

Diversity Access and Equity Policy 2026-30

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Document Compliance

Council acknowledges the legal responsibility to comply with the *Charter of Human Rights and Responsibilities Act 2006* and the *Equal Opportunity Act 2010*. The *Charter of Human Rights and Responsibilities Act 2006* is designed to protect the fundamental rights and freedoms of citizens. The Charter gives legal protection to 20 fundamental human rights under four key values that include freedom, respect, equality and dignity.

Greater Dandenong City Council Policies comply with the Victorian Charter of Human Rights and Responsibilities, the *Gender Equality Act 2020*, the *Climate Change Act 2017*, the Child Safe Standards contained in the *Child Wellbeing and Safety Act 2005*, (Amended) the *Privacy and Data Protection Act 2014* and the Overarching Governance Principles specified in 9(2) of the *Local Government Act 2020*.

Acknowledgment of Country

Greater Dandenong City Council acknowledges the Traditional Custodians of this land, the Bunurong People and pays respect to their Elders past and present. We recognise and respect their continuing connections to climate, Culture, Country and waters.

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1. POLICY OBJECTIVE (OR PURPOSE)

This policy describes the nature of diversity and the way Council seeks to support its diverse community through engagement, communication, service delivery, infrastructure development and advocacy.

It expresses Council's acknowledgement and respect for the diversity of backgrounds, abilities, values, beliefs, and lifestyles of all residents. It also recognises conditions which contribute to personal hardship for some residents, such as social isolation, family violence, financial hardship, discrimination and others:

- in setting a standard of fairness, inclusion, and transparency in all aspects of its conduct.
- in planning and delivering services and infrastructure in a way that takes account of the needs and circumstances of all residents
- in creating opportunities for all people to participate in the social and economic life of this community

2. BACKGROUND

Diversity makes us all unique. It is an essential feature of all people and communities, which should be respected and taken into consideration in Council planning and programs. This policy acknowledges that diversity includes, but not limited to:

- age
- sex
- sexual orientation and gender identity.
- physical, mental, visual, sensory, or intellectual ability
- mental or physical health
- educational level and income
- Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander identity
- birthplace or cultural identity
- language and communication requirements
- religious or other beliefs
- family structure and conditions
- housing circumstances

Many people experience exclusion due to conditions affecting mobility, communication, or self-care; financial or housing insecurity; lack of educational or employment opportunity; limited family or social support; family violence and/or abuse; or other conditions. Some face discrimination on the basis of their ethnicity, ability, sex, gender identity or other attributes.

Others still may experience multiple forms of disadvantage or discrimination, which may combine to worsen disadvantage or hardship.

Such considerations are considered by Council in engaging and communicating with residents, delivering services and advocating for resources for this community.

3. SCOPE

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

It relates to a variety of Council activities, such as engagement and consultation; service planning and delivery; the development of infrastructure, open spaces and community facilities; advocacy; and other functions.

The policy also requires Council to comply with all diversity, access and equity-related legislation. In some instances, legislation may stipulate how Council must deliver specific services, such as regulatory, building, occupational health and safety and planning services.

4. DEFINITIONS

Unless otherwise specified within this policy, the following words and phrases are defined to mean the following in terms of this policy:

Access	The ability or opportunity for people to benefit from services and programs which may advance their well-being. Access not only requires that services are available, but that they be affordable, within physical reach, and match the needs of their intended beneficiaries.
Advocacy	Seeking to persuade governments or other institutions to direct resources to a particular community or goal. For a council, its purpose is generally to further the interests and rights of residents, including marginalised individuals, ensuring that they receive fair access to services and resources.
Council Staff	Means all Council employees including fulltime, part-time, casual, permanent, temporary, agency staff, contractors, consultants and volunteers.
Diversity	This term stands for the unique, often intersecting, backgrounds, characteristics, experiences and material circumstances of people and of their communities. Diversity encompasses differences in race, ethnicity, religion, age, sex, gender, ability and other attributes. Consideration of diversity helps councils provide services and resources

to people in a way that effectively and authentically matches their circumstances, needs and aspirations.

Equity	Equity is the principle of fairness. This often entails consideration of the differing circumstances and characteristics of individuals, then matching resources and services to their needs and preferences, to ensure that they enjoy equal opportunity.
Gender diverse	An attribute of those people whose gender identity and expression do not correspond with societal expectations, based upon the sex assigned to them at birth. Such circumstances reflect the varying and sometimes changeable nature of gender identity.
Gender equality	Equal opportunity for women, men and gender diverse people – a goal often sought by striving to reduce gender-related inequality and discrimination.

5. POLICY

This policy emphasises the importance of collaboration and leadership, advocacy, language and communication, acknowledgement and celebration of diversity, community and civic participation, the development of infrastructure and open spaces, and consultation with residents in the course of service planning and delivery.

In the conduct of these activities, Council seeks to:

- enhance its capacity to identify and respond appropriately to diversity;
- provide opportunities for participation in decision-making to residents adapting services and programs to their often-differing needs; and
- address barriers which reduce access and opportunity for residents.

The policy statements set out below describe Council's approach to acknowledging and respecting the diversity of its residents in its various fields of responsibility.

5.1 PARTNERSHIPS AND LEADERSHIP

Council supports the opportunity for participation in community life for all residents. To achieve this, Council will:

- Collaborate with local organisations to develop accessible services and programs for diverse communities.
- Set an example to the community, repudiating discrimination, bullying, harassment, and violence; acknowledging the benefits of diversity; and extending equal opportunity to its staff in recruitment, promotion, and training.

5.2 ADVOCACY

Council will represent the needs of the whole community, advocating to governments and other institutions for funding and services to address the needs of diverse groups and individuals. To advocate on behalf of all residents, Council will:

- seek guidance from the community in identifying issues for advocacy
- advocate for programs to ease financial hardship, alleviate housing insecurity, prevent family violence, advance gender equality, reduce unemployment and otherwise redress disadvantage
- advocate for the development of built environments, open spaces and streetscapes that are safe, accessible and appealing to diverse groups.

5.3 LANGUAGE AND COMMUNICATION

Access to information contributes to an informed and active community. Accordingly, it is important that residents are informed about Council services, programs, events and facilities available to them.

Council's communication with residents shall be plain and straightforward, taking consideration of different levels of formal education and English fluency, incorporating specific requirements associated with a disability, and accommodating language preferences among residents. Council seeks the guidance of residents, community organisations and community leaders in shaping this approach to communication.

To communicate effectively with residents and to accommodate their diverse circumstances and language needs, Council will:

- communicate in a way that is clear and concise
- supply relevant, timely, transparent, and accurate information, in languages, formats appropriate to the needs of residents
- provide translations and interpreters where required
- work with cultural media organisations, community leaders and service providers, to reach all segments of the community.

5.4 ACKNOWLEDGEMENT AND CELEBRATION OF DIVERSITY

Council strives to foster a community that acknowledges and respects diversity, while repudiating discrimination and prejudice. Support for celebrations and festivals acknowledges these values and promotes the participation of residents.

Council will:

- work with the community to cultivate respect and challenge discrimination
- support events, festivals and other activities that promote pride and generate respect
- provide accurate and timely information about the community and its diversity.

5.5 COMMUNITY AND CIVIC PARTICIPATION

All residents are entitled to the opportunity to participate in civic life, enjoying social activities, taking part in sport and physical recreation, participating in learning and education, and engaging in volunteering and employment.

Council will:

- apply the principles outlined in its Community Engagement Policy and Community Engagement Planning Framework to guide its engagement with the community in its consultations

- create opportunities for its residents to participate in Council activities and avail themselves of its services.
- extend opportunities for residents and community groups to participate in Council decision-making, as planning and service provision improve when residents are able to communicate their views.

5.6 INCLUSIVE PLACES AND SPACES

Accessible built infrastructure and open spaces are essential features of a healthy and inclusive community. Infrastructure should be welcoming, safe and relevant to all people. Council will seek to:

- consult with residents when determining how public spaces, infrastructure and facilities are planned and designed
- develop and maintain infrastructure to a standard that meets or exceeds formal accessibility requirements
- promote the shared use of facilities and co-location of services to encourage their use by the community
- strive to improve safety in public places.

5.7 SERVICE PLANNING AND DELIVERY

Council provides services which are accessible, of a high standard and which meet the requirements of the community. Services are most effective when they are designed with thoughtful consideration of the diverse needs of residents.

Council will:

- apply principles of access and fairness to the planning and delivery of its services and programs
- direct services and programs to the most disadvantaged residents
- seek opportunities to involve residents in the planning of services and facilities.

5.8 CAPABILITIES

Resources and practices that enable Council to respond to the needs of the community are essential to the fulfillment of this policy. Efficient, open reporting, coupled with sound review mechanisms, help Council to fulfil these principles.

Council will:

- provide staff with training in equity and access in decision-making and planning, to properly meet the needs of a diverse community
- incorporate principles of diversity, access and equity into relevant policy and planning documents.
- inform staff and residents about social, health and economic trends.

6. RESPONSIBILITIES

Responsibility will rest with the Advocacy Unit for informing Council staff and residents about the content and meaning of this policy, through the Council website, emails, presentations, print, social media or other means.

7. CONFLICT OF INTEREST

All Council Staff, and other persons involved in the administration or application of this policy must act impartially and in the public interest.

Any actual, potential or perceived conflict of interest must be identified, declared and managed in accordance with the organisation's Conflict of Interest Policy and relevant legislation.

Where a conflict of interest arises:

- Council staff must disclose the conflict as soon as practicable to their direct report and the Manager Governance Integrity Legal and Risk.
- The CEO must disclose the conflict as soon as practicable to the Mayor the Manager Governance Integrity Legal and Risk.
- Appropriate steps must be taken to manage or mitigate the conflict, including recusal from decision-making where required.

Failure to declare or appropriately manage a conflict of interest may result in disciplinary or other action.

8. REPORTING, MONITORING, REVIEW AND IMPLEMENTATION

Reporting	Coordinator Community Advocacy
Monitoring	The Policy will be reviewed in the event of any significant relevant legislative changes, and in the course of its standard four-yearly review.
Review	Review of policy is scheduled in four years' time from date of adoption. Review to be completed by Community Advocacy.
Stakeholder Engagement	• Governance Legal and Risk • Staff Consultative Committee • Executive Team
Implementation	This Policy will be published on Council's website and intranet so that it can be used by employees of Council, including contractors and agency and/or labour hire staff engaged by Council, Audit and Risk Committee Members, Delegated Committee Members, Community Asset Committee Members and Councillors to understand the principles and requirements.

9. REFERENCES AND RELATED DOCUMENTS

Legislation

A variety of Federal laws support the rights of people of diverse circumstances or characteristics, seeking to deter or redress unfavourable 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 them are:

- [Age Discrimination Act 2004](#)
- [Disability Discrimination Act 1992](#)
- [Equal Opportunity for Women in the Workplace Amendment Act 1999](#)
- [Fair Work Act 2009](#)
- [Human Rights Commission Act 1986](#)
- [Human Rights \(Sexual Conduct\) Act 1994](#)
- [National Disability Insurance Scheme \(NDIS\) Act 2013](#)
- [Racial Discrimination Act 1975](#)
- [Racial Hatred Act 1995](#)
- [Sex Discrimination Act 1984](#)
- [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:

- [Carers Recognition Act 2012](#)
- [Charter of Human Rights and Responsibilities Act 2006](#)
- [Child Wellbeing and Safety Act 2005 \(Amended\)](#)
- [Disability Act 2006](#)
- [Equal Opportunity Act 2010](#)
- [Freedom of Information Act 1982](#)
- [Gender Equality Act 2020](#)
- [Justice Legislation Amendment \(Anti-vilification and Social Cohesion\) Act 2025](#)
- [Local Government Act 2020](#)
- [Multicultural Victoria Act 2011](#)
- [Occupational Health and Safety Act 2004](#)
- [Planning and Environment Act 1987](#)
- [Privacy and Data Protection Act 2014](#)
- [Public Administration Act 2004](#)
- [Public Health and Wellbeing Act 2008](#)
- [Public Records Act 1973](#)
- [Racial and Religious Tolerance Act 2001](#)

Related Council and Other Policies, Procedures, Strategies, Protocols, Guidelines

The following plans, strategies and policies developed and endorsed by the City of Greater Dandenong relate to the implementation of this policy.

- Imagine 2030 Community Plan
- Council Plan (2025-29)
- Children's Plan (2021-26)
- Disability Action Plan (2017-23)
- Community Engagement Policy (2025-29)
- Reconciliation Action Plan (2026-28)
- Make Your Move Greater Dandenong Physical Activity Strategy 2020-2030
- Workplace Adjustment Guidelines

Administrative Updates

It is recognised that from time to time, circumstance may change leading to the need for minor administrative changes to this document. Where an update does not materially alter this document, such a change may be made administratively. Examples include a change to the name of a Council department, the change to an existing policy or document referred to in this policy and minor updates to legislation and the like which does not have a material impact. All changes or updates which materially alter this policy must be by resolution of Council.

Date	Update