

Diversity, Access and Equity Policy 2015

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1. Purpose

This policy describes the nature of diversity and the manner in which Greater Dandenong Council seeks to meet the needs of, support, engage, advocate on behalf of and empower its diverse community.

The goal of this policy is to enable the community to participate in Council programs, services and facilities, and contribute their voice to decisions which affect their lives. Accordingly, Council strives to deliver services and engage with the community in a way that respects human rights and equal opportunities for all.

This policy formalises Council's acknowledgement and respect for the diversity of backgrounds, abilities, values, beliefs and lifestyles of all residents. This policy also outlines the process that Council will adopt to acknowledge and respect the diversity of Greater Dandenong's community including:

- the planning and delivery of services and infrastructure in a manner that encourages inclusion
- the promotion of opportunity for all to participate in the social and economic life
- as an organisation, setting a standard of fairness, inclusion and transparency in the delivery of services.

This policy supports the intentions of the Council Plan and the Community Wellbeing Plan, and reflects the principles of the Victorian Charter of Human Rights and Responsibilities and the UNICEF Child Friendly City principles.

2. Background

Diversity makes us all unique. Council recognises diversity as an essential feature of all people and communities, which should be acknowledged, celebrated and respected. This policy recognises that diversity is inclusive of, but not limited to:

- age
- gender
- physical, sensory or intellectual ability
- mental health
- income or educational level
- birthplace or cultural background
- religious or other beliefs
- sexual orientation, identity or status.

Understanding and responding to diversity leads to an inclusive community where all people experience equal rights and opportunities. However many people continue to experience exclusion due to impairments affecting mobility, communication or self-care; limited financial means; lack of educational or employment opportunity; discrimination; limited family or social support; violence and abuse within the home or relationships; and other conditions. Respect for diversity means setting in place measures that acknowledge and address inequity and disadvantage.

Accordingly, inequity and disadvantage might not be redressed by treating all people the same, but by acknowledging differences among members of the community and adapting services and amenities to meet their diverse needs. In this way, equitable service planning and provision provides an opportunity to build an inclusive community that addresses inequities and promotes access.

3. Scope

This policy applies to all Councillors, Council staff, contract staff and volunteers.

This policy guides Council's efforts to address discrimination, promote inclusiveness, and foster community participation in social, civic and economic life. It applies to Council service planning and delivery, the development and planning of infrastructure, engagement and consultation with residents and all other related Council functions and organisational requirements.

This policy also acknowledges that there are some circumstances where legislation may prescribe how Council must deliver specific services, such as regulatory, non discriminatory, building, occupational health and safety and planning services. In these instances, Council must follow prescribed processes in order to fulfill its obligations

under various statutes to the extent that they do not contravene other legislative requirements.

4. Human Rights and Responsibilities Charter – Compatibility Statement

All matters relevant to the Victorian Human Rights Charter have been considered in the preparation of this policy and are consistent with the standards set by the Charter.

5. References

Legislation

The alignment of this Policy with Commonwealth, Victorian and Local Government policies and legislation reflects consistency in Council's approach to diversity. This Policy conforms to declarations and laws which seek to protect the rights of all people.

Relevant Commonwealth legislation:

A variety of Federal laws support the rights of people of diverse circumstances or characteristics, seeking to deter or redress unfavorable discrimination, or vilification, on account of gender, age, disability, marital status, pregnancy or family responsibility, sexual orientation and identity, race, colour, national origin or ethnic identity. Among these laws are the:

- Age Discrimination Act 2004
- Sex Discrimination Act 1984
- Equal Opportunity for Women in the Workplace Act 1999
- Human Rights (Sexual Conduct) Act 1994
- Racial Discrimination Act 1975
- Racial Hatred Act 1995
- Disability Discrimination Act 1992
- National Disability Insurance Scheme (NDIS) Act 2013
- Human Rights Commission Act 1986
- Work Health and Safety Act 2011
- Workplace Gender Equality Act 2012

Relevant State legislation:

Victorian Acts which seek to promote tolerance of diversity and prevent discrimination on the basis of various personal characteristics and circumstances, include:

- Equal Opportunity Act 2011
- Occupational Health and Safety Act 2004
- Charter of Human Rights and Responsibilities Act 2006
- Racial and Religious Tolerance Act 2001
- Multicultural Victoria Act 2011



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Disability Act 2006
Carers Recognition Act 2012
Local Government Act 1989
Public Health and Wellbeing Act 2008

6. Definitions

Access: means that Council services and programs should be available to all people in our diverse community.

Diversity: refers to the variety of differences between people. Diversity encompasses acceptance and respect. It is an understanding that each individual is unique and there is recognition of our individual difference.

Equality: affirms that all human beings are born free and equal, having the same rights and entitled to the same level of respect.

Equity: Equity means that Council services and programs should deliver outcomes for each individual or group that are equivalent to those that any other member of our community may expect to receive.

Inequality: Inequality can be characterised by the existence of unequal opportunities and rewards for different social positions or statuses within a group or society. It contains structured and recurrent patterns of unequal distributions of goods, wealth, opportunities, rewards, and punishments.

Inequity: Lack of fairness or justice.

Social Inclusion: refers to an inclusive society in which every individual has an active role to play. Such a society is based on fundamental values of equity, equality, social justice, and human rights and freedoms, as well as on the principles of tolerance and embracing diversity.

7 Council Policy

This policy emphasises the importance of access, inclusion and partnership; advocacy; celebration; community and civic participation; inclusive places and spaces; and engagement in service planning and delivery. Council will seek to achieve these goals by:

- enhancing the capacity of Council to recognise and respond appropriately to diversity
- engaging with the community in a manner that provides genuine opportunities for participation in decision-making and to improve responsiveness of services to a diverse community
- identifying and working to address conditions that limit equal access and opportunity for all residents.

The following policy statements demonstrate the processes that Council will adopt in acknowledgement and respect for the diversity of backgrounds, values, beliefs and lifestyles of all residents.

7.1 Partnerships and Leadership

Council supports access and participation in community life for all, helping to secure access to services, activities and facilities that enable all in the community to live constructive and fulfilling lives.

To achieve this Council will:

- seek to develop programs and services that reflect the needs of all community members, collaborating where appropriate, with local organisations to develop more effective services for diverse and vulnerable communities, and models of service delivery which improve equity and access
- continue to enhance access to clear, accessible information in a variety of formats and media, as many residents have limited English fluency or literacy, with particular effort to be made to reach the more vulnerable members of our community, in accordance with Council's Language and Communications Policy and Framework
- facilitate participation in Council decision-making, recognising that service provision and planning are enhanced where the community has an opportunity to express their opinions, preferences and aspirations.
- as a progressive organisation and major regional employer, continue to set an example as an organisation which rejects discrimination, bullying, harassment and violence; acknowledges the benefits of diversity among its staff; and promotes equality of opportunity in all aspects of employment, including recruitment, promotion and training.

7.2 Advocacy

Council has a responsibility to represent the needs of the whole community. This includes advocating on a range of issues to a variety of bodies and levels of government. Central to this is the need to advocate for equitable funding and service delivery to address the needs of diverse groups and individuals within our community.

To advocate on behalf of all residents, Council will:

- consult with the community to seek guidance in identifying issues for advocacy
- seek to influence public policy and resource allocation, lobbying for more resources to address disadvantage in Greater Dandenong
- advocate and plan for the development and management of built environments, open spaces and streetscapes that are accessible and maximise their potential use by diverse groups.

7.3 Celebration

Council seeks to create an inclusive community that celebrates and values diversity.

Accordingly, Council seeks to promote the benefits of access and equity, while rejecting discrimination and prejudice.

Support for celebrations and festivals acknowledges, values and celebrates diversity and promotes inclusiveness.

Council will:

- advocate for and support, local and regional events, festivals and other initiatives that promote pride, generate respect and foster inclusion
- develop initiatives which cultivate respect and harmony while challenging racism, discrimination and negative stereotyping
- promote the benefits of diversity within and beyond the municipality
- work to enhance the understanding and appreciation for diversity in the Greater Dandenong community, including maintaining and disseminating accurate information on the community and its diversity.

7.4 Community and Civic Participation

The community should be empowered to participate fully in civic life, enjoying the freedom to engage in social opportunities, learning and education, volunteering and employment, according to their preferences.

Council is therefore committed to meaningful, inclusive capacity-building to enhance the strengths of each individual, redress disadvantage, foster a cohesive community and create pathways for people to connect to others.

Council will:

- utilise the Community Engagement Framework to actively engage with all relevant segments of the community when undertaking community consultation and seeking general public comment on broad community issues
- create opportunities to participate in Council processes through activities and opportunities that are accessible to all residents
- provide accessible and welcoming places and spaces that encourage civic participation in community life
- promote opportunities for meaningful participation in Council activities and programs that are appropriate to the needs of the community
- empower and encourage the community to raise awareness of existing services and promote participation.

7.5 Inclusive Places and Spaces

The availability and accessibility of built infrastructure and open spaces is an important component in building a healthy and inclusive community. Infrastructure that is accessible, welcoming, safe and relevant to people of varying abilities, cultures, incomes and other circumstances supports this policy aim of access and equity.

To support this aim Council will:

- consider equity and access in the way community facilities are funded, designed, used and operated, as far as practicable
- plan for facilities and infrastructure that take into account the demographic nature of the Greater Dandenong community
- encourage the shared use of facilities and community infrastructure including the integration and co-location of services to maximise utilisation and improving access to community facilities for all groups in the community
- consult with Greater Dandenong's diverse communities when considering how Council services and facilities are planned, designed and delivered

- plan programs to update and renew infrastructure to a standard that meets accessibility requirements to aid improved accessibility.

7.6 Service Planning and Delivery

Council plays a vital role in ensuring accessible and inclusive planning, policy, services, activities and information. Council's programs and services are significantly enhanced and better utilised when they are designed in partnership with our community.

We will respond to the needs of the Greater Dandenong community by providing services which are equitable, accessible, safe, high in quality and cost effective.

Council will:

- consider principles of access and equity into all Council service and program planning
- consider the prioritisation of services and programs for residents most vulnerable to, and affected by, social disadvantage where appropriate
- consider opportunities for capacity building for and with the community in the design and delivery of services and programs.
- implement education and training programs for staff to promote equitable access to services and the inclusion of all community members in service planning and development.

7.7 Capabilities

The availability of a variety of resources that enable Council to respond to needs and deliver equitable outcomes is an important consideration in the implementation of this policy.

To support the aims of this policy Council will:

- incorporate the principles of this policy into corporate and business planning of relevant Council Business Units
- develop an Audit Tool as a resource for Council services to use in the planning, development and implementation stages
- provide ongoing competency and professional development opportunities for Council leadership, management and staff with a focus on planning for a diverse community and including equity and access in decision making
- support the ongoing implementation of the Community Engagement Policy and Framework along with the Language and Communications Policy and Framework to

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encourage all Council staff to engage and consult with the community in a manner that respects and responds to diversity.

7.8 Performance

Reporting and review mechanisms that are accessible, transparent and effective are important to measure Council's performance against these policy principles.

Council will:

- gather and disseminate key statistics on diverse population groups to the general public and Council staff
- provide an annual update to Council on the implementation of this policy
- incorporate key performance indicators related to this policy into Council's corporate reporting processes as the opportunity arises
- review the goals and objectives of forthcoming strategic documents to integrate the principles of diversity, access and equity.

8. Related Documents

The following have been prepared and endorsed by the City of Greater Dandenong.

Plans

Asylum Seeker and Refugee Communities Action Plan (2014-17)
Best Start Action Plan (2014-15)
Children's Plan (2015-19)
Council Plan (2013-17)
Community Safety Plan 2015-22)
Community Wellbeing Plan 2015-22)
Disability Action Plan (2010-14)
Festival and Events Plan (2012-15)
Health and Wellbeing Plan (2013-17)
Imagine 2030 Community Plan
Language and Communication Action Plan and Framework (2015)

Strategies

Active Ageing Strategy (2012-15)
Activate – Sport and Recreation Strategy (2014-19)



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Cultural Diversity Strategy (2010-15)
Local Economic and Employment Development Strategy (2011)
Libraries Without Borders – Library Strategy (2012-16)
Youth Strategy (2012-17)

Policies

Active Ageing Policy
Community Engagement Policy
Disability Policy
Greater Dandenong City Council Enterprise Bargaining Agreement
Indigenous Policy
Language and Communication Policy
Multipurpose Use of Community Facilities Policy
Occupational Health and Safety Policies