

DISABILITY ACTION PLAN 2025-2029 FOR ENDORSEMENT

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

The *Victorian Disability Act (2006)* requires councils to maintain a Disability Action Plan (DAP). Council's Equity, Access and Inclusion Strategy 2013–2023 met this requirement; a final report is provided (Attachment 3).

The proposed Disability Action Plan 2025–2029 (Final) is Council's next plan to support disability inclusion (Attachment 1). It moves to a four yearly planning cycle, while setting four strategic goals and a long-term vision, while also preparing for possible future requirements under the proposed *Disability Inclusion Bill*.

The refreshed DAP was shaped through two phases of community engagement, conducted over eight weeks, in addition to consultation with Council's Disability Advisory Committee; the Community Engagement Report is included as Attachment 2.

Council's Disability Advisory Committee plays a significant role in the development, implementation and review of the DAP. A yearly report is provided to Council on the implementation of the DAP and a summary of the Disability Advisory Committee's achievements. The committee's achievements for 2024 are provided as Attachment 4.

RECOMMENDATION

That Council endorse the Yarra Ranges Council Disability Action Plan 2025-2029.

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).

Council endorsed Draft Disability Action Plan 2025-2029 and supported further four weeks community consultation (Item 10.4, 25 February 2025).

DISCUSSION

Purpose and Background

The *Victorian Disability Act 2006* (currently under review) requires councils to maintain a Disability Action Plan (DAP). Council met this requirement through its Equity, Access and Inclusion Strategy 2013-2023, which has now ended; a final report on the ten year Strategy is provided with this report as Attachment 3.

The refreshed DAP 2025–2029 (Final) is included with this report as Attachment 1. It is Council's next iteration and ensures that Council can meet both current and emerging legislative responsibilities. It also strengthens Council's commitment to the social model of disability.

As part of the review of the *Victorian Disability Act 2006*, a *Disability Inclusion Bill* was released for sector-wide consultation, which closed in October 2022. A summary of key themes has since been published.

If passed, the *Disability Inclusion Bill* will require additional resource commitment to meet Council's new obligations. The DAP 2025-2029 (Final) positions Council well for these changes.

Options considered

Only one option was considered.

Recommended option and justification

It is recommended that Council endorse the Disability Action Plan 2025-2029 (Final). It is reflective of community expectations and in alignment with Council's service level commitments.

FINANCIAL ANALYSIS

Developing the DAP 2025-2029 (Final) cost \$10,000, funded through the Health and Wellbeing operational budget. Delivery of the DAP will be funded through existing operational budget. Grant opportunities and partnerships will be sought where alignment exists. This will be monitored and reported on as part of the DAP's annual reporting to Council.

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. Council is one of the largest employers in the Yarra Ranges and 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*

SUSTAINABILITY IMPLICATIONS

Economic Implications

The DAP seeks to support employment opportunities for people with disability and unpaid carers, recognising the barriers they face to social and economic participation. The DAP commits to ongoing improvement of disability inclusion within Council's workforce and through advocacy and partnerships with external organisations.

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. People with disability often experience greater barriers across these areas. The DAP highlights these issues and sets out clear actions for how Council will help address them.

Environmental Implications

People with disability, particularly women, are often among those most adversely affected in an emergency, sustaining disproportionately higher rates of morbidity and mortality, and limited access to support. The DAP recognises the need for their meaningful participation, inclusion, and leadership in disaster planning, response, and evacuation. This focus will also be reinforced in other key Council planning documents.

COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT

An initial Gender Impact Assessment (GIA) was completed on the 17 May 2024. It recommended broad community engagement, particularly where data was lacking.

A four-week engagement period occurred to identify key themes for the DAP. In February 2025, Council supported a further four weeks of community engagement, which took place from March 6 – April 6, 2025. A total of eight weeks of community engagement has occurred to inform the DAP.

In addition to this, Women's Health East completed an independent gender analysis on the draft DAP and facilitated an independent focus group. This work strengthened

the intersectional approach and language used throughout the DAP's actions and performance indicators.

The DAP (Final) incorporates feedback obtained through this engagement period. A summary of findings is included with this report as Attachment 2, Community Engagement Report.

Council acknowledges the contributions of the Disability Advisory Committee, now in its third term, providing a voice to Council. The Disability Advisory Committee have been integral to informing the DAP. Council also worked with the Health and Wellbeing Advisory Committee and Positive Ageing Reference Group who also helped to inform the DAP.

COLLABORATION, INNOVATION AND CONTINUOUS IMPROVEMENT

Consultation has occurred with Senior and Executive Officers through the entirety of this project.

Council's Integrated Planning Control Group has ensured consideration has been given to the following key strategic 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 appropriate e.g. Key Life Stages Plan.

Implementation of the DAP will be tracked through Council's Corporate Performance Management system and reported annually to Council.

RISK ASSESSMENT

Resource Constraints

Risk: Yarra Ranges is 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 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. Yarra Ranges Disability Action Plan 2025-2029 - Draft
2. Disability Action Plan Community Engagement Report April 2025
3. Equity, Access and Inclusion Strategy 2013-2023 Final Report
4. 2024 Disability Advisory Committee Achievements