

DISABILITY ACTION PLAN 2025-2029 DRAFT

Report Author: Executive Officer – Health and Wellbeing
Responsible Officer: Director Communities
Ward(s) affected: (All Wards);

The author(s) of this report and the Responsible Officer consider that the report complies with the overarching governance principles and supporting principles set out in the Local Government Act 2020.

CONFIDENTIALITY

This item is to be considered at a Council meeting that is open to the public.

SUMMARY

Council's Equity, Access, and Inclusion Strategy 2013-2023 (The Strategy) meets Council's legislative obligations under the *Victorian Disability Act (2006)* and stipulates the requirements for a Disability Action Plan (DAP). The most recent DAP expired in 2023, with the next iteration for Council (Attachment One) building upon the learning and success of the previous Strategy.

The proposed DAP (2025-2029) outlines Council's approach to meeting legislative requirements, ensuring we work towards a common vision, advancing disability inclusion across all aspects of Council. The DAP works towards a long-term vision through the structure of four goals and is written to ensure Council has strategic foresight to additional legislative obligations pending the passing of the *Disability Inclusion Bill*.

A first phase (four weeks) of community engagement, in addition to Council's Disability Advisory Committee and Access and Equity Reference Group supported the development of the DAP to date, identifying both the key themes and desired outcomes of the Plan. This is attached to this report as Attachment Two: Disability Action Plan Community Engagement Report. A further four weeks of stakeholder and community engagement is required before finalising the DAP. This is planned to commence in March 2025.

RECOMMENDATION

That Council endorse the Draft Disability Action Plan 2025-2029 and support a further four weeks of consultation.

RELATED COUNCIL DECISIONS

Council endorsed Equity, Access, and Inclusion Strategy 2013 – 2023 (Item 7.7, 13 May 2014)

Council endorsed appointment of Disability Advisory Committee Members 2022–2026, (Item 10.6, 20 September 2022)

Council endorsed Equity, Access & Inclusion Strategy 2013-2023, Final Report (Item 10.4, 11 June 2024).

DISCUSSION

Yarra Ranges Council has been successful with advancing disability inclusion for the past decade through the implementation of the Yarra Ranges Equity, Access and Inclusion Strategy 2013-2023. This Strategy has expired and a new plan is required.

Yarra Ranges Council is obliged under *Commonwealth Disability Discrimination Act 1992*, and the *Victorian Disability Act 2006* (currently under review) to develop and maintain a Disability Action Plan (DAP).

As part of the review of the *Victorian Disability Act 2006*, a *Disability Inclusion Bill* was released for sector-wide consultation, closing in October 2022. A summary of key themes has been released and the DAP is positioning Council to meet both increasing legislative responsibility while moving to the social model of disability as core practice for Council.

Once passed, the *Disability Inclusion Bill* which will sit alongside the *Victorian Disability Act 2006*, will require an additional resource commitment to meet Council's new legislative requirements. The DAP positions Council strongly to meet any new requirements.

Options considered

Only one option has been considered.

Recommended option and justification

After a first phase of community engagement identifying key themes and outcomes for the proposed DAP, it is recommended that Council support a further four weeks of consultation on the proposed Disability Action Plan 2025-2029, in particular to obtain feedback on the accessibility of the document, inclusion of actions to address hidden disabilities and the suite of proposed actions that sit within the DAP.

FINANCIAL ANALYSIS

The cost to develop the proposed Disability Action Plan 2025-2029 is broken down in Table 1 below.

Table 1: Cost to develop Disability Action Plan

Action	Cost	Comment
Community Engagement – Two Phases (8 weeks total)	\$4000	Renumeration for participants beyond Council Advisory Committees and Community Engagement Roadshow.
Graphic Design	\$1,500	Design of Community Engagement Reports and Accessible Content
Consultancy	\$4,500	Women’s Health East
FTE: <i>Health & Wellbeing Planner</i> <i>Disability Inclusion Officer</i> <i>EO Health & Wellbeing</i> <i>Internal Project Working Group</i>	In-kind	

APPLICABLE PLANS AND POLICIES

This report contributes to the following strategic objective(s) in the Council Plan:

Connected and Healthy Communities:

- The DAP will address the needs of people with disability in having communities which are safe, resilient, healthy, inclusive, and socially well connected. It will also address the key objective to have quality services which are accessible to everyone through the identification and removal of systemic barriers.

Quality Infrastructure and Liveable Places:

- Consultation with people with disability will be conducted when Council plans and develops quality facilities and infrastructure that meet current and future needs. Places will be well planned and are hubs of activity that foster wellbeing, creativity, and innovation. Where appropriate, Disability Advisory Committee members support site audits with officers, where project timelines and resources allow.

High Performing Organisation:

- An innovative, responsive organisation that listens to people with disability and those who provide unpaid care. It also recognised that Council is one of the largest employers in the Yarra Ranges and also has a high proportion of employees who may be living with a disability or providing unpaid care.

RELEVANT LAW

International

United Nations Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities

National

Commonwealth Disability Discrimination Act 1992

State

Victorian Disability Act 2006 (Vic)

Disability Inclusion Bill Exposure Draft 2022

Equal Opportunity Act 2010 (Vic)

Charter of Human Rights and Responsibilities Act 2006 (Vic)

Gender Equality Act 2020

Gender Impact Assessment

An initial Gender Impact Assessment (GIA) was completed on the 17 May 2024. The key recommendation from the GIA was to conduct broad consultation, particularly where data was lacking.

Further to this, Women's Health East will consult on the DAP to further ensure an intersectional lens is applied and that the actions included in the plan are strengthened.

SUSTAINABILITY IMPLICATIONS

Economic Implications

The DAP seeks to support employment opportunities for people with disability and for those who provide care and unpaid care. Recognising the impacts on social and economic participation experienced by community members. The DAP looks to review and continuously work to advance disability inclusion across internal workforces and through advocacy and partnership with external agencies.

Social Implications

The health and wellbeing of all community members is underpinned by the social determinants of health including education, employment, housing, economic participation, transport, gender, environment, social inclusion, violence, health literacy and power over decision making. In the context of disability inclusion, it is important to consider these determinants and the disproportionate effects. This presented in the key themes stated in Attachment Two: Disability Action Plan

Community Engagement Report. As a result, actions outlined in the DAP will involve Council playing a role as a lead, partner or advocate to address these determinants

Environmental Implications

In the context of climate change, people with disability, particularly women are often among those most adversely affected in an emergency, sustaining disproportionately higher rates of morbidity and mortality, and at the same time being among those least able to have access to emergency support. Meaningful participation, inclusion, and leadership of people with disabilities and their carers in disaster response, planning and evacuations is required. This has been referenced in the DAP and will be reinforced through other critical planning documents for Council.

COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT

In the final year of the outgoing Equity, Access and Inclusion Strategy 2013-2023, consultation was completed with community and key stakeholders to evaluate, review and provide recommendations for the next iteration of the DAP. This, in addition to the review of local health data was vital to ensure Council planning is aligning with the changing needs of the community. This was presented to Council in the form of a Final Report, Summary Report and Video to close out the previous Strategy in June 2023.

In preparing for the next four-year DAP, a four-week community engagement period was held between February and March 2024. It captures the first of two phases in which the community is engaged regarding their vision, desired outcomes and preferences for access, equity, and inclusion for people with disability and unpaid carers in the Yarra Ranges.

During this time several of Council's advisory committees were also consulted including; Disability Advisory Committee, Health and Wellbeing Advisory Committee and Youth Ambassadors.

Information gathered through this consultation phase is summarised in Attachment Two. A second round of stakeholder and community engagement will be undertaken in March 2025, this in adherence to Council's Community Engagement Policy.

COLLABORATION, INNOVATION AND CONTINUOUS IMPROVEMENT

This DAP meets all legislative responsibilities and requirements for Council. It ensures we work towards a common vision, advancing disability inclusion across all aspects of Council. In developing the DAP, consideration has been given to the following key documents:

- Council Plan 2025-2029 (*in development*)
- Health & Wellbeing Strategy 2025-2029 (*in development*)
- Other key strategies, plans and policy for Yarra Ranges Council where existing commitments are referenced.

Council will continue to deliver three critical functions that will ensure good governance and monitor and evaluate progress against all actions referenced in the DAP. This will be captured in Councils Corporate Performance Management system and presented to Council via an annual report. They are:

Council's Access and Equity Reference Group

The Access and Equity Reference Group (A&E Reference Group) is a group of Council staff that meet quarterly. They are responsible for helping to implement and evaluate the Disability Action Plan. They will support the annual reporting to Council.

Disability Advisory Committee

Council is dedicated to advancing access, equity, and inclusion of people with disability and unpaid carers. This includes a dedicated Disability Advisory Committee (DAC), established in 2012. The DAC provides advice to Council, bringing their lived experience to inform policy, planning and programs delivered by Council. DAC members serve a four-year term and meet every six weeks with a nominated Councillor delegate.

Disability Inclusion Officer

Council has a full-time Disability Inclusion Officer. This role drives community development, engagement and advises on all work across Council. It acts as a conduit between community and Council. It convenes the Disability Advisory Committee and the Access and Equity Reference Group. It builds Council's capacity in all areas.

RISK ASSESSMENT

The following risks have been identified:

Resource Constraints

Risk: Yarra Ranges as one of the larger LGAs with a significantly high proportion of the population that requires a variety of service supports, in addition to ageing infrastructure.

Impact: Limited resources to meet growing community demand. Limited number of service providers in the region.

Mitigation: Capacity building and professional development opportunities for officers to build Disability Inclusion as part of business as usual. Continued advocacy on behalf of Council relating to matters outside of Councils jurisdiction. Enhancing partnerships between service providers.

Legislative Changes

Risk: Ongoing reviews and potential changes to legislation, such as the *Disability Act* requires Council to be agile and ensure resources are available.

Impact: Increased governance and reporting requirements, resulting in potential new obligations for Council.

Mitigation: Annual review and reporting on the DAP. Consider aligning Disability Impact Assessments with Gender Impact Assessment processes.

CONFLICTS OF INTEREST

No officers and/or delegates acting on behalf of the Council through the Instrument of Delegation and involved in the preparation and/or authorisation of this report have any general or material conflict of interest as defined within the *Local Government Act 2020*.

ATTACHMENTS TO THE REPORT

1. Disability Action Plan 2025-2029
2. Disability Action Plan Community Engagement Report