPO and provide timely input as projects develop and evolve.

If members are unable to attend a meeting, they are to advise the NSPO in advance. They are encouraged to still read the meeting papers as the NSPO welcomes input via email or separate meeting. If members are unable to attend three consecutive meetings, the NSPO will seek to determine whether the member is able to remain committed to attending.

Members are not able to nominate a delegate to attend meetings on their behalf.

Secretariat and record keeping

Secretariat support will be provided by the NSPO.

Secretariat support includes:

- developing and circulating meeting schedule in consultation with members;
- arranging meetings as required;
- developing meeting agendas in consultation with the co-chairs and sharing meeting papers five days prior to meetings;
- Recording and distributing meeting minutes;
- following up on agreed actions arising from meeting discussions and any advice received from the advisory councils; and
- maintaining a record of advice provided by members and how the NSPO has responded.

Meetings

A meeting schedule for the LEPC and AC will be set by the NSPO. Additional ad-hoc meetings may be called with advanced notice to ensure the LEPC and AC assists NSPO to meet deadlines.

- Meetings will be held virtually via Teams.
- Agendas, briefing papers and any other materials that support the engagement and participation of Members will be provided at least 5 business days prior to meetings.
- Meetings will be attended by the Head of the NSPO, the Director of Partnerships and Engagement, Director, Policy and the Senior Partnership and Engagement Officer. Other guests may be invited to attend meetings as required.
- No proxy attendance can be arranged. If a member is unable to attend a meeting, they may provide their advice directly to the secretariat for sharing with the group.
- All advice provided by members is recorded in the meeting minutes, including any relevant background information. A summary of minutes is shared with members of both advisory councils.

Ways of working

- The NSPO and advisory councils commit to ensuring the voices of lived experience are central to the work of the NSPO and to advice provided to governments.
- The NSPO and co-chairs promote a safe and supportive environment, with the aim of facilitating diverse viewpoints in discussions and decision making.
- The advisory councils work with the NSPO to understand the parameters of work being undertaken, and the NSPO remains open to innovation and diversity of advice provided by the advisory council members.
- Advisory council members aim to provide clear input to the NSPO, acknowledging that there may not always be a consensus view.
- The Head of the NSPO holds final decision authority on the work of the NSPO. The Head of the NSPO reports to the Minister for Health, Disability and Ageing, who holds final decision authority on government policy.

Conflicts of Interest

Advisory council members must declare any conflicts of interest as they arise, including where other interests influence the advice they provide to the NSPO, or where their membership and knowledge of the NSPO work relates to any competitive funding decisions.

Confidentiality

Information shared with the advisory councils must be treated as confidential and not be shared unless otherwise approved by the Head of the NSPO. A Deed of Confidentiality and a Conflict-of-Interest Declaration form will be provided to all members and must be signed and returned to the NSPO prior to participation.

Remuneration

The NSPO provides a daily or pro-rata payment for participation of people with a lived experience when they are personally nominated or invited to give expert advice and share their experiences to inform our work and they are not being remunerated for their time by another entity. This includes payment for travel and accommodation and reimbursement of any reasonable associated out of pocket expenses.

The NSPO's paid participation processes are currently under review, as part of alignment to the Department of Health, Disability and Ageing's payment processes.

Continuous Improvement

The Terms of Reference and ways of working will be reviewed every two years. Members are always welcome to provide feedback outside of meeting sessions direct to the NSPO.